

DISGENDER

a
zine
about
being
trans //
nonbinary
& disabled //
chronically ill



issue #2 curated by raz



Welcome back,

The second issue of Disgender zine is here!

We return after a long year with pieces that reflect the depth, power and pain of being trans // nonbinary & disabled // chronically ill.

Curating this zine has once again been an opportunity to discover experiences of which I needed to expand my awareness, find solidarity and validation, and appreciate the creativity of our community.

Why the change of name from Trans and Disabled in issue 2? Well apart from being a little snappier and more inclusive, I like that Disgender has been interpreted differently by every person I've suggested it to. It reminds people of misgender, cisgender, a dysfunctional gender that can't find a neat label, and neogender-style labels relating one's gender to an experience of disability.

I read it as the prefix dis- denoting removal, negation, damage to a concept. A verb: to disgender as in to disown. To crip gender itself. I am always interested in the ways in which we as disabled people can take back power for ourselves in an often inaccessible world, and find ways to leverage our unique experiences to help us shape our lives & the world around us. The contributors in this issue provide insights into radical self acceptance, the power of community and using an understanding of disability and gender diversity to disrupt disempowering systems.

All contributors who wished to have provided links to

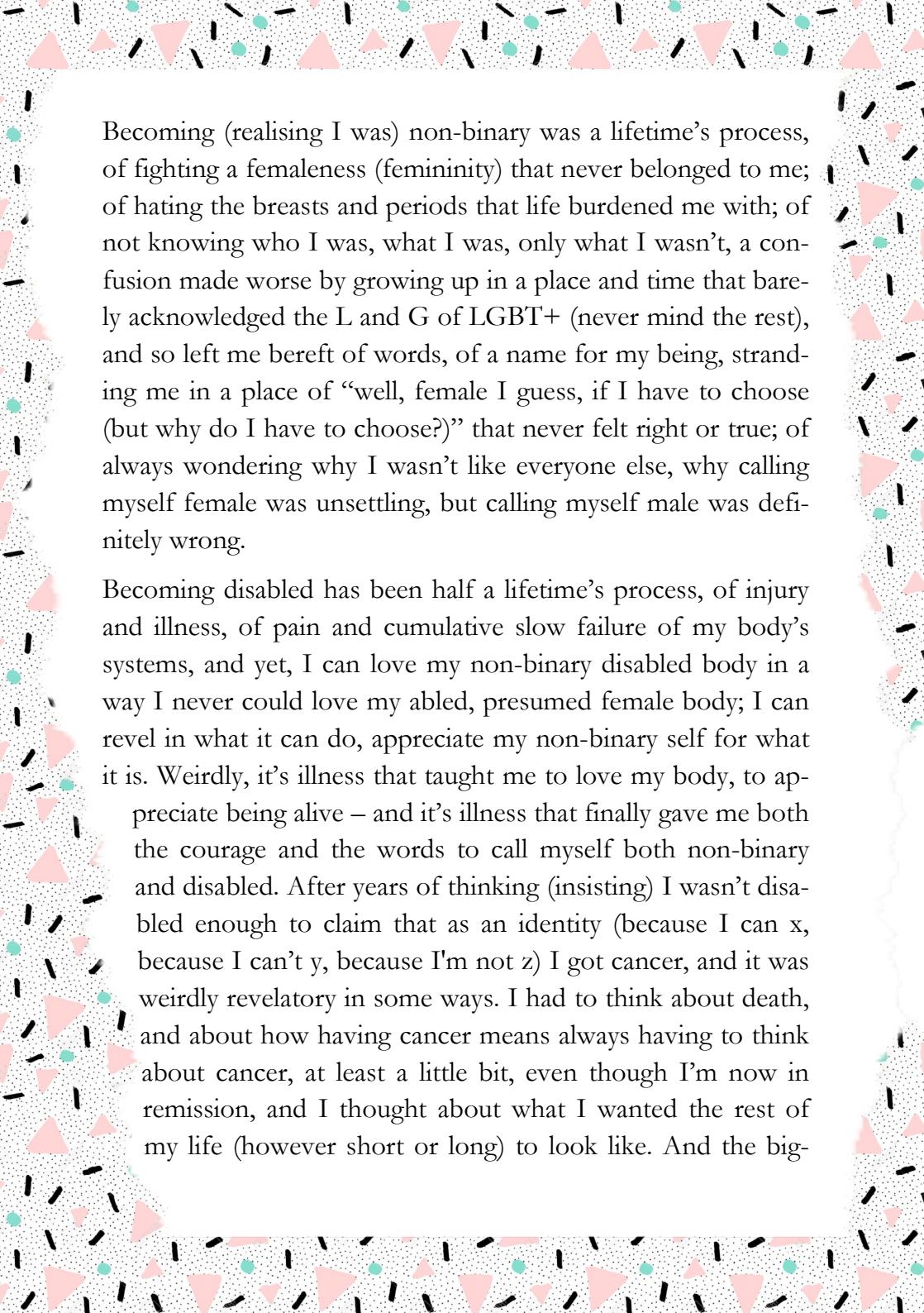
their online presence, and you're encouraged to check them out and send appreciation their way if you like their work.

If you want to contribute work to a future issue of this zine or just have a chat, you can reach out to raz.zines@gmail.com

I hope that when reading this zine, you can find work which inspires you, with which you can identify, and which makes you feel like you've learned something new.

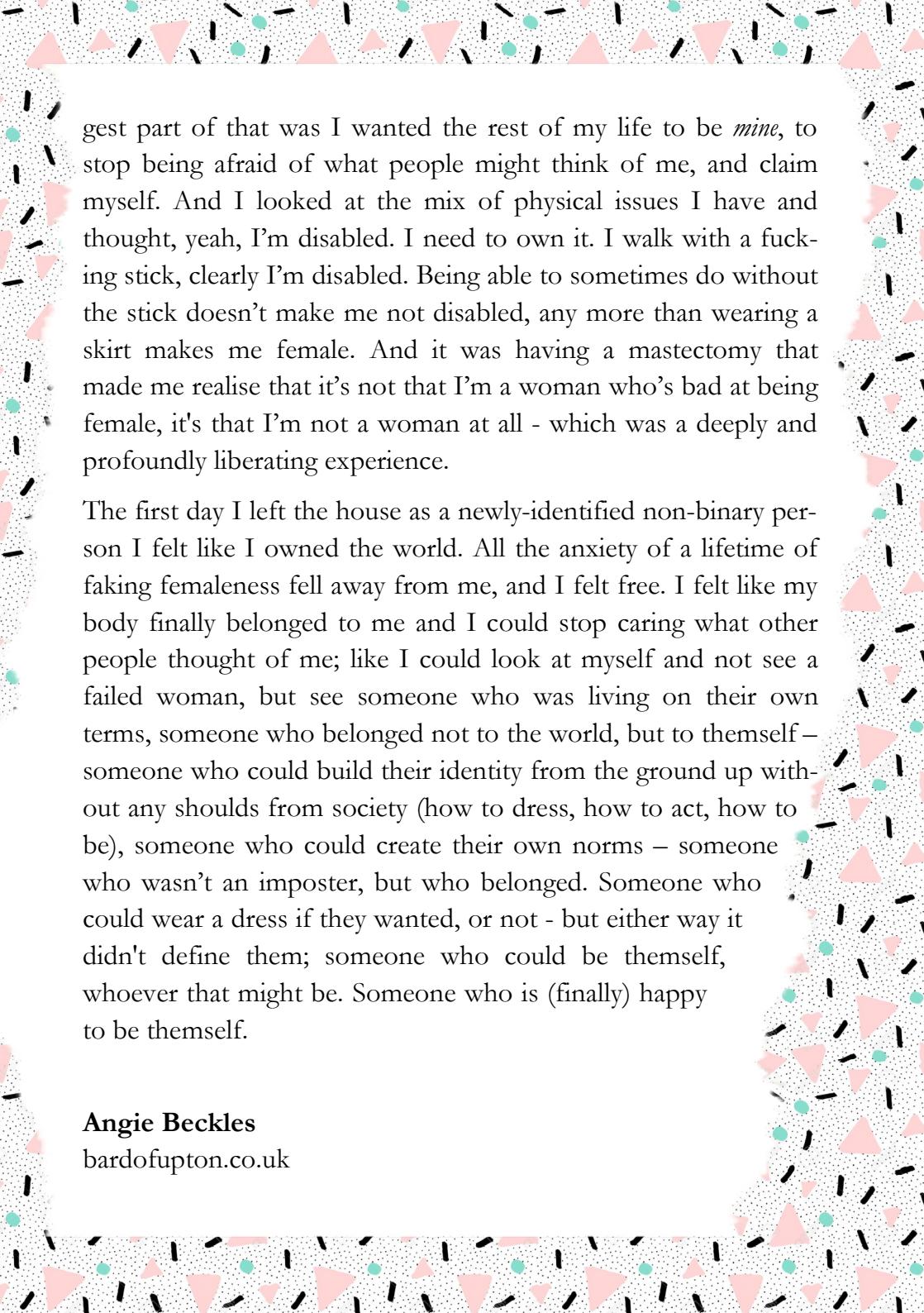
With love and solidarity,

Raz, August 2018



Becoming (realising I was) non-binary was a lifetime's process, of fighting a femaleness (femininity) that never belonged to me; of hating the breasts and periods that life burdened me with; of not knowing who I was, what I was, only what I wasn't, a confusion made worse by growing up in a place and time that barely acknowledged the L and G of LGBT+ (never mind the rest), and so left me bereft of words, of a name for my being, stranding me in a place of “well, female I guess, if I have to choose (but why do I have to choose?)” that never felt right or true; of always wondering why I wasn't like everyone else, why calling myself female was unsettling, but calling myself male was definitely wrong.

Becoming disabled has been half a lifetime's process, of injury and illness, of pain and cumulative slow failure of my body's systems, and yet, I can love my non-binary disabled body in a way I never could love my abled, presumed female body; I can revel in what it can do, appreciate my non-binary self for what it is. Weirdly, it's illness that taught me to love my body, to appreciate being alive – and it's illness that finally gave me both the courage and the words to call myself both non-binary and disabled. After years of thinking (insisting) I wasn't disabled enough to claim that as an identity (because I can x, because I can't y, because I'm not z) I got cancer, and it was weirdly revelatory in some ways. I had to think about death, and about how having cancer means always having to think about cancer, at least a little bit, even though I'm now in remission, and I thought about what I wanted the rest of my life (however short or long) to look like. And the big-



gest part of that was I wanted the rest of my life to be *mine*, to stop being afraid of what people might think of me, and claim myself. And I looked at the mix of physical issues I have and thought, yeah, I'm disabled. I need to own it. I walk with a fucking stick, clearly I'm disabled. Being able to sometimes do without the stick doesn't make me not disabled, any more than wearing a skirt makes me female. And it was having a mastectomy that made me realise that it's not that I'm a woman who's bad at being female, it's that I'm not a woman at all - which was a deeply and profoundly liberating experience.

The first day I left the house as a newly-identified non-binary person I felt like I owned the world. All the anxiety of a lifetime of faking femaleness fell away from me, and I felt free. I felt like my body finally belonged to me and I could stop caring what other people thought of me; like I could look at myself and not see a failed woman, but see someone who was living on their own terms, someone who belonged not to the world, but to themself – someone who could build their identity from the ground up without any shoulds from society (how to dress, how to act, how to be), someone who could create their own norms – someone who wasn't an imposter, but who belonged. Someone who could wear a dress if they wanted, or not - but either way it didn't define them; someone who could be themself, whoever that might be. Someone who is (finally) happy to be themself.

Angie Beckles
bardofupton.co.uk

YOU DID IT!

beyond
watch

I was brave.

gender

a

kind

Community

They are defiant

and

positive

THIS

pride and

is

radical people,
redefining ourselves

pain.

normal

a lot of people
with the same kind of mind that I had."

their

new

FREE

on

What does your body mean to you?

being

becoming

The wisdom of

inspired

YOUNG MINDS

CREATIVE

POLITICAL

people

a man

a woman

a person

in their minds

EXPLORING
THE
WORLD

a kind community

I've transitioned

into 'brave'

it's how I identify

being

yourself

what

an

ever-growing

mess

EVERYONE was

ever-growing

Del @biconiq

A Eulogy for the Pretty Girl

Ezra Hudson

I'd always been 'pretty'
Complimented on my hair,
Told I had a good body.

I loaned out my perfect body to perfect strangers,
Hoping they would add the substance I lacked.
"Screaming out God's name might bring me closer to the
intervention I need".

People aren't made to be beautiful,
They're made to be flawed, changed by the people they
meet,
the places they go and the life they lead.

If there is a god it lives inside me;
Makes me cry at death,
Scream at injustice,
Rejoice at beauty.

Maybe the god I need is myself.

So I cut off my curls,
Dyed it all green,
Became ugly,

Though I mourn the body I had, it was never mine;
That was the world's pretty girl.

I sacrificed that pretty, sad girl to be the ugly,
happy boy.

And I am more myself now than I ever was when I was
beautiful.



Forest

Everywhere, I am alien.

At home, this is not a problem.

At home, I am merely a small strange alien who lives in my house.
So are my cats, so everything is fine.

It's in the wider world where things get hairy.

Everyone expects a certain level of sameness. A certain kind of neuro-typicality. The ability to intuit wordless communications and body language. The want to communicate with, and be around, other human beings all the time.

I have learned, after so many years, how to imitate some of these things.

But they can still tell. They lose patience with the way I forget to put an expression on my face when they say something, or the idiosyncratic way I learn and play with language, or the few seconds of pause it takes me to formulate a response to a question in words, or my constant preference to communicate by gesture and nod instead of by speech.

They think my gender comes of similar strangeness, and they think it all the accidental product of the trauma that partially shaped me. But it is always been here, always part of me. It just took me a little bit of time to find the words, as usual.

Time and practice.

When I found the words genderqueer and nonbinary, they were small miracles. A gift of language where previously there had been none, and I took to them like a ravenous ghost. Finally, here, proof that I was something with a name. That there had been others like me before. That there would be more like me in the future.

Even better, these words carried within them an acknowledgment of difference. They were many things, any set of interpretations that fit within their generous boundaries. Here, finally, I could revel in my glorious alienness, and I could probably share it with the world in a single set of words.

Language grants people the ability to celebrate themselves and each other.

Language also grants people the ability to categorize and rank each other, an avenue for cruelty.

These are two pieces of the same phenomenon.

Whenever I go to say something Important, I get The Fear,
Closing my throat and making me cold to the bone and shaking.
This is always true, but especially true of gender.

Now that we've found each other, we can challenge each other's Authenticity.

'Not Trans Enough' hurts, especially from people who also know that pain. Who know better.

One day, our identities - with the beautiful array of language that we use to describe them and to celebrate them - will reach their intrinsic potential, the implied ability contained within their capacity for description. Queerness has always been the foundation for a community with as many differences as similarities (or more), forever shifting and flexible, a magnificently multitudinous variety of human beings. It is not always recognized for this, but this is its strength. I hope we can take our language use it to celebrate all of us, different in thought and origin and experience. I hope we can learn to let difference connect us. I hope that we can all be alien,
And that it be okay.

Nessi Alexander Barnes

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Not A Proper Place

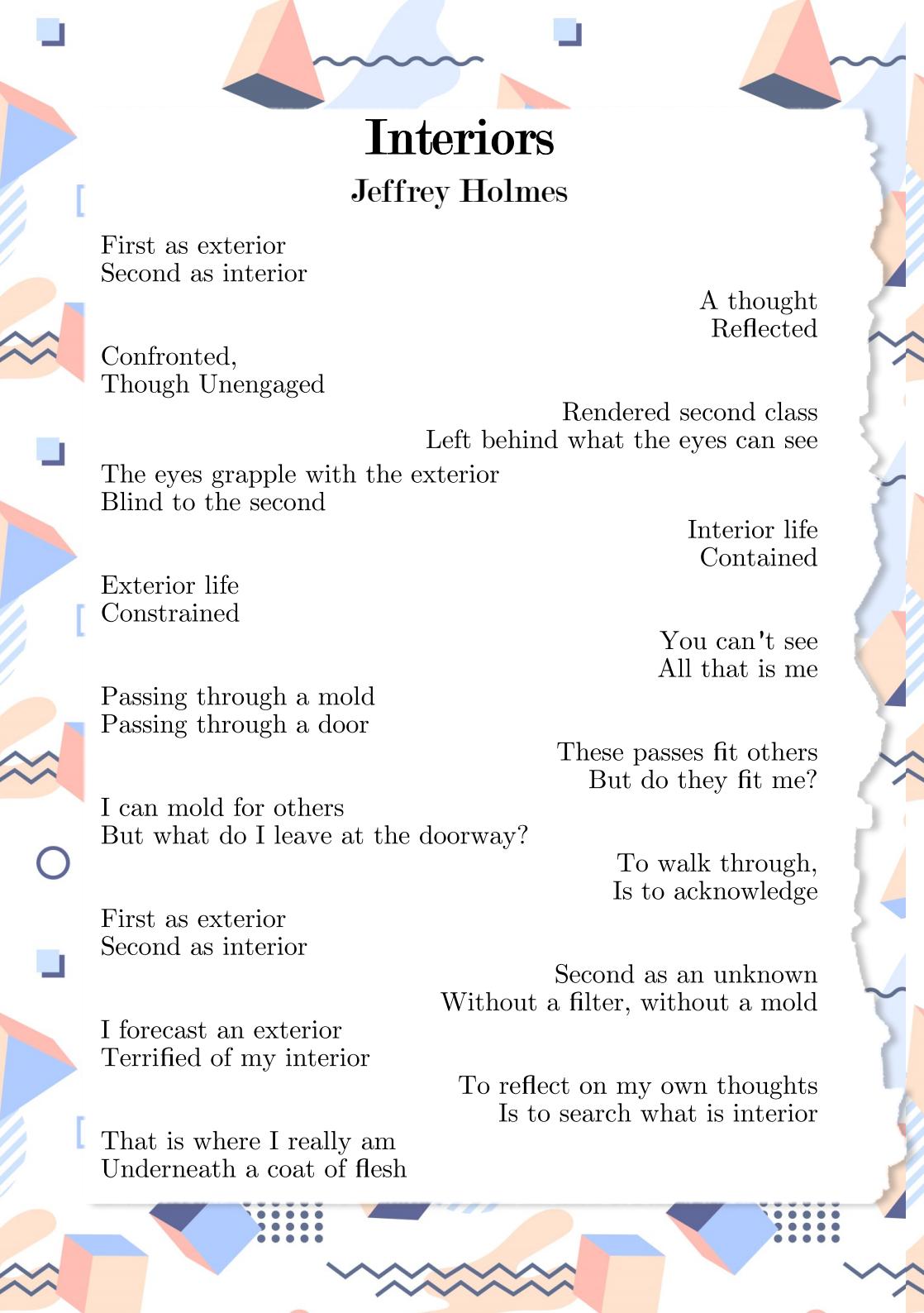




Vreemdear

<https://vreemdear-draws.tumblr.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/vreemdear/>



Interiors

Jeffrey Holmes

First as exterior
Second as interior

Confronted,
Though Unengaged

The eyes grapple with the exterior
Blind to the second

Exterior life
Constrained

Passing through a mold
Passing through a door

I can mold for others
But what do I leave at the doorway?

First as exterior
Second as interior

I forecast an exterior
Terrified of my interior

That is where I really am
Underneath a coat of flesh

A thought
Reflected

Rendered second class
Left behind what the eyes can see

Interior life
Contained

You can't see
All that is me

These passes fit others
But do they fit me?

To walk through,
Is to acknowledge

Second as an unknown
Without a filter, without a mold

To reflect on my own thoughts
Is to search what is interior



I can decide who I am
My meaning comes from within

Who I am
Is for me to decide

Why are we taught to patch these leaks?
Maybe I need a new credo

It starts interior
And exits exterior

This is my hardest task
Commune with myself

Incompatible with a catch-all
Turning inward

Returning to an origin
Leads to a discovery

Cradling with care
All of my possibilities

Underneath a shell
There are no categories

Do not sort me
Identity not as commodity

My meaning cannot be captured
My interior leaks of myself

It begins within
And pushes outward

To convey a meaning from within
To communicate the self

Decide on what my meaning is
Exclusive, solely mine

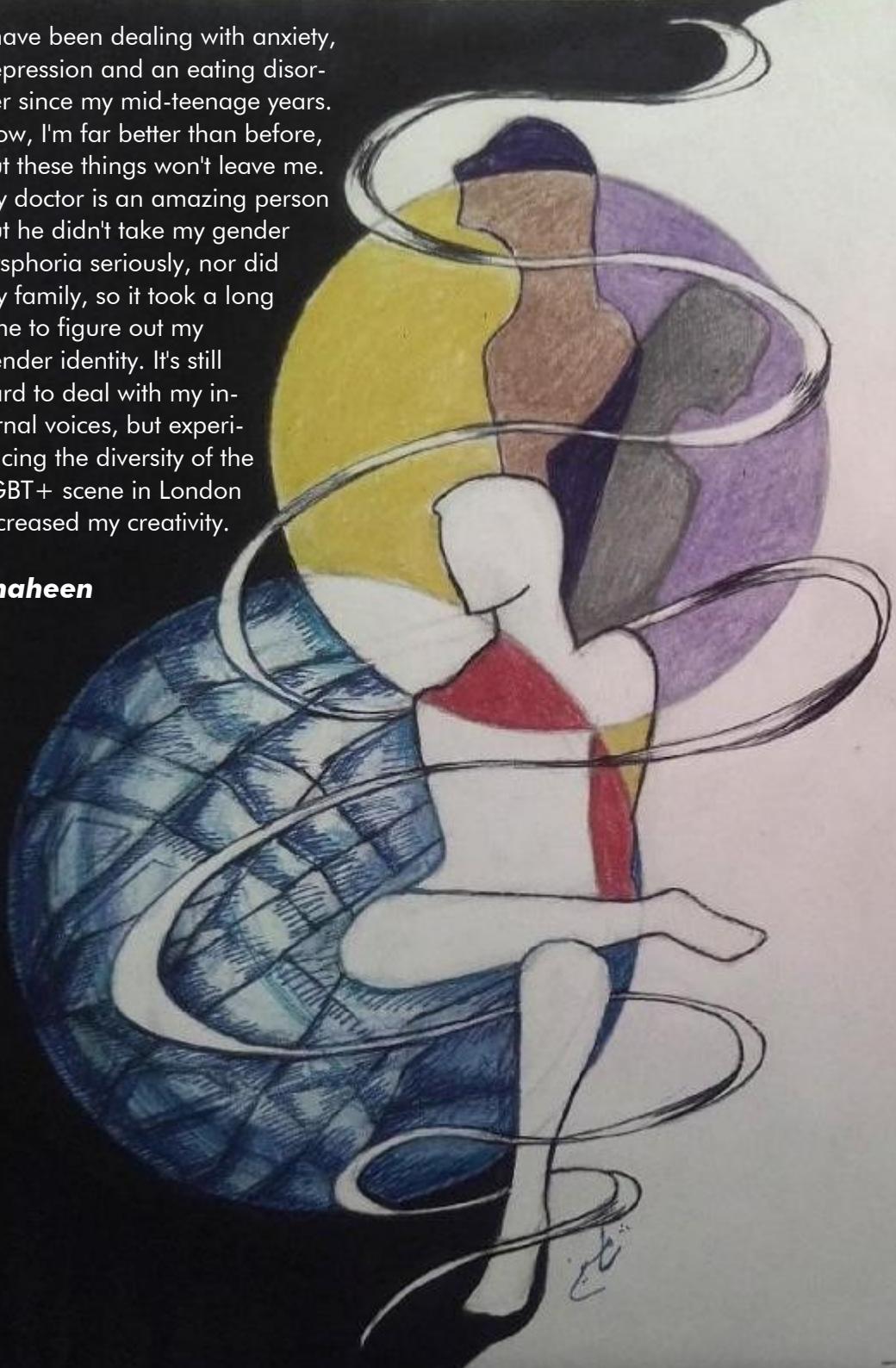
I am at home with myself
Retract from an exterior

I can bring this outside of me
My voice carries like hands

<https://www.facebook.com/jeffreyholmesmusic/>
<https://rateyourmusic.com/~angelnoise>

I have been dealing with anxiety, depression and an eating disorder since my mid-teenage years. Now, I'm far better than before, but these things won't leave me. My doctor is an amazing person but he didn't take my gender dysphoria seriously, nor did my family, so it took a long time to figure out my gender identity. It's still hard to deal with my internal voices, but experiencing the diversity of the LGBT+ scene in London increased my creativity.

Shaheen

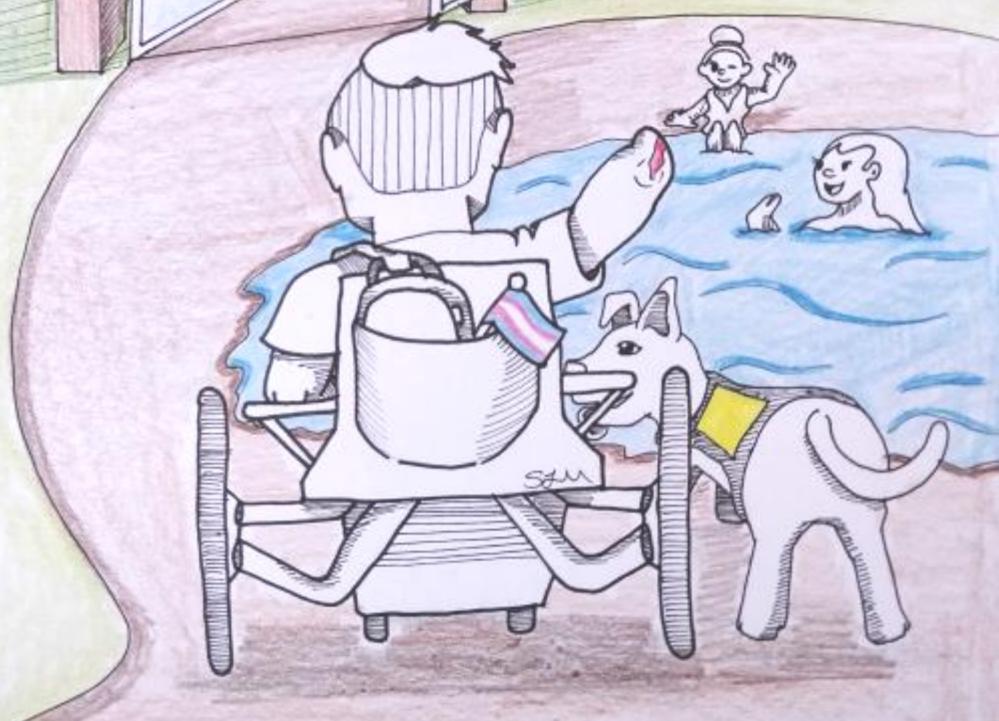


V
Voices in my head
Haunt me
Sometimes it is hard to tell
Which is Which...

Lost in between Black & White
Confused by thousands
of Reflections

Let the Colours
Free

Never be cracks on
my skin
Shattered but



Camp Welcome All

All the people aren't coloured in to represent that skin tone, hair colour and what people wear is not representative of who they are. The piece is intentionally scruffy, due this being a faded idea rather than a realisation of somewhere that should exist. It's called "Camp Welcome All", as it literally welcomes everyone. All the pathways are flat, there are ramps inside, there are no doors to hinder people. It's a very clean, all natural environment where everything is in reach, needs are met and service animals are welcome. It's a place that should exist and should be accessible to everyone, no matter where they live. It has a similar idea to the American Summer Camp (the idea of it being a safe, inclusive happy place) but open all year long...

Sam James McCracken

Instagram: @darklink1991

Facebook: Samuel James McCracken Artist

I am a white autistic, nonbinary and disabled witch. Due to my chronic mental illness, I cannot work conventionally and therefore live with my parents and receive income through Social Security. However, I have realized in the past year that the combination between my mental illness and gender gives me immense power in areas where many others would not be so quick to consider as empowering.

I was diagnosed with schizophrenia at age 19 in 2012, and I have heard voices for the six years since then. At first, they were very mean and derogatory, but as time has passed and I've accepted my voices for what they are—and indulged in some research into witchcraft and psychic development—they've become more and more helpful. In fact, my mom and my spiritual coach have recently validated me as psychic, even though I still require the accommodations necessary for a person with disabilities to thrive in our current society.

I may not be able to work a conventional job, but as I'll be explaining shortly, I am nearly thriving through the intersection of my identities and the privilege I have for the living arrangements that I do. While I struggle to define myself for people in everyday life without attending to deep details about myself, this vulnerability has allowed me to see the divine and magickal nature of my own being.

In past societies, such as those that are tribal, a “psychotic break” (as we call them these days) would be when a future healer or leader is awakened to their innate gifts; in fact, gender-nonconforming individuals would be consid-

ered more in tune with the divine nature of reality—as such with the Native American people who are Two-Spirit—as well.

These individuals would be respected and cared for by society because their gifts were weighed equally with an inability to attend to the everyday tasks that most members of the tribe would take on. Because of the respect others had for them, not only were they powerful in their gifts, but also in the fact that they did not neatly fit into any other pre-determined role than healer or mystic. This is, to me, an example of what an accessible and gender-affirming world would look like.

All in all, I would like that us disabled, trans and nonbinary folx know in their hearts that we are much, much more than the labels and boxes society has decided to put us in. Socially, we are the most compassionate, and mystically we are the most powerful. So to those out there struggling, I say: you have much more power than you would realize. Know that productivity cannot be the measure of your worth, but by your heart and the faith you have in yourself as important and necessary people of the world.

Barbara I. B.

My Tarot Business Page: fb.me/innermysteriestarot

My Artist Page: fb.me/stbarbarella

I am a tarot reader and psychospiritual healer in training. I am currently going to school for Philosophy and Psychology at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota, USA... as well as keeping up my studies of witchcraft and psychic development on my own.



Tyler Austen
Twitter: @tcausten
tylercharlesausten.wordpress.com

With each passing year I have had to balance my identity with my chronic illness. Some days I think to myself that transitioning was a huge mistake. That I sacrificed my life expectancy to get what made me happy - but the truth is that if I hadn't, it would have got a whole lot shorter.

Having Chronic fatigue and EDS is exhausting. It's cliché but it is. Juggling activism and bed bound days, finding events to go to that are actually accessible is tough and the constant pity people see in me cause of the chair constantly makes me sick. I am better WITH the chair, without it is prison. I have a love/hate relationship with the one thing that gives me freedom and some days I just stay at home instead of people staring at a heavily tattooed trans metal monster that I am.

The only saving grace is that there are others like me that feel the emptiness of being LGBT and disabled. My gay ass isn't alone in this world even when it feels like it sometimes. The Brighton LGBT disability group has been an amazing saviour for so many of us, we can now be free and meet other people in the same boat as us, and that's what we need. A community. A sense or human contact that actually get who we are without pressure to perform.

I often feel not "non-binary enough" by my peers, I "pass" as male and so does my partner and they are constantly misgendered.. They are also chronically ill too and have no time to "look queer".. When did fashion even become a part of trans identity? And is that even achievable during chronically ill periods of time. I recently did an interview for a queer looks event and I dressed up in horns for it, to detract away from the chair.. It was still the only important thing in the room.. I just wished it was invisible at times, or that I just didn't need it to see the world.

Sometimes hyper visibility is the actual worst - whilst my actual illnesses go under the radar, the end results are for all to see. So is my homosexuality and in medical settings, my gender identity.. Doctors and nurses have even abused me in hospital because they think they can get away with it... this year alone I was assaulted by a nurse whilst she was dressing my stitches. I was saved by my partner thankfully but you would be surprised by how many people share the same experience of hospital like I do.

I am just so tired of being intersectional. Like could I just be gay, or trans, or disabled, or working class. Not all at once.

I'm Tyler, I'm Agender, I'm 31 and I'm just so fucking tired all the time.

A Survival Guide for Being A Very Sick Queer™

So you're a person who's been sick and queer for a while. You think you know the ropes in both these rings, but right when you think you've got it all figured out, the mother of all flares decides to flop onto you and change your life. Or maybe some massive life change occurs and triggers the relapse of the century. Either way, you are now here, queer and stuck in bed until further notice. So what do you do now?

I have been trying to learn some lessons from struggling to thrive with a chronic illness, and I think they also apply to self acceptance as a trans/nonbinary person.

1. Accept the new normal

- ◆ When your body & its abilities change, it may take some work to come to terms with it as you acclimatize to the new normal. You might need an entire five-stage grieving process, and that's allowed. Don't deny yourself the simple pleasures of tantrumming about how unfair being sick is—your job right now is to reach a place of conscious coexistence with your illness. Living in denial will only reduce your quality of life as you can never get to step #3.
- ◆ Have outlets to work through your feelings about this situation. Art, music, writing, talking therapy, CBT, friends - whatever helps with the processing. Make angry sick art and stick it in the world's face.

2. Shame is a useless emotion

- ◆ Shame around how your body is now, and hiding/neglecting your needs as a result, only harms you. You can't ask for accommodations for a disability you won't acknowledge and you'll regret skipping out on meds or assistive devices so you can hide how sick you are.
- ◆ Be open and let people prove their worth in supporting you.

Ask for help when you need it, while acknowledging that caretaker burnout is a thing and you need to create open & honest communication with those who support you about what is realistic for you both.

- ◆ Especially in a world where you face marginalisation on multiple axes, it can be hard to trust others, but it's important to find those people who are worth trusting and let them in. Build & join communities of sick queers, accessible queerdom and queer-friendly disabled folx.
- ◆ Your trans body is beautiful, your disabled body is beautiful. This is kind of a Japanese paint-the-cracks-with-gold thing, but also your body is a vehicle for you to live your life & allows you to interact with the world and that makes it inherently worth loving & caring for.

3. Do the work to adapt

- ◆ Be willing to adapt your life to your needs, and be willing to hear those needs even if there's a lot or they're scary or seem unreasonable.
- ◆ Focus on and design the systems that you need to put in place to enable yourself to do the things you want to do, rather than dwelling on the goals that you currently can't reach.
- ◆ Create plans - I can't recommend a WRAP workbook enough. I recently looked back over my WRAP workbook and was reminded of some really obvious things that help me that I don't think of when I'm flaring. This is also super helpful for making zombie apocalypse plans - what are the worst case scenarios at the root of your fears around being sick, and what concrete plans can you lay down for them?

So there you have it. Go be proud sick queeros and build a little corner of the glorious accessible gender-affirming luxury gay space communist future we all deserve, by being good to yourself.

Raz

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