color theory

A GSWS Zine

Table of Contents

i.
Opening Statement.....1

Editors' Message.....2

"*Color Theory*: A Welcome Letter".....3,4

ii.
"Daydreaming Colors" by Sabrina Wigfall.....5

Piece by Ian Long.....6

"Las Mujeres No Deben Ser Pelonas" by Melanie Garcia.....7,8

"moonflower" by Emily Paluba.....9

Piece by Vick Gonzalez.....10

"Jo March Project" by Sam Wilk.....11,12

"The Metaphor" by Rubin Smyers.....13

Piece by Riley Melone.....14

"an open letter to the oppressive system we call society and the people who make it worse" by Spencer Crines.....15,16

"Journey to Them" by M.K.....17

"nostalgia" by Jawan Martinez.....18

"You Want to Be Me So Bad" by Aryanna Salmon.....19

"Fingernails" by Katt Hoffmann.....20

"Clothing Has No Gender" by Julia Danzeisen.....21

"Zine Puzzle" by Sara Cantor.....22,23

"In the Eye of the Beholder" by Aryanna Salmon.....24

"Stop Pinkwashing 'israel'" by Asma Barakat.....25,26

"In Conclusion" by Rubin Smyers.....27

Piece by Vick Gonzalez.....27

"Songs About Queer Feelings & Relationships" by Sara Duricko.....27

"nebulous femme" by Emily Paluba.....27

Table of Contents

“spotlight” by Jawan Martinez.....28

Piece by Joe Allen.....29

“Love Makes a Man” by Damien A. Lopez.....30

“Worth it (Gay Mantra)” by Geraldy Wang.....31

“I’ll Be Whatever You Want Me to Be” by Aryanna Salmon.....32

“fairy wings” by angus honeymoon.....33

“Someone New” by Sabrina Wigfall.....34

“Art” by Lauren Lamantia.....35,36

Piece by Vick Gonzalez.....37

“My Stance On The Matter” by Rubin Smyers.....38

Piece by Riley Melone.....38

“Felicity” by Lauren Lamantia.....39

“Her Love” by Sara Duricko.....39

“Stardust” by Sara Duricko.....39

“Surveyed” by Aryanna Salmon.....40

“Dream Big Little Black Girl” by Sabrina Wigfall.....41

“leave it all behind” by Niko Farley.....42

“On My Relationship to Gender” by anonymous.....43,44

“reincarnation” by Jule D.....45

“Fully Realized” by Fable.....46

“Sensitive” by Rae Wilkins.....47

“some songs that may inspire you to do at least one Outrageous Act in the name of social justice” by Angela D’Alessandro.....48

Piece by Vick Gonzalez.....48

iii.
Thank You.....49

The views expressed in this zine belong to the contributors and not Montclair State University itself.

This is a student run zine fueled by individual student voices, and we honor our contributors' voices and perspectives.

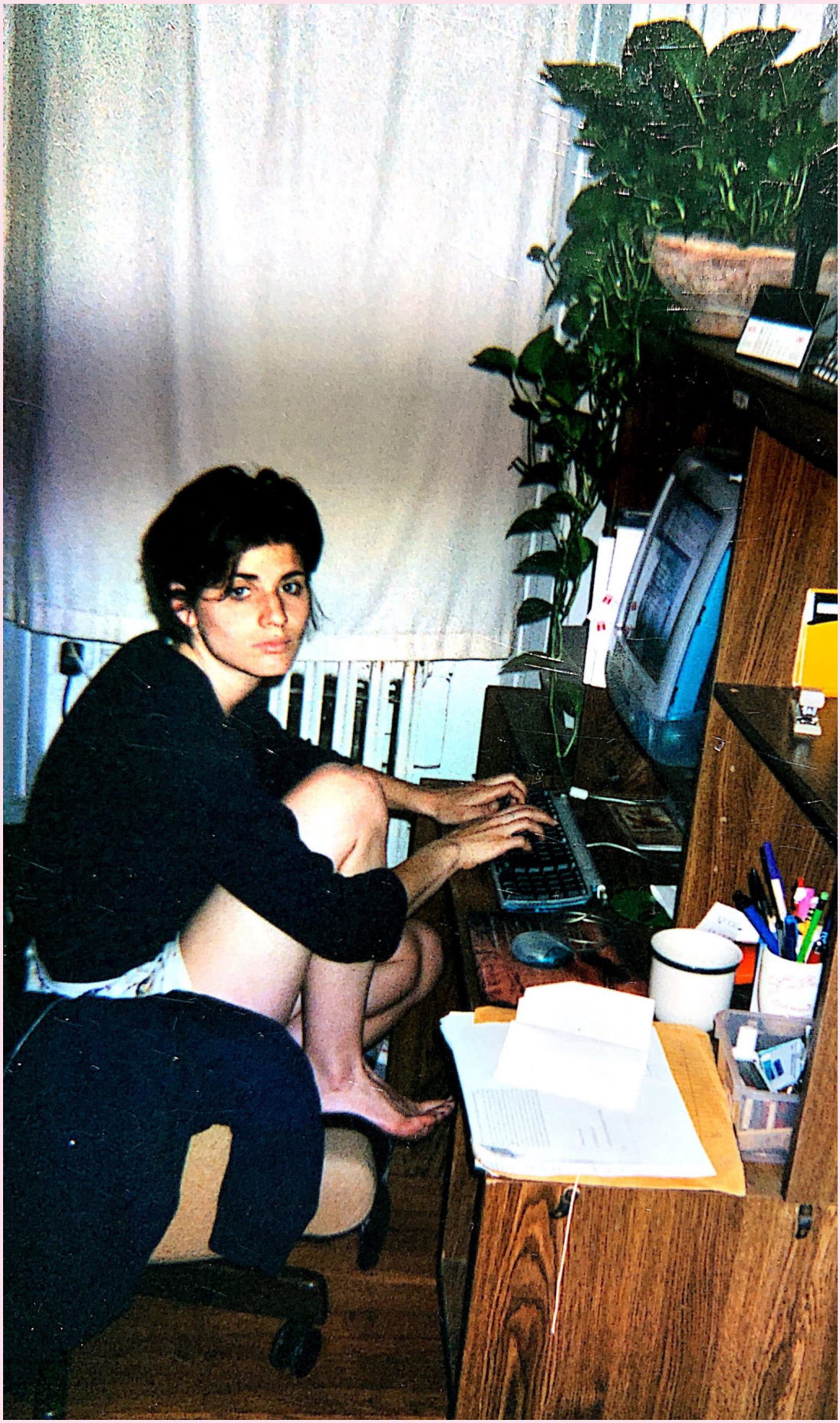
Color theory, by definition, is, “both the science and art of using color. It explains how humans perceive color; and the visual effects of how colors mix, match or contrast with each other. Color theory also involves the messages colors communicate; and the methods used to replicate color” (Kris Decker).

Color Theory: A GSWS Zine captures the infinite spectrum of color we wish to celebrate. Whether it is the colors of people, LGBTQ+ pride, art, or emotion, this zine aims to serve as a compilation of nuanced, vibrant voices mixing together, complementing one another, and in active conversation with each other, and you, the reader.

Montclair State University’s first ever Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Zine will give you a glimpse into the hearts and minds of the creators, contributors, and facilitators of this collaborative work. Though we live in a world that may try to subdue the radiance of those who dare to live their lives authentically, we have no doubt that these messages will shine and speak for themselves.

Above all, we hope you will see yourself in this colorful labor of love.

Warmly,
Niko Farley & Jonah Schwartz
Co-editors



Color Theory: A Welcome Letter

To My Twenty-Two Year-Old Self (circa late 90s):

This will seem strange but I'm writing to you from the future: it's 2021 (I know, right?) and I'm you, just *way* older. The Montclair State University Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program interns (shout out to Niko and Jonah who really got it all started) had a great idea: to do a feminist, queer 'zine project showcasing student art, writing, photography, and more. Let me assure you (you'll understand this well eventually): more than ever right now we need art, activism, and contact with our own sense of freedom. I thought I'd write you to tell you about this project, how important it is, how much there is ahead.

Of course you know about 'zines in the 90s. The 'zine—and really so much of Riot Grrrl and the feminist punk movement—is all about creating your own cultural products, working by hand, piecing things together, never being neat or perfect. I'm so glad you have this big influence in your life; it helps to clear space for your own power and imagination. In 2021 we need in many ways to start from scratch, to pick up our pieces, to build something new together. Our health, our racial pain, our collective traumas, our violences, our fears: all, as I write to you now, is radically exposed.

I can imagine, Jess @ 22, that you might feel afraid of the future. Will you be anywhere near strong enough for what is ahead? Listen, you're going to learn. You will find you are not just more powerful than you knew, but also more hurt, more loving, more queer, more creative, more angry, more *possible*. In the meantime, I am so honored to share with you this collection, *Color Theory*, the first ever GSWS 'zine. Inside is risk, beauty, honesty, hurt, memory, fear, and, most of all, love. I can't wait for you to meet the talented, brave, brilliant students featured here. I want to remind you that one of your writer-heroes said it like this:

> That's why I want to speak to you now.
>
> To say: no person, trying to take responsibility for her or his [or their] identity, should have to be so alone. There must be those among whom we can sit down and weep, and still be counted as warriors. (I make up this strange, angry packet for you, threaded with love.)
>
> I think you thought there was no such place for you, and perhaps there was none then, and perhaps there is none now; but we will have to make it, we who want to end suffering, who want to change the laws of history, if we are not to give ourselves away.
>
> --Adrienne Rich, *Sources*

Color Theory is a place in words and art for us all. Let's meet here.

Love,
Jess @ 44
(aka Jessica Restaino, Director of GSWS)

Daydreaming Colors

by Sabrina Wigfall (she/her/hers)

The sun was daydreaming when she made me,
Wishful thighs ... Brown eyes ... and Dark skin,
What a dream godsent,

I was the sun's favorite,
Soft, delicate, and absolutely gorgeous,
She kissed me brown and loved me blue,
Blue as the sea, blue as the sky, and blue as a wintering cold night, But never blue as stormy freight,

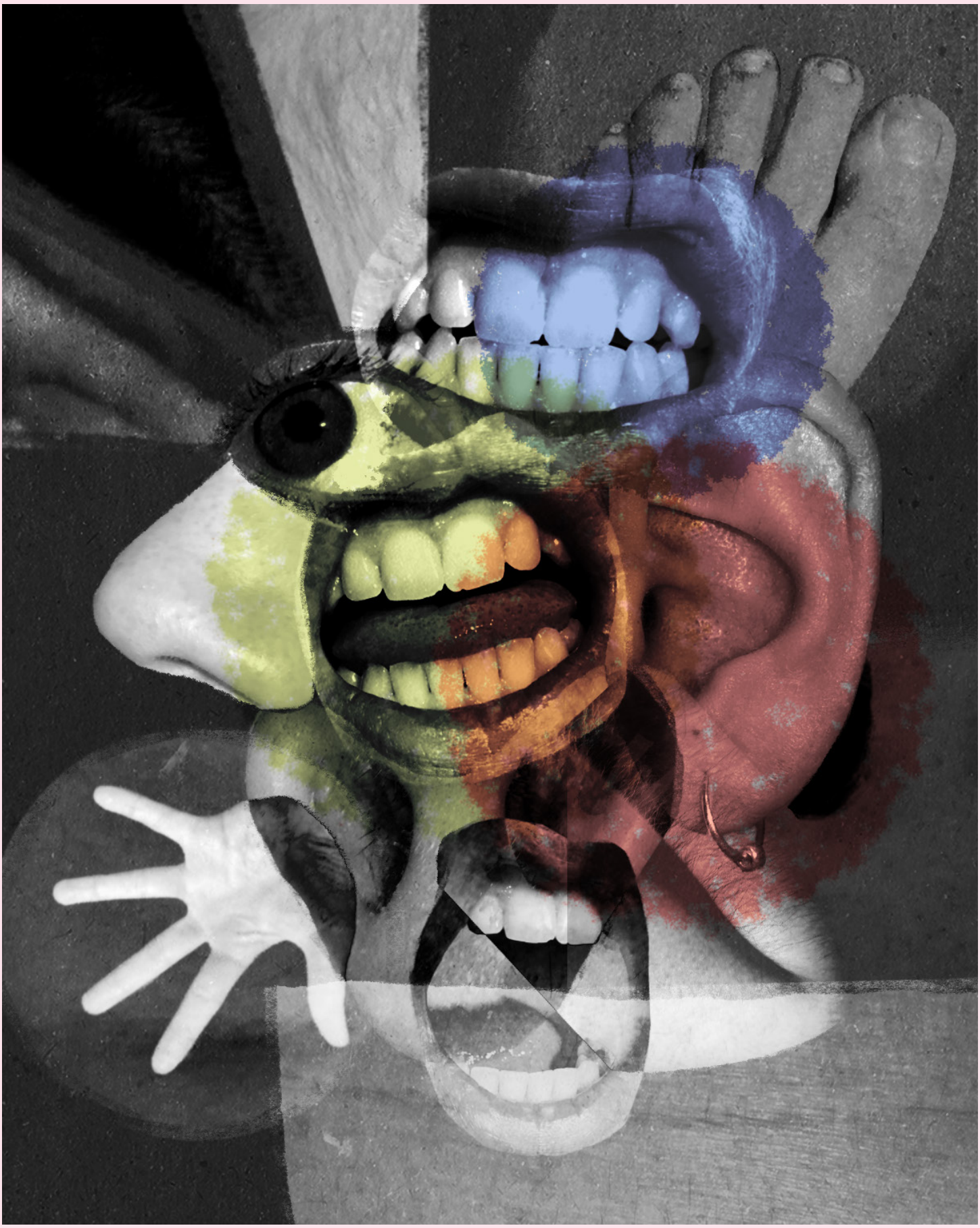
Daydreaming of a love that never was,
but could have been,
She loved me blue not out of sadness,
She loved me blue because it's what the moon loved me as,
What a dream godsent,

The sun was my favorite,
Beautifully bright, round, and absolutely intelligent,
I kissed her yellow and loved her red,
Red as the maple leaf, red as the cosmos, and red as a poppy during a sunset, But never red as an open wound,

Daydreaming of a love that never was,
but could have been,
I loved her red not out of pity,
I loved her red because that's what she bled,
What a dream godsent,

I was daydreaming when I made the sun,
"Make me beautiful," I whisper to her
Touch my hands and hold me close,
These are the times that I need you most,
"I'm afraid your beauty is unachievable, my lovely host."
She whispers back,

Wishful thighs ... Brown eyes ... and Dark skin,
What a dream godsent.



by Ian Long

Las Mujeres No Deben Ser Pelonas

by Melanie Garcia (she/her/hers)

“Mira que si te quise, fué por el pelo,
Ahora que estás pelona ya no te quiero.”

mami says you’ll like boys some day, you’ll have a boyfriend get married have his babies

mami says you want the boys to like you, you want to look pretty and be a real woman

shave your legs and wear dresses

mami says don’t you want to have a family some day from a man, be normal

don’t you want to get pregnant

as if my identity lies in the capabilities of the organ between my legs

mami doesn’t like it when i cut my hair short

when i cut boys off

when i cut and strip away the conventional expectations of my womanhood

mami solamente me quiso por mi pelo
ahora que soy pelona, ya no me quiere

moonflower

by Emily Paluba (she/her/hers)

take me to the realm
where there is no sun
just moonbeams and silver stars
that rise in the west
and fall in the east

to keep me happy (safe?)
in the shadows

away from golden eyes
and bronze hands

away from perception
and streets

away from opinions
and the feeling that

my beauty isn't mine
but someone else's
something else's
on a planet where the
sun rises in the east
where the flowers may thrive
but will always be
plucked

how do i break through
the atmosphere
of this world i never
asked to exist in

take me to the realm
where i can be flat
and take up space
at the same time

where i can bloom
in the absence of expectation

by Vick Gonzalez (they/them/theirs)

Jo March Project by Sam Wilk (she/her/hers)

Jo March from the classic book, Little Women, is a lesbian. There, I said what every other person on this planet has been too cowardly to put out there. When I read Little Women for the first time, this was just a passing thought. I brushed away the thought as any true Little Women fan knows Jo March's sexuality is not the point of the story. Not until I posed this question to my mother as we watched Greta Gerwig's Little Women that I realized how important my idea is.

"See, look at the way she's already talking about how much she hates marriage," I tell my mom no more than five minutes into the film.

"Why does she have to be a lesbian? Can't she just be an independent woman?" asked my mom.

As a gender studies major, I am usually the first person to encourage assuming everyone's sexuality is fluid unless they express differently, but not in this case. Yes, Jo not ending up with Laurie does not make her a lesbian. However, I think Amy ending up with Laurie does. Louisa May Alcott shows us three different sides of a nineteenth century woman's relationship with marriage. More specifically, nineteenth century women who all happen to be artists. First, we have Jo and Amy's sister Meg, who is excited to get married. She has no fear leaving any chance at being an actor in the past because she wants to join the domestic lifestyle. Jo is the complete opposite, only wanting to write. Even after she creates a bond with Laurie so close that he falls in love, there is something in the way. Most fans believe the "something in the way" is her dream of being a writer, except that does not entirely make sense. In modern films the trope of a woman having to decide to pick between love and her career is widely used, such as La La Land or Rachel Green's plot of the last season of Friends. Unlike those women, Jo does not struggle to pick between love and career, in fact, she does not care to pick. Jo never picks because she can not feel intimate love for her best friend in the first place. A gay character not being able to fall in love with their opposite sex best friend is a classic 21st century film trope (Kurt and Mercedes in

Glee, Cher and Christian Clueless, Ian and Mandy in Shameless, etc) because that happens all the time in real life. Even if Jo was simply an independent woman, how come she does not feel even the slightest bit of feelings, or questions if she has feelings, for a male best friend that has so much affection for her? This is because Little Women was written in a time where people could not come out to their friends.

Amy, on the other hand, can find the balance between keeping up her life as an extravagant visual artist and becoming a wife when she marries Laurie. Amy shows the readers that Alcott believes a woman can be both independent and in love, so why can Jo not be the same? One might say it is because she was meant to fall in love with Professor Bhaer, but her "love" for him was obviously just added to please the Little Women's publisher. Greta Gerwig beautifully demonstrates this when she has Jo relay to her publisher this same hypocritical flaw of marrying off a character who spends an entire novel hating on marriage. The publisher does agree with Jo, however, he points out the book will not sell if Jo does not marry off her character because readers of the 1800s want to see a woman die or be married. Jo begrudgingly agrees and rewrites the ending. In my opinion, Gerwig's addition to Little Women is the perfect metaphor as to why Jo married Professor Bhaer.

I would hate for someone to misinterpret my passion as a pointless theory because in actuality, my passion comes from a place of wanting less of a heteronormative society. Little Women not only came out and said in a patriarchal time period that women have a purpose outside of wifely duties, thus giving a new perspective on gender roles, it also demonstrates a common sapphic perspective. Every queer woman I know has thought they would rather be alone than marry a man because they had no idea marrying a woman was an option, and we grew up way past the nineteenth century! One may see Jo March as just an independent woman, and maybe that person is right, but her independence undoubtedly is something that queer girls can relate to. If the twenty-first century society was less heteronormative, perhaps more than just me would have picked up on Jo's lesbian undertones. If LGBT+ stories were easier to recognize, I think the community would feel less alone.

The Metaphor by Rubin Smyers (he/him/his)

Hey, come on , we're playing Monopoly.
Monopoly? What's that?
Isn't it obvious? Wow I can't believe you don't know already. So it's this game with a whole bunch of rules that you have to follow and nobody really wins anything, you just kind of have to act within the established range of behavior for your whole entire life and if you don't you get in big trouble. It's super fun, come on.
Wow that honestly sounds pretty terrible. I'd rather not play, thanks.
Well that's unfortunate because it's not optional.
What do you mean it's not optional? It's just a game.
It's just not an option. You have to do it, you can't refuse. Nobody gets to refuse.
Why not? It sounds silly and restrictive and all the rules are totally arbitrary. I don't want any part of that.
Why won't you let me play Monopoly?
I never said YOU couldn't play Monopoly, I said I didn't want to.
You're being really unreasonable right now and it's making things hard for everybody. You're actually hurting everybody by not doing this very simple and obvious thing you already should have known about. Nobody else is fighting it, why are you? You don't have to like it, you just have to do it. Now come sit down and play Monopoly with us.
Ugh, fine, whatever.
Here's your token, you're going to be the dog.
I don't want to be the dog, I want to be the top hat.
What do you mean you want to be the top hat? I just told you you're the dog. You're obviously the dog, I mean just look at you.
What does that even mean? Look if you're going to make me play this ridiculous game, the least you could do is let me pick the token I want. Now hand me the top hat.
What you're saying doesn't make any sense. You don't get any say in the matter, you just are what they say it looks like you are the first time you play Monopoly and that is what it is and it never ever changes. Now I gave you your token and that token is the dog because you look like the kind of person who'd play as the dog and that's just that and how it's going to be forever. God, it's really not that hard.
Why are you being so strict about these things that don't even matter? I just don't want to be the dog, but I said I'll be the top hat. If you just let me be the top hat I'll stop arguing with you.
Wow, why do you hate dogs so much? Why can't you just accept that you're a dog-token player?
I don't hate dogs, I just don't want to personally play as the dog. It's really not that hard to understand, and I just think that since you're making me play this game that I never wanted to play in the first place, you should at least let me pick which kind of token I get to use.
That's just not how it works. Look, if you don't stop arguing over nothing we're never going to get anywhere and I, for one, would like to get the game started. So take a seat, calm down, and here's your dog token.
Fuck you and your pointless game! Have fun alone with your weird ass rules, I'm done here!

by Riley Melone (he/they)

an open letter to the oppressive system we call society and the people who make it worse

by Spencer Crines (he/they)

Dear lesbians who mourned the "death" of Elliot Page, who cry and weep over the fact that he has decided to come out as the version of them that makes him happy: you are vile and cruel. You mourn the death of someone who was never yours to begin with, and make their coming out about you and how your community is slowly "disappearing", when you blatantly ignore the trans lesbians, the lesbians of color, the disabled lesbians, nonbinary and he/him lesbians, neurodivergent lesbians and lesbians with xenogenders and neopronouns. You refuse to accept the butch lesbians, the studs, the butch4butch and femme4femme and stud4stud couples, and instead find solice in the skinny white cisgender lesbians, the couples that perpetuate heretosexuality, the women who play queer women on screen when they themselves are not gay. You are not being a feminist, you are being selfish and transphobic. Fix yourselves.

Dear gay men who verbally abuse women, who buy Chik-fil-A and still call themselves "queens", the ones who say they don't like pussy and gush about how much they love "big dicks": you are a nasty member of the community. You may like men, but by excluding trans men from the equation and by shaming women for existing and by supporting homophobic companies, you give us a bad name. How are you say that you're a member when you laugh at a trans guy for hitting on you and shaming them, saying "I only date real men"; how dare you make fun of drag queens when they are starting out and boasting about your makeup skills when you got them from men like James Charles, who talked about "turning" straight men gay, and men like Jeffree Starr, who is a racist piece of shit and once had a Nazi themed lipstick line. You shame your fellow men in your label for being hairy, for being poc, for being disabled and trans and neurodivergent and anything that doesn't fit into your "understanding" of what a twink, a twunk, a hunk, a bear, an otter should look like. You use terms like "fishy" when discussing passing drag queens, knowing full well that it refers to how a woman's pussy smells, and you don't care. You are not "breaking boundaries", you're a sick version of what a gay man should be. Fix yourselves.

Dear toxic trans men who sneer at feminine trans men, who hurl slurs at transmasculine people, who call men who don't wear binders "not real trans men", who focus on the awfulness of being trans: you are perpetuating toxic masculinity

in a new way that makes it even worse. You shun your own community members away because you think exclude everyone who isn't "classically" masculine for we ourselves are not classically masculine.

So let that trans guy wear a skirt if he wants to, let that transmasculine person not wear a binder because they have a condition, let that trans guy use neopronouns because he's also neurodivergent and has a hard time understanding gender as a concept and using he/ix/bee pronouns makes ix happy. You sneered at me when I said I am a boy, but I can't bind most days; you laughed cruelly when I said I like neopronouns like pup, fang, bite; you shamed me when I wore a crop top and no binder, because I looked "like a girl"; you hate me for wanting to dye my hair pink. Who are you to tell me what a girl should look like? Why do you shame the plus size boys who are just as valid as you are for existing? Why are you so sure of what you think masculinity is when you're getting your information from a YouTuber who has given people trauma from bullying them on their identity? You are not "the new generation of men", you are the same version of those cis men you hate on, only your toxic masculinity is from you, not from your family. Fix yourselves.

This is a letter to society. It isn't a love letter. This is a declaration of individualism for the trans anarchist witches who love to go to a hill and scream, the disabled fashion designers who are in a triad relationship and are married, the POC engineers who have no kids and two cats who they love dearly as if they were their own children, the queer politicians who haven't medically transitioned and don't plan on ever doing so, the neurodivergent therapist who takes so much medication for a cancer that will never go away that sometimes they weep in frustration. We don't want to be tied by some generic understanding of us. We don't want to be responsible for explaining ourselves to you because we are something "new" and "exciting", for we have been here for centuries. Millenia, even. We do not want to give you praise for using our names and pronouns one time when you still deadname and misgender us every other time. Do not weep for your lost sons, your lost daughters, your "normal" friend, your able bodied partner; we do not need your tears, your sympathy. We are full of stardust and rage, of blood and candy and weed and milkshakes and medications and we are vibrant, resplendent, original, one in a fucking million chance of existing. We deserve to not have to fight for our rights to live every one, two, four, six, ten months. We deserve to not be the punchline to your jokes, to have comedy sketches based on our lives, to not have people ask us if we're "sure", or if we've had "the surgery".

We are never leaving, so get used to us.

Journey to Them

by M.K. (she/they)

An impulse
A whim
An unconscious thought
That opened up a whole world of exploration

There are worlds living inside of me
Untapped potential
Untold stories
Universes of meaning and beauty

My feminine beauty has always held a she/her identity
But recently I have seen so much more growing
Yesterday, tomorrow and today
I am she and I am they

I look in the mirror
It all becomes haze
Eyes begin to cross
And through the blur I see
A man I could not be
And yet the woman in me is not enough
But what else is hiding inside me?

A nonbinary being
They/them just fits so right
I'm not a boy, I'm not a girl, I'm a friend
We live in confinements and constraints
Society screaming to pick a label
Living in the binary hurts
But I am not drawn to putting myself in a box
I am who I am
My happiness is in that

nostalgia by Jawan Martinez (he/him/his)

You Want to Be Me So Bad by Aryanna Salmon (she/her/hers)

FINGERNAILS

by Katt Hoffmann (they/she/he)

Well-intentioned phrases make
my palms sweat
my jaw clench
my breath catch,
Make the room begin to spin out of focus.
I catch the corner of a cold slop sink to lean against.

I bite the cherry red acrylic
On the ends of my fingers.
40 dollars a month
just to bite off plastic
until my cuticles burn and bleed.

I cross my arms over my chest,
tuck my newly raw hands under my arms,
Shoulders hunched forward.
I can't press down hard enough
or get my chest flat enough.
My lower lip finds its way between my teeth.
I nip at the dry skin in the hopes
That no one notices me.

I look down at my outfit.
In a split second, I decide.
Too tight.
Too short.
Too sickly-sweet pink.
I slide my high school sweatshirt back onto my body
Even though the sticky wetness under my arms,
at the nape of my neck
Is already borderline unbearable.

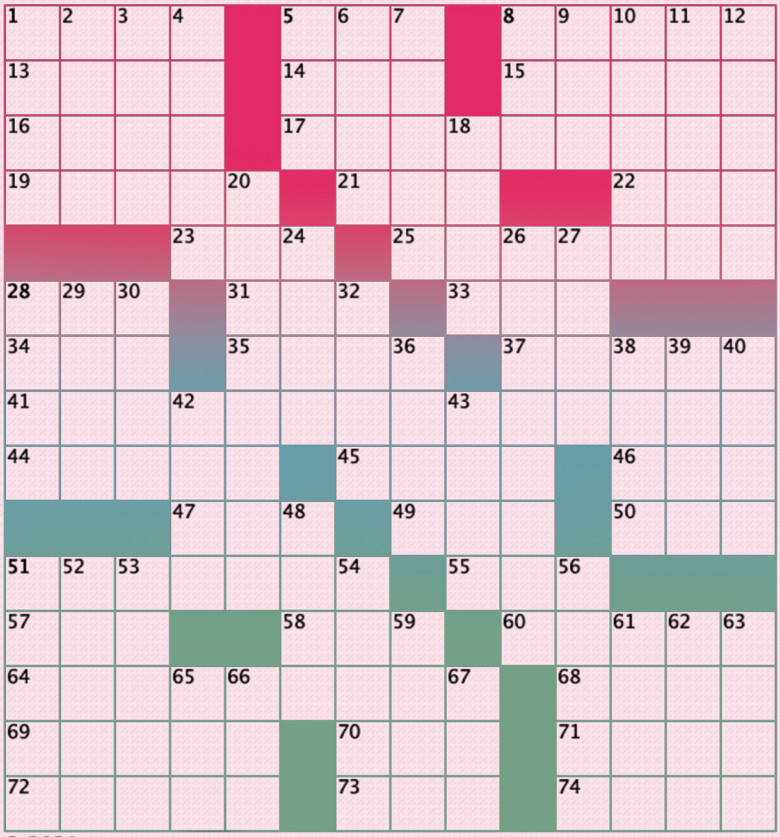
Maybe it's the heat or maybe it's something else all together
But I can't breathe again.
The room is suddenly filled with
New introductions- new explanations.
Squeezing between all of these potential arguments,
Silently praying that no one touches me or feels me or stops me to talk
Or otherwise cares enough to see me as more than a passing shadow in a crowd.
I can't reach the door or my lighter fast enough.

Woman?
Another question that lingers in the air
like the smell of a storm coming.
I take a deep drag of my cigarette and ash on the street.
I let the smoke sit in my throat while I think.
I don't have an answer.
I'll make a nail appointment in the morning.
I'll paint them blue this time,
I think.

by Julia Danzeisen (she/her/hers)

Zine Puzzle

Sara Cantor
she/they



© 2021

ACROSS

1. Singer Sawayama of of "XS"
5. Cacao ___ (chocolate-y superfood)
8. Animal that Kuzco turns into in "The Emperor's New Groove"
13. "You Shook Me All Night Long" band
14. AIM creator
15. Answer to the riddle "What gets wetter the more it dries?"
16. Farm animal with rectangular pupils
17. "Nobody was killed at ___." -Willam Belli
19. Stop following on YouTube, for short
21. Back then
22. Use your eyes
23. Gal ___
25. Pronouns for a genderqueer person, perhaps
28. Active marijuana ingredient (not THC)
31. Stat. that'll tell you if you've had too many shots
33. Your and my
34. "___ WE STILL FRIENDS?" (Tyler, the Creator song)
35. Acronym on an abolitionist's protest sign, maybe
37. Spiced rice dish
41. Feminist rallying cry about reproductive autonomy
44. Opening remarks
45. Shirt type that might have an alligator on it
46. Acronym for some queer people... or some communists... or some pyramid schemes
47. Platform for iPhones and iPads
49. 17-Across, for example
50. Awareness-raising TV ad
51. Thailand's capital
55. God, in Italian
57. Tavern offering
58. Congressperson who played a game of Among Us on Twitch, for short
60. "Zami: A New Spelling of My Name" author Lorde
64. Punk feminist movement
68. Midday
69. Punk, for example
70. ___ v. Wade
71. Cancer symbol
72. Happen next
73. Gibbon or bonobo
74. Award won by Yance Ford for his Netflix documentary "Strong Island"

DOWN

1. Pasta sauce brand
2. "She's an ___, she's a legend, and she is the moment, now come on now." -Wendy Williams about Dua Lipa
3. Confidentiality contracts: Abbr.
4. Go wild
5. Pole-dancing, Satan-killing legend Lil ___ X
6. Letter between theta and kappa
7. Tumblr pages
8. 4G ___
9. Quiet volume setting
10. Overwhelmed
11. Super Smash Bros. installment
12. Place to bowl
18. Lower Manhattan section, for short
20. Gay Australian horror creature
24. Like some lingerie
26. Gender ___
27. Haim, for example
28. Thin-strapped tank top, for short
29. ___ Mawr College
30. Thing you owe
32. "Looking ___ right in the eye #MetGala" -Karlie Kloss tweet
36. Acronym on a party invitation
38. Not taut
39. Often-torn parts of the knee
40. Post-disaster relief org.
42. The first: Abbr.
43. Decked out
48. Fly
51. Intrude, with "in"
52. UFO pilot
53. Bright colors worn by someone dressing like they're in an '80s workout class
54. Canonically queer Avatar after Aang
56. 1/16 of a pound
59. ___ top (shirt type worn by Winnie-the-Pooh)
61. Student housing
62. Wander
63. Non-binary, for short
65. "u right"
66. Girls' Generation hit of 2009
67. Activia spokeswoman Jamie ___ Curtis

link to solve online!

(see next page for answers)

Zine Puzzle Answers

R	I	N	A	■	N	I	B	■	L	L	A	M	A
A	C	D	C	■	A	O	L	■	T	O	W	E	L
G	O	A	T	■	S	T	O	N	E	W	A	L	L
U	N	S	U	B	■	A	G	O	■	■	S	E	E
■	■	■	P	A	L	■	S	H	E	T	H	E	Y
C	B	D	■	B	A	C	■	O	U	R	■	■	■
A	R	E	■	A	C	A	B	■	P	I	L	A	F
M	Y	B	O	D	Y	M	Y	C	H	O	I	C	E
I	N	T	R	O	■	P	O	L	O	■	M	L	M
■	■	■	I	O	S	■	B	A	R	■	P	S	A
B	A	N	G	K	O	K	■	D	I	O	■	■	■
A	L	E	■	■	A	O	C	■	A	U	D	R	E
R	I	O	T	G	R	R	R	L	■	N	O	O	N
G	E	N	R	E	■	R	O	E	■	C	R	A	B
E	N	S	U	E	■	A	P	E	■	E	M	M	Y

In the Eye of the Beholder by Aryanna Salmon (she/her/hers)

Stop Pinkwashing “israel”

by Asma Barakat
(she/her/hers)

Some of you may have heard of the genocidal occupying entity known as “israel,” but for those of you who don’t know about the terrorist state colonizing my homeland, let’s have a little history lesson.

In May 1948, a bunch of white European people marched into the Middle Eastern country of Palestine with their army and their guns and committed many of the worst human rights crimes. Which crimes, you ask? Here are a few out of the thousands of crimes against humanity committed by the settler-colonial state of “israel”. (FYI: settler-colonialism is when people settle in a territory that is not their own and seeks to replace the indigenous population. For example, the united states of amerika is a settler-colonial state as it has massacred and displaced Native Americans to make room for settlers. This is a crime in itself.)

A few of “israel’s” war crimes include:
Ethnic Cleansing
Genocide
Apartheid

The Oxford Dictionary defines ethnic cleansing as “the mass expulsion or killing of members of an unwanted ethnic or religious group in a society.”

The Oxford Dictionary defines genocide as “the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group.”

The Oxford Dictionary defines apartheid as “a policy or system of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race.”

Therefore, “israel” was born 72 years ago out of the mass murder, oppression, and displacement of indigenous Palestinians. To this very day, Palestinians of all ages, genders, and sexualities are tortured, blackmailed, imprisoned, bombed, and murdered. To this very day, Palestinian homes are frequently demolished by a foreign army that has occupied Palestinian land. There is no “normal” life for Palestinians. Every day we are terrorized for simply existing. In our own land, we are massacred daily, and in other lands, we are seen as the enemy because of racism and propaganda.

One would think this evil would be denounced by everyone, correct?

Wrong.

Instead, the reality is that “israel” is hailed as “the only democracy in the Middle East,” “the gay Mecca,” “the most tolerant country in Asia when it comes to gay rights.”

Instead, the reality is that Palestinians are silenced, and when we are briefly mentioned, we are vilified through a racist, orientalist lens.

This is called pinkwashing. Pinkwashing, as defined by FEM magazine is "the appropriation of the LGBTQIA+ movement to promote a particular corporate or political agenda. In other words, entities market themselves as "gay-friendly" to gain favor with progressives, while masking aspects that are violent and undemocratic."

"israel" is doing just that. In other words, "israel's" government is saying, "Hey, let's distract people from the 35 bombs we dropped on Gaza this month by throwing a gay rights parade in the streets of Tel Aviv (a city that lives on top of Palestinian ruins after it was demolished and ethnically cleansed in 1948.)

Newsflash: Queer Palestinians exist. Palestinians of all sexualities and gender identities are fighting for LGBTQ+ rights, women's rights, and basic human rights. For 72 years, every Palestinian has been resisting the brutal occupation and colonization of our homeland.

There is no better example of hypocrisy than the pinkwashing campaign: it pretends to be the face of acceptance, freedom, and love, but seek out Queer Palestinians to blackmail.

Queer Palestinians like Najeeb or Nadia can find a fun atmosphere at queer cafes in Ramallah, but with the "israeli defense forces" lurking around the city, they can be followed, kidnapped, and blackmailed. Yes, you read that correctly. Queer Palestinians are taken in by "israeli authorities" and are given two options 1) become an informant or 2) be outed by the same entity that calls itself a savior of LGBTQ+ rights.

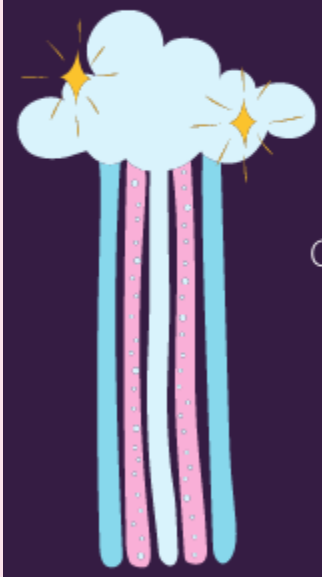
If you try to save yourself, you will become a double agent and be forced into helping your oppressors with intelligence information that seeks to kill and imprison other Palestinians. I didn't realize abusing, terrorizing, and harassing Queer people is part of Queer liberation, but according to "israel" it is.

The Palestinian cause is one that belongs to the feminist movement, the LGBTQ+ movement, and every existing human rights movement. There are no human rights without Palestinian rights. To be a feminist or an LGBTQ+ ally, you must be pro-Palestinian. There is no LGBTQ+ liberation when Queer Palestinians are being bombed, orphaned, and/or left homeless. There is no women's liberation when pregnant Palestinian women are left to give birth at a checkpoint, risking infection and death of both the mother and child.

How many of you have heard about Palestine? What is it that you have been told about my home? I'm angry because not enough people know, and those who do know are happy with my people being genocided. Read about Palestine. Stand with Palestine, or don't call yourself a feminist or pro-LGBTQ+.

In Conclusion

by Rubin Smyers (he/him/his)



Gender is a question.
Gender is the answer.
Gender is fake.
Gender is real.
Gender is irrelevant.
Gender cannot be ignored or denied.
Gender is performed.
Gender is inside.
Gender is a feeling.
Gender is an action.
Gender is the truth.
Gender is a lie.
Whatever it is, it's probably gender, so do whatever you want <3

by Vick Gonzalez (they/them/theirs)

Songs About Queer Feelings & Relationships

by Sara Duricko (she/her/hers)

Sleepover- Hayley Kiyoko
Make Me Feel- Janelle Monae
Honey- Kehlani
We Fell In Love In October- Girl in Red
Sanctify- Years & Years
Bad Religion- Frank Ocean
Girl- The Internet feat. KAYTRANADA
Homegirl- King Princess
Marceline- WILLOW
Bloom- Troye Sivan

nebulous femme

by Emily Paluba (she/her/hers)

she walks on rains of
sunshine kissed by lilac
lips. and a little
something else.

her storm cloud eardrums
quiver but she's too proud
to pour. too attached to
purge her nebulas just
yet.

her mind wants the moon.
but her chest craves hail.
or anything frozen.

spotlight by Jawan Martinez (he/him/his)

by Joe Allen (he/they)

Love Makes a Man by Damien A. Lopez (he/him/his)

There are exactly three events
that have shaped me into the
man I am today.

One.
As I grew up, I was told that
Jim and George were brothers,
But I am no fool when I see two
people who unconditionally love
one another.
They shared a house, they had
a cat, Leo, and twin labrador
dogs too!
That was a love that can last
forever, that is something that
I knew.
“Jim and George are brothers”.
“Stop lying to her dad, just
say it, yes they’re gay!”
This was the first time I heard
the word,
I was perplexed. If my father
never told me, was this a word
of shame?
But I also was accepting, the
concept of loving a gender that
was the same.
I looked up to their love, I
respected it, their love was
nothing near bizarre,
Because had I not known they
were gay, I wouldn’t have made
it here this far

Two
The moment I saw my girlfriend
I fell in love instantly and
unknowingly.
She appeared behind translucent
radial glass,
Her emerald eyes peeked from
black abyss,
I lock on to what seems to be,
A moment I can never leave,
The feelings I had felt before,
a love that was true adored,
A love that felt like Jim and
George,
An endless love that’s true.
An endless love is what I want,
a life spent loving you

Three
I packed my bags, she burned
my pride flags, this hatred was
nothing new
Being born in the wrong body,
this is something that I knew.
I tried to resist, I couldn’t
fight, the truth I live out to
this day
Knowing my family and friends
can all turn the other way.
My chin is up, teary eyes filled
with pride
I repeat there’s nothing I need
to prove
Because a feeling is a feeling,
it’s always inside of you.

But sometimes you’ll see me cry
at night, for the love I’ll
never receive.
Because your latina daughter
is actually your latino son, a
girl I’ll never be.
You call me diablo, tainted,
fake and crazy
You don’t want me near your
grave.
You yell and cry and scream,
blaming me for your shame
When the mother of a son, can
never love him the same.

The creation of who I am was
filled with three events,
With love I’ve seen,
With love I’ve gained,
And love I’ll never get.

Worth it (Gay Mantra)

by Geraldy Wang (he/they)

Worth it!
You never thought of me
than anything else but
worthless
Worth it!
Break me, hit me, but don't
say you love me
Because a mother wouldn't
say the things you do
Wouldn't do the things you
do

A mother would say I'm
worth it
Worth standing up for
But not you
All that you do
Is tear me down

And I remember my childhood
Wish I didn't
The echoes of my cries are
like PTSD
Waking me my most peaceful
dreams
To remind me that life
never got easier
Living in apathy
With the rest of the world

See I thought I was worth
it!
I called out to strangers
Helped them so they could
help me
I fed homeless
I went to college
But all you saw was a
faggot
Say I'm not worth helping
Because I won't have a
future
Reaped away by AIDS and the
promise of no children
You called me Sick!
You called me dirt
And you called me worst!
But I am worth it!

You found me disgusting and
repulsing
And mother so are you
A lesbian who breaks down
her son
You don't know me
My birthday or my identity
So how can you call me
unworthy
Of being worthy
To live my own truth

To be successful in my own
way
Happiness isn't exclusive
to white straight people
That's not what's worthy
I am worth it!
I am worth what I promise
myself

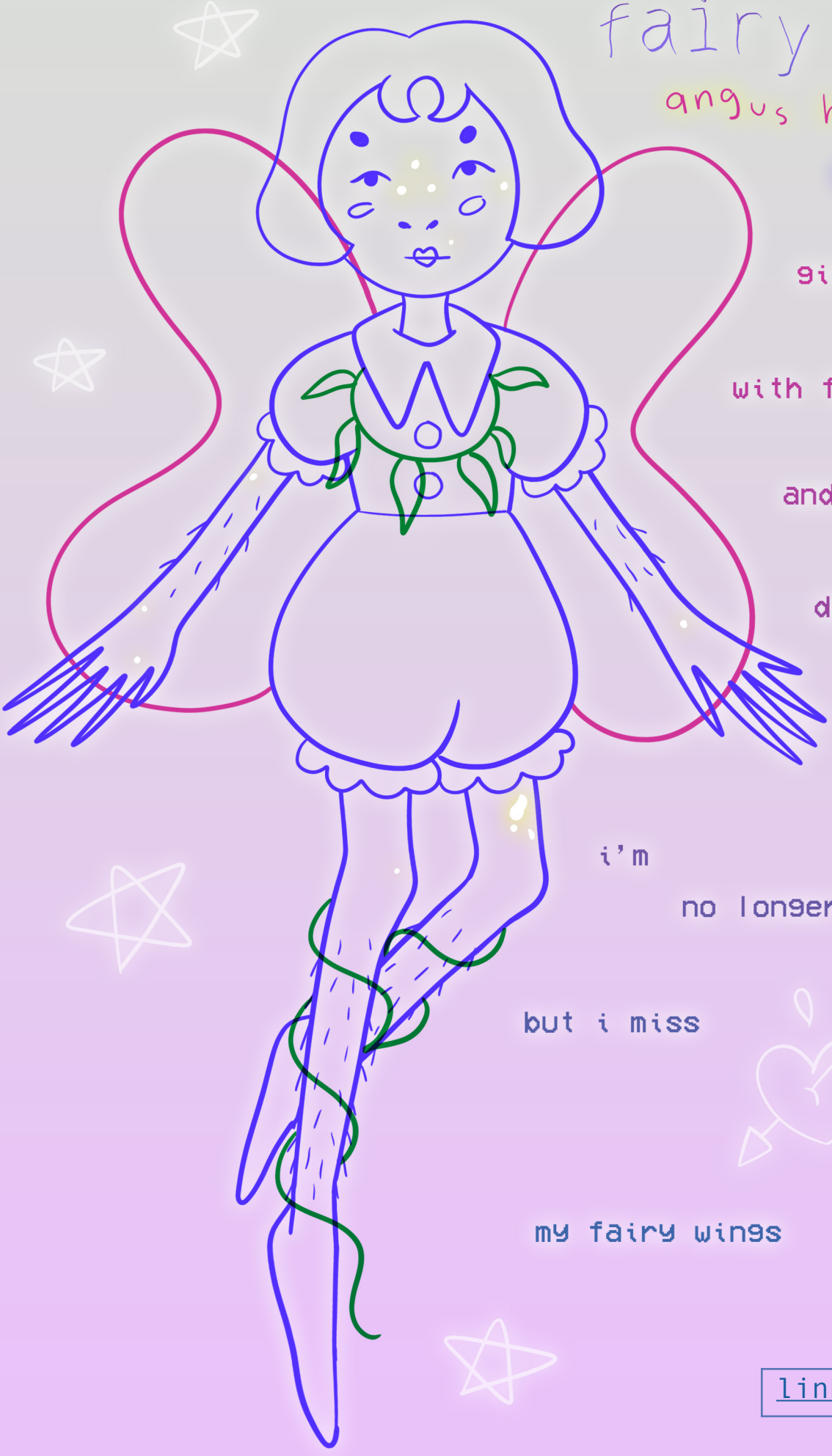
Even if the world sides
with you
I will continue to share my
truth
And love myself before I
love anyone else

I’ll Be Whatever You Want Me to Be by Aryanna Salmon (she/her/hers)

fairy wings

angus honeymoon

© fmaj7



girls

with fairy wings

and glitter cheeks

deciding who to be

i'm

no longer a girl

but i miss

my fairy wings

link to the song!

Someone New by Sabrina Wigfall (she/her/hers)

How to forget someone.” I type
tiredly as the whipping winds
howl through the night and the
serenity of hearing lost souls
whispering through the dark,
“Find someone new.”

The cost of a new lover meant
a piece of myself would be
sacrificed,
I’d need to learn what it meant
to be a lover again,
How to satisfy a new body in a
way that I couldn’t before,
Know what it means to be lost,
confused, and hopeless again,
And understand that life isn’t
over if it doesn’t work out,

I’m a lover’s lover,
A lover’s lover is someone who
loves another and loves for the
other,
Being twenty years old is hell
because nobody knows what they
are meant to do and with who,
Misunderstandings are frequent,
We drink poisonous liquids to
make us feel good,
Most of the time- we’re high to
forget the anxieties inflicted
on us from the system,

We’re essentially screws up
trying to fix the meaning of
life,
A life that wasn’t made for
most of us to live past twenty,

I never knew I could live past
twenty,

Skateboarding through the
ghostly parking lot,
Falling in love with each
bystander that makes eye
contact,
Thank you for seeing me today
“My name is Sabrina and I’m a
lover’s lover,”
I fall in love with people that
I have to love and love for-I
have depression riding my back
and anxiety burning a hole
through my stomach,
I’m the Black woman that
carries everyone’s problems
with no room for myself,

Sometimes I can be flirtatious
when I’m not rotting,
Sometimes I smile so big to
ignore my troubles,
And most of the time, my poetry
doesn’t have a theme,

But each time I meet someone
new ... I’m someone new to them
even if I’m stuck being myself
every time.
They don’t know that though and
I’m never prepared for when
they do.

by Lauren Lamantia (she/her/hers)

I believe in art. Not in the sense of paintings from Bob Ross or Picasso, but in the way natural marks and scars make me who I am. That without black mascara and coral colored blush, rosacea and freckles can be seen scattered throughout my nose and cheeks.

The way that without a hot straightener and heat protector, curls and baby hairs get tangled within each other creating the world's most frustrating knots. The way that without coconut scented self-tanner, stretch marks from growing pains rest against my sides. Even the way certain scars despite layers of foundation remain in tack from lessons I've come to learn.

The way I see it, as some people may agree, the human body can be seen as a temple or canvas. Where art and exploration can be inflicted by a needle creating flowers that hug your elbows or from healing over wounds on your knees from when you fell off your bike when you were 12. The way I see it, is that sometimes body art can come from hardship and maybe not from a needle, but another sharp object.

During a stage of life when nothing seems right and sadness feels like mucus stuck in your chest, self-deprecating out of blame may hurt just as much as a needle in a tattoo parlor that plays Paramore a little too loud. But through each experience and in the midst of pain, there is art in each process.

My mother always told me that the greatest gift in the word was not a materialistic purse or the newest addition of Vogue magazine, even though I did appreciate the monthly subscription. That the greatest gift of all was not necessarily something you could grasp in your hands, or wear on your back or on your feet. She would say that the greatest gift of all, beating any worldly possessions was the gift of self. The gift of being oneself and everything about them making them who they are.

That despite having a scar on the side of your face from being slammed into the blue lockers in middle school one to many times to teenage years spent lying on the floor thinking it would be better to be someone else, every experience is a chapter in your own book.

That even with the walls of your once purple bedroom changed to a freshly painted gray, to days spent trying to wash away the scars on your wrists no matter how much antibacterial soap you use, that every line, memory and scar makes you, you.

That even in your adult's years, when you walk into a tattoo parlor with a flower in mind and you sit in the oversized chair getting ready for your first tattoo, you look down seeing your scars realizing it doesn't need to be covered in black ink. That the uneven lines from your once shaky hands makes the spot on your wrist just as pretty as any flower you could possibly choose. That the asymmetrical beauty marks that lie on your skin are reminders of the greatest blessing of all, the gift of everything making you, you.

by Vick Gonzalez (they/them/theirs)

My Stance On The Matter by Rubin Smyers (he/him/his)

To be trans is to know your gender on a level that most people never will. Not because they're incapable of it, but because society hasn't necessitated they do. The overarching message from people who do not understand us is that we are confused, when in fact they are the ones who are confused and most of us have a better sense of ourselves and our gender than most of them do of their own. Even those of us who oscillate among gender identities, unable or unwilling to choose just one, have a deeper understanding of their gender than those who have not bothered to question it. How often does a cis person have to interrogate their gender, figure out if they really are what they claim to be, justify their place in womanhood or manhood to themselves and everyone else? How many cis men and women have bothered to question what it means to be a man or a woman, deconstructed those categories to find that their essence escapes definition, and then chosen one again regardless because, even in the absence of cohesive qualifications, something about it just feels right in their soul? In this way, I believe that trans women are truer women and trans men are truer men than most cis men and women because a trans gender is a gender explored and questioned and eventually known, whereas a cis gender is assumed and often remains unexamined and may not hold up to scrutiny.

by Riley Melone (he/they)

Felicity

by Lauren Lamantia (she/her/hers)

Stop using me like I'm a doll
that is sculptured to be
society's ideal image of what a
girl should look like.
The fake exterior that is
wrapped in plastic with
piercing white pupils that hide
behind the eyes that are too
white, pop out as they stare at
you.
Nothing is ever that pure.
You sit there knowing you can
bring that doll out and play
with her, you don't know what
it's like to be her.
You just like the games and how
she can always be there.
The artificial smile plastered
on her flawless face is the only
thing we both have in common.

Her Love

by Sara Duricko (she/her/hers)

Im filled with it when I look at
her,
This overwhelming sense
that I have been waiting to
love her for centuries.

Our souls having tangoed for
millenniums,
Her fingertips dancing across my
ribs like
My feet moving across the
hardwood floor.

Our hearts intertwined like ivy
wrapped around a tree,
I cant believe I was so scared
Of the possibility of you and
me.

Stardust

by Sara Duricko (she/her/hers)

I watch from afar as your
delicate hands grab stars from
the blackened sky
Just so you could place them in
his hair the same way you did
with mine.
You rip apart constellations
and rearrange them to spell out
his name,
so that when you are separated
you can simply look to the
sky and be comforted by his
company.

A walking explosion of nebulas,
he is quite the sight to see.
With astral eyes and celestial
smile
even I find myself mesmerized by
the thought of him.

He's the comet you always
needed,
The reminder that fate isn't
fiction
and that maybe, just maybe,
your purpose here is just as
vital as the cosmos.

For he is a wish on a shooting
star that came true and I'm a
speck of stardust,
enough to spark an interest,
but not enough to change your
life for.

Surveyed by Aryanna Salmon (she/her/hers)

Dream Big Little Black Girl

by Sabrina Wigfall (she/her/hers)

She lies awake at night,
Wild kinks brash against the sheets, Imagining a simpler time...
One that is full of peace,
Dream big little black girl,

Her dark skin bathes in the moon's light, As she searches for herself in the dark, Lost in her own mind,
As she lives inside someone else's dream, But not in her own reality,
Dream big little black girl,

She can see a future,
One that's filled with glee,
Smiling and living her own dream,

Running her toes through the sand,
Laughing a laugh that is so deep,
Contouring those round cheeks,
Basking in that light,
A light that was once so far,
But now so close,
Dream big little black girl,

Relieving herself of trauma,
Forgiving those around her,
Learning to love herself,
And breaking free of those chains,
Swim fast little fish!

Dreaming of a dream bigger than her own, Retrieving her youth,
That was rightfully her own,
Seeking happiness and joy,
Because she deserves nothing more,

Her thoughts? Hopeful,
Her dreams? Lucid,
And her voice? Resilient,

Her dreams are coming sooner than she thinks,
So close she could almost taste it,
That girl? That girl is me,
Flowers bloom in the spring,
As I will,
I will be reborn and succeed as I please,

Future me I hope you can hear me,
I'm almost there,

Drink me in!
Feed me your light,
And watch me flourish ... overnight,
Dream Big Little Black Girl.

“leave it all behind” by Niko Farley

On My Relationship

I am not particularly attached to any gender. I feel no need to be defined by it.

However, others often append gender to me.
And so, I have been forced to reconcile with the fact that gender shapes how I am perceived.

I can adhere to the labels of gender. I can attempt to fulfill the roles expected of me.
I can adequately, and, on occasion, gracefully perform the acts of gender.

But, I myself do not strive to be anything.
If any of my various, aesthetic presentations seem to manifest specifically as either feminine, masculine, or androgynous, I promise that this is just and only incidental.
The manner in which I decorate myself is changeable.

So, I cannot confidently claim womanhood or manhood.
I am hesitant, even, to align myself with personhood.

Yet still, I do attempt to comply with the requests of others.
If another insists upon my gender, then who am I to deny them my performance of it?
This can be unbearable though.
That is, the way that gender conditions and restricts my mobility is unbearable.

For instance, if one chooses to define me as a woman, I may be subject to subsequent condescension.
I can be belittled, I can be patronized, I can be infantilized.

to Gender by Anonymous

People may view me as hopelessly fragile and utterly incapable.
In these cases, I feel compelled to grab them by the shoulders, shake them, and yell:
“I am competent, I am competent, I promise, I promise that I am competent.”

Though still, when I stray from femininity, when I evade concise and uniform categorization,
I can be discomfiting.

My being androgynynous or masculine can prompt confusion,
as others simply do not know how to refer to or interact with me.

Under these conditions of ambiguity, I experience less outright condescension,
but dear God, it is isolating to be viewed as incongruent.

So, append whatever gender you would like to me.
Label me as you feel the need to.
Classify me if it brings you solace, and I will do my best to appease you.

When I am alone and free of you though, I will shrug off your designations.
I will become comfortably devoid of gender and its requirements.
I will stop the performance.
And I will then understand myself as only and wholly myself.

reincarnation by Jule D. (they/them)

Fully Realized by Fable

Body

The Realized create communities
From urban to rural
All of their needs met, self sustained
Long claws and a soft smile plants potatoes
4 arms with 28 fingers weave clothes and blankets
Glowing skin and wide eyes build rails
Trading with neighbors for remote goods- intertwined without interdependence

Armor

Safety is paramount and infrequently worried about
The Realized have little to fear from one another
And only a bit more from anyone else
Nobody dare confront them
Every Realized is unique and amazing and dangerous in their own way
The strength of the self is apparent and discreet
Thick scales shift under a sundress at the community farm

Bonds

A featureless,completely smoothe being plays tennis with a shimmering being that can’t seem to choose their features, shifting with every swing
Padded fingers dance across a gaming controller, modular of course
A bar in a city is filled with different shapes and colors, yet nobody is drinking their woes away
The bar is full of music deafened by a crowd of people singing for no other reason than for song
Horns knock into wings that knock into legs that knock into shells
Swaying back and forth to the rhythm of something between a sea shanty and an AJR track

Peace

A particularly joyful tree smiles in the middle of a park
Thin trunk with thick roots that sit just under the dirt
Branches that shake with the wind
Tipped with leaves that change by the day
The tree sits and meditates without a care in the world
No work to do, but still intrinsically valuable

I've been thinking a lot about sensitivity, and why "sensitive" is treated like such a dirty word. When I was younger, I was often told, "You're too sensitive," and it felt embarrassing to be emotional. Being sensitive was a sign of weakness, of being annoying, of taking everything "too seriously." But in retrospect, in times when I've been called, "too sensitive," it was often in response to me advocating for my needs and boundaries, or someone else's. And I think that is a very brave thing to do.

People who do advocacy work, who dedicate their lives to helping others, need to be sensitive. Empathy is a powerful tool for understanding the systems that hurt people. And it is much easier to reach others when you can feel the hurt surrounding them. And while it's crucial to know when to step back and allow yourself space to breathe, to rest, we must never stop being sensitive.

It can be incredibly painful to be sensitive, to constantly keep yourself open and vulnerable. It's exhausting to feel everything so deeply, for yourself and on behalf of others. And there's so much pain to be felt but it's a sign of strength, not weakness, to allow yourself to feel it.

As Sandra Cisneros wrote, "The world we live in is a house fire and the people we love are burning." You can't stop the burning if you don't feel the heat.

Rae Wilkins
"she/her/hers"
Sensitive

→ table of contents ←

by Angela D'Alessandro (she/they)

by Vick Gonzalez (they/them/theirs)

Thank you to all the remarkable contributors that made our dream of a GSWS zine a reality.

Thank you to Dr. Jessica Restaino and Tamicha Adams for their ongoing encouragement and support of this project.

Thank you to our fellow interns Sage Mautino and Serena Allison-Ikwuagwu.

Thank you, the reader, for hearing our voices and supporting *Color Theory: A GSWS Zine.*