

BOUND to STRUGGLE

Where Kink and
Radical Politics Meet

VOLUME 3

Language

Well, here we are again. I've got half an hour before leaving to go put this thing together, so it's a good time to write the intro that I've been contemplating for three months. Graduate school has made me a perfectionist in procrastination.

Thank you for picking up Volume 3 of Bound to Struggle. I like this rhythm of getting one zine out every year, around winter time. Allowing a full year to gather submissions by making contacts through the internet, conferences, travelling and word-of-mouth makes me not only appreciate what words come my way, but the process of collecting and distributing them. Process process process.

This issue's theme is LANGUAGE, and most of the pieces included touch upon the theme in one way or another. I have been slightly looser in my choices in terms of what is, or is not, strictly political. Or what is, or is not, strictly kinky. I hope this choice helps bring in different kinds of readers, or readers with different interests, without alienating the more traditional readership. I have been happy to include more art, fiction, and entries with less formal narrative structure – thanks to those creators, especially, for submitting. And of course thank you to everyone who has sent me work over these past 4 years!

For each previous issue, I've added my own piece, but this year, I couldn't make it happen. I've been on some sort of search for some sort of answer about the connections between kink and radical politics, but the accurate articulation still escapes me. Add on an onslaught of new information from grad school, and the mix only becomes more viscus and unclear.

Right now, I'm trying to use the anarchist idea of the Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) – an isolated space where the social norms are shifted away from regularly experienced hierarchy around identity – and apply it to the BDSM scene or play space, as a space where two (or more)

people have theoretically equal powers of consent. I have this idea that a *change* is made when we consent to interactions in a sexual way that, outside a consensual space, would cause us pain and/or trauma. And instead of leaving that brilliant feeling we get when we practice our kink in our play spaces, we internalize it somehow and take it with us. It makes us stronger for the varied oppressions enacted upon us every day. (I wrote a paper on this and have been giving it at conferences all year – if folks want to read it, just send me an email and I'll get it to you.) That's what I've got in a nutshell, any ideas would be most helpful!

So all I can end with is one big thank you to everyone who has submitted, distributed and read BtS. I've been honored to meet so many amazing folks, in person, through mail, and over the internet. Special thanks to Samuel for layout assistance, Lee at Early to Bed and Kate at Women & Children's First for Chicago support and distro.


And I'm always looking for more distro opportunities for all the volumes, past, present and future! Send these connections, and your writing, to

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Broke-neck Chick

Early on, skin pulled taut my tongue,
insuring that I stayed well within the confines
of sweet teeth organized
by middle school orthodontics.
Lazy language emerged as I traveled
the tongue tied ropes of verbal articulation:
R's escaped me, that became dat,
and win meals spun in the breeze.
Even now, early morning finds me panting,
a broke neck chick gasping for air,
with head back, mouth wide,
and tongue still collapsed, a flaccid muscle
that never knew the hope that pulls on
flesh with guy wire support,
linking tongue tip with floating bones
and pubic symphosis.
Darling, follow that tongue of yours
up past teeth towards pleasure.
Kiss so hard that warm blood floods your mouth
and your trapped tongue jumps right on out.

Pain is Unbelievable

BEFORE:

I love being alive. It is amazing and delightful.

Also in this life, regardless of my intentions, I am daily duped into some scheme to maintain social stratifications of ability, gender, race class, adultism... There is no escaping that I am part of a predatory social machine that eats people, one that won't survive without the delicate symbiosis of oppressor and oppressed. Rather than work on ways to set myself apart, vainly hoping I can be an exception, I am going to be a crack in the engine block. I will shut it down by simply refusing to do its work.

I want this this because I want to live, and there is no halvesies on this point- if I am either I am all. What, then, does neither look like?

DURING:

I am constantly scanning my environment, on watch for how to be only liberated in a society that won't survive if I am. I'm vigilant. It is incessant work. Sometimes I cry because I can't make it stop- neither the knowledge of what is happening, nor my efforts to be ready for what comes next in hopes that this time I can find one more foothold towards freedom, let go of one more grab at power. I can't amend what I've inherited alone, and what I've inherited is a set of dynamics whose sole purpose is to alienate me from my peers by making me think I have to choose between us who gets to be human. It is overwhelming, and I refuse to look away. I am always thinking, readjusting, assessing, trying again.

This world is terrifying and I'm a perpetrator of terror. I need a space to unlock an experience that matches this awareness, to let it out before it festers into hate or illness.

BEFORE:

We have no communal grieving process. We do not coordinate people to sit on the street in shifts, wailing to bear witness to the confusion and sadness that infuses this era. Were I to evidence its depth, to let it out, I would be castigated, the natural process of grief slandered into mental illness.

I have learned from this. I am excellent at being okay. I'm fine, I'm fine I'm fine. It's okay.

It's not okay. Where can I be not okay?

AFTER:

My nipples are constantly hard these past days, reminders of how his teeth bit so hard they bled, because I asked him to bite and he did, because I asked. As I walk through the public school hallways, I have this part of me, this secret fortification I can retreat to: there are spaces where I can be explicit about how we are creating our experience, about the power involved, about what I do and don't want to be part of. There are spaces where I not only don't have to pretend be 'fine', but I can't be, and that's safe.

DURING:

When the first few lashes fell, I was mildly astonished at the feeling. Surprisingly, being hit makes me laugh- a sparkle of "is that all?" My partner was surprised, too-

laughing? Yes. Laughing. Each bite made me giggle: it's a game, it is fun. I can do this. When they got harder I made little plans of anticipation, a savvy perfectionist navigating how to "get through it". As the blows began to catch me unaware, my super-sassy wit couldn't explain or sort the experience. I had to drop my 'together' attitude entirely. Rather, I couldn't choose to drop it; my ever-ready preparedness was wrenched from me, escorted by involuntary gasps and guttural sounds I couldn't plan if I tried. No more anticipation. No being ready. No making sure everything is okay. No being perfect. No understanding. I was left with only a bright shock of feeling, preciously overwhelming my thoughts, wiping them out for a moment. The pain is unbelievable. And it's happening. Just like life. We are well met.

AFTER:

The only word I have for that time is 'livid' but it's more accurately a release from being livid, from, as they say, 'feeling strangulated because of strong emotion'. Only after the scene do I know what I've unlocked or released.

NOW

In that place- as in the space between breathing in and out- in that pause I am free of my conditioning, my worry, full to the brim with experience. In the intervening moments I 'recover', assess, how am I? But for that time, I have cut underneath the social to the body, the body whose imperative is joy. Reunited, I can remember her, re-establish trust, and perhaps keep her with me.

Black, Blue, & Brown

[This is about my unfinished process; I know these few lines only touch the surface of all that I could say, all that could be explained, details that have been left out, thoughts I have yet to think, encounters I have yet to have. I haven't figured this all out. I don't know how consistently this feeling or these thoughts are there for me- they tend not to be there in the moment; when I'm playing with someone, when I'm feeling trust with them, trust for them. But afterwards, & before. . . I struggle (pun intended, of course).]

I'm not sure when I started being conscious of this dynamic- race & how we see ourselves- in the context of sex. I do know that in the past- at the very beginning of my discovery of my kink self- I had a date/play partner who projected a more public dom/sub image of our relationship than was actually true- more importantly, than was ever agreed upon, or consented to. There were a million reasons why that relationship was unhealthy, but at the time I just knew that many things about that projection felt REALLY wrong. Looking back, I can't help but see how intense it is/was that my date- a white person- made public, non-consensual comments to our friends implying that I- a genderqueer/trans masculine-identified person of color- wanted to be her "boy". It's true that when we fucked, I was in the process of discovering my bottom self, my submissive self, but her projection, comments & jokes weren't about asking me what I was thinking, what I wanted, what I felt- they were about her own assumptions & what she wanted people to think about her. But can we just break this down, for a minute?! This non-consensual image of a white person

with a POC sub- it's an intense one, for me. Not one that I'd necessarily be comfortable with as a stand-alone image, with no context. I know that context is what it's all about, but still- when I'm playing with someone, what we're both seeing is key, right? How does each person process these images? What does it mean to be furthering a process for someone when you don't necessarily know their politics? After a longer line of thoughts leading to each other, I always end up here: Can I bottom to a white person whose anti-racist politics I'm not sure of? Should it matter to me? What does it mean that it does matter to me? How do we dialogue about it when I don't want to subject myself to dealing with someone's fear of being called on their racism?

The first time a date of mine acknowledged the mere fact of our mixed-race ("interracial") relationship & was open to talking about it, I cried- because no one had ever said those words to me. No one had ever taken this thing that always lies underneath for me, and brought it to the surface. Just that naming of it, taking the power away from it, is all that I needed to feel safer about it. I cried because I'd never realized that all I needed was a naming- and I cried because no one else had ever done that for me or with me ever before.

These days- years later, now- I find myself to be more of a switch than I used to be. I'm sure this is for many reasons, but right now I find myself wondering if part of the reason isn't to do with my hesitance to go to play parties with mostly white folks. The kink community is a relatively small one (isn't it always?!), & I don't know that I'd be able to refrain from contextualizing the people I see there- where I know them from, my assumptions

about their politics, etc.- when I'm considering joining a scene with them, or even around them. What do I do as a genderqueer/trans person of color with submissive tendencies who doesn't feel comfortable hooking up with white strangers?

Now, clearly one answer to this struggle is for me to find a hot POC top. But it's really not that simple- there's the question of monogamy vs. polyamory (I'm not looking for just one partner right now), not to mention how I would go about finding a POC top I wanted to play with- factoring in the demographics of the queer community where I live, who I feel most comfortable around, others' transphobia, etc., I come up with slim pickings.

I'm not confident that the S/M & kink scene always understands that as queer white folks (and moreso if they're gender-conforming), there's more than just kink to be thinking about— do most folks keep anti-oppression values (if they have them) in their consciousness during a scene? (& is it possible for folks to do that & not process it out loud? With me?) Recently I've realized that I've been struggling with reclaiming my kink identity in a more public way- given the assumptions people make when they see me or flirt with me (my masculine-ness gets mis-read as butch or a top), what assumptions are being made or being projected on me based on race? What about when they start putting together race & submissiveness? I generally only play/go to sex parties in spaces where I'm around people I know, friends of friends who probably have similar politics to me. Why is this important? Because I need to feel safe, obviously, for one- it took me years to even begin to be comfortable with my genderqueer/trans self in a kink/play party

context. But now that I'm (more) comfortable with being open about my transness during play, what about my race? I'm not into race play, & I can't help but think about the image of a person of color in bondage to a white person— especially if that person of color is me. The scene would be consensual, yes, but the image is still there. It doesn't matter if it's not in anyone else's mind but mine; I'm still uneasy about it.

For now, I'm still taking my time, being okay with being hesitant, confident that my politics are mine, my comfort level is mine, and my body is mine- I have no issue with making sure I make my own decisions, consensually, and confidently. I'm hoping that soon these questions churning inside my head will finally seem articulate enough for the next time I consider playing with someone; that I won't be afraid of whatever the other person might say, with having to say no to a potential encounter, and that maybe, just maybe, we'll agree on what we want things to look like- and more importantly, feel like. Struggle is something that keeps me going, keeps me fired up, keeps me thinking; not to mention keeps me feeling alive and both in my body and mind. Here's to us all struggling together, with each other and against each other, but remaining close enough to hold each other there.



BITE

by Sarah Mangle

Rockstar rebel crows filled the sky, calling
the apocalypse

It is the end of the world.

I trudge through the mud and gravel, my leotard legs shaking more violently
the closer I get.

I am nine years old and my Teacher has razor sharp ugly shoes and a
tight braid of hair rolled into a bun, and magnificent tits that are small
and pointy like miniature mountains, and when she is hollering at us for our
foul mouths or our passion for chewing gum, I pray that her blouse will
burst open and I will catch one of the popped off buttons in my mouth.
When this happens I will suck on it like a lozenge until she comes to
retrieve it, her long pointy fingers fishing in my mouth.

Meeting you was like going to a spelling bee. I stand there, spotlight
hot with my dress on backwards, catching the words that you toss
at me in my mouth, I try to spit them back at you, LETTERS IN THE
RIGHT ORDER.

You got that ONE right,
you can continue.

I fell in love with my teacher. She worked in the tiny school house next to the cemetery next to the ocean. I moved ~~there~~ here from the city. Had difficulty smiling and making friends.

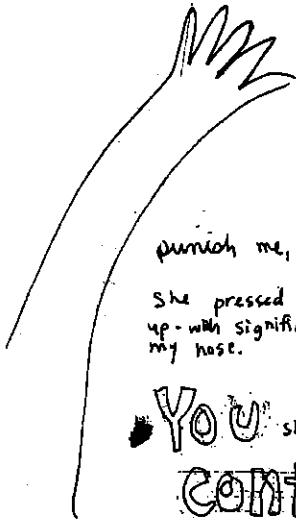
punish me, oh please, so I can stay longer. ^{with you} make me write lines so I can strain myself to be as disciplined

Discipline:

I wore the same dress every day, hoping my dress would help her remember me better and notice what a terror I was.

~~a nine year old girl
with no sense of time
and rhythm must be taught~~

And I am your apprentice. Teach me to behave and I will curl up close to you each night, reciting Robert Frost will you breathe whistles to sleep softly on my cheek.



punish me, oh please, so I can stay with you longer.

She pressed a long long narrow finger into my belly and pushed it up with significant pressure to my chest, aching my sternum and flicking my nose.

You she had perfect pronunciation **are out of control.**

I closed my eyes tight. My hands became claws.
and in slow motion

my voice was deeper and deeper, low and growling. I exploded seven feet tall. A huge beast of sex and meat and decay who lived on the beach, dark flesh covered with Sesame Street Shags and googly Muppet Eyes.

I tore at her tight flesh as she screamed with delight and desire. I chewed on her bloody thighs and sucked on her toes until I swallowed each one.

Young Lady, that is quite enough.



Permanent Sentiment

Anyone would have been impressed by the lone tattoo artist's rich cocoa-colored skin had every exposed inch of it not been completely obliterated by the over-abundant populace of tattoos. Clearly she had been a primary consultant to the Crayola crayon company in creating and naming obscure colors, as every imaginable hue, in every imaginable form a tattoo could take blended into one another on her arms, from the biceps that bulged just past the wide straps of her black tank top, to her wrists and down the backs of her hands, over her thighs just below her raggedly ripped cutoffs, down her legs, around her thick calves, and ending into a slouched ring of white gym socks that disappeared into a pair of stain-riddled black work boots. Words, pictures, and symbols communed together in a dizzying cacophony, the meaning of which would surely throw future archeologists and semiologists into a life-long, frenzied race for interpretation.

And just like the tattoo artist, the parlor could have just as easily been wall-less, had they not been so effectively displaying posters of every kind of human body part known to Creation masterfully and artistically enhanced by a tattoo. The industry was obviously indiscriminate in its ability to turn skin into canvas. Everything about the parlor was noisy, a pure assault of ocular overkill. In contrast, acid jazz played softly in the background, off beat to the intermittent buzz of the artist's electric needle.

The small redhead bounced into the parlor like she owned it, the edges of her yellow skirt flapping about her thighs, the word "Super" printed across her tight white tank top jiggling in time with her small, full breasts. She

took position in the doorway of the front counter, her fists pressed into her narrow hips. Though she wore a pair of calf-length, black leather boots with a stiletto heel, she was still short. Nonetheless, she stood like an imposing superhero ready to fight an unmentionable crime.

"Somebody do me," she announced to no one in particular.

The tattoo artist glanced up from her work on a young guy's back and stared at the intruder through goggled eyes. The redhead's stare shot straight through the artist. She lifted the needle from her client's back, intrigued by the bright, bold challenge in the woman's eyes.

"How would you like to be done?" she asked, feeling as though she were suddenly negotiating a rather risky business deal.

The redhead flounced uninvited behind the front desk and stopped inches away from the artist. The artist could smell the sweet, cold sweat on the redhead's flawless white skin. Her long fiery red curls glistened in the light and smelled like fresh citrus. For a painfully long instant the artist was truly baffled. Why is she baffled?

The redhead stared down at the guy's back. She twisted her head in various angles, stopping each time to analyze the artist's work. The artist was in the middle of tattooing the word "Redemption" in an archaic Goth script across the client's left shoulder blade.

"How stupid," the redhead finally said.

The artist squinted at the woman. The guy on the table attempted to sit up to get a better view but the artist pushed his head back down into the chair.

"Excuse me?"

"Words. Tattooed words. Stupid." The redhead glanced around the parlor and released a bored sigh. "You have an art book I can look at...one without words?"

The artist put the needle in its holder on the counter and pushed the goggles from her eyes and up onto her forehead. "Words are my thing," she said defiantly.

"Don't get much business then, do you?"

The artist opened her mouth then closed it. "Hold up. How you gone come up into my shop, demand service and then insult my work?"

"Are you dense? Did you not catch my method? I didn't think much on it, but had I known it would be too complicated for you to grasp I would have performed the remedial version."

The client in the chair laughed. The artist popped him in the head. She glared at the redhead. "What's wrong with words?"

"I don't have enough time to tell you what's wrong with words," the redhead said glancing at her nails. "But the short, remedial version is tattoos are permanent.

Sentiments are not. Words are sentiments and therefore not permanent. Why would you get words, any words, tattooed on your body when the sentiment behind those words might change or no longer apply in the future?" Without waiting for an answer, the redhead continued. "See what I mean? Stupid." She gave the parlor another once-over. "Got any bottled water?"

The artist clenched her jaw and began to absent-mindedly tap her foot against the tattoo gun's pedal, refusing to feel the tender edges of her bruised ego.

For a moment the room was silent, except for the intermittent buzz of the tattoo gun the artist held in her hand. The redhead stared down at the gun then met the artist's seething gaze. She grinned and raised an eyebrow in silent question.

"Not for you I don't," the artist finally said, removing her foot from the pedal and putting the gun on the counter. "And some sentiments are more permanent than others, you know." The artist looked at the redhead, a glint of a challenge in her eyes.

The redhead stared back at the artist for a protracted moment. "Oh yeah?" She smirked. Challenge accepted. "Which words?"

"Do you really want to find out?"

The redhead shrugged nonchalantly. "I'm game. But I have to say I'm not easily convinced."

"Enough said." The artist smacked the guy in the chair on the ass. "Get lost Willy."

Willy groggily pulled himself up onto his elbows. "But you didn't finish," he protested.

"I'll finish in an hour. Take a walk."

Noting the finality in the artist's words, Willy got out of the chair and slouched out of the parlor, sans shirt, his unfinished tattoo contrasting against his pale back.

The artist went into a back room then returned a few moments later, a long length of black silk rope coiled in her hand.

"Sit," she commanded the redhead, pointing to the chair Willy had just vacated.

"What are you going to do with that?" Her voice rang high with equal amounts of innocence and cynicism.

The artist reached around and grabbed the redhead by her glistening hair and dragged her down into the chair.

"I'm going to teach you a lesson about sentiment," the artist snarled. The redhead's eyes grew wide. The smirk fell away from her face.

Before she could protest, the artist straddled her in the chair, pressing her knees firmly in the crooks of the redhead's arms. The artist leaned over the redhead, her tits smothering the redhead's face. The artist grabbed all of her hair and swiftly tied it with the rope. She tied a

long chain of knots in her hair molding it into a ponytail then yanked hard on the end. The artist smiled as she heard the redhead's muffled yelps. Winding the rope around the back of the chair, the artist pulled away and began wrapping the rope around the redhead, securing her to the chair. First she wound around the redhead's upper arms and chest, bringing the rope back around the chair. Then she wound the rope around her biceps and just below her tits. She pulled tightly on the rope, forcing the word "Super" on the smaller woman's shirt to bulge forward. The artist used her knees to spread the redhead's legs apart and then expertly bound each leg to an armrest on the chair.

The redhead strained against the rope, her eyes wide. The artist stepped away and stared at her handiwork. She saw that the rope bit into her skin and caused a pink flush to form around the bindings. Tipped backward and immobilized in the chair, the redhead looked like she was at the dentist's office facing a menacing instrument. Her eyes were wide with fear. But behind the fear the artist detected a tiny glint of lust.

The artist gripped the armrests and leaned forward until her face was inches away from the redhead's. "You still game, sweetheart?"

The redhead struggled against the ropes. The flush in her skin grew brighter. "Take this shit off of me, you asshole."

"Ah-ah. See it was that big mouth of yours that got you into this predicament in the first place," the artist said. "I highly doubt it's going to get you out of it."

She stood up and clapped her hands twice. The lights in the parlor went out. The acid jazz suddenly transformed into some kind of heavy rhythmic music that sounded like voices chanting in a distant cave. The artist flipped a switch and the lamp dangling over the chair shined upon the redhead. She squinted in response. The artist then pulled the redhead's skirt out of the rope bindings and folded it upward. Slowly she dragged her hand back and forth across the nylon softness of the redhead's panties. She slipped three of her fingers inside and, just as she suspected, the woman was very wet. She played with the redhead's slick pussy lips, watching as the woman's eyes clamped shut and she began to moan.

"That's right, you little loud-mouthed slut. You like the way the rope feels, don't you?"

The redhead pushed against her bindings and tried to grind against the artist's fingers. The artist fondled the woman slowly and gently, savoring her thick juices through her fingertips. "Look at you. Wouldn't just love for me to fuck you right now?" The redhead nodded and moaned louder. The artist smiled.

With her free hand she pulled a long pair of scissors off the counter. She pressed the cold metal against the woman's inner thigh and the woman jumped. Once she calmed herself to the feel of the instrument, the artist slowly began to cut away the woman's panties, exposing her hairy mons.

"First we must prepare the canvas," the artist said moving away from the redhead. The woman tried to follow the artist's movement, but between the darkness and the hair

binding holding back her head she was unable to see beyond the glare of the light.

Several moments later the artist returned. She grabbed a low stool from nearby and sat between the redhead's parted legs. Silently she stared down at the redhead, a curious look in her eyes. Then she slowly raised her hand. Instead of a normal hand, the artist wore a leather glove, each finger ending in long, metal straight blades that glinted in the singular light. The redhead gasped.

"What the fuck is that?"

"Shhh. Don't speak," the artist whispered, leaning forward. "It might make me miss. And you don't want that at a time like this."

"A time like this? What--?"

Before she could finish the question, the artist began dragging the backsides of the bladed fingers through the red patch of her pubic hair. The redhead's mouth gaped open.

Still fondling the redhead's curly thatch with her real hand, the artist dipped one bladed finger into the crack of the redhead's cunt and slowly twisted. Though she remained still, the redhead's eyes widened, her mouth gaped open. Sweat glistened on her flushed face.

"I...promise...I'll be good," she hiccupped. "P-please...STOP."

The artist gave her a sympathetic look. "I know you'll try, dear."

The artist chuckled, a sinister gleam in her eye. While holding the blade close to the woman's opening, she plunged two of her own fingers deep inside of the woman. The woman opened her mouth to scream, but instead hiccupped, her eyes opening wide in surprise.

"Huh? Uh...mmm." Once the shock wore off, the woman immediately responded to the artist's slow steady thrusting, her hips rolling back and forth to keep time.

"Gotcha, didn't I?"

"You got me. Yes! You got me," the woman said, sounding miles away from the Artist's meaning.

Then just as quickly as she had entered, the artist pulled her fingers from inside the redhead and began smearing the woman's cum on her pubic hair. Once her thatch was thoroughly saturated with her own juices, the artist methodically scraped away the hair with the razor. Her motions were quick and exacting. Within moments she had shaved the surface clean.

She examined her own work, rubbing her flattened hand along the now smooth surface. "Nice." Then she prepped the area with alcohol. The redhead moaned and squirmed in reaction to the sharp sting.

"I'm s-so sorry."

The artist leaned forward. "I'm sorry. I didn't quite hear that. What did you say?"

"I said I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said what I said about your work...about words."

"That's right," the artist said in mock remembrance. "You did insult me. What was that you said, now? 'Tattooed words are stupid?'" The artist shook her head.

"Something about tattoos being too permanent to capture words, which are merely temporary sentiments? Isn't that what you said?"

The redhead nodded. The artist slapped her hard on the thigh. "Sorry. I didn't catch that."

"Yes... YES! That's what I said." The redhead started crying again. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I didn't know what I was saying. Please stop!"

"No, see, I think you did mean it. I think you knew exactly what you were saying. You were just wrong. There are certain words that accurately and permanently capture a sentiment that will never change. I'm about to introduce you to such a word."

With that, the artist grabbed her electric needle, pushed the goggles back over her eyes and began her work.

She didn't really enjoy tattooing soft flesh. She mostly loved the sensation of needle pressing against bone with nothing more than a thin epidermal layer separating the two. Though she never admitted it to her clients, she loved the fact that tattooing the bonier parts of the body

caused more pain. But she had, however, learned over the years how much more she had to puncture softer flesh – centimeters, really – in order to elicit the same response. She was thoroughly enjoying this unexpected moral lesson she was imparting upon this wayward woman. Each installment of the needle's razor point into the redhead's soft pubic flesh made her wetter and wetter. She worked slowly, relishing each of the woman's moans, whimpers and, at times, outright screams.

She used her favorite most popular font to inscribe the six black letters. Three were placed on the right labia, three on the left. Equally spaced and shadowed for effect, the artist engraved the word she believed the redhead would agree was the most appropriate permanent sentiment: SINNER.

in my mouth.

i stopped sucking my thumb in the fifth grade. i was 11 years old. i wouldn't do it at school, but at home, at night. my mom helped me quit. she paid me ten dollars to stop sucking during the day. and then an additional ten dollars to stop sucking all together. ever since i have been worried that if i put my left thumb in my mouth i'd never take it out. that i wouldn't be able to stop again. now 17 years later, at 28 years old, i put my thumb in my mouth, then each finger, my whole hand.

we were wrestling. he called me skinny. i pinned him down, told him that i was huge, that i would bite him if he didn't take it back. he wriggled up his shirt "start with my back."

my mom taught ceramics to old folks in the suburbs of minneapolis once a week. i would come along as an assistant sometimes. during coil pots one day i saw emma roll a perfect clay ball, the size of a whopper, and put it in her mouth. she didn't chew it, but let it sit on her tongue with her lips shut for over a half an hour. i wasn't sure if i should report her to mom or just keep an eye out. she seemed totally content. then she started to drool and i told on her. the nursing aides came and tried to talk it out of her mouth, she just shook her head. they then tried prying it out. she ended up on the floor before they bested the clay ball from her mouth. i used to share her name and i wondered if i would be like her when i was old.

i didn't drink for my last 2 years of rugby playing, opting to chug soda out of a boot instead of beer out of a boot,

and paying for it with a fair share of over sugared, over carbonated stomach aches. but this time i ended up drinking. and spilling. turns out i had sucked a lot more cock than all the dykes at the party, and though i had not tallied them up, they were more than happy to oblige and were even happier to ogle at my figure of 11 cocks in one year. turns out that for being the biggest dyke there, i also had the biggest appetite.

s.k and i made a print together last year. we were facing each other, fists in our mouths and letter press conversation between us. mine said "i can only come to explain it with one fist in my mouth and the other fluttering ideas about space that exists between."

we went skinny dipping at walden pond. then i sucked his dick on the carpeted floor of our grandparent's house. he was my cousin. i can still remember how he tasted.

like hotdogs. i sew lace to hotdogs and put them in my mouth. i suck coddle bite these salty, over processed food items with all the will and attention of my 11 year old self who chooses not to worry about where the other kids put their fingers. emma is allowed a clay ball on the surface of her tongue. and i am allowed my thumb. and hotdogs. and anything else i choose.

Ways to Disappear Completely

I forget until
I'm all paw & dirty in the garden,
gnawing pigs ears until I'm so full.

Give me a new name.
Something fierce & fugitive.

I'll recite alphabetically backwards:

Burden, Bludgeon, Blow-to-the-head

list the options until I
no longer recognize the language.

Callow, I know.
But I need the master's reprimand.

Me, milling around the yard
& suddenly the thrill of the kick,
the black boot meeting my ribs—

Dirty

I quiver while the bath
makes carnage of me.

& then someone's inserting,
clutching my hips against the lip of the tub.

I am a perfect thief, he says,
do not hesitate to touch me.

But the water is never hot enough,
just barely time for tugboats, rubber ducky.



CAION PESSOA



A COISA MAIS LINDA QUE EXISTE

Vampire Stories

We can rationalize our kinky fantasies as much as our hearts desire.

We can delve introspectively into our own psychology, and we should. Pragmatically (unfortunately), we need to organize politically to protect homosexuals, transsexuals, pornographers, sadomasochists, polyamorous families, and so on.

But in the end, there's really only one compelling reason to have or to want the kind of sex we have and want: *Because it's fun. Because it's really, really fun.* Within the sexually liberated community, why are some of us drawn more to floggers and others to gender-bending? Does it really matter? We play with different ideas because we love to play. We act on our fantasies because we imagine thrilling fantasies.

In contemplating the labels I have reclaimed and the labels I have found insufficient, I have pondered "slut," "straight," "bisexual," "submissive," "dominant," "family." Each of those words deserves its own essay, its own volumes. But truthfully, none has made me feel quite so giddy as *vampire*.

Around the time I hit puberty, I became fascinated by vampire stories. To be fair, this is an ideological debt I owe largely to Joss Whedon. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* first aired when I was an impressionable thirteen, and it served as a role model of female empowerment for many among my generation. Several books of academic essays interpreting Joss Whedon's sociological and philosophical impact have already been published. Some of these essays have titles like, "A Kantian Analysis of Moral Judgment in *Buffy the Vampire*

Slayer.”¹ And while I wouldn’t protest Mr. Stroud’s Kantian analysis, he does ignore one important aspect of the show’s popularity: Vampires are sexy. There’s a deliciously dark romance of the fetish look, the power exchange, the physical strength, the biting... Buffy has sex with two of them. In the episode “Smashed,” our beloved feminist heroine has sex that transitions seamlessly from a fight to the death, and results in the destruction of an entire house.

Even in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*—the Victorian-era antecedent of all Western vampire stories—vampires are unmistakably sexy villains. Count Dracula only attacks Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker in their respective bedrooms, which he can only enter by invitation. Jonathan Harker also writes of the vampires, “I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips... There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth.”²

So, when the emotional work of contemplating sexual orientation and power structures exhausts me, I turn to vampire stories to refresh.

On Halloween weekend in 2006, my lover and I went to our local dungeon dressed in black leather, and I wore vampire teeth that fixed over my canines with denture paste. The teeth looked realistic, but I discovered

¹ Scott R. Stroud. Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Mythology: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale. Ed. James P. South. Open Court Publishing Company, 2003.

² Stoker, Bram. Dracula. 1897. Bantam Books, New York, 1981. Page 39.

that when I bit my friends, I actually left them faint red smiley-faces: two points and a semi-circle. Before that night, my lover had found a broken branch on the ground, about an inch and a half in diameter, and he had whittled it into a wooden stake. He pressed the point of the stake against my breastbone and ordered me to take my pants off. He pushed me onto a black leather chair, rolled a condom over the blunt end of the stake, and shoved that into my cunt. He ordered me to play with my clit, and each time I slowed down, he pulled out the stake and pressed the point against my chest. "Cum or I'll turn you to dust," he threatened. I obeyed.

Black and Brown Blues: Trolling for "a hundred gutters"

Reply

Well, now I feel stupid for not reading closer, I should have realized what was going on! I blame fatigue. Unfortunately, I'm not interested in meeting up. I wish you luck on your deceptively mislabeled hunt!

- Show quoted text -

On 8/13/07, Margo Miller -----@gmail.com> wrote:

Haha. Well now I will definitely check them out. I'm sure you don't know me--I just got to town a couple of weeks ago...i don't know anybody--and I'm also pretty sure i can convince you to sleep with me. Shy is good. I'm not sure if you've got me pegged or not with the Ruby Room, as I don't know the place, but no matter how cool it is I'd like to think it wouldn't quite classify me. I'm not so much a girl, as it happens, but more like a trannyboy. thus, berman meets malkmus. this can be innocent hand holding and long discussions about the sex appeal of suburban kids with biblical names or the scarier stuff i mentioned. either way. so let me know if you want me to post you the prize or if you'd like to meet up. don't worry, those girls scare me, too. we should do both.

margo

On 8/13/07, ???????????? <??????????@gmail.com>
wrote:

Margo,

The truth is that every Suburban kids fan ever has a crush on those guys, including me. Their music isn't as bad as I let on, actually, I'm a huge fan. I even enjoy listening to them while drunk.

I'm not sure what I was planning to collect as my prize for winning. Possibly some kind of expensive cheese, although the ass fucking and blowing does seem nice. I'm a bit too shy to actually meet someone so randomly, so we might want to consider you mailing me my prize. From what I understand ass fucking is usually expensive to mail.

Not only am I too shy to meet, but I'd be terrified that I might actually know you. Where do you hang out? You seem like a ruby room girl. Those girls scare me.

Should we talk about general silly stuff or continue on the ass fucking vein?

Best,

xxxxxxx

On 8/13/07, Margo Miller <-----@gmail.com>
wrote:

Hi xxxxxxxx,

Well I hope the so-called war in Iraq ends in the fall. You'll have to forgive me for not being IM friendly. That's a great lyric, but those suburban kids with biblical names just look so precious. And your rec is less than glowing. But I'll check them out.

What is it that you're hoping to win, exactly? The chance to fuck me in the ass, or to let me blow you, perhaps? Or did you just want validation of your indie

rock knowledge? what do you think that all that biblical revisionism means anyway?

margo

On 8/13/07, ??????????????

<?????????????@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi,

Have you heard Suburban Kids with Biblical Names? They are named after a David Berman lyric and so that's all the really matters. And remember that in the cold places where spanish is spoken, most wars end in the fall.

I win!

AIM = xxxxxxxxxxxx

Best,

xxxxxxx

this message was remailed to you via: pers-395734100@craigslist.org

Reply

i always wear my corduroy suit... - 26

Reply

im down...heres a pic...23 here

Need a vacation? Get great deals to amazing places on Yahoo! Travel

2 attachments — Download all attachments View all images

i always wear my corduroy suit... - 26

Reply

Images are not displayed.

Display images below - Always display images from
????????@hotmail.com

I don't really know who any of those guys are and I'm too lazy to look them up. But I am half jewish. And technically the other half is Jewish too but that requires more words. ME: xxxx 27 palo alto

i always wear my corduroy suit... - 26

Reply

**** CRAIGSLIST ADVISORY --- AVOID SCAMS BY DEALING LOCALLY**

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**** More Info:**

<http://www.craigslist.org/about/scams.html>

imon yur path...dave30

corduroy suit

[-1.jpeg]

Reply

i have drugs and great taste in music

i always wear my corduroy suit... - 26

Reply

i dont kno what u mean, by those guys, but im totally down for ne thing...im 20 i live in fremont, no car, but im chill

xxx

Reply

I dunno, it has to be. Also, I know who stephen malkmus is but who in the fuck is Dave Berman (Sorry, I didn't feel like googling)

I love good music but I guess I'm not really into the sort you are. I dunno, I'm over rock band. Please, lets argue.

From: Margo Miller

Sent: Monday, August 13, 2007 1:02 AM

Subject: Re: i always wear my corduroy suit... - 26

No way! Too good to be true?

On 8/13/07, ?????????????? <???????.?????@gmail.com> wrote:

This is a joke, no?

this message was remailed to you via: pers-395734100@craigslist.org

from walnut creek guy...i always wear my corduroy suit... -
26

Reply

hello there Im a south american guy i live here in the east bay, i like to get to know you, well im a honest guy i do work school i like being an active person i like sports movies dining having a good time with friends stuff like that also family oriented guy, just ask me anything you need ill be glad to answer anything you need to know about me, well let me know i jope i get to heard from you soon ok take care for now
xxxx

i always wear my corduroy suit... - 26

Reply

Okay

i always wear my corduroy suit... - 26

Reply

hi

this message was remailed to you via: pers-395734100@craigslist.org

* Location: oakland

* it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Reply

but you can't really be straight if you responded, right?
can i go through your closet and tell you what to wear while we fuck? that would be my ultimate fantasy. i love brown.

this is me listening to the silver jews.

i can hardly handle all the straight indierock assholes responding to my ad right now...i've always felt ambivalent about that song. i sing "finesse" instead of "fine ass," fyi.

- Hide quoted text -

On 8/13/07, ??? ???????? <???_????????@?????.???> wrote:

**** CRAIGSLIST ADVISORY --- AVOID SCAMS BY DEALING LOCALLY**

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<http://www.craigslist.org/about/scams.html>

hey there,

i have drugs. and i have superb taste in music.

plus, i have a corduroy jacket to match.

a few of them, actually... i hope you like brown.

so now you need to tell me... how can i love you if you won't lie down?

write back if you interest is at all piqued.

- a straight CL guy

Choose the right car based on your needs. Check out
Yahoo! Autos new Car Finder tool.
<http://autos.yahoo.com/carfinder/>

this message was remailed to you via: pers-
395734100@craigslist.org

flagged & removed: 395734100 (women seeking men) i
always wear my corduroy suit...

Inbox X

Reply

Your posting has been flagged for removal.

Approximately 98% of postings removed are in violation
of craigslist posting guidelines.

Please make sure you are abiding by all posted site rules,
including our terms of use:

<http://www.craigslist.org/about/terms.of.use.html>

If you need help figuring out why your posting was
flagged, try asking in our flag help forum:

<http://forums.craigslist.org/?forumID=3>. Include
posting title, body, category, city, how often posted, any
images, HTML markup, etc.

If your posting was wrongly flagged down (2% of flagged ads are) please accept our apologies and feel free to repost.

Sorry for the hassle, and thanks for your understanding.

Date: 2007-08-13 00:41:33

PostID: 395734100

Title: (women seeking men) i always wear my corduroy suit...

Dear craigslist straight guys,

I'm looking for someone who wants to fuck like Stephen Malkmus and David Berman. Seriously. You can choose which one, but I'd prefer to be DCB, if you know what I mean.

Maybe you have drugs. Maybe you just have great taste in music...

Reply

Earth Fist

Way back in the closing months of the year 2000, when I was 19 and attempting to "find myself" during a leave of absence I had taken from college, I found myself in a van filled with Radical Faeries, driving through the snow-dusted Cumberland Pass in southern Tennessee, heading away from the Faerie commune I had been living at for the past few months, towards another commune, one devoted to permaculture and sustainability, for an Earth First meeting and their annual winter solstice party.

Although my stay at the commune had been wonderful and healing for me--I was learning all sorts of new skills, like how to cook and how to chop wood, as well as overcoming old fears, of the woods, of dogs, of being alone--my companion at the time would sometimes comment on the unique challenges that came with living in what was essentially an all male space. Was it just me, or did people interrupt each other more? Were they more direct in their requests? Did they speak louder? I knew I enjoyed the fag vibe that surrounded me more than a lesbian separatist vibe, and yet there was something different about living only with men, even gay men.

What I had forgotten, however, in my fretting over being the only woman in an all-male space, was what a privilege it was to live somewhere that was explicitly, unabashedly queer. I was reminded of what a queer wonderland I had been living in as soon as we arrived at the permaculture commune. All of the men were wearing flannel and most had full beards, the women in long flowing skirts with their hair done up in braids. I felt like I had walked into the pages of *The Farm Cookbook*, a 1970s classic of

vegetarian cooking that features photographs of women in such traditional activities as preparing and serving food, while men were captured in the traditional male activities of harvesting and, more often, eating food. The people I met, of course, were perfectly lovely, but I was jarred by how rigidly they seemed to be playing out gender roles.

This became even more clear when I sat in on the Earth First meeting. As people went around the room, sharing ideas, every woman who spoke would begin her comment with some sort of disclaimer: "This might be silly, but..." or "Maybe someone already said this, but..." or "I'm not sure if this is what we are trying to accomplish, but..." By contrast, the men in the room were much less hesitant about their goals: "I want to see an action." "When are we going to go ahead with the action." "We need to do this action."

One young man in particular, caught my attention. He was trying to rally support for an upcoming protest in Canada, and was very concerned about crossing the boarder, which he assured us would be closed for over one thousand miles. He loved saying the name of a Quebecois affinity group he was working with, rattling off the words in French. He spoke loudly and angrily, even though he already had the attention of everyone in the room. This man was ready for the revolution. He was just itching to wear bandoliers of bullets, to take things to the next level, to prove himself. I found him very strange. It was as though somehow, fate had somehow crossed the path of a gentle environmental rights activist with that of an angry frat boy.

At the end of the meeting, an announcement was made that the solstice party would feature a re-write Christmas

carols contest, with a bottle of bourbon as the grand prize. I don't know what drew me to the contest, but I started working on a song. The lyrics were inspired by a handkerchief I had bought recently at a trip to Hobby Lobby, a christian crafting store the size of a small airline hangar. My friend and I had been laughing about all the different styles of handkerchiefs we found, and what they would mean in the "hanky codes" if you were to flag with them. A cartoon teddy-bear-themed hanky in your left pocket? Clearly you were a plushie top. Shamrock hanky in your right? Leprechaun bottom.

"You have to get this one," my friend had cried from down the aisle, waving a red-paisley hanky.

"Fisting," I had said, unimpressed by this relatively traditional hanky, "Right." But upon closer inspection I had seen that instead of a regular paisley pattern, the hanky was covered white Jesus-fish as well as the letters WWJD. I had bought it on the spot and wore it everywhere I went, to the thrill of anyone who noticed at the commune.

Now, I was singing an early version to a faerie friend, attempting to get feedback on my "fisting carol," when the frat boy activist, who had been listening, interrupted.

"You can't sing about that," he said. "The carols are supposed to be political."

My response was to write another verse.

As luck would have it, I was the last person to sing. There had been many admirable entries, including the short, but

sweet, "Dildo, dildo, dildo, I made it out of clay, and when it's dry and ready, with dildo I shall play." Frat boy activist's song was impressive. It was a medley of about five different Christmas carols and the dense lyrics explained Bill Clinton's neo-liberal crimes, George Bush's involvement in various atrocities perpetrated by the CIA, and many other political themes I had heard of but didn't know that much about. The stakes felt very high when I stood up to sing my carol, appropriated titled, Earth Fist.

Earth Fist (sing to the tune of Hark the Herald Angels Sing)

(first verse)

Hark, that girl is flagging red,
It's on the right... She's in my bed!
I'd like to pound against her cervix,
But can she really take my fist?

One, two, three, four fingers tight,
Thumb goes in--it fits just right,
A hand, a cunt, a glove, some lube...
I wonder what would Jesus do?

(second verse)

Matthew Sheppard's six feet under,
All the news--it makes you wonder,
Why his death got so much hype,
Perhaps because he's cute and white,

Drag queens, perverts, and boy-lovers,
When they get gay bashed where's the coverage?

The media is hypocritical,
And, yes, sex is political.

They loved it. "Give it to the dyke," they yelled, cheering.
People crowded around me, patting me on the back.
Someone handed me a bottle of bourbon.

Riparian Fantasies

its not beyond streambed darkness
that cattails smother left bank's depth.
edgespace caters to coots
and mallards with open beaks eek
out sound
all still morning. a pink hood hides
long hair, as that child grins
over her wood plank bridge.
out pops a thumb from puckerd lips
sucked hard.
the railings aren't there to hold you in.
next time, sweetfuck, those bite marks
will eat up your shoulder.
it's your turn to scream,
opened up from the back side.
come on over and sit a bit.
sun search with me.
that girl's crossing over. wait.
the cormorants haven't flown in yet.

Dirty

1. Echoes

"Tidiness, we will discover by analogy, does not assure the cleanliness it promises... It merely obscures dirt: indeed, all natural (and finally, historical) processes."

—Eric Michaels

"The human body was the first machine developed by capitalism."

—Silvia Federici

"To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it 'the way it really was'... It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."

—Walter Benjamin

"Ligature, *n.* anything that serves for binding or tying up, as a band, bandage, or cord."

—Oxford English Dictionary

2. Flashes

When did you first know you were dirty?

I knelt on the floor of my parents' bedroom next to their bookshelves. On the lowest shelf, the sex books. *The Joy of Sex*. *The Kama Sutra*. I stole books of women's sexual fantasies. Lying on the carpet in my bedroom I skim read the pages, straining for the noise of the car in the driveway. In the one I remember most vividly a woman fantasises about her Alsatian licking her cunt.

Gross.

Then the ropes and crotchless panties in the dresser drawer. The mail order catalogs. The vibrators. I borrowed one. I turned it on leaning against my bed with my knees up. I stuck it inside me. It didn't make me come. Later I cleaned it carefully and put it back in the drawer.

In Judy Blume's book *Deenie*, Deenie masturbates in the bath with a wash cloth. In the bath I folded a blue washcloth into a rectangle. Through the rainbow curtain across the arch of the doorway, the sound of the television and my mother washing the dishes. The wash cloth on me felt warm and like nothing. I wondered if I should put the wash cloth back on the lip of the bath or put it in the washing basket.

Eventually my father burnt my Judy Blume books. He didn't say it was because they were dirty. He didn't have to.

Foul.

His body was gross but at eight I liked it. Thin and older, blue flannel shirtsleeves doubled over sunburnt forearms. We all played on the lawn outside the apartment block with a hose until grass rash scored our bodies. Then upstairs for a bath. Pants off. T-shirt off. Everyone together naked. That day it was just him. I kept my underpants on. At the other end of the bath he eyed me. The faucet roared hot water. He splashed some on my face. *Look at my dick*, he said. His dick swayed in the water like a buoy. He touched it. Then he bent over fast so his head was on my thigh. *What are you doing* I said. *I want to*

lick you. Grass clippings were floating on the bath water behind the curve of his back. *Why* I said. *I just do.**No way.* Saying this felt triumphant. Then his mouth was on me. A warm tongue. *Alex stop.* I pushed his face up. I got out of the bath and left my clothes on the floor, dripping water down the stairs to my own front door. Now my body was gross.

Disgusting.

I imagined breaking my leg and being in traction. Hospital gowns and flowers on the bedside table. Suspended, I would become magically more popular. A tall handsome basketball player would visit me. I wouldn't have to move for a long time. In bed at night I stuck my leg in the air. I hung a rope from the top of the cupboard and looped it around my knee. Someone came before I worked out a pulley system.

Gross.

He hadn't kissed anyone before. I took him to my dorm room. It was early morning and our hangovers were already beginning. Thick coated tongue, damp heat up the spine. *What do you want to do* I said. He didn't say anything. On the bed I rolled a condom onto his dick. Inside me he went limp. The lights were off and he said *Um, I'm, uh, uhmm.* I sucked him off and got on top of him. Jerked him off. Another condom. His penis shrivelled. *We'll do other stuff* I said. *It's fine.* In the dark doing sixty-nine his hands found my ankles. They felt snug in his grip. His tongue found a current that looped joltingly to where his hands were placed and back on through my body as if he had lit a fuse. *Do that again* I said. *Do that again it feels good.*

With slender hands he held my ankles down and I made myself come.

Days later I was reading in my room. Outside I could hear boys passing. Loud voices. *Ankles* I heard. My name. Laughter. *Ankles. Ankles ankles ankles.*

En.

My boyfriend said some things.

Why do you want to have sex so much? he said.

And later *Let me gaffer tape you to the easel.*

You're so obsessed with fucking. Can't you give it a rest? he said.

Or *If it hurts too much could I tape you to the bed?*

I don't want to fuck because you intimidate me he said.

And later *Can't you go on the Pill? I hate condoms.*

Maybe you're like a nympho or something he said.

And one morning when I woke to a burning:

I thought if you were asleep you'd be relaxed my dick would go in your ass easier.

Yuck.

They said I'd fucked half my hometown. I fucking wished.

Dirty.

...He's pulling the chain tighter sitting on my chest feeding me his cock while he jerks off mine. So many hands, where are they. How did he get to have so many. It's early summer. The streetlight dapples an orangey glow through the trees onto the grass beside us and the blanket rucks up under my neck. His pale chest looms

over me in the dark. *You're a fucking slut* he tells me. I believe it. *Look at how wide open your mouth is* he says taunting. If I come too fast he'll take his cock out of my mouth and I don't I try not to I don't. I don't think about the noise I am making or the people walking past on the other side of the fence. And then I do. Scent of jasmine on the breeze. *You're so dirty* he says. *You're disgusting. Look how badly you want this. You'd do anything I bet. Anything.* And I would.

When the mosquitoes start biting, he unties me. We pick up the blanket. We watch science fiction in the living-room with the fan blowing air into our faces. *I don't know if I'd do anything* I say at some point. He laughs and tickles my chin. *We'll find out* he says. *We have time.*

3. Ligatures

Years before I heard the word 'kink', I knew the word 'dirty'. Dirty was the unspoken thing that hung, a bad smell, around girls who liked sex too much. I knew I was one of them. It was not that my parents were conservative or that I was taught sex was bad. My mother told me about how women got pregnant when I was two years old. She taught me, if not to be proud of my body, then at least to discover how it worked with impartial curiosity. I was a nerd, and I set myself to the task. But when my body collided with other bodies this system failed. I needed to fuck boys, somehow, and I soon learnt that once you'd fucked most boys would pretend not to know you afterwards, or would make an excuse to leave, or would tell their friends who would tell theirs. But there was a deeper problem: despite the humiliation, I liked it. I liked getting carpet burn. I liked the weight of someone

bigger than me pushing my face breathless into the floor. It became clear that I liked other things too, things I had no words for at all. I liked those things a lot more than penetration, more than 'normal' sex. All I knew was that I was dirty. This dirt was corporeal and disgusting and returned no matter how many times I washed: it was the blackheads I wanted to squeeze off my forehead, it was the smell of blood staining the crotch of my jeans. It was my body. This was long before dykedom and even longer before boyhood, and realising that this was why my body felt so repulsive, or why I couldn't get off without pain or force.

Powerful ligatures connect kink to trans embodiment. I could cite a dozen examples of these bonds: the character of Chris in Laura Antoniou's *Marketplace* series; Patrick Califia's whole oeuvre; Susan Stryker's stories and theories of reconfiguring trans bodies and the spaces we inhabit to be livable and joyous through pain or humiliation or gender play. Or, if we look at faggot culture, there's Jean Genet's semi-autobiographical theorisation of abjection in *The Thief's Journal*. In one episode, Genet is arrested and when he is searched, the cops find a tube of menthol vaseline. They joke about the meanings behind this small object, making fun of Genet. But rather than feeling ashamed, Genet doesn't care. To the cops, the tube represents the most vile act possible, anal sex, but for Genet himself it's "a token of secret grace" that gives him the means to survive.¹ This response to violence and humiliation is about taking pride in one's ability to withstand it, to find resistance and even love or pleasure in the worst circumstances. Trans and queer stories like this made my body and its capacities for finding pleasure in pain or confinement into something to

be treasured, and transformed shame into salvation. Better, I learnt how to top: to draw the shame out of other people and make them love it, an alchemy of sorts, turning shit into gold.

But neither trans nor fag accounts fit, exactly. The most popular trans stories rewrite life histories so that gender “dysphoria” becomes the source of any and all trauma. Abjection, in the way Genet and his queer inheritors have used it, is about faggothood. I might feel an affinity with faggothood now, but I wasn’t read as a faggot as a child, and I didn’t think of myself as one. Fantastical and strength-giving as they are, these tools for rewriting my experience strand me on the threshold of a future without a past. They don’t equip me with the instruments to navigate how being kinky felt at five, or eight, or thirteen.

So what is shame? Shame is a technology. People use it on each other to make other bodies feel disgusting. Bodies that are shamed bow their heads, turn away, stay quiet. They become docile. But bodies don’t need to become docile randomly—docile bodies (and I am echoing Foucault deliberately here) are good at doing their jobs. This, for me, is where feminism meets anti-capitalism. And where we get a little historical. Silvia Federici is one of the only theorists around to have successfully, in my book, wedded a critique of political economy to feminist thinking about the body—and non-conforming bodies in particular.¹¹ She argues that the demonisation of ‘witches’ and figures like Caliban, the hostile ‘native’, were an effect of, and part of, primitive accumulation, or the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Part of this transition involved the various powers of the time needing to turn a large, unstable

population of freed bondsmen, who were only a few years out of serfdom, into disciplined workers. This process also involved the incorporation of women and non-Europeans as labouring bodies in the new capitalist machine. The new system of wage labour required women to be located in the home to perform reproductive labour, or the work of producing workers: making men's lunches; satisfying their sexual needs; popping out babies who turned into more workers. Religion and capitalism united to exert moral pressure on the population to work.

Under these conditions, non-Europeans were regarded as expendable and subhuman, thus rationalising their traffic as slaves or classification as 'fauna' to be cleared off the lands of the colonies. The church and legislators demonised intellectually and socially powerful women as heretics, or witches. 'Witch' came to mean women who wouldn't dedicate themselves to reproductive labour. This included sex workers, women who weren't feminine, women who didn't believe in God, women who didn't fuck men at all, and women whose sexual lives weren't clean or meek. Worse, those who did practice spiritual craft were attempting to get what they wanted without 'paying for it'.ⁱⁱⁱ

This story might be about the middle ages, but I want to draw something from it that makes sense of my world, my experiences. "Capitalism has created more brutal and insidious forms of enslavement," Federici writes, "as it has planted into the body of the proletariat deep divisions that have served to intensify and conceal exploitation." The lesson of the witch-hunts, Federici argues, is that they became an effective way to turn members of the

population against each other. These divisions concealed larger exploitations by dividing the 'proletariat' against each other along gendered, racialised and sexualised lines. This, at its core, involved the body—and differences amongst bodies.

Maybe it's a massive over-simplification, but I think shame works in similar ways to conceal broader the broader exploitations of capitalism. And it, too, is almost entirely based on bodies. Think of *The Scarlet Letter*: a red letter worn on the dress of promiscuous women to make them visible, use them as a lesson to others who might do the same. This is an economy of shame, where promiscuous men can be invisible but women must be visible. Shame divides the dirty faggot from the clean hetero/homosexual; the tranny from the 'unwitting' man who beats her up when he discovers her secret; the sexworker from the trick; the slut from the uptight boy who fucks sluts; the 'disabled' body from the 'working' body. Sluts, trannies, homos, whores, crips: we are all subject to violence and disapproval. We're supposed to carry the burden on our bodies, keep it just visible, so we can be pointed out, but never pollute those people who are clean by coming too close.

But this is the biggest lie of them all. No-one is really clean. Children are not innocent. Right-wing senators the world over have sex with other men. And women like to fuck. The boys and men I encountered when I was younger would swing confusingly between seeming to want to do the things I was into and being disgusted or intimidated by them. They were probably just as confused as I was. Maybe more so. By dint of their gender, they had the power to make me feel ashamed for acts that

implicated all of us. I kind of doubt, nowadays, that one of those boys is upfront about being a pervert in the way that I am. In a way, because my shame was more intense than theirs, I had an advantage. I had to learn how to cast it off.

It would be nice to think this through as an easy dividing line: 'clean' people get privileges, 'dirty' people don't. And that is the way it works, to an extent. But it's not as simple as that. Capitalism needs the people who are stigmatised as dirty. It thrives on setting conflicts into motion, and thrives even more from the illicit and illegitimate economies of pleasure or violence that prop up the legitimate, morally 'clean' ones. This is where it becomes possible to resignify the meaning of dirty. Maybe we can't access our bodies at all without those divisive implantations coding what is 'clean' and 'dirty', 'normal' and 'abnormal'. This is what makes us ourselves. But all bodies are dirty. Kink is everywhere; dirt is everywhere. Sex itself is everywhere, wrote Deleuze and Guattari: "the way a bureaucrat fondles his records, a judge administers justice, a businessman causes money to circulate; the way the bourgeoisie fucks the proletariat."^{iv} Together we are all kinky. We all like sex too much.

It seems like the deepest irony, or sickest joke, then, that kink as a subculture is so commodified. Here the economies of shame have looped back on themselves. Shame attacks to divide poor kinksters who can't afford the correct fetish gear from 'serious' leather contestants who drive Subarus to their conventions and kit out their own homes with expensive dungeon wares. Shame here divides the banal weekend swinger bondage enthusiast from the serious leatherfolk with more 'interesting'

desires; the uncool from the cool. But this, too, is just another ruse.

Undivided, we would be dirtier than ever. We would learn to love our shame. And we would write our histories, thinking also of the moments when shame turned to something else. Which was always.

ⁱ Jean Genet, *The Thief's Journal* (New York: Olympia Press, 2008). My reading here is indebted to David Halperin's discussion of Genet and abjection in *What Do Gay Men Want? An Essay On Sex, Risk and Subjectivity* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2007). Halperin is careful to limit his discussion of abjection to what he carefully calls "gay male subjectivity." Contra Halperin, I see abjection as a process that exceeds the limits of gayness and bleeds into all kinds of queer or perverse practices, regardless of sexual orientation. Or perhaps instead it's that a lot of different people are getting kinda gay with their abjection.

ⁱⁱ Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004). Also see a review of *Caliban and the Witch* by Angela Mitropoulos reading the lessons of primitive accumulation in the present day: "The Demography of Time and the Times," *Ephemera* 6:1 (2006).

ⁱⁱⁱ For an analysis relating this to gender non-conformity see the fantastic essay on Federici in SubRosa Collective and James Pei-Mun Tsang, *Yes Species*.
www.refugia.net/yes/yeschapters.html

^{iv} Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti Oedipus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 293.



I will NOT jerk off in class. I will not have a crush on my prof
I will not get off in class. I will not have a crush on my prof
I will not jerk off in class. I will not be a Revolting Queer
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Crotches/and its nostrils etc. I will not confuse you. I will not confuse you. I will not
I WILL NOT TURN YOU ON

I will not be a revolting queer. I will not have a crush on my prof.
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