

2825  $1/2 + 1 = 13$



Wing



add

# GENDER AGENDA

wig

wind



big

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small

vase

snack

sing

show



Vulture

snack

Van

Vivian



Soup

sing

show

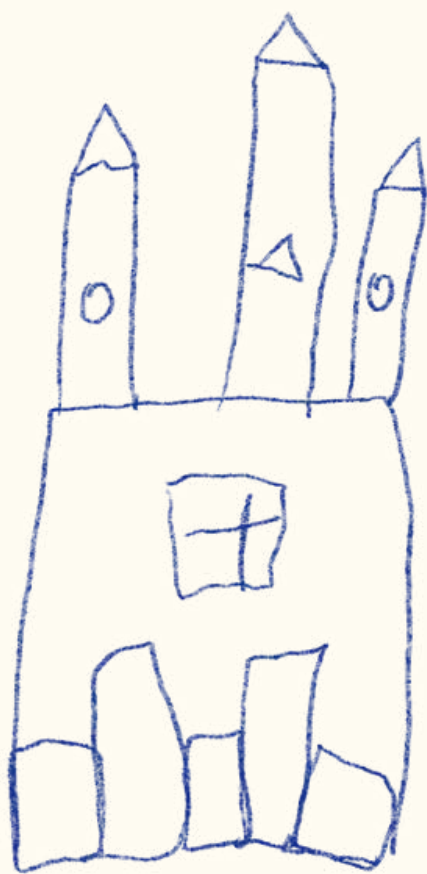
swing

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$1/2 + 1 = 13$



# REBIRTH



we are going to make a castle



# Editor's Note

this is my very own vegetable

Patch! I love it when I get  
to grow things and I love  
it when I grow to!  
Well when its time for me to go  
how its but Ill see you next  
time.

Amelie Fawn

05.06.2008







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With special thanks to the

# zine-team:

## **Editor-in-Chief**

Amélie Fawn

## **Creative Director**

Madeleine Baber

## **GA President (arts and zine)**

Elise Batchelor

## **Graphic Designers**

Caitlin Mason

Ciara Avis

Martha Vine

## **Editors**

Cadence Rustam

Eleanor Dougan

Isobelle Oppon

Sapphy Dunn

Syna Majumder

Madeleine Whitmore



## **Illustrator**

Daisy Cooper

# MADELEINE BABER

## On *GENDERAGENDA*

In 2022 – my first year at Cambridge – I scoured the freshers' fair in search of the Cambridge University Feminist Society to no avail. The Women's Campaign stand stood unappealingly corporate, haphazardly thrown in at the front of the fair with the other soulless SU 'Campaigns'. I didn't give it so much as a second glance, unnoticeable as it was.

What was noticeable was a small, 7-year-old sticker on the toilet door in the Maypole. 'Want to write for a feminist magazine?' it asked. This question warranted our response.

Oh, person who placed this sticker! How much we owe you!

Turns out the feminist magazine was **Gender Agenda** – a close to obsolete subsection of the Women's Campaign. Founded in 1997, the zine was a place to showcase the more subversive, unpolished, and/or radical works of the Cambridge feminist community. It published (albeit off-and-on) on a termly basis for years. Originally it worked in tandem with the larger and more widely available **Women's Handbook**.

In the 80s and 90s (before GA), this handbook encompassed everything the campaign had to offer. It was placed in every female student's pidge at the start of the academic year and its 100+ pages covered a wide range of topics – from practical advice on college sexual assault policy, to even more practical advice on what straight women should do when encountering a lesbian ('do not run away screaming from the room. This is rude'). In the 2000s, this handbook, newly sponsored by JP Morgan Chase, shrunk to a fraction of the size, its more rough and ready components being moved to the brand-new GA. By 2011, there was no handbook at all. With the 2010 women's officer writing 'why can't this all be online?' on her copy, only GA remained.



The end to the **Women's Handbook** is a sordid reflection of the Women's Campaign's general decline throughout the 2010s. Its mission was fast becoming outdated, its goals confused and watered down by the constraints of charity law and the ever-watchful eye of the freshly corporatised SU. Three Women's Officers in a row quit their job before making it to the end of their term. Meetings dwindled from 60 attendees to 4.

This was the Women's Campaign that greeted us at the other end of the email on that sticker: an aching husk of a once-thriving political movement. Even GA at this point had ceased to exist – its last issue had been published almost 4 years before.

I shall not recount in great detail the events that led up to the publication of this zine, for fear of boring you. But know that, despite this depressing state of affairs, we started publishing again. To get our name out there and, hopefully, some submissions, we started hosting events too. We wanted (and we knew we were not alone) a centralised space for feminist discourse and action in Cambridge but something – maybe COVID, or social media, or the SU, or just plain old apathy – had killed it. So, we pushed for its rebirth.

Of course, the theme for this year's zine was not originally intended to be so self-indulgent. We picked it without overthinking, sometime just before the start of Michaelmas term, before we knew what was going to happen. Yes, we knew that, with GA, we had kind of instigated a 'rebirth' for WomCam, but we did not know that, come December, the SU would dissolve its campaigns completely, strip our funding and ask us, politely but not kindly, to start anew.



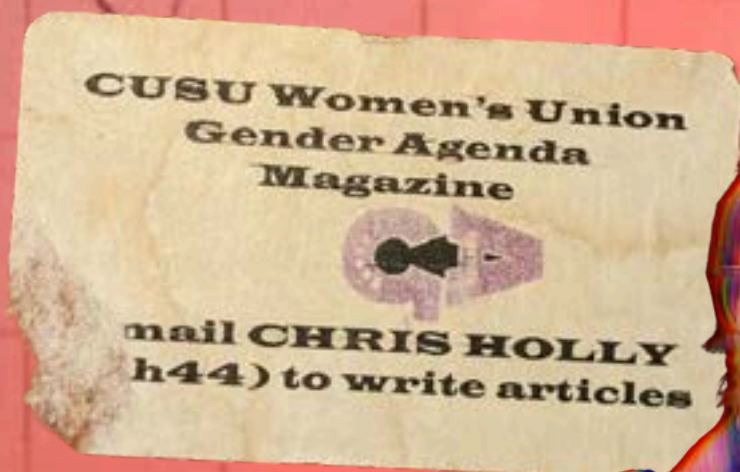
So ended 40 years of CUSU Women's Campaign history. But, thanks to the extremely hard work of the committee as well as the support of the student community and, of course, a small but noticeable sticker on a toilet stall door, it went out with a bang and not with a whimper.

In fact, it did not really 'go out' at all. It was merely resurrected as its no-BS little sibling, Gender Agenda – and we love it all the more for that. They (perhaps mercifully) killed WomCam, but they did not kill feminist passion in Cambridge!

Gender Agenda: Feminist Collective has more than risen from the ashes of its predecessor. We have (not to brag) over 50 committee members and 6 active sub-committees. We host at least 8 well-attended events a term. We have won 2 publication awards in as many years. We published this zine.

We will keep this flame going until we can pass on the torch. Maybe, after several years, it will go out again.

But a fresher will notice an old sticker and it will be reborn.





# SNIP

A pair of scissors is positioned horizontally, cutting through a piece of light-colored fabric. The word "SNIP" is written in large, bold, black capital letters, with the scissors' blades cutting through the letter "I".

What haunts the night of old books?

The hairdresser! The thief! The lion tamer! Delilah! Delilah!

Sheep murder! Blood! Ram! Slab! Wool! Delilah the shearer!

Delilah the ten pounds of flesh! Delilah the dark waterfall!  
Delilah the dripping smile! Delilah the asp! Delilah the  
aspartame! Delilah the sand storm slaver!

Whose eyes are pits of diamonds! Whose hands are eagles  
who play doves! Whose dress is the silk of night breath!  
Whose feet are flowers opening! Whose feet are shards of  
glass! Whose skin is green anger!

Lioness! Leper! Liar! Lair breathing dragon!

Delilah of too many stones! The temple's bed mate! The rock's  
cushion! The bone house breaking!

Delilah the full bodied Pantene commercial! Delilah the  
skimpy outfit! Delilah the fishnets! The fisherwoman! The  
catching!

I am afraid! I am wanted! I am strong! In soft beds of feathers  
come! I fucked your sister, Delilah! I killed your sister! Blind me  
with your lies!

I am chained Prometheus? You the eagle!

Delilah whom I adore unwittingly! Delilah who regrets! Delilah  
who acts! Actor!

Delilah of the uterus! Delilah of the femme fatales! Delilah the  
anger of women! Delilah the fear of women! Delilah the dark  
space! Delilah the opening! Delilah the vacuum! Delilah the  
fear of flesh! Delilah the want of flesh!

I'm in your room, Delilah! Your dad's asleep! Say your prayers,  
mean them all!

The betrayer! The chosen one's destroyer! Delilah the eaten  
apple's bite!

Breath of summer wind Delilah! Flowers in your hair! Hippy  
love Delilah! Over in New York City!



**GEORGINA JOHNSON**  
**GEORGINA JOHNSON**  
**GEORGINA JOHNSON**






# S FEM O INIS N T J DOU A BLE THI B NK E L K I N

Content warning:  
sexual violence

From age seven to eighteen, I spent most of my waking moments in a quasi-feminist haven, albeit one described as an ‘only-girls’ private school’. Cocooned by – comfortably unexamined – fluoride feminism, the girls were well-versed in the liberal girl-power doctrine; it bored us. Boys might have existed, but only in imaginary form. We viewed them as wildlife, local curiosities spottable on the high street at 3:45pm on a Friday: red-striped blazers on the horizon. Instead, life was punctuated by girls – endlessly girls, with the enormity of our psychodramas, our elaborate text arguments, screenshotted and forwarded to oblivion: the critic and her publics. The task of ‘decentring’, after all, requires boys to have occupied the centre in the first place.

Yet our separatist utopia couldn’t last. Referencing the post-mortem revelation that Andrea Dworkin – a radical activist fearlessly opposed to institutions of male dominance – was, in fact, heterosexually married, Ariel Levy wryly notes: ‘Ah, the real world...it’ll get you every time’. And ‘get you’, it does; in Dworkin’s case, her acceptance of patriarchal structure could have been practical, to ensure access to health insurance. But we’d be lying to claim that practicalities alone impede women’s commitment to their liberation. Certainly, the lives of radical activists are rarely uncomplicated – indeed, for Dworkin, this complexity was one she courted. Though she fiercely identified as a lesbian, calling her love for women ‘the soil in which [her] life [was] rooted’, Dworkin felt equally at home in her – periodically sexual – partnership with John Stoltenberg, who also identified as homosexual.



Similar tension can be found in Dworkin's work. A dizzying conflation of pleasure and pain hounds Dworkin throughout her writings, epitomised in her unpublished epistolary novel, **Runs**. Addressing 'E', a man in Crete she, aged 19, thought she would marry, Dworkin describes the intensity of her feelings: 'What does it mean that [...] a man and a woman, who share no common language, come together [...] in an erotic ecstasy, die in each other, are born in each other [...]?' Yet, she follows this with horrific disclosure – that, throughout their relationship, E expressed anger through 'explicit sexual forms', teaching that 'a woman who loves a man stands the pain'. While Dworkin is fully cognisant that E's pleasure is not 'more important than [her own]', she is ultimately unable to fully commit to her liberation, writing, 'I dont [sic] think that I will ever come back to you or see you again' before second-guessing herself: 'Sometimes I wish that were not so'.

Approaching womanhood, we too doubted our enlistment to the feminist project: aged sixteen, we were realising the pull of male attention was heady and hard to resist. Our commitments wavering, we would float ambitious exit-plans: 'Yeah, I'm thinking of leaving...being only around girls is just so artificial'. And who could blame us? Even Shulamith Firestone, who sparked the 70s women's liberation movement, found the possibility of female separatism ultimately preposterous. Considering a suggestion to celebrate the New York Radical Women's successful first year with a female-exclusive party, she could only ask: 'What's a party without men?'.

She wasn't alone in her doublethink. Lesbian members of the Redstockings, another contemporary women's liberation group, expressed frustration with the inconsistencies of their sisters-in-arms. Ignoring lesbianism's radical possibilities, they would be 'obsessively preoccup[ied] with men'. The few feminists, like Judith Brown, who did recognise how male partners splintered female solidarity were eprescribed: 'all-female communes [...] and] periodic, self-imposed celibacy'. However, this is undermined by unwelcome reminder of Brown's own, straight, marriage. We weren't alone in flirting with feminist betrayal when the 'real world' came knocking.



\*

Personal interest has long been a spectre, hanging warningly over the feminist project. Though the 1960s radical feminist group, Cell 16, doubled down on the celibacy front, calling on women to avoid 'squander[ing] energy on men and sex', this militancy was suppressed by other members: Amy Kesselman argued that activism should 'promise people a better life, not a narrower life'. While this may ring true to today's feminists, we would be forgiven for asking why Cell 16, the self-fashioned 'Female Liberation Front', were averse to following through on their commitments.

Today's feminist discourse has long repressed conflict between our personal desires and our ideological disciplines. As successors of Ellen Willis' feminism, one consumed by justifying women's choices, today's 'women's liberationists' see little need to resolve these inconsistencies. 'Dissociative feminists' are content to be marshalled into a position of being 'tortured enough to be interesting but not enough to be repulsive'. Women allowed to confront conventional femininity must remain gorgeous; embracing 'abjection' is only encouraged in individuals abiding to the status quo, thus subsuming any attempt at protest. The ideal feminist is a 'feminist-nihilist', a 'hot girl with deep palpable sadness', whose radical decisions – to forgo shaving, for instance – function more as a Twitter edict for a 'hot bush summer' than any genuine theoretical position. After all, what's a feminist critic without sex appeal?

Such feminisms are punctuated by an undercurrent of anxiety, simultaneously capable of 'identifying the problems of heteronormativity [while] remain[ing] unwilling...to step outside of its gendered and sexual confines'. Although Amia Srinivasan is wary of second-wave feminism, she sees potential in renewing our focus on politicising desire, to question where our urges really come from. She argues that desire cannot be sanctified; instead, we have a duty to challenge, and perhaps 'transform', our potent first-order desires in line with our utopian second-order ones.

This transformation is not a novel exhortation; the Radicalesbians group of the 1970s, which protested the discrimination they experienced within the women's liberation movement, regarded embracing lesbianism as the ultimate feminist resistance: 'the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion'. Is it absurd to accept the positions of Srinivasan and 'political lesbians' – that it is possible to choose a predominantly female space, in line with second-order preferences, and then be erotically surprised by the opening of feminist possibility?

\*

No one recognises the futility of warring with the personal better than Andrea Long Chu, who is sceptical, though admiring, of the revolutionary feminists attempts to 'change her own desires and reorient herself' through the 'force of political will'. We wish to police our actions, but how feasible are these constraints when met with Chu's admission that 'unfold[ing] [her] political critique at its creases' would leave us with 'nothing but flat, blank envy'? She parallels her thinking with a writer in **The New York Times** who confesses to wanting to conceive a child with her transgender partner 'the way fertile cisgender people do'. To Long Chu, we are selfish and more truthful when not papering over flimsy political commitments, instead accepting our inability to 'justify [these desires] politically'. After all, she seems to say, who can impose discipline – even framed as emancipation – when wanting bad things comes so very easily.

What happens to feminism when we accept unflinchingly that we 'cannot legislate relationships' – when we let ourselves be overpowered by our desires? Perhaps, freedom. Becca Rothfeld sketches the aspirational possibility of sex as carnival. Submission to transgressive desires is not wrong; it beckons in eroticism, itself a moral imperative. In contrast to the strictures of adult life, sex functions as one of the 'few forms of play permitted to adults', allowing the casting off – and on – of new identities.





Without institutional reform that addresses factors responsible for disempowering desires, Rothfeld suggests that forbidding 'impolitic cravings' dooms women to engage only in a 'restrictive ethics of personal restraint'. We can extrapolate from books underlying Rothfeld's analysis for a model of such carnival. In Lillian Fishman's **Acts of Service**, a bisexual, stridently feminist protagonist relinquishes her politics – and girlfriend – to engage in a secretive, torturous relationship with Nathan, a man whose power resides entirely in the force of his heterosexuality. Portrayed as a sex Svengali, Nathan can 'cure' such troublesome things as political commitments. Moments of his lucidity emerge in diagnosis, telling the protagonist, 'you have a straight forward rape fantasy... you're too afraid to get near it'. Though she protests, he uncovers – or moulds – something unrecognisable in her: lustful, selfish, and yet undoubtedly euphoric.

To conceive of Nathan as not merely disturbing but truly discerning is not far from Rothfeld's narrativising of her own experiences: '[P]ain ought to contradict pleasure. But I think that it hurt, it really hurt, and yet it still felt good'. While we may be uncomfortable to entertain her interpretations, Rothfeld is not alone in seeing sex and violence as, at times, being conjoined; eroticism can have an abrasive edge. Camille Paglia puts it crudely: she argues we must accept that there are those who choose to stay in their roles as 'battered women' solely for the 'hot sex' that ensues; 'some women like to flirt with danger because there is a little sizzle in it'. Rothfeld does not claim that eroticism necessitates moral blindness. Instead, approaching the thorniness of politics' intrusion, she argues 'under the most abjectly patriarchal conditions, the degradation that women experience in bed [can become] an extension of the same degradation they experience everywhere else'. This verdict, incisively argued by second-wave feminists, may feel damning – but not for Rothfeld. She accounts for the possibility of societal oppression extending to the bedroom by taking a novel tack; any sex following an agenda is trite, lacking in 'all the surprises that eroticism cannot do without'. We ought only to reject female sexual degradation for the boredom it elicits. At least for our most lurid fantasies, Rothfeld acknowledges we need 'political protections', though this admission is tidily confined to a subclause. Rothfeld's rewriting of the bedroom as bedroom-cum-laboratory takes centre-stage: it is through practising our sexual arrangements that she hopes we might discover better political ones.



Every instance of carnivalistic experimentation rigidly returns to the status quo, revealing that there is no clear line separating the bedroom, idealised by Rothfeld as potential **tabula rasa** and the political sphere. Perhaps, in 'seeking ecstasy on the battlefield', we can only be greeted by a feminism that, in Dworkin's words, is 'fighting for the right [...] to be tied up and proud'. Such political ends, which only recapitulate existing dynamics, feel little like a feminism at all. In an unpublished piece, Dworkin anticipates the repetitiveness of these liberatory visions, 'oh so femme fatale, daring to be blonde, daring to wear make-up'. Despite her bitter concession that the movement she articulated is dead – 'Goodbye to the dummies who thought sex could express reciprocity and equality and still be sexy. [...] Goodbye Women's movement, hello girls' – recent re-examinations have daimed her resentment is 'frankly bananas'.


In ignoring our turn to a feminism which venerates girlhood-as-subversion, this critique misses what Dworkin foresaw: a politic in which women's resistance is tailored to men's preferences. Consider attempts at revolutionary hyperfemininity which are ultimately belied by 'having to explain [this] to every new man [they] meet'. Or the suggestion of 'prey-mode', wherein women, 'radical[ly] accept[ing] bottom-feeder status' find power in surrendering to girlhood. Thus, the bedroom functions not as a haven for experimental expression, but an extension of a worldview which hastens feminism's political dead-end.

\*

However, we ought not to engage in hagiography. An approach which concedes that feminism is opposed to desire will likely also fail. By assuming a clear distinction between militant feminists and women broadly, the feminist project becomes uninspired: confined to zealous radicals, rather than collaborative. A better feminism must resist the dichotomy between erotically 'enlightened' women and 'hysterical moralists'. This endeavour is not without challenges. We are motivated not by pleasure alone, but also by novelty, by revelation, by the prospect that yielding to a sexual experience might metamorphose us. We are not always capable of knowing what we want. Participants' desires are formed 'through a lifetime of interactions. Desire is generative, formed in conversation, not 'something to satiate rather than create'. Consenting with the hopes of transformational ends also means accepting a less pleasurable result. We may date individuals we think will transform our lives for the better, only to be disappointed by the outcome.



Yet, just because these interactions hurt us, does not mean we have been morally violated, and to draw comparison with instances of abusive harm risks minimising the latter. Kristen Roupenian's short story, **Cat Person**, explores the distinction between unsatisfactory and actively harmful sex. Margot, the protagonist, becomes attracted to an older man. Despite having initiated a sexual encounter with him, she suddenly feels revulsion, the 'perverse cousin to arousal'. Instead of being able to renege on her consent, Margot feels static: 'It wasn't that she was scared he would try to force her [...] but that insisting that they stop now, after everything she'd done to push this forward, would make her seem spoiled and capricious'. In Margot's monologue, Roupenian reveals that a feminism which encourages regression to girlhood offers no real protection. Indulging in patriarchal expectations of passivity only leaves us stuck.

A surrealist illustration featuring a hand reaching out from a cracked, egg-like object. The hand is positioned as if it is emerging from or about to grasp something. The background is dark and textured, with a large, dark, arch-like shape framing the central elements. The overall mood is mysterious and evocative.

If we recognise the implausibility of militant feminism, given our tendencies towards hypocrisy, and are dissatisfied with the alternative – an individualistic pursuit of pleasure – what ought a feminist do? Perhaps, she should face her imperfections and wilfully engage in a little doublethink. Srinivasan's conception of liberation is 'a process'. Our re-aligning of desire with feminist conviction must take time. 'Want' may be a potent propelling force, which compels us to 'stop dwelling and start acting'; we ought to remember the several possibilities that can emerge between formulating our desires and following them. We may, for instance, take pleasure in our partner's possessiveness in threatening not to allow us to wear overly revealing attire, but if they were to do so, the action would lose all eroticism, functioning only as a source of misogynistic horror. Our inner fantasies need not always be borne by reality; we must remember that wanting is not always as satisfying as getting.

Such actions, though, should be complemented by the consciousness-raising that the second-wave feminists engaged in – being open to our flaws, rather than intent on purging them. Relationships may be a secret, 'inscrutable to outsiders', but our relations to craving need not be: among our sisters, we should aspire to be vulnerable. Our project, then, would not shy away from the 'dark, unconsoling mysteries' of desire; rather, surrounded by peers, we could start to resolve these hypocrisies as feminists – discussing them, making sense of them and, eventually, reshaping them.





# Mollusc

I've been pulled out of the mud

By hopeful hands who brought buckets and soap

Bleach and base

Exfoliants and scrubbing sponges

But that stench is cemented in subconscious memory

It is a churning cesspit of murky doings, related and joined.

Conflated and curdled – Indistinguishable till the point of contact,

where the surface tension breaks.

And with all the eloquence of a tear

Uncontrollable release; a grimace and bared teeth.

And their stare is shocked and wide, with eyes watering under the fumes.

They scrub deeper into every wound, singe every broken sore with ethanol.

A feather duster for the bones, and a varnish suited for whites.

The gristle sanded down and carved into ornaments.

Pretty things like pearls.

The shells cracked,

and left to sink wherever they're thrown.

MILA EDENSOR





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# DUNN SAPPHY DUNN SAPPHY DUNN SAPPHY SAPPHY DUNN DUNN SAPPHY DUNN

59, Princes Ave, Hull, HU5 3QY

Wednesday 27th December 2023, 15:43

Decaf coffee because I'm already wired, jittery: the dive bar isn't much of a dive anymore; artisanal coffee grounds and organic oats until 4pm, then local craft ales on tap – fab Karaoke Tuesdays too – Prinny Ave gets more hipster by the day, I still watch myself though, in the dark walking back to the car; on a night, my mum'll be at home tracing me through the same streets she used to duck and dive through, mapping the blue dot through her screen – because one girl wasn't so lucky...Spring Bank Cemetery made Hull Daily Mail headlines; I hate how the undergrowth reaches the edges of the pavement: but it's daylight now and the bartender is pouring water in my coffee because I gulped it hot and fresh, straight off the bar, burnt my whole mouth right in front of his face; I won't bother sitting down because she said she'll be here any minute so I'll stand by the door and sip coffee and not worry about looking like I'm alone – I did say, nice and loud, loud and proud that my sister would be here any minute now; she's coming to tell me the news, the news she doesn't know our Auntie let slip – so I know about the baby, and I debate on how to play it: I want her to choose to tell me, to want to tell me, so I'll try my best to keep my mouth shut even though I can't stop thinking about it; I had a dream it was a girl – I think she'd like it to be a girl – when the door opens and it's her I hug – big – and claim her, MY BEAUTIFUL SISTER,

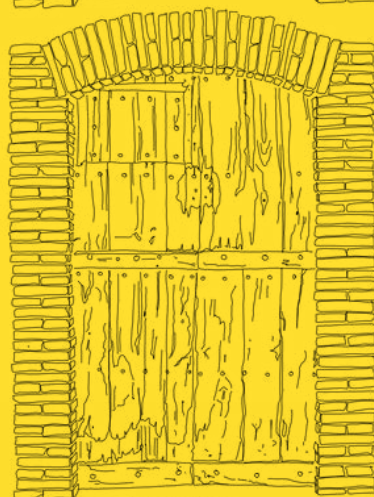
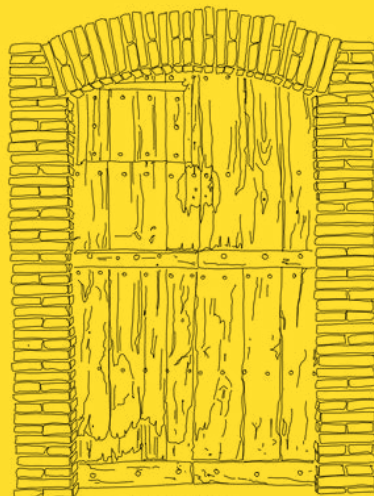
so everyone knows, so she knows, and she looks uneasy, she always does, it sets me on edge: she's wide-eyed, every bone rigid, every muscle tensed in some small, tight way and now I'm desperate for her to ease into it, feel safe, feel like she's home – I ask her how she is, about work and the flat (they seem like safe grounds), she never reveals too much, takes a blow with every question, tosses back a why? instead of a response, but sometimes she softens just slightly – she buys me some chuddy from the off license – we blow blackcurrant bubbles together and share stories from the same places, ten-years-apart: she used to live above the dive bar, with the owner and a friend – I never knew that – it was strange, she said...I didn't ask why, is she glad to be back? not really, she'll stay a few hours then head back West, I'll miss her; as streetlights warm she says it's getting late and I can't believe she's not told me but then she does, I know, I cry but not about the baby, she giggles, places my hand on her stomach; I can't feel anything – when will I next see her? We've gone years at a time without meeting, she never stays in one place for long; we'll see each other, she says, in no serious way, and as she leaves, she says she can't shake the feeling that this city is unfinished business,



# THE REBIRTH OF UNORTHODOX CURATION

The right to unorthodoxy is granted first to the artist and then appropriated by the curator. In the midst of their discussion about their own unorthodox curation practices, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Jens Hoffmann expressed dissatisfaction with the modern state of curation. Their dissatisfaction is seemingly rooted in the meaning of curation having been stretched so far that it now encompasses too many forms.[1] Whether they were referring to the commercialisation of curation as a word or as a practice is unclear. They offhandedly suggest introducing new jargon to restore the original definition of the curator as the ‘exhibition maker’, perhaps to avoid the risk of having to discuss DJsubcultures. But I would say the term curation has not been stretched. Curation has developed beyond their self-proclaimed unorthodoxy. Has curation been stretched or has Ulrich stretched unorthodoxy? After all, Ulrich’s seminal work, curated in his kitchen, was only produced after taking advice to follow Harald Szeemann’s method of curating in his grandfather’s apartment (see *Grandfather: A Pioneer Like Us*, 1974). For two men who pride themselves on their unorthodox approach, they seem threatened by curation’s barreling beyond what they are comfortable with. They appear to be experiencing the same panic their predecessors did when forging their own unorthodoxy.

[1] He seems to reminisce about a time when his practice was obscure. I feel almost sympathetic that his own popularisation of curation has caused him such grief.



Traditionally, curation is an exclusionary practice. This premise has never really died, but the turnover of curatorial form is surely necessary to prevent the art world from becoming stagnant. This stagnancy is imminent if post-orthodoxy is not embraced. Yet I contend that subcultures have created access to the arts through inclusionary practices, and this shift from exclusionary to inclusionary may be the very stretch in meaning that Obrist and Hoffmann express dissatisfaction with. Subcultures can be explicitly framed as a decentralised form of curation. The once ‘unorthodox’ curators may argue that curation can only be defined by its intention or deliberate process of collating work, in which subculture curation cannot fulfil. But do we understand curation in its intention or outcome? Subcultures constructed as deviant and excluded from mainstream might be where exclusion can be maintained in the rebirth of curation. As a process, we can recognise its movement away from curator-imposed authority to one of collaborative expression. But the understanding of subcultures as a seemingly social explosion that cannot be traced undermines the ideological form that pushes subcultures in their expression. Feminist curation, for example, is not new, nor are feminist subcultures; look at Riot Grrrl as a punk feminist movement of the 90s.

Now I turn your attention to Gender Agenda: Feminist Collective, a feminist movement for women with facial piercings – a subculture seemingly characterised by the ideological or the modified body.\* I hope to see the work of GA stretch out curation in front of Hoffmann and Obrist’s eyes until their cries of protest become nothing more than an ironic echo of their once radical curation.

Submit the work that you believe has no place. Reach beyond unorthodoxy: it is granted first to you.

\*Editor’s note: GA has members of all tastes, facial piercings or no.

By Caitlin Mason





**TURN THAT**

**Minnie Peacock**

# AFTER BIRTH

## INTO RE-BIRTH!

Things to do with your placenta that aren't even as weird as what some people have already done with theirs.

- Blend it. Pour into ice lolly moulds. Freeze. Yummy summertime snack!
- Take to a tannery. Turn into a red leather beret. Or clutch bag!
- Cut open. Stretch over a balloon. Coat in PVA glue (papier mâché style). Let dry. Lampshade!
- Name your child Placenta.
- The word placenta comes from the Greek for 'flat cake'. Freeze until Shrove Tuesday. Pan fry. Add lemon and sugar. Tuck in!
- Maybe don't name your child placenta, flat cake is not the most flattering of namesakes.
- Braid the umbilical cord into friendship bracelets for your antenatal class besties.
- Freeze dry into chunks and sprinkle over porridge.
- Stick it back in.
- Bring it to a rage room. Release all that postnatal stress girl!
- Embroider a lifelike pillow replica of it. Put in your baby's cot to remind them of the good old days.
- Bury it. Take your child back to it every year. Watch them roll around in the dirt over it.

# ANNA VIENHAUSER ANNA VIENHAUSER





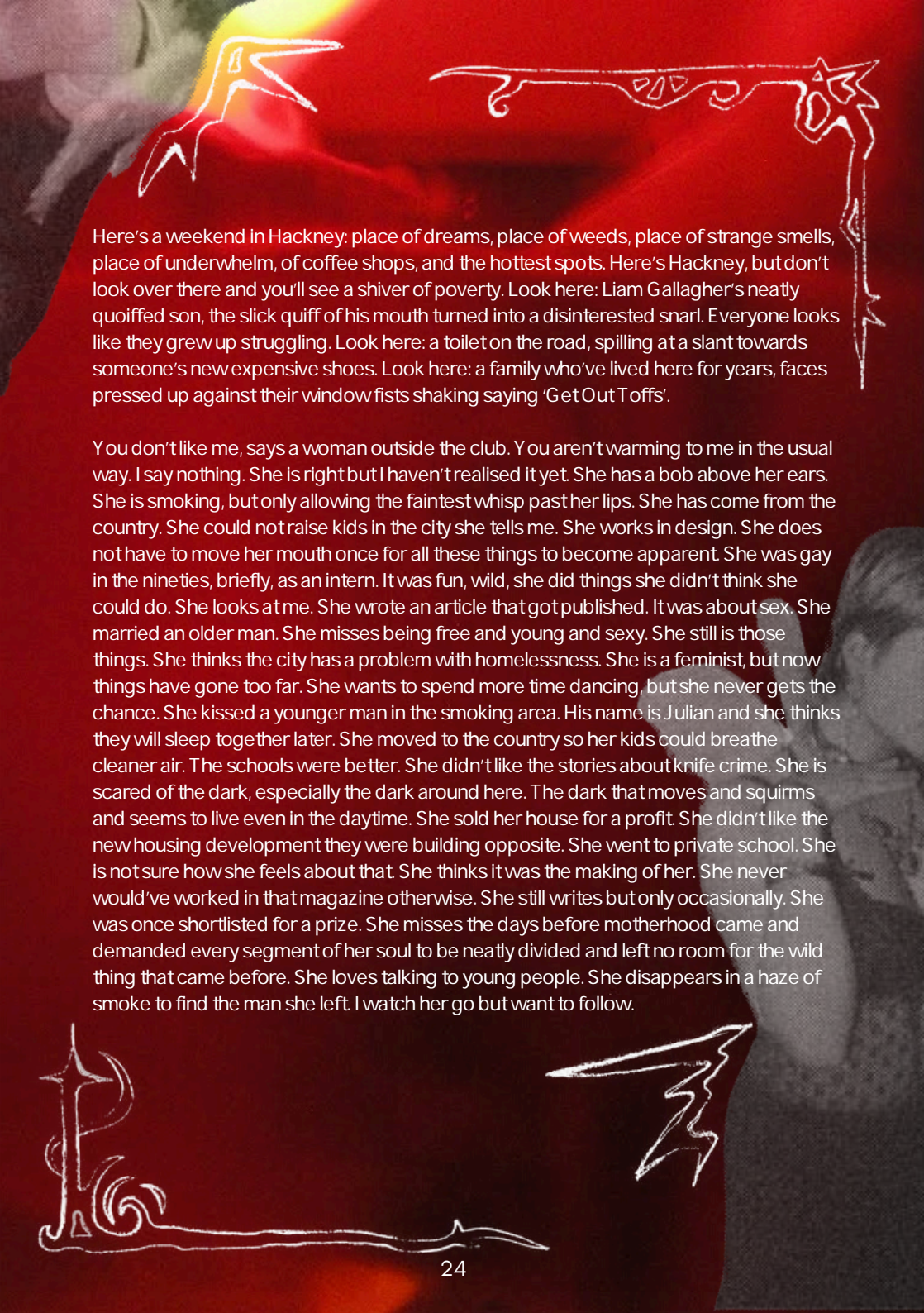
# A WEEKEND IN HACKNEY

We move among the Miu Miu Marxists. We shudder through a throng of trench coats, splayed outwards in the London breeze. We are cheek to cheek with the rich and the famous and the downtrodden and the junkies. Everyone is stylish. Everyone blows down the pavement in an expensive haircut, smoking a straight, listening to New Wave, reading about the sixties. Everyone is the daughter of a rock star. Everyone else is an actor. The red lip is in. France is just around the corner. Women are wonderful but only the thin ones. Charity shops are chic but only the expensive ones. Booze is beautiful. Fags are better. Health is important, but nothing can be as important as a Saturday night.

Then turn a corner, there is the big Lidl and tracksuits and fags and wet crocs slapping heavily against the pavement. How can two places so close together feel so far apart? The pub on the corner crawls with the young and the cool and the beautiful. They are original and daring and unique but guess what? They all wear the same shoes. They'd never read **Vogue** but **Vogue** reads them. Wide cut, boxy fit, low slung. Here's the future. Here's what it looks like dressed as a woman, cutting a cold figure in her baggy jeans, scraping the floor in her flat shoes, dragging her fabric across town with legs that will never, ever, ever, end.

Here's a weekend in Hackney where you will dance and fuck and fall in love. And smoke outside, inside and leave the club dripping with ideas for poems and films and songs. Where you will bump into people you haven't seen since forever and they are rude and difficult to talk to and everything they say is a riddle you can't crack. Where you will drink something which tastes fine but costs six quid. Under the lights you will feel full. You will feel at the centre of the world, out here with the beautiful people, twirling in tandem, kissing in cubicles. But don't try to open your mouth on the dancefloor because lies might fall out.

Georgia Scheerhout



Here's a weekend in Hackney: place of dreams, place of weeds, place of strange smells, place of underwhelm, of coffee shops, and the hottest spots. Here's Hackney, but don't look over there and you'll see a shiver of poverty. Look here: Liam Gallagher's neatly quiffed son, the slick quiff of his mouth turned into a disinterested snarl. Everyone looks like they grew up struggling. Look here: a toilet on the road, spilling at a slant towards someone's new expensive shoes. Look here: a family who've lived here for years, faces pressed up against their windowfists shaking saying 'Get Out Toffs'.

You don't like me, says a woman outside the club. You aren't warming to me in the usual way. I say nothing. She is right but I haven't realised it yet. She has a bob above her ears. She is smoking, but only allowing the faintest whisp past her lips. She has come from the country. She could not raise kids in the city she tells me. She works in design. She does not have to move her mouth once for all these things to become apparent. She was gay in the nineties, briefly, as an intern. It was fun, wild, she did things she didn't think she could do. She looks at me. She wrote an article that got published. It was about sex. She married an older man. She misses being free and young and sexy. She still is those things. She thinks the city has a problem with homelessness. She is a feminist, but now things have gone too far. She wants to spend more time dancing, but she never gets the chance. She kissed a younger man in the smoking area. His name is Julian and she thinks they will sleep together later. She moved to the country so her kids could breathe the cleaner air. The schools were better. She didn't like the stories about knife crime. She is scared of the dark, especially the dark around here. The dark that moves and squirms and seems to live even in the daytime. She sold her house for a profit. She didn't like the new housing development they were building opposite. She went to private school. She is not sure how she feels about that. She thinks it was the making of her. She never would've worked in that magazine otherwise. She still writes but only occasionally. She was once shortlisted for a prize. She misses the days before motherhood came and demanded every segment of her soul to be neatly divided and left no room for the wild thing that came before. She loves talking to young people. She disappears in a haze of smoke to find the man she left. I watch her go but want to follow.





## Content warning: sexual violence

Currently on display at Murray Edwards College in their 'Growth' exhibition, this piece speaks to violence against women and girls and the progress being made to change this. In ancient mythology, Cadmus and Jason sow dragons' teeth from which an army of men grow. Both men accomplish their goals in the immediate aftermath of the warriors' destruction: Cadmus founds the city of Thebes – culturally the richest historical city in Ancient Greece – and Jason retrieves the Golden Fleece. Here, I have portrayed the warriors (or *spartoi* in Greek) as the 51 men on trial in the Mazan rape case. Each of their individual faces are taut, as if forcing their way out of the ground. The woman is portrayed from the shoulders up as if she were attempting to harvest the men before they reach full growth. She represents Athena, who instructed the planting of the teeth (ensuring mutually assured destruction), as well as Gisèle Pelicot, victim of abuse by the men on the Mazan rape trial. Much like Cadmus and Jason, Pelicot is freed from the men on trial upon their convictions. I chose to use old barbies and action figures to create the identities of all parties as it highlights harmful gender stereotypes affecting people from an early age (as is somewhat comically portrayed in the 2023 *Barbie* film). The female figure not only represents Pelicot, but every woman who has been affected by sexual violence. Pelicot waived her right to anonymity, hugely impacting societal impressions regarding the protection of women. The portrayal of the woman – arms outstretched – shows growth, strength, and hope. She hangs over the growing heads, observant and prepared to 'weed' as she sees fit.



# on right Wing Women

Global politics have taken a radical right turn. As fascism and nationalism have been resurrected from the graveyard of ideologies, their undead proponents take a surprising form. Women have led far-right parties to success in Italy, Denmark, France, and Germany. Their complicity in the anti-feminist agendas of the far-right amounts to a paradoxical act of self-denial. Far-right politicians such as Georgia Meloni, Marine Le Pen, and Alice Weidel abuse the rights feminism has secured them to champion racist and misogynist agendas. The feminist concern for women's rights is hijacked to stigmatise immigrants and non-European cultures. In constant denial of their identities, far-right women nonetheless exploit their 'femininity' to deny both the virulent misogyny of the ideologies they champion and the danger to women and all marginalised groups these ideologies pose.

'I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am a mother'. Giorgia Meloni, Italy's first female Prime Minister and leader of the neo-fascist Fratelli d'Italia, has cultivated the image of a traditional woman and mother who rallies to the defence of her 'besieged' country like no other. Her gendered vision of policy has come at the expense of all women and non-binary people who escape the narrow confines of Catholic womanhood. Under order by her government, local authorities have stopped registering same-sex couples as parents. 'Abortion is not a right', declared her Minister for Family, Natality, and Equal Opportunity. Meloni's exhortation of womanhood as delineated by patriarchy coincides with her denial that patriarchal oppression continues to confine the lives of all women. Under her rule, female representation in parliament has dropped from 35% to 31%.

'I am not queer', says the leader of the far-right AFD and contestant for German Chancellorship, Alice Weidel, who rivals Meloni in her mastery of accentuating her identity while denying its implications in a patriarchal society. Weidel, who lives in a civil partnership with a Sri-Lankan born woman, has made the crusade against the 'queer-woke insanity' the centrepiece of her political agenda. She denies homophobia and politicises her homosexuality. 'I am tolerant, and I know that you are, too', she told a far-right rally in 2017. The AFD has found odd expressions for its tolerance: it seeks to ban homosexual marriage, adoption by same-sex couples, and denies the legitimacy of families beyond the classic 'father, mother, and child'. Alice Weidel and her wife have adopted two children.





The politicisation of womanhood and motherhood legitimises a female power that has pledged its allegiance to the nationalist project. The role of the mother, central to the ideology of the Right, is paralleled in the imagining of the nation as the Motherland. The familial nation allows for a distinctly gendered leadership.

Right-wing women in power cultivate their role as ‘mothers’ of the nation or nationalist movement who promise to protect its imaginary homogeneity from the threat posed by the amorphous ‘other’. Meloni, Weidel, Le Pen and others express a gendered ‘concern’ for the safety of the women belonging to their national family. They instrumentalise the feminist struggle for female equality and women’s safety to demonise the Muslim populations of their countries. The forced convergence between the xenophobic anti-immigration policies of the far-right and feminist concerns about gendered violence, termed ‘femonationalism’ by the sociologist Sarah Farris, characterises their politics and rhetoric.

‘I am scared that the migrant crisis signals the beginning of the end of women’s rights’, writes the born-again feminist and leader of the far-right Front Nationale Le Pen, who has found no time to condemn the sexist views espoused by her party and its members. ‘I will do everything I can to restore security to our cities’, comments Meloni under the harrowing video of the rape of Ukrainian women by an asylum seeker she posted for her campaign. Security from the alleged immigrant threat excludes security from Italian-born men, however, as Meloni refuses to condemn the son of her President of the Senate for raping a drugged girl, and justifies the victim blaming of her former partner. Equally, Alice Weidel juxtaposes the ‘tolerance’ of her AFD with the alleged intolerance of the Muslim community. Right-wing women are adept at identifying the threats posed to women from those excluded from the national and nationalist body. Sisterhood is evoked only to enlist other women in their crusade against immigrants and foreigners.



The virulent and often violent sexism and homophobia of the Right is deliberately ignored, and, in the most dangerous instrumentalisation of gender, neutralised by right-wing women willing to accentuate their identity only when the nationalist project demands it.

But Mother Nation is not afraid of revealing her 'masculine' side if this ensures her support from the wider electorate. Meloni, a single mother, Le Pen, twice divorced, and Weidel, married to a woman and mother to two adopted sons, propagate their 'emancipatory' lifestyles and the restrictive family and gender policies of the Right in the same breath. Right-wing women leaders espouse traditional womanhood and embody its opposite. Finally, nothing is as contradictory to patriarchal femininity as a woman in power. By championing patriarchy, right-wing women have escaped its expectations. They have emancipated themselves from the patriarchal hierarchies of the Right by helping to undo the emancipation of all other women.

But the power grab of right-wing women leaders ultimately amounts to a sacrifice, because, as Andrea Dworkin has written, 'only the freedom of all women protects any woman'.



emma  
tenzler

# Isabella Albertoli

## Lil B and My Winter of Discontent

Content warning:  
sexual violence

I spent all Christmas break working through the back catalogue of infamous American rapper and internet personality Lil B, mainly thanks to a long session of Spotify stalking my good friend and zine officer Amélie Fawn. Before I start the essay proper, I'll share some facts about him just to make the whole 8-week binge useful and relevant in some way, rather than being a total waste of time and burden to my family and friends.

- Lil B once placed a curse on NBA player Kevin Durant that is acknowledged by basketball fans as a principal factor in his teams' failure to win the 2016 game against B's own Golden State Warriors.
- Lil B once wrote and uploaded a diss track in 15 minutes as a response to an insulting tweet by radio host Joe Budden. It is widely regarded as one of the best diss tracks of all time.
- His song 'I'm God' ushered in a new chapter of hip hop, highly irreverent and referential and characterised by dreamy, looping vocals.
- I think he might also own snakes.

It sounds like an exaggeration to say that listening to his music and learning about him as a person revitalised my faith in humanity for about three weeks, but embarrassingly it's true. The news is miserable at the moment, and these past two years it has become increasingly difficult to keep the things I see online separate from the way I think and feel about the world. It seems like every time I open my phone I encounter evidence of people behaving more cruelly than I previously believed possible.



I live a sheltered life in a small, posh market town full of old people, where occasionally the streets smell like armpits because the brewery is making a new batch of our characteristic and very bad homebrew (we call it Ouse Water, pronounced Ooze water). The cognitive dissonance began in lockdown I think – when my life was mostly online – and intensified after my arrival at Cambridge. It seemed like there was a disconnect between the things I knew people could be capable of and my day-to-day life (cycling to supervisions past the cows in the Fens in October, rustling up a new noodle soup, drinking and pretending to enjoy Guinness at Spoons and then throwing up, also at Spoons). This guilt had wormed its way into my head like a new thing crouching in my brain, and that guilt was simply that I could enjoy my life and live it well based on nothing more than idiot chance. I know a lot of people will be rolling their eyes right now and fair enough, roll away. It was pretty stupid to get in the way of my own life with this constant, pointless internal monologue that went something like this:

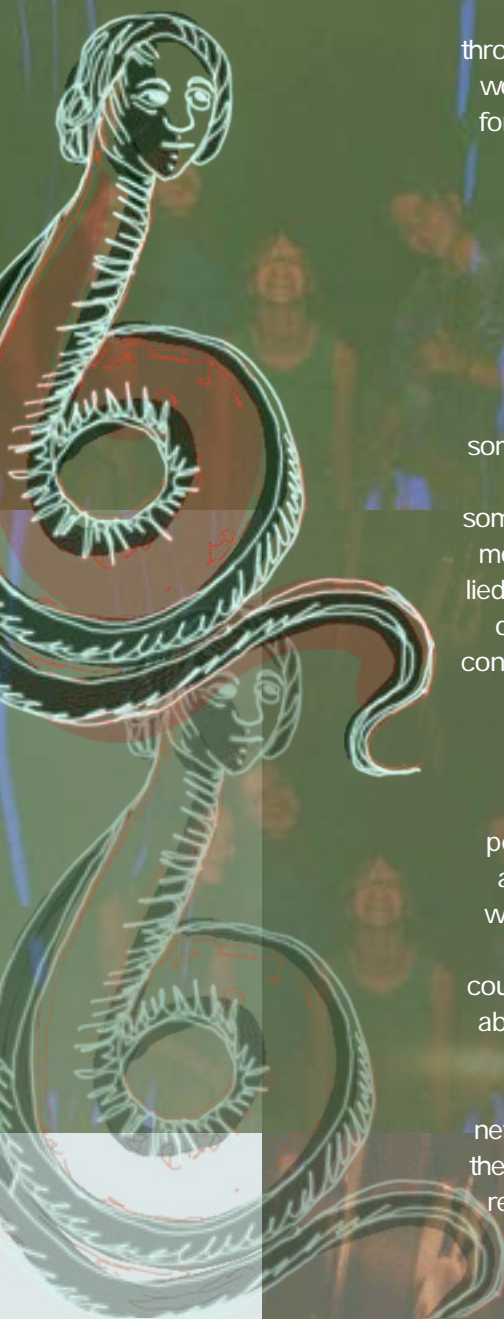
***(In Co-op buying oranges)***

**Little Voice:** Imagine if a medieval peasant were in your position right now, buying oranges from Spain in November. They would have a fit. It's not even the Harvest Festival yet. Lots of people in the world cannot have oranges at all, I think. Think about the cars and the trucks and the lorries and the people picking them who are not paid enough. This orange is nothing more than the Fruit of Human Suffering. Enjoy your Orange of Shame. The world has gone bloody topsy turvy.

**Me:** Can I please just eat and enjoy an orange. You sound a bit like Will Smith's son.

**Little Voice:** Ah, yes! You'd like to eat and enjoy an orange wouldn't you! You are so used to having your needs instantly fulfilled. How would you do in a small village in Sussex in the 1400s, for instance? You'd have to subsist on leeks, grains and barley. Do you think people back then lived a good life? Do you think people can live good, fulfilled lives in the world now?

**Me:** Jesus H. Christ. I will put the orange back and get some pears instead.



Even apples only came along with the Romans. Can you imagine the only fruit you have ever tasted being a pear? Anyway, it became an obsession of mine to work out whether or not people were able to have good-enough, happy-enough lives throughout time and space, even if they were born a woman in a Saxon settlement in East Anglia in 900 for example. I know this is weird, and I would like to caveat this essay by stating that employers and teachers have concluded with a fair degree of probability that I am at least a little bit autistic. I wanted to hold my life up as a measuring rod basically, to try and learn how other people live.

The reason I stopped thinking in this absolutely insane and patently unproductive manner is that something bad happened to me, maybe for the first time in my life actually. A good friend of mine, someone who I trusted and liked, took advantage of me in an ambiguous and likely sexual manner, then lied and covered his tracks about it for the next year or so. I will not go into the details, but it was a very confusing time for me, compounded by the fact that he was pretty unanimously regarded to be the poster boy of decency and goodness for a lot of people I knew; for the rest of the year, in conversations about the shortcomings of men, people would occasionally make reference to him as a sort of saving grace of the whole gender. He was a nice man, a good man through and through, the sort who could be relied on. The fact that he could have treated me in the way that he did, and lie about it, cured my cognitive dissonance because it was firsthand evidence of human cruelty not refracted through the prism of my iPhone 6. I've never really been a cynical person, in part thanks to the snow globe I grew up inside, so this was my first real taste of the world-weariness characteristic of quite a lot of women I know.



So, weirdly, learning more about music became a chance to create a sort of alternate history that was a record of human creativity and goodness, as opposed to actual history and its endless catalogue of wars and disasters. It was all these little stories about people making and collecting and reorganising things, like magpies. Lil B was a perfect example of this – he is one of the first musicians uniquely of-the-internet, and he obsessively documents his life and churns out music like it's second nature. It is not uncommon for him to release four substantial albums a year. I loved the mix of quality and style in his work, how some songs seemed deliberately designed to poke fun in a way that predicted later internet culture, some were straightforwardly beautiful, and others were an absolutely intoxicating mix of the two so you could never quite tell if you were in on the joke or the butt of it for even listening to the music at all. And the more I learnt about him as a person, the more I liked him. He reminded me of Daniel Johnston, someone totally earnest and sincere. It is exactly the type of humour I like, born out of a sense of wonder at the strangeness and stupidity of the world.

You might have noticed by now I am using the past tense to refer to my Lil B days. This is because I found out on a Reddit thread (where else?) that he had been using his platform to groom women and girls, harvesting explicit content from them and then uploading it to his personal Twitter account. I was so disappointed, and it really hurt my heart to find that out in a way that felt a bit disproportionate to Reddit. I now realise this was linked to this experience I had with my friend around this same time last year. You might now be thinking, 'Isabella. What did you expect, placing a great deal of importance on the goodness of a random internet celebrity you've never met before in your life, especially one known for being pretty eccentric and doing things like cursing basketball teams and owning reptiles?' You would be absolutely right. The answer is that I am very naïve. I wanted to believe that he could be a good man, and that there are men you can trust absolutely. It changed my brain a little bit having the safety of my little bubble popped, and knowing that certain forms of privilege don't actually shield you from sexual predation, which seems ubiquitous whether you're on Twitter, Reddit, in Cambridge, Los Angeles, or working at a W H Smith in Stoke-on-Trent.





So guilt, in a way, makes you feel immune to things that are very much alive and well around you if you look hard enough. I could have worked this out before; many decisions that are made in the highest rungs of the British establishment, that have disastrous real-world ramifications, are of course made by people with an Oxbridge education. The people around me, maybe this man, will be the next generation of policy makers, external consultants and think tank researchers, making the wheels of this country spin in the same old ways. Or new, worse ways. Being deliberately shielded from the full spectrum of human experience keeps men like that thinking of themselves as good people even as they mistreat the women closest to them. They don't see what they do as being harmful because the thought that something bad and unsavoury could ever happen inside their neat little bedrooms that smell like laundry detergent just doesn't gel with their picture of the world.

'Rebirth' is the theme of this term's zine, which seems utterly unrelated to my essay. But after the Lil B episode, I have continued listening to music absolutely constantly, and learning as much as I can about the things that interest me. At the moment it is disco music. The Bee Gees are great, so is Donna Summer. I have also continued placing my faith in the men around me that have proven their kindness from years of us knowing each other. My dad, my brother, my boyfriend and my friends are some of the best people I know full stop, gender agenda aside. I think I have been reborn very slowly in a funny sort of way. My lack of blanket trust in goodness has meant I see the world in a much more clear-headed way, and that I also trust myself more to sort right from wrong. It's meant that I've banished the guilty little needling voice from the back of my head, the one that never did any good anyway. I am still not a cynical person and I will do what I can for the world around me in the ways that I can. But one thing I will never do again is put a man on a pedestal. That is a fairly substantial rebirth if you think about it, I suppose.





IZZIE

SILVERMAN

"we can forgive ourselves for the death of our children" – Denise Riley

1.

Compose yourself, your self is something that must now be composed.

2.

I smooth the layers of skin down, the years folded within like a concertina file, maybe Maybelline can even them. They cake, the powder clinging onto itself, penetration is implausible – daubed in pink, mimicking flesh, fleshy. Flecks of benefit mascara. They're real! Would you believe it. At my age as well. Smooth under the eye, hills and valleys, fungal acne speckles. More faux freckles please – henna is in at the moment. The acnecide-sting of adolescence still wages war. Self-inflicted. Lips crust and curl, the edges trimmed with chocolate milk, God that's embarrassing, wipe it off with a napkin darling, there we go. Teeth? Whitened. A good tweeze is in order, exfoliate and pluck, tint and fill. Brush. Time lollops on. Submerge it in beige paint.

3.

Between these layers, past and future vibrates, my own and my child's, my children's, regeneration is possible – taut, sloping, stretching, my skin's possibilities extend and are realised. Ply layers, close, sheer, like stockings. These cells, this great net, it cradles me and the multitudes within me, I am a living Russian doll. I carry the infinite versions of myself as I carry the infinite versions of my children.

4.

Exfoliate.





# Rebirthing the Vagina's Image:

the vagina  
monologues

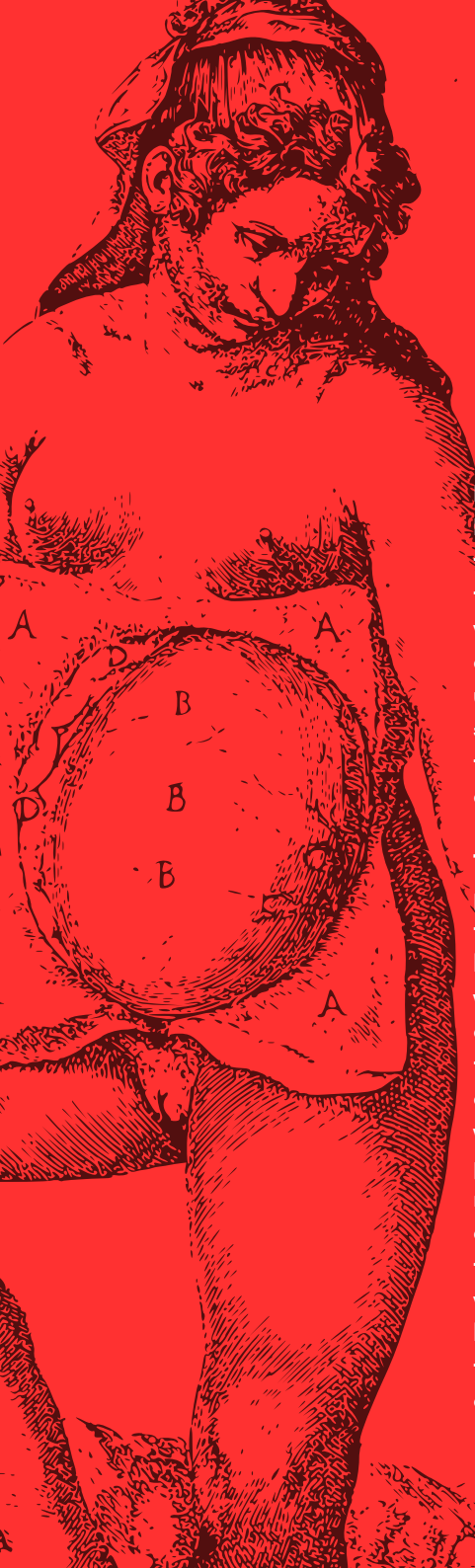
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PRESCOTT

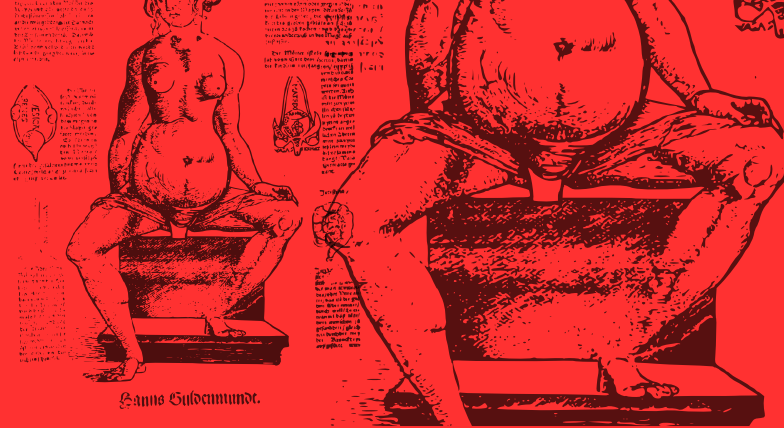
Content warning: sexual violence





First staged in a small, downtown theatre in New York, *The Vagina Monologues* have come to be known as a mainstay of feminist culture; the series of monologues boldly discuss violence, self-love and assault, all with a distinct focus on the vagina. Due to its unflinching focus on the taboo of female sexuality, *The New York Times* stated in 2006 that it was 'probably the most important piece of political theatre in the last decade.'

The monologues were written and originally performed by 'V' in 1996 but they have gone on to be staged and performed across the world by celebrities and university students alike. V was formerly known as Eve Ensler, but she changed her name in 2019 to separate herself from her abusive father. Written after conducting hundreds of interviews with women on their relationships with sex, pleasure, and violence, V created the monologues as a source of female empowerment. She explained to *Women.com* that 'the story of your vagina is the story of your life, and women want to talk about their lives.' For V, to empower women was to hear their voices and reflect them unapologetically on stage.



Brutality against women and girls was an obsession of V's, stemming from personal experiences of violence as a child. She believed these violations were often tied to women's vaginas and so set out to explore the intimate relationship between violence and sexuality. However, the play was not solely focussed on assault; V also attempted to also look at the power and beauty that emanates from a woman's body. Some monologues' tones are much more celebratory; looking at pleasure, menstruation and self-love.


Examples of core monologues include:

- 'The Flood' - an older lady's reflection on sexual shame
- 'My Angry Vagina' - a rant against the modern-day products and practices not designed with the vagina or woman's best interest in mind
- 'My Vagina was a Village' - a poem from the perspective of a victim of mass rape during the war in Bosnia and Kosovo

In the years following the initial 1996 production, a new monologue was released each year which focussed on a new relationship or perspective on the subject of the vagina from a variety of races, ages, and sexualities. The monologues' purpose has been reborn each year to better fit the context of their performances.

An example of *The Vagina Monologues* responding to shifts in attitude can be seen by the addition of transgender representation in the play. In 2004, a new monologue was written that was based on interviews with people whose gender did not align with the sex that they were assigned at birth.





Furthermore, the play featured an all-transgender cast for a performance in the same year. This affirmed the play's position as a taboo-busting production, unafraid to contend with growing attitudes that ownership of a vagina is not synonymous with womanhood. *V* contended in a 2015 *Time* article that:

*'The Vagina Monologues* never intended to be a play about what it means to be a woman. It is and always has been a play about what it means to have a vagina. In the play, I never defined a woman as a person with a vagina.' The commitment to evolution that is innate to the monologues' production and performance allows for the piece to span audiences and waves of feminism.

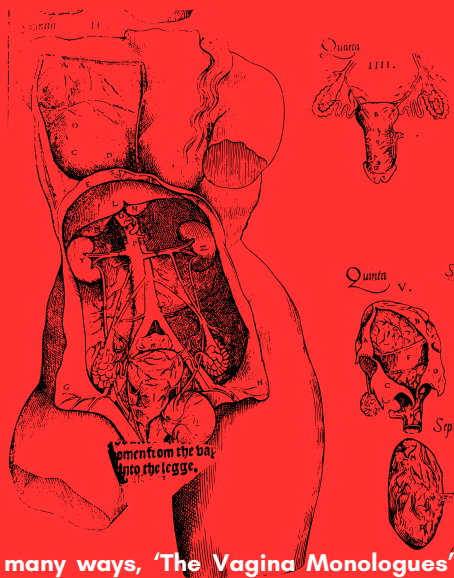
Another key aspect to *The Vagina Monologues* is their consistent fundraising ability for anti-violence charities. Shocked by the horrific violence that her conversations were uncovering, *V* decided to mobilise and use the monologues' platform to form an international movement that would aim to end violence against women and girls. This became known as the 'V-day' movement, with the initial fundraising focussing on performances held on February 14th 1998. The first gala, in the Hammerstein Ballroom, New York, featured Glenn Close, Whoopi Goldberg, and Susan Sarandon. However, as the 'V-day' movement grew, fundraising efforts have become equally synonymous with college and university performances that occur in February each year.






Giving the monologues an altruistic purpose beyond the play's initial explosive run, the 'V-day' movement has raised over \$100 million for charities that aim to prevent violence against women and girls. In 2020, *The Vagina Monologues* exited these campaigns, demonstrating how the global movement of 'V-day' outgrew its original link to the play. It is for this humanitarian good that V was recognised with The Isabelle Stevenson award at the Tonys in 2011.

Still a political tool today, the purpose of the play has evolved in both the public and private sphere. In 2012, after Michigan state legislature Lisa Brown was banned from the debate floor for using the word 'vagina' during a speech on reproductive rights, V met with her on the steps of the Michigan State Capitol to recite extracts from the monologues. But on a more personal and intimate level, thousands of people watch the monologues each year and every one of these audience members is exposed to a direct challenge to the shame and stigma which society attaches to the vagina. V celebrates that the play has allowed her to be 'inside her vagina' for the first time in her life, unapologetically in the driving seat of her own sexuality in a way that has been traditionally denied to women.



In many ways, 'The Vagina Monologues' provided a public rebirth of conversations surrounding genitalia, ridding it of a level of societal shame. This mass media piece that has spanned continents and various formats has played a role in reframing both how we as a society see and talk about our bodies, and has especially significant implications for how womanhood is understood. The play has opened a space for dialogue and disrupted long held silences surrounding the subjects of sexuality and violence. They still serve the purpose for many university-aged students today as being the first frank discussion surrounding their vagina that they experience.





Anonymous

In an instant, we were engulfed

I will not sit in the wind:  
Eleven hours sleep flicks up all this,  
The settled dust, the dream  
Blotching everything grainy.

Today, they are coming out.  
Sprawling men like tongues  
Make the evening fluorescent with noise and numbers  
Treat beauty as something to bash, knock shut.  
Something warm and sticky  
Here, where there is only concrete to speak of.

I try to conjure something up.  
'Memory is a fantasy  
A glimpse through long, tired grass  
A time before slatherings, before the crass:  
It is the soft red mouth, vintage legs.'

Am I a distortion, the 'I' separate from the true?  
The clattering of the human spirit to get through  
Even the most confining flesh?  
Somewhere, does truth wait? - Glistening and malleable  
Like the night lit up outside the car  
Us, furred deep into dark seats like its intestines:  
Is it just a glass screen away?

No. I want to hold beauty in my palm  
And nurse it like a soft flower.  
The words they inscribe on the last pink breeze  
Are as real as the brittle, erect object  
You reach through your pocket to  
You try and make  
You grab

Memory is as real as  
The soft flower: only for a moment.  
The foxglove has sprung from the ivy  
Since I came here - since dandelions choked up yellow  
Since he, from behind the shrub  
Since I







praying to  
Mary: give  
me  
something  
to believe in

WOMANHOOD is something which, I have to admit, has always eluded me. It has eluded me in the sense not only that I have never felt quite at home in it, but in the sense that I have never really understood what it is supposed to mean in the first place. As a nonbinary person, I wish I could say that I now have the answers to these questions – that it all became clear to me once I came out. But a divestment from womanhood is difficult to enforce when you do not even know what womanhood is; when you do not know where to draw the boundary between what is ‘woman’ and what is ‘not’, nor where to put yourself on this continuum. For me, nonbinary identity is not so much a state of **being** as it is a state of **not-being**.

I suppose the problem is that all of these ideas are so malleable. For every definition of womanhood out there, for every definition of the female experience, you can find a different, conflicting one. I am convinced that in the amazing breadth of human experience, you would never find two women who are the same. How can you define yourself against something which does not really exist? The question makes me curious. When I ask the women in my life what makes them proud to be women, they all give different answers. They don’t know that when I ask them these things, I’m asking for something to believe in.

I think that belief is a big part of the equation. It might strike some as an odd comparison, but my own feelings about gender exist in a state which is comparable to my feelings towards my religious faith: a state of agnosticism. I left Christianity behind me at age twelve and the concept of gender identity at age sixteen, but both still have their grip on me. Sometimes, when I sit down and think about it really hard, when I close my eyes and try to imagine a solid, unwavering concept I can tie myself to – I think that maybe there is some identity which fits me, which I can believe in. But when I hear an Ave Maria, I often find myself feeling lost ‘Blessed art thou amongst women’, it is said, but what does that mean? Amidst the wonderful and incredible diversity of womanhood across the world, I cannot seem to find a sanctification which works for me, or against which I can define myself. And so, in my day-to-day, I declare myself not invested in the issue at all – I am an atheist, I am not a believer in gender – and I do my best to put the thought of mothers and Mary out of my mind.

Faith is one of the ways we try to make sense of the world, and I suppose ultimately, gender is too. It is painful to realise that the comfort of certainty is simply the comfort of knowing you know something for certain. I don’t know, and I may never. But perhaps this is also a comfort in and of itself. When I ask my best friend, who is transfem, what makes her proud to be a woman, she laughs and tells me: “I’m not proud of anything. I’m just happy.” Perhaps I need to recognise that the phantom of Mary is simply going to be a part of my life sometimes, and that I can welcome her presence when it comes, but that it does not need to define me. Perhaps I need to recognise that personal gender, just like faith, is what we make of it ourselves. Perhaps I need to stop hoping for divine revelation and start putting myself at the altar instead.

# LOVE, MEN, AND TERMINATOR: WHY MASCULINITY DESERVES FEMINISM.

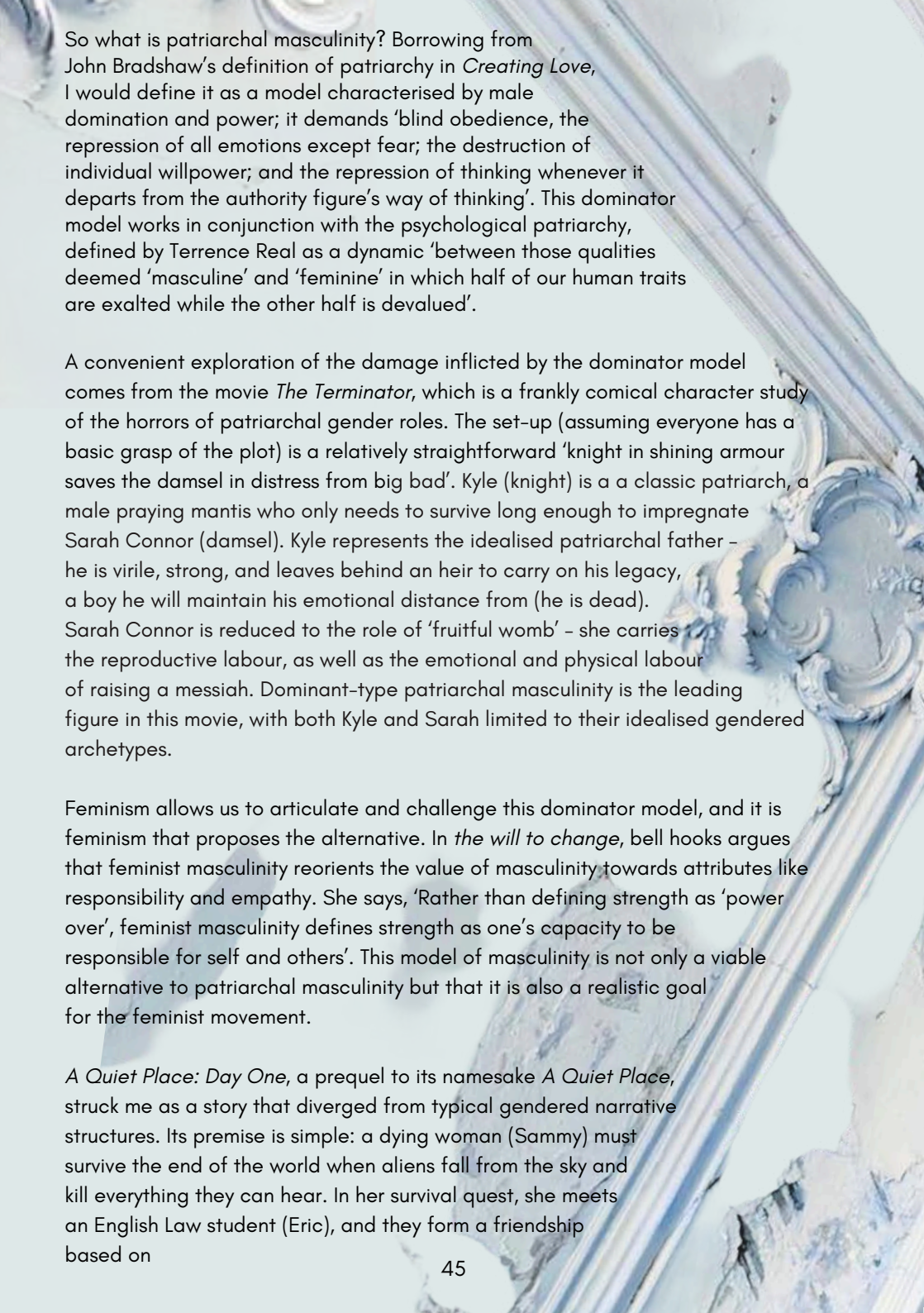
This essay is a version of the speech I made in Michaelmas 2024 for Gender Agenda's debate, opposing the motion 'THB Feminism is in Decline'. Afterwards, a fellow student asked me 'when there is so much else to do, why should we focus on men?'. This feeling seemed to resonate with many women present. To include men or to not include men is a never-ending debate within feminist spaces that I think needs to be reformed. I'm passionate about breaking down patriarchal masculinity, not only because I care for many men, but because masculinity does not end with the social category of 'men'. We all hold masculinity dear. Western masculinity is a site of emulation, repetition, desire, control, submission; it is a value system –

working against it, working towards it or working to simply understand it goes beyond gendered boundaries of who 'should' or 'should not' be masculine.

My patriarchal masculinity means I see my own emotional vulnerability as weakness. I'm both fascinated and repulsed by the value I inadvertently place in it. Masculinity has its place in feminism. Men have their place in feminism. To ignore that is to assume the authenticity of patriarchal structures, and working in a patriarchal structure limits us to the language of that system. Feminism is foundational to our understanding of gender as a malleable social construct, and, from this understanding, patriarchal masculinity is revealed for what it really is: a construction that harms all within its reach. Feminism offers the only viable alternative to this current model; feminist masculinity.

## ELISE BATCHELOR



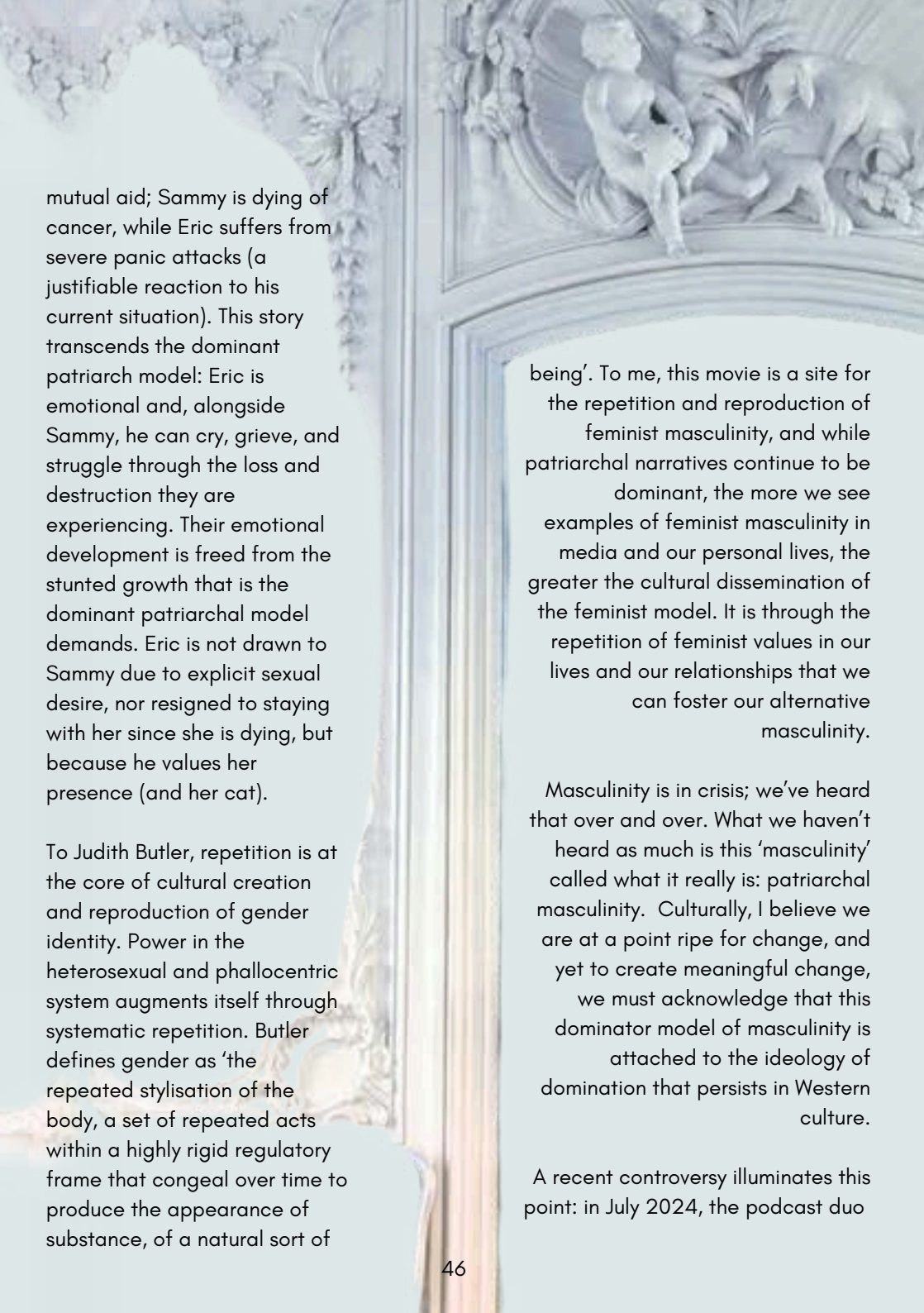


So what is patriarchal masculinity? Borrowing from John Bradshaw's definition of patriarchy in *Creating Love*, I would define it as a model characterised by male domination and power; it demands 'blind obedience, the repression of all emotions except fear; the destruction of individual willpower; and the repression of thinking whenever it departs from the authority figure's way of thinking'. This dominator model works in conjunction with the psychological patriarchy, defined by Terrence Real as a dynamic 'between those qualities deemed 'masculine' and 'feminine' in which half of our human traits are exalted while the other half is devalued'.

A convenient exploration of the damage inflicted by the dominator model comes from the movie *The Terminator*, which is a frankly comical character study of the horrors of patriarchal gender roles. The set-up (assuming everyone has a basic grasp of the plot) is a relatively straightforward 'knight in shining armour saves the damsel in distress from big bad'. Kyle (knight) is a classic patriarch, a male praying mantis who only needs to survive long enough to impregnate Sarah Connor (damsel). Kyle represents the idealised patriarchal father – he is virile, strong, and leaves behind an heir to carry on his legacy, a boy he will maintain his emotional distance from (he is dead). Sarah Connor is reduced to the role of 'fruitful womb' – she carries out the reproductive labour, as well as the emotional and physical labour of raising a messiah. Dominant-type patriarchal masculinity is the leading figure in this movie, with both Kyle and Sarah limited to their idealised gendered archetypes.

Feminism allows us to articulate and challenge this dominator model, and it is feminism that proposes the alternative. In *the will to change*, bell hooks argues that feminist masculinity reorients the value of masculinity towards attributes like responsibility and empathy. She says, 'Rather than defining strength as 'power over', feminist masculinity defines strength as one's capacity to be responsible for self and others'. This model of masculinity is not only a viable alternative to patriarchal masculinity but that it is also a realistic goal for the feminist movement.

*A Quiet Place: Day One*, a prequel to its namesake *A Quiet Place*, struck me as a story that diverged from typical gendered narrative structures. Its premise is simple: a dying woman (Sammy) must survive the end of the world when aliens fall from the sky and kill everything they can hear. In her survival quest, she meets an English Law student (Eric), and they form a friendship based on



mutual aid; Sammy is dying of cancer, while Eric suffers from severe panic attacks (a justifiable reaction to his current situation). This story transcends the dominant patriarch model: Eric is emotional and, alongside Sammy, he can cry, grieve, and struggle through the loss and destruction they are experiencing. Their emotional development is freed from the stunted growth that is the dominant patriarchal model demands. Eric is not drawn to Sammy due to explicit sexual desire, nor resigned to staying with her since she is dying, but because he values her presence (and her cat).

To Judith Butler, repetition is at the core of cultural creation and reproduction of gender identity. Power in the heterosexual and phallogocentric system augments itself through systematic repetition. Butler defines gender as 'the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of

being'. To me, this movie is a site for the repetition and reproduction of feminist masculinity, and while patriarchal narratives continue to be dominant, the more we see examples of feminist masculinity in media and our personal lives, the greater the cultural dissemination of the feminist model. It is through the repetition of feminist values in our lives and our relationships that we can foster our alternative masculinity.

Masculinity is in crisis; we've heard that over and over. What we haven't heard as much is this 'masculinity' called what it really is: patriarchal masculinity. Culturally, I believe we are at a point ripe for change, and yet to create meaningful change, we must acknowledge that this dominator model of masculinity is attached to the ideology of domination that persists in Western culture.

A recent controversy illuminates this point: in July 2024, the podcast duo

James Duncan and Fuhad Dawodu, two black men, were challenged over an appearance they made on Andrew Shultz's podcast discussing the 'black girlfriend effect'. The phrase inspired a TikTok 'before and after' trend where mixed-race couples would post pictures showing how their relationships had changed them. In the podcast, Fuhad started by saying black women 'glow up the other culture', with James adding that their boyfriends may get a beard, tattoos, and a fade haircut. 'They shave their hair because they start losing it'. Schulz (a white man) interjects, 'because he's so stressed to be around this black girl complaining all the time'. James and Fuhad laughed along as Schulz continued: 'they grow their beard because they need a cushion when they get slapped. I think the black girlfriend effect, it might be a protective instinct.'

James and Fuhad, in this interaction, characterise an observation bell hooks makes in *ain't i a woman*: 'Many black men who express the greatest hostility toward the white male power structure are often eager to gain access to that power. Their expressions of rage and anger are less a critique of the white male patriarchal social order and more a reaction against the fact that they have not been allowed full participation in the power game'. James and Fuhad chose to participate in the ridiculing and degradation of black women for the sake of patriarchal acceptance. Within our patriarchal society, there is a hierarchy of identities, first white men, then white women, then black men, and finally black women. It is the responsibility of all those who sit with privilege in that hierarchy to acknowledge and challenge their role in maintaining dominator-style patriarchal masculinity. Patriarchal masculinity is a value system fundamentally intertwined with the Western capitalist-imperialist-white-supremacist project. It my responsibility, like it is yours, to deconstruct attachments to it.

A feminism concerned with alternative masculinities is a feminism concerned with the impact of patriarchal masculinity on women. To dismantle patriarchal structures is to understand how we can reach beyond them; the construction of men and masculinity is essential to that end.





RIA  
PATEL

RE  
KI  
ND  
LE

How can I be a POC rep,  
when I've carried shame in my own skin,  
burdened with embarrassment.

For not being white.

Then it becomes shame for  
Feeling shame. Even still I will admit.

A new burden.

I hated myself  
for feeling it.

It is not always so simple  
as standing proud,  
always loud, always defiant.

Sometimes the weight  
of this identity  
feels more complicated than I can explain.

Sometimes,  
I feel like they want to see our pride  
as if it lets them off the hook—  
Now they want to hear how we love ourselves  
so they can forget  
the harm they've caused,  
the systems that made our pride  
a way of survival,  
a protest in itself.

But our pride  
is not for them,  
it's for us—  
to hold at the center of our gaze,  
without their permission,  
without their approval.

It is not a display,  
not a song they can applaud from a distance,  
with tilted heads and condescending smiles,  
as if they are the keepers of its worth,  
like a gift they've allowed us to unwrap.

Our pride belongs to us.  
It rises from the ashes they left behind,  
the fire flowing through our veins.  
It is not theirs to validate,  
to marvel at like an exotic bloom.

Our pride does not mean  
making the best of a tarnished skin colour.  
It is not tarnished, not lesser, not wrong.  
It is quite simply just brown.  
And I love it.  
Brown. Indian.  
My skin breathes incandescence,  
Culture and comfort glowing through.

The shame was never ours –  
it was planted, cultivated in a world that tried  
to teach us to hate ourselves.  
Our pride is not a reclamation of brokenness.

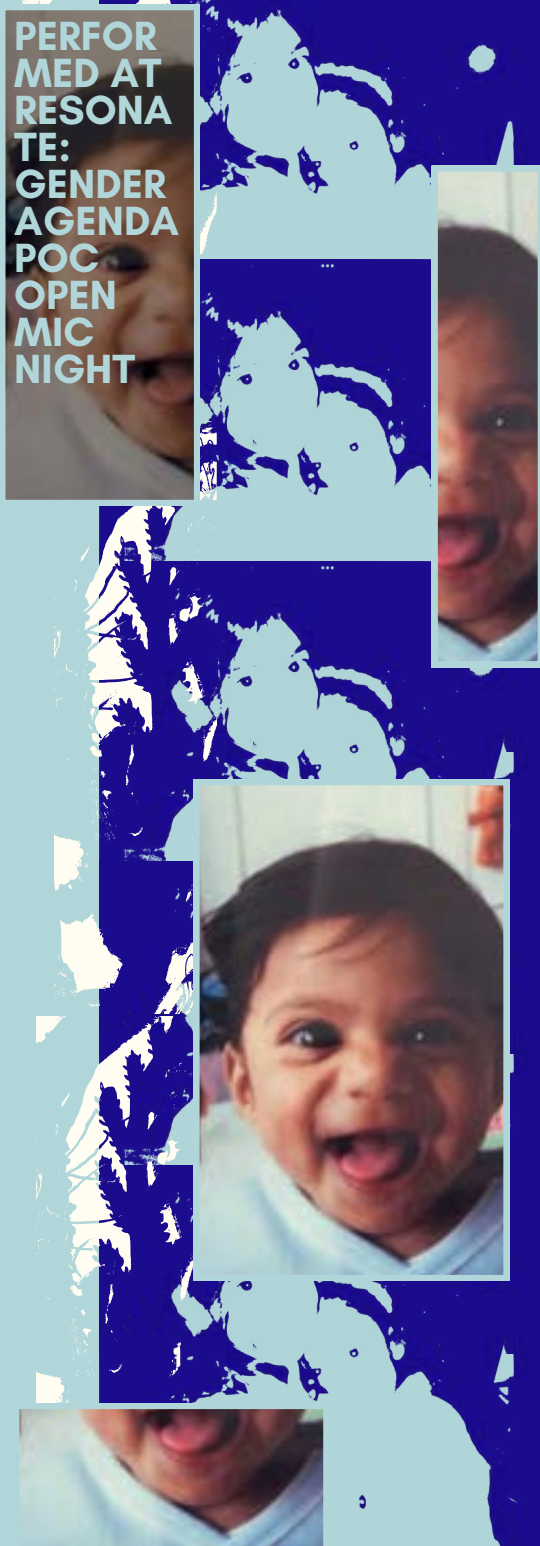
It is the truth of who we are –  
whole, vibrant, and unapologetically alive.  
It rises from roots deep in the earth,  
from histories they've tried to erase,  
from the mirror we hold to ourselves,  
Clear and luminous.


To exist in myself  
does not mean I must feel proud every day,  
or have every answer, every certainty.

It's enough to arrive as I am,  
with my doubts, my depths, my layers,  
to let others see  
that pride and struggle can coexist –  
that sometimes the strongest defiance  
is simply to keep breathing,  
to speak my truth,  
bare and honest.

Our pride is ours to rekindle  
like a quiet flame,  
to lift when we need its light.  
It is ours to nourish and name,  
a revolution alive in our hands.

**PERFORM  
MED AT  
RESONA  
TE:  
GENDER  
AGENDA  
POC  
OPEN  
MIC  
NIGHT**





# MOURNING THE BLISTERS ON MY FINGERTIPS WHILE PATIENTLY WAITING FOR NEW ONES

Dad came in this morning to ask me if I had bled to death in the night. I frowned at him for a minute, wondering if this was a mis-timed comment on the haphazard way that I shaved my legs. He prophesied that if I got one more hole in my body I would become a sieve before shutting the door. 'Then stab him till his flesh be a sieve', it says somewhere in my notes on Elizabethan theatre. But I didn't want to be put on the bottom of a pile of kitchen utensils, all with holes of varying sizes. I wanted someone to notice I had changed my face. I wanted someone to call me pretty.

This morning, after Dad had offered his view of the likelihood of my becoming a kitchen implement, I remembered my dream and felt guilty. Guilty that you were still located somewhere in my subconscious; at the bottom of Jung's psychological iceberg - like a cryogenically frozen celebrity waiting to be thawed. Sometimes you even stood on the top of it too, waving a little red flag. In my dreams you push your dad around a theme park in a wheelchair. I want to knock on your door and warn your dad in case I'm an oracle and his paralysis is immanent. I just want to give you a chance to notice I got a new piercing and changed my hair.

I tell everyone I meet in corridors that I eat BLTs just in case it gets back to you. That I have callouses on my left hand, that I like Disaronno on the rocks, that my brother has a new girlfriend and that I'm still taking my medication. I don't tell them that I haven't played my violin since we broke up, or that I still masturbate with the vibrator you gave me. Perhaps you'll be cast as Rebecca De Winter, however hard I'm trying to be her too; my portrait at the top of the stairs but with pink hair and an even better hat.



I wrote a poem about your mum. In the space between being awake and falling asleep, I talk to her and tell her that I'm doing my dissertation on Christina Rossetti and the presence of the uncanny. I will employ a messenger to run across the hills and deliver to her all the essays I've written this year. Tell her that the Beatles are my most listened to artist and what I walked away from your house listening to that one time. For You (I'm) Blue.

I need to look into the eyes of your unnamed main character, the second Mrs De Winter, and tell her that you're good. Give my blessing in the manner of a future father-in-law, gripping too hard on the handshake and sweating aggressively through my T-shirt. Speaking the name of the holy spirit over the wine after I've already tasted it. Take this, all of you, and drink from it. Do this in memory of me - but who knows how much you've decided to remember.

I see Wetherspoons as the site of my birth. I get the bus up the hill, recreating the journey of an Atlantic salmon to their native river in order to spawn. I hope that I'll walk through the door in my denim mini-skirt to see you and realise that one can move a lot and yet not really move at all. When I spoke those words on your living room carpet, I knew I was invoking the muse of someone you were months before, not the one underneath me, drunk. With you I practised sticking my tongue in ears. Now I never have sex to music, only the sound of my own cracking knees.

I still have that music though. You helped me acquire a whole 7 day advent of CDs covered in paper cutouts of my own face and left me with an inability to listen to Erykah Badu. Now I play Elgar as homage to the blisters on the tips of my fingers instead. I would rather be in mourning for those blisters and the bruise under my chin than for you. I still listen to Wieniawski's violin concerto and feel my elbow ache but I haven't touched my violin since I last touched you. The two aren't correlated but then again, I haven't drawn a graph since I was 18.

Tomorrow I'll rosin my bow and dust my strings, but my fingertips are soft now, my callouses have sunk and migrated to the palms of my hands for new purposes. My fingers would be slow and my cadenzas out of tune so maybe I'll just resolve to almost, but not quite, crying on the floor of the Royal Albert Hall and watching the angle of the first violinist's elbow with fixation. Mum gave me her old violin but God didn't give me the coordination or precision to ever sit on that stage holding it. For that, I'll always be sad but I'll keep my old violin teacher's name on my phone just in case.

FRANKIE  
RATCLIFFE



# WE ARE NOT INVENTING SOMETHING, WE ARE GROWING PETALS

every time I touch / glow-worms ignite / full  
dusty orange moon / shimmer drip of pussy /  
willow / yes I can see you yes / I lie / of all these  
hours you silver now I think / I have to trap a  
few beneath my / belly / kept constant in their  
aching / fresh as a scraped womb couched / in  
soil / now I try to be tummy up / a portion of  
the day / night / hips eddied upstream by your  
fingers soft / red finned salmon / sliding off the  
bone like an alive thing / swimming / little  
babes that tumble / through my waking  
subterranean / mouths like gasping fish / there is  
a planet in your eye socket / when it orients  
towards me I am / peach plum pear and dying /  
on your doorstep / I am privileged to squint into  
the morning and turn / to find your mouth  
nearby / peppered with light / like a dawn beam  
outside the hospital tripping over / concrete / I  
saw venus once / through a telescope / all I saw  
amongst the rings was my own face / my face  
your face / o baby / your face / it is / a mirror

MAD  
ELE  
INE  
~  
WHIT  
MORE

Many acts of sexual violence will occur during May week. Few will report it because 'everyone was drunk'.



Being inebriated is not an excuse for sexual violence. We should be able to celebrate too.

Z

*Zero tolerance*

Only 1/10 victims report sexual violence. This needs to change.

END SEXUAL VIOLENCE AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

Instagram: @endsvcambridge



# we are going to make a castle

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- o Elise Batchelor

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- Fatima Shuaib
- Ella Jancovich
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  - o Millie Sheridan
  - o Thea Sewell

### Website/feminists.org.uk:

- o Meg Bennett
- o Elise Batchelor
- o Madeleine Baber

ICan Play  
With my friends  
Safely



# How you grow a Flower.



Sun



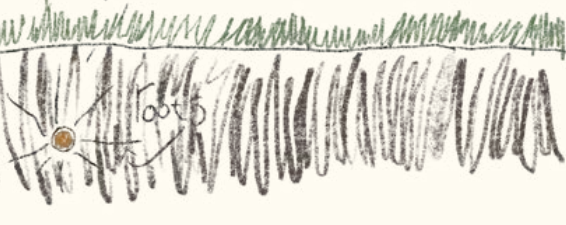
Flower



Water



Stem



Roots





ReBi'rth



snack ring  
wind...  
add  
 $12+1=13$

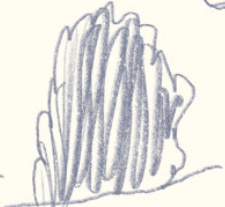


swing jam

Amee



jelly



snack



jump



Amee



Emma



# GA

2025

bliphent



Vulture



vase



Van

Viubin



bliphent



Emma



wig



wind



Wing



Window



snack