

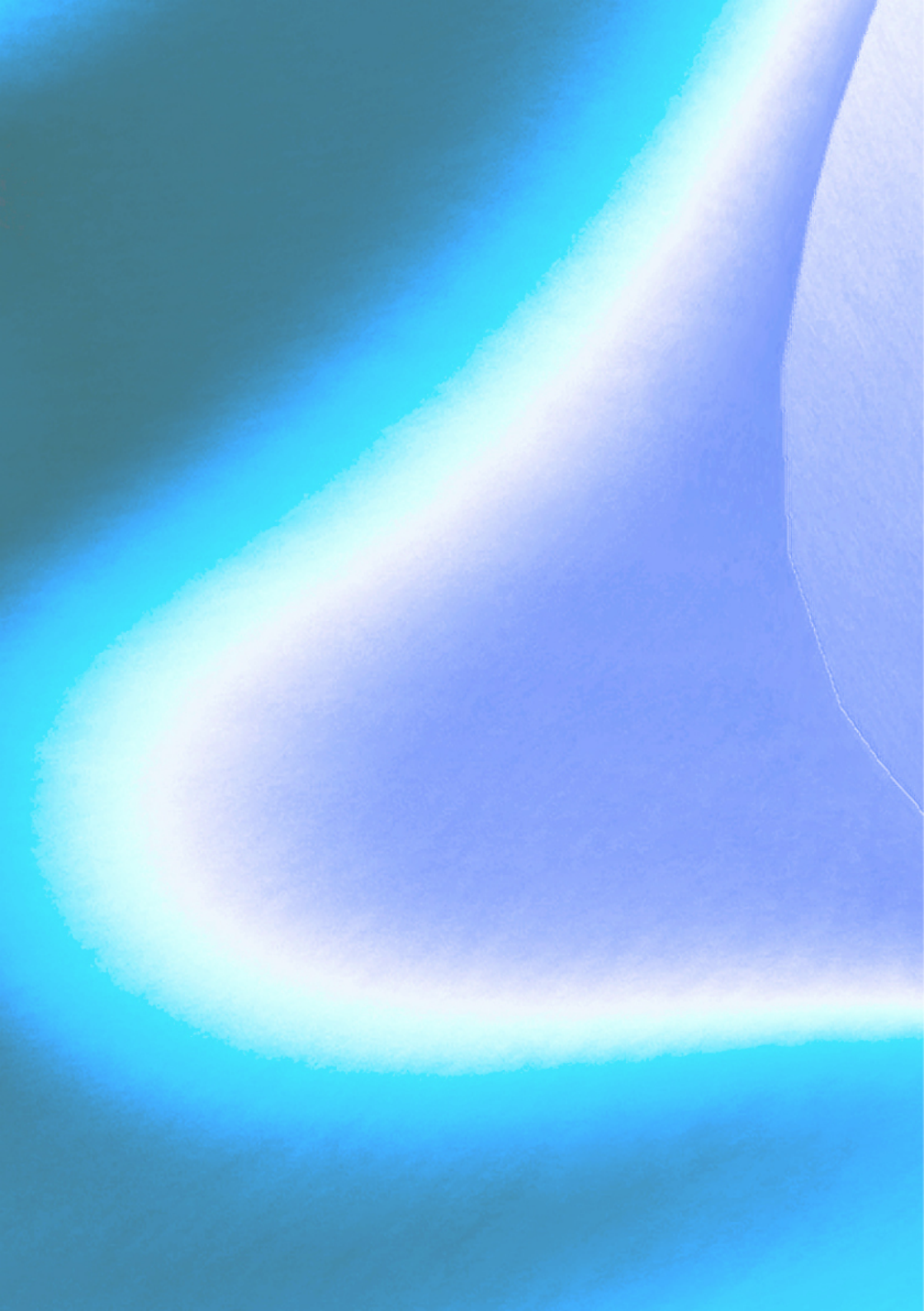
VOLUME 6

ISSUE 6

# THE GAY SAINT

C E L E B R A T I O N





**The Gay Saint**

# **CELEBRATION**

**Volume 6 Issue 6**

# Foreword

**Written by Jack Travers  
(he/him), Editor-in-Chief**

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*Dedication: celebrating our queer family, and remembering those taken from us.*

As spring comes, we appreciate and celebrate the return of the sun, with longer and lighter days to bask in its warm light and the occasional cold snap and snow flurry. We see daffodils begin to emerge, bringing bursts of colour into the everyday, and giving us boosts of happiness as we power through our deadlines towards summer.

This edition, aptly named *Celebration*, celebrates our LGBTQ+ community and the progress we've made both in our own town and beyond. Often it's hard to recognise the small victories, especially in the face of so much wrong in the world. But finding joy in the small things can give us hope for a new day and the strength to keep fighting for our eternal gay summer – where all is beautiful, joyous, and radiant in its technicolour queerness.

This issue is an expression of joy; it celebrates what brings us together as a community. Our Arts and Culture section includes articles on *Dungeons and Dragons* as a queer utopia, the queer icons of our time looking at fandom and shipping culture, Charli XCX, a review of *Sunburn* by Chloe Michelle Howarth, and a celebration of queerness in 90s cinema. We also celebrate queer history, from the DC Dyke March, the history of pride and queer thought, queer icons across time, to the link between rave culture and the queer scene, as well looking at neuroscience research in the LGBTQ+ community. Our creatives dream up scenes of celebration. They immerse us in the celebration of the opening of a



queer bookshop, as well as imagining queer safe havens and the emotions within. These themes are echoed throughout our poetry section. *I Am* looks at individualism and self-determinism, whilst *Hot Apple Cider* ponders home and the memories we attach to people and space. *I Love You, I'm Glad You Exist (After Wendy Cope)* contemplates existence and human experience, and *the dance* reflects on the circles of life, whilst *Licking Out* exposes the sexual daydream as an escape from the mundane. *Last Piece* traces a journey of self-discovery, expression and acceptance in the 'capitalist straight-ass cis-tem' that tries to stop us.

Read on for the monthly horoscopes section, and our famously wise Agony Uncle tackling emotional academic incest, and the plight of a St Andrews lesbian trying to find cooler 'rug munchers' to date in town, instead of travelling to Dundee every time they want a shag.

These articles are accompanied by artwork from our creative team: one piece is on the vigil for Brianna held in Sallies Quad last month. Another illustration shows flowers & barbed wire, meant to represent LGBTQ+ community overcoming adversity. Other pieces highlight coming out, symbolised in the doors we open and close, diversity in pride and trans bodies. This edition also contains three photo series: *Portraits of Love* celebrating queer love on film, photos documenting the joyful colour of the world around us, and guest pieces sharing their vision of queerness through street photography.

Whilst this edition is about celebration, this issue marks the last instalment of Volume 6, and sadly

brings my time as Editor-In-Chief of *The Gay Saint* to an end. It's been a magical year: two (re)freshers' fayres, six issues, four launch events, three drop-in collections, and a poster sale. And bringing us back into print to give everyone the chance to pick up a free piece of physical queer media and feel represented and included in St Andrews' magazine scene.

Ultimately, the success of this past year comes down to our amazing writing, editing and creative teams, to whom I'm so grateful for your contributions. *The Gay Saint* is a blank canvas for your work, and on that canvas, you made something beautiful – you're all incredibly talented and I've been so lucky to work with you all. None of this was possible without my brilliant senior team: Martin and Susie, Angelina, and Blue. Thanks for putting up with my bullshit and keeping us on track. A special mention to Sofia and George for their support and bankrolling us this year to keep us free and accessible for all to enjoy. I'd also like to thank Jack for keeping me relatively sane this past year and putting up with the emotional rollercoaster that comes from me being an over-invested Editor-In-Chief. Your encouragement and advice (even if often ignored) has kept me going.

And finally, a special thanks goes to our readers. Everyone who came to our launches, picked up a copy, bought posters, shared our posts, spread the word, and sent your drama to our Agony Uncle or your creative work for us to publish. It is the beauty of this queer community that this edition celebrates.

We're still here. We're still fucking queer. You still getting used to it?

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# Queer History

## *Icons of History*

*Written by Dheiry Sonecha  
(he/him)*

---

For many an age, our community of diverse folk have been irrationally deprived of that which has been our reasonable due, and only recently has humanity grown to confess this indignity and allow us an equal and welcome position in society. This blind tyranny meant that for a long time our lives were led clandestinely, cloaked away in layers from those who would seek ill for us. There have still been several throughout our history who have been valiant and determined enough to unshackle themselves from the piercing opinion of society and live their life to the fullest. These few have been renowned icons for us throughout the times.

Sappho of Lesbos is perhaps the first and most fascinating. Specialising in lyric poetry sung to the harmonies of the lyre, Sappho was revered many times over as the 'Tenth Muse' and the 'True Poetess'. Most of her poetry is now regrettably lost to history with only one – *Ode to Aphrodite* – enduring in full. Even in the ancient world however, Sappho was popular enough to invite wide acclamation as many impersonations of her style by others survive. After all, imitation is the ultimate form of flattery. The words *sapphic* and *lesbian* both originate from Sappho and the numerous legends

surrounding her. All the knowledge we have of her arises immediately from her own poetry (as a contemporary source) and a compendium entitled *Suda* authored eight centuries after Sappho's death. Her demise too was just as exciting as her life, as she flung herself from the Leucadian cliffs of Sicily where she was banished, or so Menander's comedies would have us imagine, considering he devoutly desired Sappho be exemplified as a promiscuous heterosexual woman. Sappho though, through analyses of her poetry in later antiquity, was conclusively recognised as a homosexual poet icon.

Friedrich II or Frederick the Great of Prussia is a further illustration of a gay icon, though countless biographers and commentators, with an interest in belying his homosexuality, would attempt to defraud us otherwise. Both King *in* and *of* Prussia, he is admired not only as a fine statesman that laid the foundation for the unification of Germany but also as one of the first blatantly gay heads of state in modern times. His father, Frederick William I, the 'Soldier King', was frugal, exceedingly puritanical and enormously authoritative. He was frustrated that Frederick favoured the 'epicene' pastimes of arts, music and culture to the decidedly 'masculine' pastime of bashing people's heads with a stick in the training grounds. This led to Frederick being recurrently beaten and severely humiliated into 'manliness' at each chance his father got. His first relationship with his

father's page ended when the page was sent away. His second and lengthiest, with Hans von Katte, concluded with abject catastrophe, thanks yet again to his father. Frederick and Hans were caught eloping, arrested and charged with sedition. Unable to rationalise killing the crown prince to the Imperial Diet of the Holy Roman Empire, Frederick's father executed the utmost malice of having the guards of Frederick's cell force him to watch as Hans was tortured and decapitated, and then ordered him to do his obligation to the state by granting him a pardon. Even still, Frederick remains the greatest king Prussia ever knew, in spite of the innumerable emotional and tangible torments perpetrated upon him, and an embodiment of resilience in the face of viciousness wracked on our community.

These are but two of sundry souls who persist to be hailed through our community as people of fortitude, as icons of homosexuality. They shower us with inspiration to persevere and honour every individual moment our free place in the grand scheme, without looking back. They are legion, and they have our eternal gratitude and affection.

### **Sources:**

*Sappho's Lives* by Kivilo Maarit;  
*Frederick the Great* by Theodor Schneider.

# *The DC Dyke March and Accessible Pride Celebrations*

*Written by Brigid Rawdon (she/her)*

Ever since I was a freshman in high school, I have joined thousands of others at the annual pride parade in Washington D.C. We sing Born This Way, cheer so that the people on the Walmart float will throw us branded rainbow sunglasses, and wave awkwardly at the police officers that don pride flag pins that are easily removable once the parade ends. As someone who can stand for long periods, tolerate large crowds, and has relatively little fear of being targeted by law enforcement, Pride is a weekend that I look forward to. However, many of my LGBTQ+ peers are often excluded from pride celebrations due to the lack of accessibility and inclusivity at most pride parades.

Although I enjoy Pride, I prefer celebrations of LGBTQ+ identity which centre activism, community organising, and accessibility for all LGBTQ+ individuals. I recently attended Washington D.C.'s Dyke March. The Dyke March is a protest march focusing on lesbian and sapphic identity that aims to more closely resemble Pride marches of the late 1900s than the commercialised parades of the modern day. Immediately upon arriving at this event, I could tell that it was very different from the pride celebrations I had attended previously for various reasons.

## **Security**

Police are present at most pride parades in major cities and can make many attendees uneasy. In addition to the history of police brutality against



Black people, there has been significant violence against LGBTQ+ people at the hands of the police such as at the Stonewall Inn. Understanding this history, the organisers of the Dyke March chose not to notify local police of their gathering. Nevertheless, because Washington is the capital of the US, police will eventually be made aware of any large gatherings and send officers to ensure that the event does not threaten government buildings or officials. The march's organisers knew that the police would show up eventually, so they sent individuals around to ensure that all attendees knew what to do and who to call if they were arrested.

Additionally, I have met many people who feel claustrophobic due to the large crowds and fences at Pride. Three summers ago, someone set off fireworks during Pride. Because this was in America, many people assumed the sound was gunshots and began to frantically flee, and experienced difficulty due to the barriers everywhere. Conversely, at the Dyke March, there were no barriers of any kind meaning that attendees could move about freely and leave at any point if they felt overwhelmed or unsafe. Furthermore, the route of the march was not publicised, decreasing the likelihood that counter-protesters would show up.

### **Accessibility**

Although I cannot speak to personal accessibility needs, I can discuss the accommodations made to promote accessibility at the DC Dyke March. One of the first things I noticed at the Dyke March that differed from DC Pride was the presence of American Sign Language interpreters. Washington D.C. has a large Deaf community including many individuals who are also part of the LGBTQ+ community. Ensuring the ease of communication between Deaf attendees and March organisers guaranteed all marchers had the

safety information needed to understand the route of the march and how to react if police broke up the event. Additionally, Pride parades can be difficult to navigate for individuals with mobility aids. In DC, the parade is viewed from uneven sidewalks, grassy areas, and debris-filled walkways. Once the parade starts, you cannot watch from a seated level, unless you find a spot an hour beforehand. At the Dyke March, however, there were many in attendance using mobility aids who were provided information on how to navigate the march route with mobility aids and where nearby benches were for participating while sitting down.

### **Commercialisation**

One debate when discussing Pride is the prevalence of commercialisation from groups that don't support the LGBTQ+ community outside of June. Every year, I receive dozens of plastic rainbow-covered souvenirs from companies trying to show how 'progressive' their company is. While large events such as Pride need money, and the best place to get money is often from commercialisation and sponsorship, many in the LGBTQ+ community find the presence of these companies cheapens the experience of Pride as a celebration of LGBTQ+ identity. However, because the DC Dyke March was a community-organised event requiring minimal financial support, the event exists without commercialisation. Instead of using its social media platforms to promote big sponsors, the Dyke March's social media accounts promote mutual aid funds, information on missing persons, and educational material that directly benefits LGBTQ+ people. I

look forward to attending the Dyke March again this summer in celebration of lesbian and sapphic identity and experiencing the impact an inclusive community-based event that is accessible to all LGBTQ+ people can have.

# ***Make Clubbing Queer Again: 'The Spectre of a World which Could be Free'***

***Written by Jay Martin  
(they/them)***

---

The cinematic landscape and language which Gregg Araki and the New Queer Cinema movement forged seems to mirror, in many ways, another burgeoning underground counterculture of the 1990s: raving. Both are, for all intents and purposes, amplified distortion. Mental, physical, spiritual, sexual and sonic distortion, exhibited proudly at full volume. Both Araki's films and the rave culture of the early 90s feature young people, abandoned by the power structures of the 'real' world, choosing instead to escape into what generations before labelled hedonism. They fuck, they smoke, they kiss, they lick, they roll, they fight. Everything is in the pursuit of another hit of dopamine. Pleasure for pleasure's sake has been cast off by philosophers and social critics of the past as barbaric, unrefined, making humans no better than swine. These intellectual figures, however, served, in most instances, the power structures which Araki's youth and the attendees of underground raves so desperately tried to reject. In her latest book, McKenzie Wark refers to the rave as a 'refuge from history'. It isn't any surprise that Araki's cinema, the underground rave scene, and various other illicit, illegalised, and untraditional subcultures and

communities have been inhabited, propagated, and forged by what the state and the cis-heterosexual systems consider, as Silvia Federici noted, 'rebel bodies'. It also serves as no surprise, then, that these subcultures were cracked down upon, criminalised, penalised and watered down. Rave licences are now required, and even when one has a licence, the police continue to attend almost every public rave which takes place, to verify the licence and search the premises and the attendees for drugs. Even private rave events now engage in what some members of the community are calling prohibitionism; simply banning drugs like ketamine, GHB, and ecstasy rather than offering safety measures for those in attendance who wish to engage in what is a long-standing custom of the rave. What is it about a subculture populated en masse by queer, trans, gender non-conforming people, and those others with 'rebel bodies' which makes the state and the police so afraid?

Clubbing, as of 2023, is boring, and it is meant to be. As the work week comes to a close, the streets of any major town or city become akin to *The Night of the Living Dead*. The intoxicated zombies shamble along the pavement to inhale a container of cheap takeout food. They're back in their mattress and pillow graves by 4am. Only to wake up at 2pm the next day, with a headache and a handful of paracetamol. A Sunday spent lethargically regretting the night before, and dreading the dawn of Monday. This process has become symbolic of UK drinking culture, but this was not a voluntary progression. People didn't just get sick of raves. The rise of the nightclub was manufactured. The nightclub industry contributes about £36 billion to the UK

GDP every year, and creates around 425,000 jobs. Clubs have sponsors, drink partnerships, pay thousands of pounds for celebrity appearances. It is now impossible to go clubbing without being exposed to the flows of capital and commodities. It is not a controversial opinion to assert that capitalism is a pervasive force in modern life, however, when considering the death of the underground rave, and thus, the death of a queer subculture, capitalism rears its head as a tragic, destructive, and regressive force.

Not all hope is lost however. Whilst it appears that capitalist realism has become the dominant mindset for those operating within wider society, raving will always represent a refuge from history for those who live on the outskirts. Queer and trans underground raves are far from dead, and, whilst criminalised, the spirit of the 1990s lives on within the LGBTQ+ communities of cities like Manchester, New York, and Berlin. In his *Valences of the Dialectic*, Frederic Jameson refers to 'baroque sunbursts' which remind us that 'Utopia exists and that other systems, other spaces are possible'. Raves are a flash of energy, a surge of motion and unrestrained activity, the breaking down of barriers and blockades. Raves are the door to psychedelic, somatic communism. A communism of the body and its affects. The machinery of capital and cis-heterosexual normativity try to shut the raves down, yet are unable as we continue to augment ourselves, the raves bring us closer to cyborgism. Their systems are zombified, they numb themselves. Instead, the ravers, the junglists, the chemical generation become more aware and transcendental than ever. In the internet age, possibilities become endless. Gender fluidity, cybernetic

technoscapes, globally coordinated anarchic communities are all within reach. For the ravers of the 1990s, hardcore breakbeats and ketamine served the purpose of dissociation from the world around them. For ravers now, we must engage in what Wark has taken to calling *ressociation*. A remembrance and a return to the spirit of 90s raving. An attempt to re-experience the *xeno-euphoria* of acid house, the *enlustment* of a k-hole, and the overwhelming *rave continuum*, the feeling that the night would never end. For the queer rave community, there is no lethargic Sunday comedown, or dreaded Monday morning sunrise. Merely the endless pursuit of that 'spectre of a world which could be free.' So, in the interests of fun, libidinal experimentation, liberation, and the pursuit of a post-capitalist world... make clubbing queer again.

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Beery, Zoë, 'Crip Rave is the Revolutionary Collective Prioritising Accessibility'; Brehmer, Noah, 'RAVE-ACCELERATE-DIE'; Feiner, Sean Michael, 'A Rave at the End of the World: The Politics of Queer Hauntology and Psychedelic Chronomancy'; Fisher, Mark, 'Baroque Sunbursts'; Jameson, Frederic, 'Valences of the Dialectic'; Kuwabara Blanchard, Sessi, 'Banning GHB at Raves is Dangerous'; Roberts, Joe, '30 Years of Trade: Celebrating the Boundary Breaking LGBTQ+ Rave'; Sprull, Max, 'UK Nightlife Contributes "Far More" to UK Economy than Revenue Suggests'; Wark, McKenzie, *Raving*.

**DEFIANCE**

*Daisy Price (she/her)*



# Poetry

## *I am*

*Written by kate k (she/they)*

this feeling is hard to sit with.  
 there is something so unfamiliar, yet  
 familiar, about this feeling.  
 a terrifying realisation.  
 at the end of the day,  
 we're all that we got, so  
 we must please ourselves.  
 this feeling is also liberating.  
 a sense of familiarity; like catching up  
 with  
 an old friend. our higher self.  
 an end and a beginning.  
 a funeral and a  
 birthday.  
 when you are born,  
 the nurse cuts the umbilical  
 cord.  
 you are one.  
 until today, this cord has been wrapped  
 around my neck like a snake.  
 unharmed – benign in its strength –  
 but firm in its hold.  
 I do not mean to be cruel.

Today, I cut the umbilical cord.  
 I am my own nurse  
 I am my own mother  
 I am my own person.

Until today,  
 'I am my own person'  
 would have been used by me like a  
 sullen teenager,  
 brandishing my freedom to whoever  
 needed to  
 know.  
 Now,

I use this phrase  
 like a parent to a child  
 learning their first words.  
 My own Self, looking up at  
 Me, reciting back in chants:  
 I am my own person.  
 I am my own person.  
 I am my own person.  
 I am –

– and I will continue to be

# Licking Out

*Written by Anonymous Dyke  
(she/her)*

---

I can't stop thinking about licking women  
out during class.

It is somewhat purposeful and completely  
inappropriate.

It goes like this:  
I am sitting uncomfortably.  
I am bored.  
Something gender related is being  
powerpointed to me.  
The paint in the ceiling's corner is fucking  
off towards the floor,  
Leaving grey asbestos-y carnage in its  
wake.

Suddenly I am sinking into images of pink  
wetness,  
And muscle and sinew,  
And droplets of exposure that explode  
upon contact.

And easy back and forth rhythm of slick,  
I am beautifully sheltered within my little  
cloud of perverseness.  
I can luxuriate in the fuzziness

And just as I am allowing my mind to  
envelope in upon itself,  
Some fascist fuck has a coughing fit,  
Dragging me from my yonic oasis,  
Yanking me back to the post-colonial  
perspective of whatever the fuck.  
And I must mourn the imagined lick as a  
forgotten memory.

I realise now that the screen has moved  
on to queer intimacy,  
And the pixie-cut dyke nearby  
Is side-eyeing me  
For not paying attention.

To that bitch I say:  
I have no qualms about class missed,  
When I am merely putting theory to  
practice!









## *the dance*

*Photography by Camille Crozat  
(she/her)*

*Words by Andreas (he/him)*

the *sub* will never become text –  
in our creator's image, we remain

there is nothing, save  
this ocean  
between us –  
its depths, all  
that is not said

metatext is merely metatext –  
in our creators' image, we exclaim:

we are not the first  
and we will not be the last, in this  
wild, merry-go-round  
Dance –  
so terrible!  
so wonderful!  
it goes  
on  
and on

without end



# Hot Apple Cider

*Written by L.S. Newton (he/they)*

---

I feel somewhat guilty  
That when I think of going home  
It's not a house across the ocean  
But a place I built with you  
Where we make hot apple cider  
In the kitchen  
Of a house we painted purple  
To match the sunsets  
We kiss under.

And while the water starts to heat  
We dance together  
In each others borrowed shirts  
And when it's done  
We'll stir in caramel  
And sit together on our worn out sofa  
And we'll share a blanket  
We knitted together  
And our fingers will brush over skipped stitches  
Before we lock them together  
And you'll whisper the lines to your favourite film  
Before I kiss your neck  
Long enough  
That you almost forget.

And we'll fall asleep there  
Just for a moment  
And in the morning  
We'll water our plants  
And you'll pick your favourite flowers  
And set them in a mason jar  
Beside our bed  
And we'll walk the dogs together  
And we'll be so happy  
Where we exist together  
In the space I carved out  
Inside my head.

# *I love you, I'm glad I exist (after Wendy Cope)*

*Written by Sophia (she/they)*

---

## I. The Beginning

My hands exist; your hands exist.

## II. The Discovery

Teeth exist, and the matching bones (I think, haven't checked). The casing of humanity, the realness of touch, atoms, and molecules and the devastating separation of space.

## III. The Indulgence

Apple trees exist and the sweetness of summer crunch. Strawberries exist and cherry pie and mountain cake. There are so many things you can do with nectar. I watch your crinkled face in exerted joy; it's so lovely to love with you.

## IV. The Discovery (Reprise)

Lovers exist; dreamers and doves. Mothers exist, and doves and doves. I don't think I could subtract the fear from the love if I tried. I've got numbered days 'til this thing is caught. A chalked outline of my body, lying on the pavement. Death exists; days and days and endings and then more days. I'm locked out of the house and the girl down the street won't let me in, anymore.

## V. Epilogue (Life as a Hopeful Thing)

Early spring exists, aftertastes of loneliness in the bloom. The hurt exists, but so does pulse. And you exist, in the space next to me. If you let me, I think we could learn to love out existence with our hands intertwined.

# Nature is non-binary

*Photography by Emily Taylor  
(they/she/he)*

*Words by Jack Travers (he/him)*

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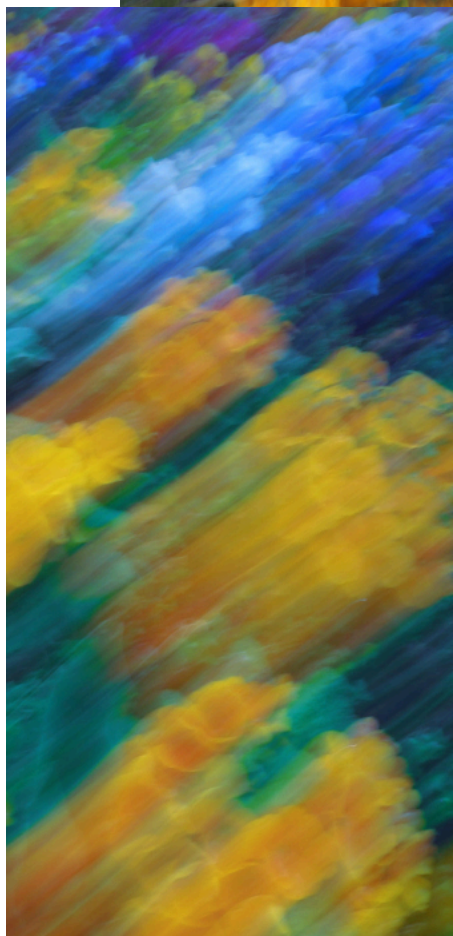
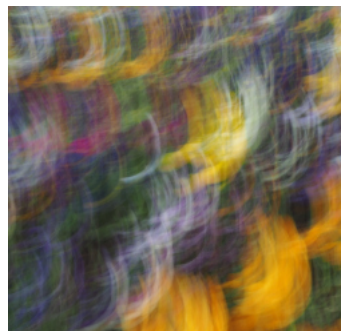
Nature is non-binary  
Take your gender elsewhere  
Nature breaks these binaries  
Throws them out

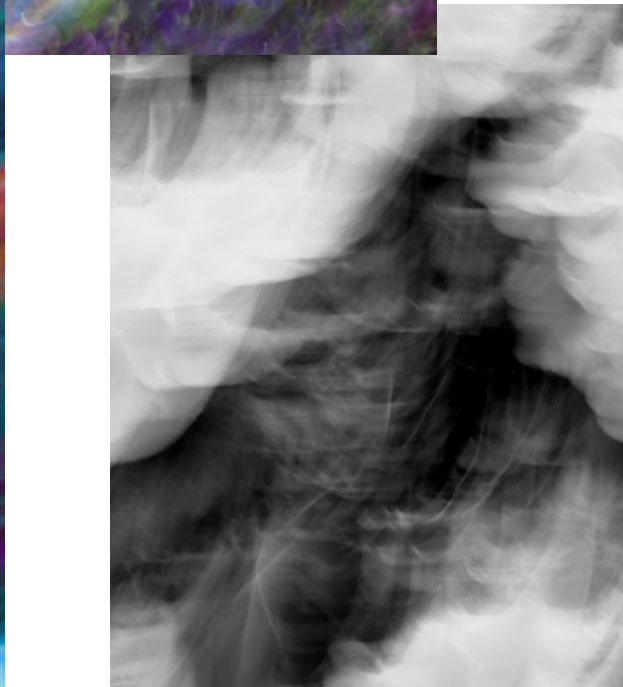
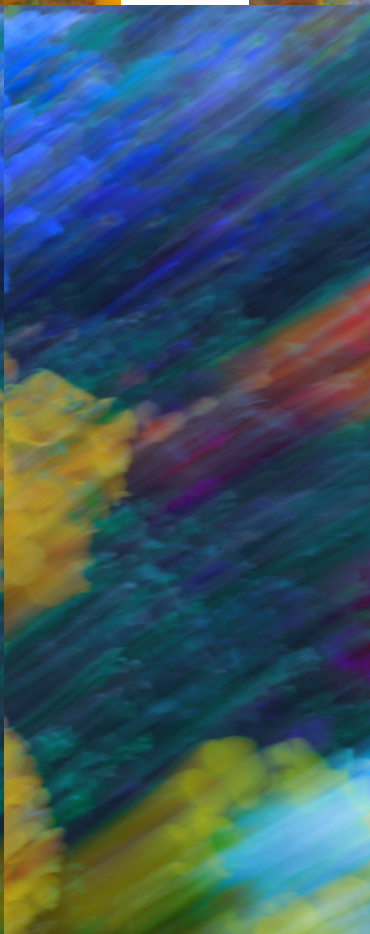
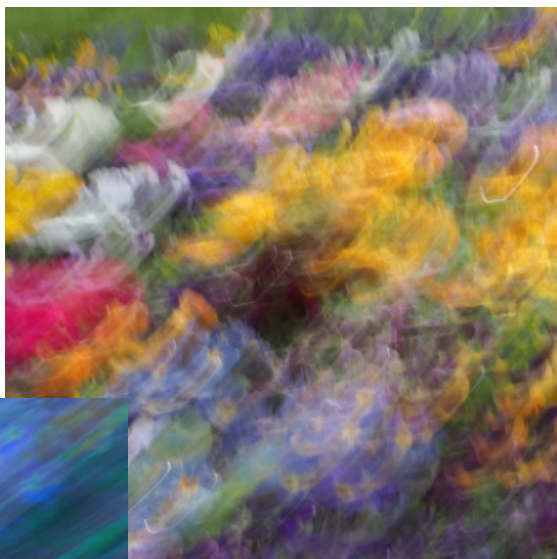
Reductive categories of wild and tamed  
Free or captured  
Highlight human insecurities  
The need to be defined  
To categorise  
To control  
To exclude

But nature is out of control  
Is continuous  
Is non-conforming  
It breaks the heteronormative narratives of  
human privilege  
And the anthropocentric stories of human  
imagination

A queer nature is a messy nature  
A world of inconsistency and diversity  
A queer world that recognises the  
interconnectedness of all beings  
And throws out the distinction of humanity  
Instead recognising the fluidity of existence  
The futility of division  
And embraces community

We're queer beings  
On a queer earth  
Nature is non-binary  
And so are we





# Creative Writing

## *Last Piece*

*Written by Blue Gacel  
(they/them)*

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Paint all over my face. I reinvent my body every day. Mom tells me it is a costume, while it is closer to who I am than the person she knew. That person who was desperate to fit in. Who had to act like what I thought was supposed to be a woman – what others told me a woman should look like, how a woman should behave.

A ‘woman’ I am not.

At 15, I think I’m gay. At 17, actually no, false alarm (sarcasm): I’m pan. I come out during a game – others took it as a joke: went back to the closet pronto. At 19, I come out again. Little by little, to my friends. No longer in denial. Here is where my long sinning journey began.

At 20, I come out as non-binary and hesitate about my pronouns. I change constantly and end up with they/them for the time being. I experiment, I try, reject, adopt.

At 21, I think I'm also aromantic. Sex is just fun enough on its own. Alone or not.

In the meantime, self-diagnoses appear, then the real diagnoses. GAD, SPS, ASD, maybe more? Or enough. Almost the same as my sister. Was the reason our family dynamics? No. Definitely not. Never. How could it be? Especially when grandma is fine with gays: 'just not in her family'. When she would tell me to put on a bra. To stand up straight. And smile more. Wonder how I ended up so sane.

Wait...

At least nowadays, when everything feels wrong – sometimes for no reason. When the whole world pisses me off. When my introversion takes precedence over everything: I put my headphones on. I turn off the light. Time and Space become abstract. Everything stops. Music takes over my thoughts. '*Mort aux Cons!* [Death To Idiots]'

Alcohol has that same effect. It relaxes me. Its toxicity is soft and sweet and painful. I'll stop tomorrow.

Also started fags before being one. Stopped for a while. Started again. Should have never begun.

Sometimes I feel like an old gay man, who has seen it all. Then I remember that it was not me, it was them. It was this capitalist straight-ass cis-tem that forced us to mature, be strong, be brave. When all we just wanted was to live, be kids, be who we are. Today we continue to force ourselves to be strong, be brave, live: be ourselves. But not because of them, but for those, who no longer can.

Mom. The Me you see as vulgar, full of tattoos, and piercings, wearing crop tops, binders, corsets, or barely anything, naked, paint on my face – IS the real Me. The girl you knew never existed. She was a disguise I now left behind. It kept me safe for a while, and I am grateful. But Mom, I no longer need your appraisal. It is time for you to face me. My faithless non-binary self. More beautiful and confident than I ever would have been.

It is time for you to face yourself, and see my genuine and absolute queerness.

*'Puisque mes souvenirs deviennent infidèles/ Que je m'enfuir enfin ! Qu'on me prête des ailes !'*

– Renée Vivien, '*À l'heure du couchant,* *Haillons* (1910)



## Read in Rainbow

Written by M.J.M. Norwood  
(she/her, he/him)

'Do you think people will come?' Violet asked anxiously, as she blu-tacked a flyer to the inside of the shop window.

'Love, you asked that when we set the date, when we designed the posters, when we ordered the decorations, and my answer is the same as all those times,' Dawn answered, with fond exasperation. 'Yes. People will come. They come into the shop every day, don't they?'

'Well, yes, but that's daytime, isn't it? They're passing anyway, so they think to pop in... It's not like that at night.' Violet fiddled with a piece of blu-tac, rolling it between her fingers, then stretching it until it snapped.

'They'll come,' Dawn repeated. She went outside, and the shop bell jangled. Putting her hands on her hips, she looked up and admired the flyer.

*'Read in Rainbow:  
25 year opening anniversary,'*

it read, and in smaller text underneath,

*'Come celebrate with snacks, drinks,  
and songs!  
7pm, 16th of June.'*

The flyer was suitably bright, and would catch the attention of anyone who happened to be passing. Dawn smiled, went inside to set up the till for the morning, and to placate her anxious wife.

'The Facebook post has a lot of shares,' said Violet, sitting back from the keyboard and pushing her glasses to the top of her head. It made her short curls stick up in a way that Dawn thought was absolutely delightful.

'Don't sound so surprised,' she said, with a lopsided smile and a shake of her head.

A young man came up to the till, giving a slightly embarrassed cough.



'Excuse me, do you sell The Picture of Dorian Grey?' he asked.

'We do!' Dawn leaned forward to point behind the young man. 'It's in the classics section, over there. Second shelf from the bottom.'

'Thank you!' The young man started to turn, and paused, looking back. 'By the way, that anniversary party' – a vague gesture behind him indicated the flyer on the window – 'do you have to get tickets, or can anyone show up?'

'It's free,' said Dawn, smiling. 'Just turn up at the door, everyone's welcome! Bring your friends!'

'Nice! I'll see if my boyfriend wants to come.' The young man grinned, and made for the classics section.

'See?' said Dawn, shooting a look at Violet when the young man had gone.

Violet huffed, and snapped her glasses back down onto her nose.

Despite all her assurances to Violet, Dawn found herself becoming more and more anxious as 7pm approached. Read in Rainbow was only a tiny bookshop – would people really want to come?

7pm came, and the shop bell remained silent. Dawn said some reassurance to Violet, but it sounded fake.

7:05.

'I'll make sure the snack table is organised,' said Violet, 'check the gluten-free stuff is separate.'

'Good idea,' said Dawn, though they both knew Violet had checked the snacks three times already.

7:10.

'It's all sorted,' said Violet.

'Good good,' said Dawn.

At 7:16, the bell finally jangled, and Ella wheeled in.

'Sorry I'm late, gays and timekeeping, what can I say?' she said with a laugh.

Ella was an old friend. She'd known Violet and Dawn long before they ever opened the shop, and had been their first customer, ceremonially getting the place off the ground.

'Ooh, snacks!' she said, and brought her powerchair to a sharp halt in front of the mini sausage rolls. 'Am I the first one here?' she said, around a mouthful.

'Yeah,' said Dawn.

'Might be the only one here,' Violet continued, ruefully.

'Come off it,' said Ella, rolling her eyes. She tossed up a grape, and caught it in her mouth to polite applause.

And, as if prompted by her words, the bell rang again. It was the young man from earlier, his arm hooked through another man's.

'Did you sell him Wilde?' said the other man.

'We did indeed,' said Dawn.

'Excellent, I was telling him he needed to brush up on his history.'

The young man from earlier shoved his partner playfully, and they made for the drinks.

After that, it was like the floodgates had opened, and people poured into the shop. Old customers who'd been coming in for years, young faces who Dawn and Violet had never seen before.

Dawn put her arm around Violet, and smiled down at her.

'We did it,' said Dawn.

'We did,' Violet replied, and Dawn knew she meant more than the party. They'd wanted the bookshop to be more than a shop. It had never been about making a profit. It had been about making a space for them and their community, and, watching the crowd chat and laugh, they knew they had done it.

## ***Fated Haven***

***Written by Logan Sibbald  
(he/him)***

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Nowadays, he goes up to the ridge every Sunday. For hours he'll sit – hunched over with his elbows on his knees – lacing and unlacing his fingers around the browning barrel of an old revolver. When we first confronted him about it, he said he was trying to 'beat the thunder' – firing a shot at the first glimpse of lightning over the valley to warn us of a storm before any aerial hammer could.

We all knew this was a lie. We all knew this was something not to be discussed. We let it anchor our necks: sink our eyes and ears into mugs of coffee, or unfinished books.

There was one time, I recall, when he was just leaving, and Charlie – Ezra's new girlfriend, who lives on the other side of the complex – asked where he was off to with the rusty gun. When he gave a staggered, hushed reply about the speed of sound and listening carefully, Ezra and I swiftly began inspecting our nails: peeling off dead cuticles and picking at nothing. After he left, the silence was a magnet between our lips, until Charlie made the spritely, unbearable assessment that 'the gun wasn't even loaded!'

We've been safe here for several years now. Apart from some inflammatory rumours and false alarms in the beginning, the rest of the world mostly chooses to ignore our existence. The complex having been built far enough below the top of the ridge, we can raise our flags on towering poles and let the colours drag in the wind without judgement. It's a bit like living in a moon crater – too far sunken to be spotted from a distance, but still part of the noticeable, dark blight on an otherwise perfect pallor. We don't run in rigged rat races here; we are content just feeling free: we play cards, or plant flowers, or drink coffee, or get married. We don't suffer. It's not defeat, just removal. Compartmentalisation. It's just easier. I don't think it's wrong to believe that this is how it should be.

I caught him installing storm shutters on the windows a few nights ago. I remember the dream it woke me from. I was a mutt in a cage – thick, steel bars locked my head in a vice, moulded my ears into pressed violets. I recall charging forward, letting the clang cut into my shoulders, throwing myself out of sleep. But I don't remember escaping the cage. In fact, I awoke to further shrieks of metal. I crawled out of bed, dripping with brine, to find him hammering the shutters into place on one of the

kitchen windows below. I opened my mouth to shout down to him, but the vowels slipped from my tongue like sand. Flaccid and folded, like a cat picked up from its middle, or the ears of a dead basset hound, the string of flags hoisted on the mast outside hung spineless. My throat seized. The flags remained heavy and fleshy for the whole night while he hammered.

Now, he goes up to the ridge every second day, with an empty gun, claiming to scout out incoming thunder. He is waiting to lose. He is wise for doing so.

I have started following him whenever he leaves the cottage, mimicking his movements from a few metres behind. I watch him from the treeline. I bring only the handle of a machete with me.

Back at the complex, they will not speak about my absence, but they'll pick their nailbeds red raw, until they decide to join us too.

Very gradually, we will move – all of us like an anxious chess set – to the top of the ridge.

Eventually, the world will notice us again – an alien frontier carrying hopeless weapons.

Soon, they will come for us – like thunder after lightning. I don't think it's wrong to worry that this is how it will always be.

# Book Review

## 'Sunburn' by Chloe Michelle Howarth

Written by S. Joy (they/she/he)

Chloe Michelle Howarth's debut novel *Sunburn* is Verve Books' anticipated summer 2023 release, and it certainly lives up to the name. The story follows Lucy, a teenager in her last year of high school in the small Irish village of Crossmore as she begins to recognise her feelings for her friend, Susannah. We see her through the end of her adolescence and into the beginnings of life as an adult, juggling religious trauma, homophobic parents, and the general plight of attending an all-girls school. The language toes the boundary between adult passion and fumbling desire that is the classic existence of any young queer girl from a religious upbringing.

The description of the hot summer that opens the novel is intermingled with Lucy's feelings for Susannah, and the title becomes all too poignant as we see the painful sting that new queer feelings can have when placed in an unsafe or unwelcoming environment. The relationship is fed to us through stolen glances and quietly exchanged letters, all divulged through Lucy's first-person narration which is filled with poignant descriptions of her intense romantic and sexual attraction. Her perspective is similar to a stream of consciousness that purposefully falls over itself in a manner only too reminiscent of the clumsy uncertainty of those first inklings of queer attraction.

The novel balances the 1990s Irish, small-town setting that provides a backdrop of repression and fear with an otherwise euphoric relationship and coming-of-age story. This is a novel that fully understands its political setting, with acknowledgements of *The Troubles* in Ireland as well as the very specific entanglements of homophobia at home, with friends, and in a small community. Lucy's inner monologue is at times painful for its incredible ability to capture the specifically queer self-destruction of choosing to deny her own identity and happiness as well as her partner's for the sake of community acceptance and parental love. This is an often gut-wrenching divulgence into a complex queer story that, though it is not light-hearted, painstakingly captures the realities of queerness in 1990s small-town Ireland.

**Release Date:** 22.06.2023

**IF QUEER WAS A CHOICE**

*Elyse Edwards (she/they)*

If being  
QUEER  
was a  
choice  
I'd  
be  
QUEENER



## ***Pride: From Radical Roots to Rainbow Capitalism***

***Written by Cosmo Billing  
(he/they)***

Pride – the quintessential celebration of queer identity – has been transformed into a contest of homocapitalist posturing. In recent years, Pride partnerships and sponsorships have included Tesco, Google, Starbucks, and L'Oréal. Not to mention, the cheapest tickets to Hong Kong Pride are \$150. This article explores the origins of Pride, its roots in queer integrationist and rebellious movements, and how these movements shaped the current evolution of queer theory and thought. 19th century queer thought, emerging around the end of World War II, is characterised by a struggle between two strands of activism: integration and rebellion. I argue that integration has become the more successful, prominent, and legitimised form of queer activism. It often takes the form of queer liberalism, majorly to the detriment of LGBTQ+ minorities.

The emergence of queer political thought must be understood within the context of the Cold War and the ideologies of Capitalism and Communism. McCarthyism othored queer people and grouped them with the existential threat to the US of communists. The USA and USSR used homosexuality as a propagandistic tool, accusing their opposite ideology of decadence (the USSR recruiting gay spies, or homosexuality being a bourgeois vice).

The post-War years also saw the start of a new queer consciousness following the Kinsey report among white middle-class

suburbans, and the UK's Wolfenden report which eventually led to the liberalising *Sexual Offences Act* of 1967. It is here that we must identify the first divergence between assimilation and revolution as two distinct ideas in queer thought: later, they formed the bedrock of queer conservatism and liberalism, the Daughters of Bolitis and the Mattachine society organised peaceful protests in public spaces, like bars.

The LGBT+ Rights movement started with a distinct integrationist tone; it would not be long until more rebellious elements began to spread. The 1960s, a period of radical peace and civil rights movements, culminated in several major social and legal victories: such as, the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964 and the flourishing of LGBTQ+ magazines and journals following the *One, Inc. v. Olsen* ruling. Of course, the 1960s also culminated in the Stonewall Riots on 28 June 1969. There had been raids at LGBT-friendly establishments, like the Black Cat Tavern in Los Angeles, but this was the first time bar regulars had fought back (causing a media ruckus). Stonewall, an establishment in Greenwich Village of Lower Manhattan, was favoured by the neighbourhood's wider minority communities. The period following the Stonewall Riots saw an influx in organised activist action coming from the previously marginalised members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Stormé DeLarverie, a mixed-race butch lesbian, most likely started the Stonewall Riots. As she was being carried away by police raiding the Inn, DeLarverie shouted, 'Why don't you guys do something?' Her involvement in the Gay liberation movement continued many years after. Others that were present at the riots include Marsha P. Johnson, a black drag queen, and Craig Rodwell, the future founder of Christopher Street Liberation Day (the forerunner to Pride

Day). Groups like the Gay Liberation Front (GLF, allied with the Black Panther Party), Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) and the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) formed shortly after the Stonewall Riots by leading activists. There were disagreements about the importance of the political feasibility of intersectionality. The GLF and STAR favoured intersectional, anti-racist, sexist and capitalist approaches, and the GAA was a more single-issue group advocating rights within the political system in place.

While integrationists had made progress in seeking accommodation within the system, revolutionary perspectives featured (for the first time) prominently and on international stages. These saw the integration of intersecting perspectives into queer narratives through the voices of female, trans, and minority ethnic activists: Ellen Brody (one of the founders of NYC Pride), Sylvia Rivera (a Latina trans woman), and Marsha P. Johnson. Christopher Street Liberation Day – which later became Gay Pride – was held on 28 June 1970. Pride parades and celebrations in other countries followed shortly after: 1972 in London, 1975 in Helsinki, and 1979 in Berlin and Cologne. The celebration of queer identity was a rejection of oppressive societal norms and values. It was organised by queer activists, from all backgrounds and experiences, and many held strictly anti-capitalist views.

Second-wave feminism, through the work of authors like Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, offered an alternative to the capitalist-patriarchal system which still prevails today. It enabled an exchange of ideas between radical and Marxist feminist theory and queer theory (embodied by radical lesbian feminism). Second-wave feminism ended in the early 1980s, around the beginning of the Aids epidemic.

The Government's disregard for the 'gay plague' killed thousands of Queer activists, like Michel Foucault and Michael Callen. The end of the Cold War saw the 'victory' of liberalism and the reification of its status as world ideology. Either, you were liberal or you did not exist. Queer movements were forced to accommodate liberalism, had to beg for help from their governments, and saw radical solutions substituted for institutional shifting.

In the past, many radical and liberationist activists organised themselves to change society in a more queer and minority-friendly way. So, why do we now see a commercialised, highly capitalist pride? Why do we see companies change the background of their profile pictures to rainbow flags in June, only to switch them back in July? Why do we see some of the biggest exploiters of workers and the environment sponsoring events which celebrate queer (and think of the original meaning of 'queer' as denoting something strange or peculiar to society) pride? My interpretation of this issue is that queer movements following the 1980s had to contend with some challenges which made a strictly revolutionary agenda impossible: the end of second-wave feminism, the AIDS epidemic, and the end of the Cold War.

A lot has happened since. Gay marriage has become increasingly embraced by liberal countries and more queer political leaders are

working within mainstream politics. Homocapitalism – the integration of queer identities into the workings of neoliberal capitalism – provides opportunities for queer folk to progress societally and materially, where otherwise there was no promise of a future. Simultaneously, LGBTQ+ rights outside of liberal countries, appear to be ignored or in peril (Uganda, Poland, Hungary). Thus, (queer) liberalism presents itself as the sole option and the commercialisation of queer identity as the necessary consequence of rights in a capitalist world system.

It's difficult to see an alternative (see Capitalist realism) to queer liberalism, but it has failed us. Yes, these positions, otherwise closed off from us, means there is more representation of queer identities in media and the public sphere. However, this should not even be the bare minimum. Queer women, people of colour, and trans individuals are still not granted access to necessary healthcare or support. They are the victims of systemic oppression and casualised hate. Until all queer people can live as they wish – free of worry and fear – no queer person is free. Will companies still seek approval from the queer community when they can no longer make money off Pride? To me, the answer stands as a resounding no.

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## **A MOMENT TO HONOUR**

*Lucy Westenberger (she/her)*





# **Refining Neuroscience research within the LGBTQ+ community**

**Written by Eden Burch  
(she/her)**

Scientific research has helped improve the lives of many people, however, there's a darker side to science where findings have had negative implications on many minority communities. One group that has received a poor quantity and quality of research, is the LGBTQ+ community. The social isolation and stigma that is experienced by a high proportion of the LGBTQ+ community has contributed to ever-growing rates of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. Much research has been particularly steered towards the aetiology of LGBTQ+ people. However, there are ways in which scientists can refine practices and methodologies to provide an increased understanding that shifts away from marginalisation and stigma.

## ***LGBTQ+ in Past Research***

A change in the identification of LGBTQ+ groups within psychiatry, has led to recognising that labels cause extensive stress on people who identify as LGBTQ+. Only in 1973 was 'Ego dystonic homosexuality' removed from the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), after being used to label people identifying as homosexual. Through this change the APA (American Psychiatric Association) supported the legitimacy of homosexuality, and opposed conversion therapy, which aims to harm and change the sexual orientation of queer people (*APA Official Actions Position Statement on Conversion Therapy and LGBTQ*

*Patients*, n.d.). Whilst the DSM referred to transgender people as having ‘transsexualism’ in 1980, this was later changed to ‘gender identity disorder’ in the DSM-IV and is currently referred to as ‘gender dysphoria.’ However, the amendment of these problematic classifications has not led to an improvement in all LGBTQ+ treatment, as a gender dysphoria diagnosis undermines patient-centred approaches in medical decision making (Kale & Juster, n.d.).

Scientists argue that focusing on the aetiology of LGBTQ+ individuals reduces bias. However, findings from many scientific breakthroughs regarding the LGBTQ+ community have been solely related to the transmission of sexual diseases. Umbrella terms were used to narrow the accessibility of research aimed towards different subgroups within the community, leading towards skewed findings that did not properly represent their experiences (Medicine, 2011).

Discrimination within science may appear to be a problem of the past. However, harmful implications can be seen in modern neuroimaging studies. These studies have claimed findings such as the brains of gay people being less sexually differentiated compared to the brains of heterosexual people, and may be ‘sex reversed’ (Manzouri & Savic, 2018). Throughout history, biological reductionism was a major part in many cultural and social movements used to justify the inhumane treatment of people linked to ideologies of race or sex. An extreme example of eugenics repercussions is in Nazi era Germany. This type of research leads organisations to defend acts of violence against specific groups of people using the laws of biology as justification (Dikotter, 1998).

### ***The Future of LGBTQ+ Research***

By identifying the lack of research of LGBTQ+ people, and the problems

experienced by the different subgroups within the community, the NIH (National Institute of Health) has put together an action plan to tackle this ongoing issue. The separation of these subgroups rather than categorising them into ‘non-heterosexual’ allows for more focused research and less skewed data. Priority research areas include a wider range of demographic research on LGBTQ+ diversity. This study should be conducted over the lifetime of these individuals to allow for a more detailed grasp of the experiences and health conditions within each group. The social influences on the lives of LGBTQ+ people is also an area that needs to be more closely analysed, as it influences mental health. This can be achieved by the inclusion of gender and sexual orientation within surveys conducted by the Department of Health. These surveys can provide vital information on the overlap between social and economic status, and their influences on health disparities. The development of standardised measures that allow valid and reliable analyses of gender identity and sexual orientations provide an increased level of knowledge on these minority groups, and how they differ from cis-gender homosexual individuals (Medicine, 2011).

Research must be conducted on the inequalities in health care faced by LGBTQ+ people as it affects well-being and functioning. Through an improved understanding of outcome imbalances, provider attitudes, and education, the ways in which this impacts the lives of LGBTQ+ people of all ages can be identified. This will enable a framework to be built to address the inequalities faced. Providing transgender specific health care would change the lives of many. The majority of research is based on small, non-probability samples, leading to poor findings. A more rigorous research program with larger sample sizes on the implications of hormone use and other transgender

specific issues means findings will be more representative and useful to the community (Medicine, 2011).

Within the LGBTQ+ community high rates of anxiety and depression are experienced, especially among youths. This can stem from a wide range of experiences that include social isolation, rejection, bullying and lack of acceptance. The downstream effects of this trauma on the developing brain of young people have an unknown effect. Studies on the effects of the stress and adversity experienced by developing brains can allow scientists to better understand the pathophysiology of mood and anxiety disorders. Research being conducted has highlighted the importance of youths having a supportive bubble to live within. This includes the importance of parental acceptance on intensifying resilience to depression and anxiety (Kale & Juster, n.d.).

Adequate training of health professionals and researchers regarding LGBTQ+ populations can allow them to adapt their practice and studies to be more inclusive, and allow them an increased awareness of problems faced by these groups. Training programs for postdoctoral researchers, graduates and career researchers allows for a safe environment where minority groups feel properly looked after with no stigma or judgement. The NIH aims to encourage research into LGBTQ+ groups, as well as women, through proposals of grants to address the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities. This provokes researchers to consider the implication of their research and whether or not they are including sufficient levels of participants represented in these groups (Medicine, 2011).

## Conclusion

A wider range of studies based on different LGBTQ+ subgroups would be a significant step towards a more inclusive and less stigmatised understanding of this community's struggles and overall functioning. Scientists must be aware of the implications their work has on people's lives and beliefs. Minority communities should be able to trust that their doctors will treat them with respect and integrity. The path forward is acknowledging the problem, and actively using frameworks put into place by organisations like the NIH to tackle these problems. Properly understanding the challenges faced by minority communities will allow research to properly address issues to actively support them. Through the recognition of different LGBTQ+ subgroups social, cultural and biological experiences within a broader range of circumstances will allow for a less biased direction of research that will make a positive difference to their lives and experiences.

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VIGIL

Daisy Price (she/her)





# Arts & Culture

## Accidental queer icons

*Written by Kamilya (she/her)*

Prepare everyone, red alert. Queer youths, pay attention: I'm about to bust some of our secrets. Yep, that's right guys, I'm airing our dirty laundry. Just trust the process. I know we're shy about this but I truly believe that in honour of celebrations we can reclaim and own this like we did with everything else.

Now it's time to come clean. I think most, if not all, queer youths have at some point imagined two characters of the same gender in a tv show or book or movie romantically together when they weren't explicitly told to be, right? And then maybe drew art of them, possibly wrote some quite profound fanfiction, or maybe even cosplayed as them... Ok, you imagined yourself in their place, treated them as a source of safety and acceptance and in some cases found community through that pair. Damn, oversharing much? Well, welcome to the world of ships!

For everyone who is very confused right now, 'shipping' is pairing certain fictional characters or occasionally real people in a romantic relationship. It often gives rise to a lot of artistic expression such as writing and drawing and film and costume making, and many other wonderful things. Moreover, even though straight pairings do exist and are more popular in certain fandoms than others, the world of ships is unquestionably and heavily dominated by queer pairings. Why that is the case is anyone's guess but I think it can be quite safely

assumed that this phenomenon is largely related to the deeply felt lack of queer representation, so as the amazing resourceful people we are, we started creating our own awesome content. Our formidable awesomeness gained so much traction and power that these days ships actually affect the creators of the original content and unfortunately gave birth to the ugly acrobatic act of trying to sit on two chairs with one malnourished ass. Also affectionately known as 'queer bating' in media for views.

Fandoms, specifically ships, became a safe haven in the treacherous sea of media content. Somewhere one could reliably go to find acceptance and consolation, with favourite characters queer-ised, made particularly liberal fighters for mental health, sexual freedom and all other beautiful things that the politicised Hollywood dream-producing machine just isn't capable of. The newly created powerful community with its flagship in the face of *Archive of Our Own* – a platform that hosts more than 56,500 fandoms, 5,532,000 users and millions of works in dozens of different languages. It has set an incredible standard of taking care of its readers, doing something that traditional media is so particularly bad at – providing serious trigger warnings that are actually looked at and slower content full of character study that is created for no financial gain at all, just for the pleasure of sharing something special. Whatever it is that you like – a niche book, a show that's been long discontinued, a video game – you can probably find it on Archive aka AO3.

The founding fathers of the ship culture, ruling it since 2011, are likely familiar to most queer kids with access to the internet and were a

crucial albeit secret part of our upbringing: Steve / Bucky from the Marvel Universe, Sherlock / John Watson from the brilliant big screen acting debut for Benedict Cumberbatch *Sherlock*, Dean / Castiel of *Supernatural*, Arthur / Merlin from BBC's *Merlin* also known as the fandom surviving against all odds, Stiles / Derek from our shared guilty pleasure *Teen Wolf*, and finally Spock / Kirk of *Star Trek* who were at the very root of things when 60's housewives started writing the first fanfics in history about them and distributing their work in print. Did any of the creators or actors expect or intend for it to be that way? For those characters to become so called 'comfort ships' for millions? Of course not. However, life works in miraculous ways and here we have our unsuspecting accidental queer icons, some of whom wear it better than others, but their significance and role have long outgrown the bounds and approval of the canon that it no longer really matters.

The world of ships, like everything else in this world, is imperfect. Filled mostly with white cis able-bodied men for reasons worth their own careful consideration, always surrounded by the controversy of shipping not only fictional characters but real people. However, there's been so much kindness and humanity shared and freely given already, so I have no doubts that we can take all the failings on board and strive for the better.

So, what do you say? Let's gaslight, gatekeep, girl boss, and feel good about this tender thing we kept in our young, confused souls to survive and come to terms with ourselves.

# Dungeons, Dragons, and Gaymers

Written by K. Halloway & S.  
Joy (she/they & they/she/he)

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The origins of *Dungeons & Dragons* can be traced back to 1972, where game designer Gary Gygax met with gamer Jeff Perren to refine Gygax's game ruleset he called *Chainmail*, which sought to simulate medieval duels using miniature figures. The two expanded the game, including its supplement on adding magic and spells, into what would be the first *D&D* ruleset. Drawing on inspiration from sword and sorcery pulps, comics, and *Lord of the Rings*, Gygax and Arneson formulated the now world-famous game of dungeon crawling and monster-slaying. Players each controlled a single character defined by a group of abilities, weapons, and scores that denoted strengths and weaknesses, and these characters would face challenges and monsters mapped out by the Dungeon Master, then called the 'referee'. *D&D* was first released in 1974 with 1000 copies, and its subsequent editions only increased its popularity with gamers. As of 2022 it is estimated that over 50 million people worldwide play *Dungeons & Dragons*, now in its fifth edition.

In his introduction to *Dungeons & Dragons*, Gary Gygax cites a number of inspirations, including Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Barsoom* series and Robert E. Howard's *Conan the Barbarian*, both stories of lone (male) heroes fighting



against harsh, hostile environments. It's worth noting that the original ruleset assumes that all the players and characters are men, exclusively using male pronouns throughout. A 1976 article entitled *Notes on Women & Magic – Bringing the Distaff Gamer into D&D* attempted to introduce a new set of rules for female characters by limiting their physical strength and giving them a 'seduction' ability to use on male monsters. Suffice to say, *Dungeons & Dragons* had no trouble maintaining its reputation as a boys-only hobby up until the present day.

*D&D* as a queer safe space was not built by the game creators. Even in the game's current edition, character race (such as elves, dwarves, or halflings) gives a boost to a specific physical or intellectual ability score, which adds a degree of bio-essentialism to the game as well. In addition, creators actively excluded queer worldbuilding on the problematic grounds that *D&D* 'is not a sex game'. It's clear that *D&D*'s queerness can only be credited to its players. In the 1974 *Dungeons & Dragons* book, Gygax advises the Dungeon Master that 'players will not find a game enjoyable which confines them too much'; a sentiment now more popular than ever with gamers. Though *D&D*'s inspiration stems from male, cis het pulp heroes, there is a queer appeal to its premise. *Dungeons & Dragons* offers an opportunity for your character to combat an inhospitable world and win.

Within tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPG) the malleability of identity and body is at the centre of play. Persephone Valentine, a trans writer and TTRPG player, discusses what *D&D* offers LGBTQ+ people: 'I probably wouldn't have come out if it

wasn't for *D&D*. *D&D* and *LARP* became a way of exploring my identity even when I didn't know that I was doing it.' Players must create a new character in order to play. There are a series of essential practical choices such as character class and ability scores, then they are free to utilise their imagination to create a backstory and personality. Construction of new identities being the foundation of play allows an exploration of their own identities, as well as a safe, fantastical space to explore them in. In Emily Lunardi's essay on drama therapy for queer adults, she says 'the body is a tool for queer people to express who they are, but it simultaneously can be the part of the self that creates the most discord' as she emphasises the importance of role-play for exploring queer identity. Yet, *D&D* is unique in its separation of person and body. In a fantasy setting, there is an inherent assumption that no one looks like their character, and a difference in gender is a small leap when horns and green skin are on the table.

Escapism is another attractive aspect of queer gameplay. *Dimension 20* cast member, Brennan Lee Mulligan, describes there being 'two ways to escape: You can escape to the world that doesn't have the problem, or you can escape to the world where you can solve the problem with magic and swords'. Keith Baker, an author of *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* (an official *D&D* sourcebook) has touched upon official rules which could be utilised to include trans and non-binary people, allowing players to escape to a world that readily accepts them. An alternative could be physically fighting imaginary oppressors of queer people, something generally frowned upon in the real

world. Homebrew is an aspect of the game where the DM and players invent alternative rules to make the world their own. Homebrew allows space for characters that are not cisgender to be a part of the world just as much as cisgender people. It is also a space for inclusivity for disabled players, with items like the ‘battle wheelchair’ becoming popular.

Ursula K. Le Guin has ruminated on fantasy escapism and finds that ‘the kind of thing you learn from reading about the problems of a hobbit who is trying to drop a magic ring into an imaginary volcano has very little to do with your social status, or marital success or income’. Once past the pure joy of something created just for the sake of fun, what appeals to the LGBTQ+ *D&D* players is that this is a game for those for whom society is not fair and escapism is a welcome alternative.

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## HONEY-SWEET EYES

*Blue Gacel (they/them)*



## **‘Another Homo Movie By Gregg Araki:’ A Radical Celebration of Queerness in 90s Cinema**

**Written by Eleanor Milnes  
(she/her)**

Although Hollywood might want us to think that queer media is improving, this perhaps only means that it is becoming more mainstream—and that isn’t necessarily a good thing. Independent filmmaking from the early 1990s, or ‘New Queer Cinema,’ as coined by R. Ruby Rich, champions a counter-culture representation of queerness that benefits from its inherent anti-commercial nature.

Inspired by queer sensibilities of European art, such as Jean Genet’s *Un chant d’amour* (1950), experimental filmmakers in the 90s began to incorporate more queer themes and protagonists into their narratives. Developments in queer theory throughout the 1980s also contributed to this franker exploration of human sexuality in the media. This queer avant-garde cinema was defined by its connection to other forms of underground art, as seen in the films of Andy Warhol. Their radical politics necessitated an equally radical approach to filmmaking; nonlinear narratives, supernatural intermissions and genre-bending narratives resulted in a marginal cinema for a marginal audience.

The films themselves are deliciously weird: Todd Haynes’ glam-rock spectacle *Velvet Goldmine* (1998)

begins with the birth of Oscar Wilde, implying that he was deposited on Earth by aliens, before transforming into a thinly veiled Bowie biopic with a flamboyant Ewan McGregor playing a Haynesean cross between Lou Reed and Mick Jagger. A year earlier, Gregg Araki's *Nowhere* (1997) had also featured an inexplicable alien encounter, ending with a character's horrific Kafkaesque metamorphosis into a cockroach. The films of Gregg Araki have now become synonymous with 'queer cinema' itself, marked by a provocative antagonism towards heteronormative society. His so-called 'Teenage Apocalypse' trilogy follows messy teenagers coming to terms with identity, relationships, and class, discarding convention for imagination no matter the cost.

This 'Queer New Wave' also addressed the straight-washing of historical narratives in mainstream media by revisiting them through a queer framework. Derek Jarman's *Edward II* (1991) takes Christopher Marlowe's historical play and translates the subtextual homoeroticism into an explicit romance, accompanied by surrealist dance sequences, a musical intermission from Annie Lennox, and anachronistic references to contemporary activism in response to the AIDS crisis. In the same year, Gus Van Sant adapted Shakespeare's *Henry IV for My Own Private Idaho* where Keanu Reeves plays the son of the mayor who initially rejects his seat at the throne to join a group of street hustlers. Even though Van Sant's film was released by a studio, it nevertheless embodies the essence of independent cinema through its commitment to portraying an underrepresented community of disenfranchised queer characters and its experimental narrative approach; appropriating the 'road trip' movie structure, the film travels across the United States, delving into the vulgar underbelly of vagrant American society, interspersed with the

occasional Shakespearean monologue or a scene featuring talking magazines.

Beyond narrative cinema, documentaries like *Paris Is Burning* (1991) further explored queer underworlds that had never before reached the silver screen. The noted absence of such representation is meta-cinematically questioned in Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman* (1996) as she reflects on the erasure of Black and queer characters from film history by adopting of a faux-documentary form to centre her own work as a Black lesbian filmmaker.

The contrast between New Queer Cinema's unyielding and often confrontational depiction of non-heteronormativity (at times anti-heteronormativity), and more commercial representations of queerness is striking. Despite being released in 1996, the queer characters in *The Birdcage* appear sterilised and conservative in comparison to Araki's apocalyptic teens. This dilution and commercialisation of queer cinema by major studios has brought us to an epidemic of watered-down queer stories, abandoning any attempt at truly revolutionary filmmaking. Today, reaching a larger audience means sacrificing the radical imagination incarnated by the New Queer Cinema movement.

But all is not lost – independent cinema continues to produce films that refuse to acquiesce to capitalist measures of success, instead cultivating a smaller audience. In other words, queer cinema is, by definition, a cult cinema, owing its lasting success to marginal (and marginalised) audiences. As long as there is an audience for it, the legacy of New Queer Cinema filmmakers has the potential to outlive Hollywood itself.

# Charli XCX signs a new album contract, are you XCXcited?

Written by Jack Kennedy  
(them/him)

*Lavender Lamborghini, roll up in a blue bikini.* Throughout the Queer community, these words echo through clubs, sitting rooms at pres, and occasionally the Union's karaoke. It is a universally accepted fact that Charli XCX is the queen of pop. From *Boom Clap* to *Vroom Vroom*, it's a word I hate to write but she truly is "mother!" Wearing the crown of her pop kingdom, Charli also has stakes in alternative, electronic and hyperpop genres. Unknown to some, she has also written the lyrics for many other artists: Camila Cabello's *Señorita*, Iggy Azalea's *Fancy*, and works for Selena Gomez and Will.i.am. Therefore, when Charli sat down with Vogue and told us she had just signed for two new back-to-back albums, after claiming she would never, it is most definitely time to get *XCXcited*.

The iconic and most recent album *Crash* was a hit. Charli said herself that this album was her 'sellout album,' even going on to flash us in the *Used to Know Me* music video with a hand-stoned pair of shorts (that she later sold for \$2k). The album and its release are full of the classic sellout tropes – from a TikTok trend to a relentless campaign for the Samsung Galaxy Buds 2. Honestly, I cannot tell you how much I know about the Samsung Galaxy Buds 2 and that silly phone that folds in half from hearing about them from Charli XCX. Nonetheless, it's iconic and we keep buying in. This era also saw Charli write the song *Hot Girl*

for the film *Bodies, Bodies, Bodies* and another TikTok trend with *Hot in It* produced by Tiesto. There is almost some sort of subtle self-awareness here both by Charli and her fans – we all really do want to just live the *hot girl, pop girl, rich girl* lifestyle. Perhaps most notable for me was Charli XCX and George Daniel (of The 1975) collaborating again on a remix of Caroline Polachek's *Welcome to My Island* that, once again, blew up on TikTok. It is not the first time this pair have worked together. The underrated song titled *Spinning* has hyperpop undertones and is an all-round good listen for those familiar with both stylings of The 1975 and XCX. The couple have stated that collaborating on this song was the start of their relationship. They have also discussed the fact that Daniel could produce songs on Charli's next album and with the sound they produce together, that would be powerful.

In terms of the next XCX project, these two albums that have just been signed are a whole world of opportunity. There are unconfirmed rumours that the signing is with label *Dirty Hit*, who have also notably signed The 1975, Wolf Alice, Pale Waves, Rina Sawayama and Beabadoobee. Yet, breaking free from Atlantic Records is incredibly notable. Charli has had a turbulent time with this record label, with attempts to try and make her 'more authentic' (whatever that means). Wanting the artist to be less of a 'hot girl' and more of a 'pop girl', she revealed in an interview that Atlantic wanted her to change her image to be more relatable. Charli XCX's appeal comes from the fact that she is the *Break the Rules* and *Boom Clap* girl that has constantly evolved. While it may be her moniker, XCX is in no way just a pop project, but a constant evolution in music.

The new album signing also poses the question as to what direction it will go in. Will hyperpop and PC Music fans

get new content? Recently, A.G. Cook's label has signed new artists who are releasing new albums and making noise in this space. It's true that Charli's fanbase follows her and not the label. I think, no matter the direction Charli takes with these albums, we need to watch out for those involved – it is incredibly likely that the sound stylings of A.G. Cook will return once more. The working relationship of these two music giants is incredibly wholesome in videos and they genuinely do enjoy producing music together. I strongly recommend listening to *Charli XCX's Best Song Ever* podcast, especially with A.G. Cook.

Since the *Crash* tour, Charli's taken a break. It's incredibly important that we treat our idols, our favourite artists, and all people with respect. The fact that she signed long-standing record deals at 16 (which must amount to huge pressure) and still comes out on top is iconic. Before playing the legendary *Vroom Vroom* on her *Crash* tour, Charli talked about the project dubbed *XCXworld* by fans. Produced by the late SOPHIE, there are genuinely amazing songs on there that never, in her words, got the life that they were supposed to have. Yet, fans have been insensitive at her shows to the point where the fanbase has made a joke out of the song *Taxi*. It is incredibly important that the legacy of SOPHIE is honoured and Charli continues this. Respect is a major part of this process. While it is fun to hypothesise about the next albums from Charli, we must remember this.

Overall, the trajectory of Charli XCX is truly amazing. Constantly changing the game, we're all eager to see what happens next. We may indeed see a move towards a more classic 'pop star', but I'm expecting something more from Charli XCX. We definitely have to remember the person behind the name, but whatever her next direction is, it's going to be iconic.





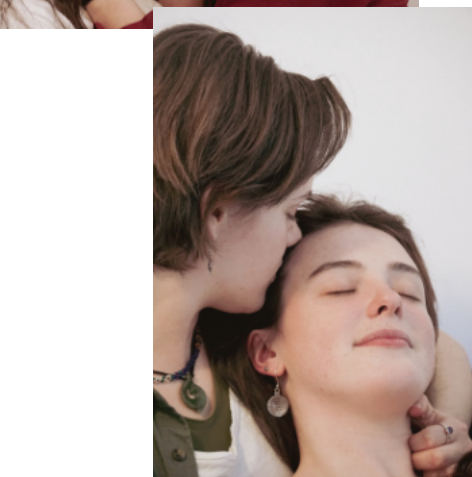




## Portraits of Love

*Photography and words by Jack Sloop (he/him)*

*Models: Izzie Merrie (they/them) and Lauren Dean (she/her)*



I've been working with *The Gay Saint* for three years now, and I finally did my first gay couple photoshoot! Meet Izzie and Lauren! They've been together a year on the weekend of the photoshoot, and they're the most wholesome couple ever!

I've always dreamt of capturing my own portraits of queer love after looking for examples of happy queer people for so long whilst in the closet. It's been great working with Izzie and Lauren to put out some beautiful non-male media into this world, and I hope these photos can bring the same joy and courage that the same media brought me.

It's always been a dream of mine to shoot a gay couple, and having done so many boring straight photoshoots, seeing the chemistry between them was night and day.

I've never seen a couple so in love on film, and they made the most amazing models. Starting with them scrolling through and listening to their favourite songs, the shoot felt so natural and easy. They talked about how they met, the bet they had with their flatmate on staying single, and how they got together.

So strap in, and enjoy these gorgeous portraits of queer love in its most heartwarming form. Thank you Izzie and Lauren!



# Agony Auncle

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Dear Agony Auncle,

*As a lesbian in St Andrews, I'm having some trouble with dating. This is because most of the queer women in St Andrews seem to be big Taylor Swift fans or corporate queers. Where can I find cooler rug munchers to date? (Ps I don't want to travel back and forth from Dundee every time I want a shag)*

*Sincerely,  
Cat Person Seeking Pussy*

Dear Cat Person Seeking Pussy,

Out of all the months I have been writing for this incredible, beautiful, celebratory, important, and should-be-award-winning student magazine, I have never felt so heard by a fellow student. It seems you and me share something that presents a true hurdle to enjoying and partaking in the wonderful queer community within St Andrews. Something that runs so deep in the very ethos and blood of the student body that if anyone dares speak against it, they face ridicule, disdain, and abandonment. It is something we have had to bite our tongues on for too long, and I shan't be silenced any longer... Taylor Swift is not that good.

Now for those of you I have deeply upset, I can hear you already. I hear your screams, your sobs, your pain. But, can we face this reality together? Together. T-Swift just isn't making music that makes me want to dance. Lavender haze? Snooze. Snow on the beach? Where is the music mama (\*Laganja Estranja tongue pop\*)? She was once a star, and I agree, she had great hits, but recently all she is doing is creating white noise for me to sleep too.

Worse yet, we no longer can separate the Taylor Swift queers and corporate queers., I fear they have become one and the same. With Taylor Swift's aeroplane allegedly pumping out CO2 faster than she can pump out the same four chord messes she calls songs, what is the difference between the two? Less than you would think.

So Cat Person Seeking Pussy, I hear you. It is hard to feel this way and yet still want to date and meet people within St Andrews. I feel that pain and I sympathise that Dundee is not the city of dreams. If anything it's flawed like St Andrews. The Swifties are there too, with regular club nights celebrating her discography. It, it seems we can never escape. So what to do?

Unfortunately the only thing to do is accept it. You can either try to learn to love Taylor Swift, maybe dip into her older stuff (who doesn't love Love Story), or block her on Spotify. Limit your exposure to her music personally so that when you inevitably go on a date with a fan, you aren't so burnt out on her music. You can also start recycling more, composting, and picking up litter around town to help offset her allegedly high aeroplane emission and to keep you conscious clear.

You also can start supporting the mom and pop and parent shops run by queer people all over this country, helping to invest in our community and divest from the corporate queer takeover. You can help spread awareness, becoming the change you want to see on campus, and maybe helping all of us queer people change too.

I know this is a lot to ask, but I do not think it will be a sisyphian task. I believe we all can change, and you can help us do that.

From someone who loves a Taylor Swift fan, I know it is possible.

Love always,  
Your Agony

Dear Agony Auntle,

*I've been secretly in love with my academic sister for over a year now and I don't know what to do. I'm too afraid to say anything and hoped it would just go away but it hasn't, the feelings are still there. The way she treats me is very confusing as she says she is straight but her actions say otherwise. She is graduating soon and I'm scared that if I don't say something soon I'll regret it for a long time.*

Sincerely,  
Scrambled Head

Dear Scrambled,

Academic families are an odd one... I have known many to go array with feelings such as these. There are many possibilities for why this could be such a common occurrence, but I believe, most likely, that the encouraged closeness of a strong academic family is one that can naturally lead to romantic feelings. An odd clump of teenagers and young adults helping each other find some routine and comfort in the early years at university as well as getting wildly drunk is only a recipe for someone to get attached.

At this point in your academic career, I presume you are more like close friends with your academic sister, which makes things more complicated. Although I am not often one to discourage the confessions of honest feelings, there is the predicament of your friendship to consider, and then her identity.

It is incredibly important to keep in mind that, when you confess feelings to someone, if they do not feel comfortable with how those feelings impact your relationship, the friendship could be irrevocably damaged. If you feel like that is not something you want to risk, then I would discourage you from this action. Secondly, I have no examples to explore of her actions that lead you to question her sexuality, and you could very much be correct in your presumptions. However, presuming someone's identity is not something I would ever encourage. There is only one concrete thing to base your actions on, and that is how she chooses to identify herself. Despite how we might secretly hope that the world is all a little bit gay, there are a few out there that simply are not queer. And if she is straight, then it is only more likely that confessing feelings would put her into an uncomfortable situation.

However, if you feel as though there is not so much to be lost in your confession as there would be in the constant "what if's?" that would come from keeping your feelings quiet, then this is your choice still to make. If you are to go forward with your feelings, think about how this may impact her and try to minimise that; do not force a confession of her sexuality into the conversation, and make it clear that you still care about her as a good friend despite your feelings. Ultimately, this is your friendship that you will be much more capable of navigating than your Auntle is, and so long as you are considerate of her boundaries and happiness, I trust that a good call will be made.

Yours sincerely,  
Your Auntle

**TRANS PRIDE**

*Lucy Westenberger (she/her)*











**STORMING THE CATHEDRAL**

*Cathedral: Jack Sloop (he/him)  
Pride flag: Mercedes Mehling*

# Horoscopes

Written by Jack  
Kennedy (they/him)

## ♈ *Aries*

(21 MARCH - 19 APRIL)

This month, you're like an ocean breeze, coming and going as you please. We can't forget you, Aries. Our hearts are aching, our breath you've taken. Aries, don't leave me this way. Wait another hour or two, I need you to stay, don't make me beg for you.

## ♉ *Taurus*

(20 APRIL - 20 MAY)

Does anyone know the words to this song, Taurus? You may have crashed your car into the bridge, but we know you love it. You're on a different road this month, Taurus, even going as far as the Milky Way. We know you love it.

## ♊ *Gemini*

(21 MAY - 20 JUNE)

First things first Gemini, you're the realest. You may come in two, but let the whole world feel it. All parts of you are so fancy and they are most definitely in that fast lane from L.A. to Tokyo. Make sure you don't trash the hotel this month Gemini, and don't get too drunk on the minibar. Stay fancy.

## ♋ *Cancer*

(21 JUNE - 22 JULY)

Lock it, lock it, lock-lock it, unlock it. You're feeling like an astronaut watching the world all alone. This month is a rollercoaster ride for you Cancer, you're on my mind. You've got the roof down. Have you got the key? Can you unlock it?



♌ **Leo**

(23 JULY - 22 AUGUST)

Why are you on your own on a Friday night, Leo? If we're going out out, for the night, I'mma meet you down on the floor. Leo, you get it started, let's go and watch you dance.

♍ **Virgo**

(23 AUGUST - 22 SEPTEMBER)

How are you feeling now, Virgo? You have had an interesting couple of months with some interesting visions. You may have made many an enemy, but now you finally understand. Listen to some anthems, experience some visions, but be careful not to detonate.

♎ **Libra**

(23 SEPTEMBER - 22 OCTOBER)

Libra, this next horoscope is really iconic. If you don't know it, that's ok, we can help you learn it. If you like this horoscope that means you're cute, you're sexy and your rides really sporty. It means you're a bad girl, it means you're a hot girl, it means you like to drive fast. This month for you is Vroom Vroom, let's ride.

♏ **Scorpio**

(23 OCTOBER - 21 NOVEMBER)

I love it when you call me Señorita, Scorpio. I wish I could pretend I didn't need ya. Every touch is ooh-la-la, it's true la-la-la, ooh I should be running, ooh you keep me coming for ya.

♐ **Sagittarius**

(22 NOVEMBER - 21 DECEMBER)

You're never crying on the bathroom floor, Sagittarius. You're most definitely never coming back for more, we'll catch you walking out that door. Tonight you look hot in it, rocking it, dropping it.

♑ **Capricorn**

(21 DECEMBER - 20 JANUARY)

Capricorn, you're picture perfect blue. It's as if you're sunbathing on the moon. Stars are always shining as your bones illuminate. The beat for you Capricorn goes on, and on, and on. The glitter in the darkness of the world, Capricorn, is you. Boom clap, the sound of your heart, you make me feel good.

♒ **Aquarius**

(21 JANUARY - 18 FEBRUARY)

Woah Aquarius, you're hot. Quite literally, you're on fire this month. There is no need for New Beginnings for you this month, you're Here and Queer. Whether its feelings of joy or remembering your history, celebrate the fact that you come in all the right flavours.

♓ **Pisces**

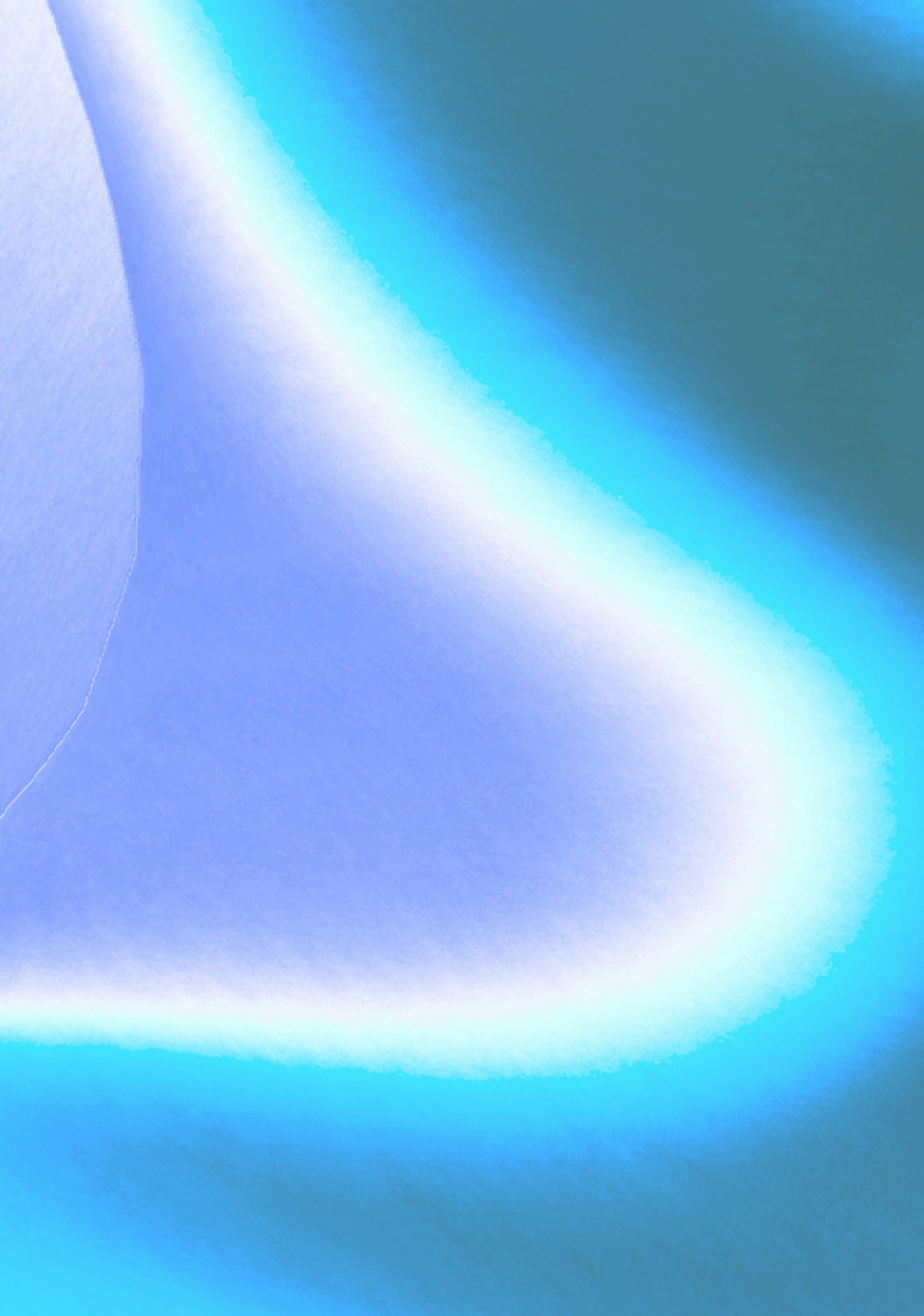
(19 FEBRUARY - 20 MARCH)

After the after-party Pisces, you're going to keep it going. You're going to rip it up and the neighbours might complain. Monday to Sunday, it's never too late. You're always saying that you don't want to stop.

**The Gay Saint**

# **CELEBRATION**

**Volume 6 Issue 6**





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