

Community in Self

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Abstract—I'm goopy mush. Goopy, sticky mushy mush. Drooling doldrums, oozing with pink and yellow and blue and orange and every shade of 4:00am. Plucked from a branch, juiced and pressed until I'm raw and ruined from my own hands. I'm sweet. Fuck, I'm sweet. And I'm bitter. FUCK. I'm bitter. And ripe and spoiled all at once. Spoil me. I want to rot and be all icky and disgusting and messy and messy and messy and I want to be really, really messy for once. My hands are dripping with sugar and I'm wiping them on my legs. I'm naked and exposed to the air, rotten in the places that I've cut into. And I'm going to love everything about me, rotten or ripe.

Index Terms—profound joy, profound sadness

EXPLORATIONS OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

Studying the kind and peaceful masculine spirit this month, following transmasculine idols as inspiration for re-inventing what it means to be a man. Dismantling the inherently flawed and transphobic "men are bad" rhetoric. This doesn't mean ignoring the abuse wrought by men throughout the ages. I suggest the interpretation/rephrasing: men aren't bad, though, there are people who are bad who are also men. This separates the abuser from the identity. But we can't ignore: Being a man in this society usually means automatically inheriting a position of power and privilege. The choice of what a man does with such a power and privilege is what separates good from bad. And toxic masculinity, then, would be men who have succumbed to the preconceived notion of "man" and spiraled into a self-inflated ego fueled by an entitled view of the world they live in.

Another question: how much should I rebel against the gender binary and how much should I acknowledge it for what it is and conform to it? Ideally, (in my perfect made-up world) there would be no gender and no gender roles. There would simply be people, personalities. The essence of someone is what would define them, and that alone. Though, I think it might be naive to try and do away with something so firmly rooted in society. Cold iron is stubborn. Aside from isolating yourself in a community that shares your ideals and philosophies on gender it would be very difficult to do away with the gender binary. It's unavoidable, in a way. And, people find comfort in it, so I'd hesitate to completely get rid of it once and for all for the preservation of those who find peace and happiness in it. The fact of the matter is that we live in a gender binary society, and to ignore that means adopting a counter-intuitive philosophy that will inevitably spiral inward onto itself. (What would a genderless society look like?) But, there is paradise in perspective. I can navigate the world as a genderless entity (a happy little genderless spirit that is simultaneously a man and a woman and neither, all at once) and see the world exactly as I want to. And that's paradise, here in my mind.

The masculine spirit is strong and reassuring and grounding. And so is the feminine spirit. And so I want to ask: what makes something masculine and something feminine? And, do these classifications inevitably reinforce the gender binary? I believe it comes back to *asking* whoever you are talking to what it means to them. I can't define what it means to be masculine or feminine past what I believe to be masculine or feminine. To try and mold a definition for one or the other leads us right back into the problem with strict binary assignments. There's a fluidity built into these definitions that *mustn't* remain frozen.

So what does masculinity mean for me? I think it might mean seeing things exactly as they are and, if something is amiss, doing something about it: without hesitation, in a straightforward and steadfast way. It means building community, and centering that community around kindness with plenty of room to grow. It means being sweet and tender and gentle with yourself and with others. It means being grounded in the now and seeing the future by defining a clear path, even if that path is through rough terrain. It means knowing when to be gentle and kind and compassionate and when to be feral. It means defending the people you love and spreading love freely without expecting anything in return. It means being brave for others and being brave for yourself. And more, and more, and more.

And what does femininity mean for me? I think it might mean seeing things exactly as they are and, if something is amiss, doing something about it: without hesitation, in a straightforward and steadfast way. It means building community, and centering that community around kindness with plenty of room to grow. It means being sweet and tender and gentle with yourself and with others. It means being grounded in the now and seeing the future by defining a clear path, even if that path is through rough terrain. It means knowing when to be gentle and kind and compassionate and when to be feral. It means defending the people you love and spreading love freely without expecting anything in return. It means being brave for others and being brave for yourself. And more, and more, and more.

I. BROKEN ZIPPERS

It's just a coincidence (well, let's say, it must be a coincidence) but I recently broke the zipper off of two garments of mine. Now, this is spectacular (just like all coincidences) (screaming now: SPECTACULAR) that I managed to break two zippers in one month. And I'm zipping everything up in a brand new way. And some things are meant to come undone, over and over again.

II. TAROT SPREAD

The Earth tastes like barley tea and rust and I'm in love with that.

I'm learning how to thaw after being frozen.
Patiently, I listen to the Wind outside.
And with eyes open, then closed, then closed *tightly*, I dream
of being out there in it.
And then it's in my heart and it spreads into my arms and
my fingers and suddenly I am a whirlwind of breath and life.

III. MEMORY FROM THEN

I remember when I was little, and then more grown up, but
still young. Well, when I was younger, there used to be this
space next to my bed: a little rectangular opening of carpet
between the bed and the wall. And there was this vent that
occasionally pumped out hot air. And I'd take my blankie
and curl up next to the vent and cover myself underneath my
blankie with the vent. And this was safety.

IV. STOPPING, STARING, STARING

I'm just a camera. I'm a camera, with a brain. I have a brain,
and I'm a camera. And when I see things I'll tilt my head and
squint, a gimbal of flesh and bones. And I spin around and
get dizzy and then I'm a dizzy camera. And when I look up
at the sky I see everything that my camera eyes see and my
camera brain processes and my camera mind interprets.

V. IMPOSTER SYNDROME

If I'm a fraud, I want to be exposed. Over, and over, and
over again. I'm not embarrassed about not knowing things
anymore.

VI. DYSPHORIC DREAMS

I had a dream that I had a really thick beard. And in the
mirror I saw myself and I think I panicked. And I shaved a
small bit away and saw my jaw: skin, freed. And then I woke
up. See, fundamentally, gender isn't something that you can
see. But how do I affirm the way I feel externally? This is a
lesson in self-love I think. *I am me*. And I am my own identity.

VII. SECRET: C306

I can reserve study rooms at the main library at the univer-
sity, and there's a long list of private rooms available to reserve
for zoning in and zoning out. Anyways, by absolute chance, I
came across a really nice room that isn't on the reservation list
for some reason. Making it simultaneously infinitely reservable
and unreservable at the same time. The really huge thing about
this room is that it has a window. Most of these rooms don't
have windows, so this is a luxury. And this is my secret.