

# Spare Rib

INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST ZINE AT DARTMOUTH  
VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 3 23X EDITION

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&  
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CHECK OUT THE  
AUDIO ZINE!

**The Joy Edition**

## THE NAME “SPARE RIB”

As written in the second chapter of Genesis, God took a rib from Adam, the first man, and from it fashioned Eve, the first woman, to serve as his companion. We propose a different origin story, in which **no one is merely a piece of flesh, second-thought, servile, or spare.**

## A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Our 23X edition theme is Joy—a long-awaited choice for many of our members. In past editions, our themes have unfolded into unfiltered expressions of emotions, frustrations, and activism, yielding complex pieces and intricate covers. As we’ve come to know in this edition, joy—a deceptively simple word—is no less difficult to pinpoint. In this edition, you’ll find that joy takes on many dimensions. Queer joy, autistic joy, Black joy, musical joy, fat joy, killjoy—All these iterations of joy are a celebration of who we are and who we want to be.

Political activism is important but exhausting work. In light of the challenges inherent to our daily existences, how do we cope? How do we find joy in the everyday; how do we deliver hope for the world we want to live in? With the pieces in this edition, we hope to illuminate the work and communities that have brought us joy in the past few months, and through this, we intend to shed light on the ways we have envisioned and embodied the world we want to inhabit someday through our art and organizing.

You, the reader, have pulled back the curtain. Light pours from our hearts into your own. We’d like to ask you: What brings you joy? What sparks light within you? What constitutes the world you want to live in? Flip through these pages; find your light in the words of our authors.

**Feel our joy.**

- 23X WRITING LEADS

## MISSION STATEMENT:

The *Spare Rib* newspaper was first published in 1992 to highlight women’s accomplishments and persisting problems in the two decades following co-education at Dartmouth. Unfortunately, the paper’s editorial staff and approach represented a narrow, one-dimensional slice of feminism, and the paper went out of print after only a few years. Twenty-five years later, our goal reflects a movement that has evolved considerably since 1995. We are re-establishing *Spare Rib* to discuss struggles, achievements, and history of people and places beyond the center, hindered (but not constrained) by racism, classism, sexism and further means of oppression, through analysis, humor, and critique. Our struggles deserve recognition, our perspectives deserve to be voiced, and our strengths deserve to be celebrated.

**Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in *Spare Rib* are those of individual authors and do not represent wholly complete or correct information, nor is it intended to be.**

## A STATEMENT AGAINST COLONIAL EXPLOITATION

In accordance with Spare Rib's values and mission, we want to bring attention to the land on which we stand, its history, and its original peoples. More than a land acknowledgement, this is a statement against a historical injustice. This is a historical demand and a material necessity that has been brewing for over five centuries. Dartmouth College is a settler-colonial, patriarchal, bourgeois institution, founded on the eve of the American revolution. It is thus profoundly entangled with the settler-colonial project. This institution stands on unceded, continually-occupied Abenaki territory and within the wider Turtle Island, lands currently under the violent, fascistic military occupation of the Euro-American settler regime. Indigenous people, both here and throughout the Earth, have been living in a post-apocalyptic winter for 500 years. These lands have seen genocide, warfare, and plagues, which have decimated most of its original inhabitants. They have seen treaties ignored and broken, cultures and languages forcibly erased, and entire populations displaced. Indigenous peoples remain here, standing proud and resolute, in love, community, and joy, awaiting the new dawn to come.

Now more than ever, Spare Rib assumes the historical duty to stand in solidarity and dedicate ourselves to a genuine end of colonial injustice. Spare Rib stands for a return of the land, people's government, and Indigenous self-determination. This statement is a new beginning for our efforts for Indigenous justice and autonomy — this is not the end. As we move forward, Spare Rib devotes ourselves to a future of collective liberation for all oppressed peoples.

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Spare Rib was created by students at Dartmouth College, a school built on unceded Abenaki land that, to this day, prospers off of Indigenous trauma. Settler-colonial exploitation is ongoing, complex, and damaging to all, and Spare Rib aims to acknowledge the privileges and exploitation we take part in within society—devoting ourselves to honoring Indigenous peoples and allies around the world that fought and continue to fight for a more equitable and inclusive future. We will continue to voice our support and encourage others to educate themselves and learn about Indigenous issues and identities. (edited from 22s edition)

Views and not necessarily reflective of the zine, writers, or staff as a whole, nor represented as intended to disparage any group or individual.

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# First Love / Late Spring

By: Tiffany Chang

Art by: YaYing Yu

Design by: Ella Grim

## Author's Note

This spring, I decided to spend my leave term on campus doing research to prepare for my senior thesis. To be honest, my real motivations for staying on campus were to spend more time with my graduating friends and continue living at Chanty (our senior apartment). Embarking on a new passion project while preparing to say goodbye to seeing my friends every day has been such a bittersweet experience. At the same time, not taking classes this term has given me a lot of time to reflect on how grateful I am to have met friends who have become like family here.

We've all been through a lot these past few years, and reflecting on what to make of everything I've ever wondered or been worried about, the next direction for my work has organically coalesced around the theme of survival. Pursuing survival means something different to everyone, and that's what makes it so beautiful: a shared need that we can build into shared communities. No matter where this life takes us, I only wish the best for everyone in the class of 2023. I hope that someday, we'll all discover our personal visions of survival which lead us towards living and loving well.

## In what ways does Jong Yak-Yong's legacy enact a teleiopoiesis of its own?

(Teleiopoiesis being the process by which literature creates new worlds across the gaps of vast spatial and temporal distances).

Could he have anticipated my study of him, or that my study of him would be displaced onto reviving the voice of an enslaved woman 비녀 in his household, and Catholicism's connections to women like Franny Choi (with a detour via the work of Alexis Pauline Gumbs) or Theresa Hak Kyung Cha? That his legacy would be housed where the archives of Theresa's work are housed? What would my own genealogical record reveal, or would it be erased in its entirety?

Today, I read the second chapter of Spivak's *Death of a Discipline*. The distinction that she draws between copying and cutting/pasting ideas from one context to another applies well to the spread of Catholicism in Korea, in which Matteo Ricci's ideas, translated into Chinese, were "copied" into Korean Neo-Confucian political debates. I also think that the idea of literature being "what escapes the system; you cannot speed read it" takes on a literal significance given penalties for importing Western literature and religious persecution. Spivak's most convincing application of her methodology was pointing out the indefiniteness of Virginia Woolf's acts of creating meaning in *A Room of One's Own*. I also liked how she pointed out modernity and traditions co-existing (with traditions outlasting dead technology) in one of the novels she used as a case study.






This brings me back to Park Dae Sung's statement that he found the modern in the ancient. The deconstructive strategy that Cawley applies to both Ricci and Tasan's work is very compelling to me. Both of them sought to evade the polarization of political discourse around Catholicism by searching for origins, histories that seemed beyond critique because they were already part of the canon. The double meanings in Tasan's work and the need for secrecy as a condition of his creation makes me think more broadly about what secrets the past keeps from us.

The idea of a distinction between a moral God and a creator God is fascinating. I wonder how this connects to the role of ritual in both Neo-Confucianism and Catholicism. The burning of ancestor tablets is the most obvious, but Yagyong also cared about music as a practical tool to cultivate moral behavior. Creation is morality, creation is godly. If Literature is what escapes the system, to quote Spivak, then how does this idea of a creator God and the absent signifier of Jesus as the practical bridge between God as a metaphysical concept and God as embodied in human actions interact? More importantly to me, how does that create the space for art of people who did not have access to Catholic texts, who keep Catholicism alive in other ways? Might we then read ritual as text if the creator God draws no distinctions between mediums?

I know I'm supposed to narrow down my research questions. I guess my research question is, if literature is what escapes, then what escaped Jong Yagyong and can we see it in the work of lapsed Catholics like Franny Choi, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and others? What escapes the text, and how does it get transubstantiated back into literature when the household registers have been burned, both for the *nobi* (for whom it never existed) and for the *yangban*? How did Yagyong create the conditions for that slippage, as the sole survivor of the purges from his family? The sole escapee? Is it really fugitive, if he's a yangban?


If Spivak were to frame this in terms of Woolf, it would be asking what of Woolf's writing creates the conditions by which teleiopoiesis of her work can occur, how is that different from other writings in the strictly Neo-Confucian tradition, or from other traditions, if it is, really? Remember my initial proposal on how so many of the signatories to the Korean Declaration of Independence were secret Korean Catholics.

**All this is making me curious about my own family genealogy.**

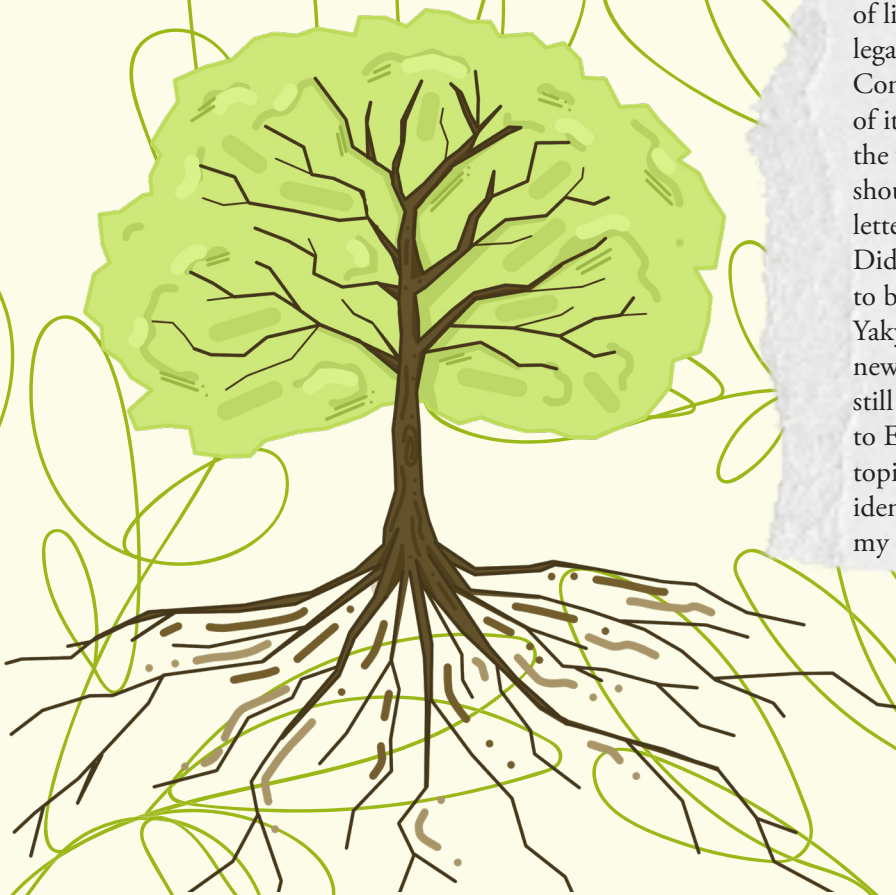


I looked through the Ricci Institute's library catalogue today and continue to feel overwhelmed with everything that exists out there about the topic of Korean Catholicism. I feel an urgency to narrow down my research topic to feel like I'm making progress, and the only thing that's sticking in my head is Professor Jung's research on the 卍L. People like her are so hard to research from a literary perspective because they rarely author literature that's preserved. I've been wracking my brain to think of what it means for comparative literature to no longer solely concern itself with literature, as the 1993 Bernhard (?) report by the ACLA concluded. Today, reading Graphs, Trees, & Maps, I was struck by the structure of an evolutionary tree to discuss shifts in literature. The process of infinite differentiation becomes consolidated through varying rates of survival. I wonder, in the context of martyrdom and martyrs' literature, if this process applies to the survivors, too. In a very literal sense, much of the Jung family was martyred. Jung Yakyong, who wasn't, wrote the majority of his works in exile (like Ovid). What does his survivorship reveal? Can a model of martyrdom be applied to the preservation of works from people with marginalized identities, and how would that be represented in the literature, its very survival planted in infertile soil? What does literary martyrdom look like for the voiceless?

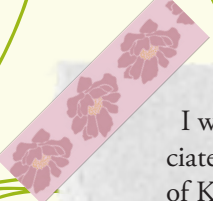
***For the record, I'm not Christian. But my grandparents are very devout Christians from one of the southernmost parts of Korea (Mokpo), in the countryside. I wonder if curiosity about their faith has drawn me towards all this.***





I'm realizing that I have a very specific vision of literature that doesn't necessarily include the legalistic analysis of yangban commentaries on Confucius. I think literature is special because of its relationship to poetics: the will to remake the world through one's imagination. Maybe I should begin to look at Yakyong's poetry and letters as well as his formal political statements. Did such a statement exist for him? Ricci seems to be the one enacting his teleiopoiesis, but Yakyong is the one who is creating something new entirely that I think Korean literature is still grappling with in terms of its relationship to English. I am still stuck on what my research topic even is or how to narrow it down without identifying core primary sources. Maybe this is my next task.







I wrote in my reflection on *The Vegetarian* that I appreciate its use of the domestic family as its unit of analysis of Korean politics. Maybe I should do the same with the founders of the Catholic Church. I can make a map of their works and compare that with representations of vernacular and women's literature. I can see which works I can trace a legacy of into the modern day and unsettle the tree diagram with modern literature. So much of early Catholics' lives were concerned with their survival. Survival was built into the conditions of their literary production. For some subjectivities, I'll argue that they performed their stories long before they were preserved. So much of literary is a preservation issue. Think of this scenario: someone performing a story and someone else writes it down. Who is the author of the story?



Other things in my mind: the idea of the God as a Creator God (birth of poetics from analytics), how is the act of smuggling knowledge an act of ritual, contrast trees with family history archival practices and family registers and gendered erasures, see how the linear logic of succession/inheritance falls apart for the people (nobi) who are traded as property between houses (circularity of ownership and its accumulation of capital via exploitation). How strange, that there exists no distinction between family and household, and that preserving the fates of the owned in any record exists alongside the turbulent fortunes of those whose power once must have seemed unimpeachable.

I'm realizing what my next step needs to be – instead of continuing to be so overwhelmed with secondary sources, I need to begin constructing a primary source bibliography that will allow me to begin applying these methods of deconstruction and teleiopoiesis in earnest. Start with the family tree provided in Jong Yak-Jong's first Korean Catechism and make a bibliography of the most notable primary sources each person on the list has created, along with intellectual influences and affiliations. In many ways, what people had in common was the necessity to hide: what they were doing, who they were, their discontent with the system, etc. How do new forms of expression arise to accommodate double meanings and free expression of possibilities unrecognized by the current paradigm? This is where I can explode form, because literature borrows from other art forms such as satire and vernacular works as well to expand the horizons of the possible in writing, as Spivak says, why are reading and writing often considered the only allegories for learning and knowing the world? Closeted expression is still expression. Expression that holds in tension both the desire to remain alive and the desire to create a new world: an ethics of revolution that is far from suicidal, and is rather a cry for a survival more vibrant than we could have ever imagined. 🍎

## **I. On Survival**

My project is a passion project about survival strategies: what we can learn from past survival strategies so we can develop better ones.

*There is no survival strategy formulated without the looming threat of loss, devastation, and death; there is no death, devastation, or loss that leaves no survivors.*

*Survival is ever-present even when death looms: sometimes, death is the only survival that truly matters.*

*Edelman writes about the death drive, but I'm far more interested in the survival drive.*

In the face of persecution, colonization, and bodily violation, how can we excavate survival strategies that enable us to find hope and love in our shared existence?

## **II. On Literature**

How can literature help us answer these questions?

*Literature is the God that creates from a distance (some would call it teleiopoiesis).*

*Literature is what escapes the system.*

What escapes, and what is the system?

*We're escaping, and the system is everywhere.*

*We're escaping, and the system is our family, our ancestors, our everything everywhere all at once!*

Are you excited?

*Yes – I want to meet your god.*

## **III. The Supreme Lord on High**

My research on the literature of early Korean Catholics reveals a literature of constant experimentation with the highest stakes of life and death.

My consumption of Korean American diaspora literature reveals a literature of constant experimentation with the highest stakes of life and death.

My creation will reveal new building blocks for transmitting the survival strategies of the past, present, and future in the words we write.

For survival is timeless –

a generative process that never ends as long as we keep learning, *together*.

# Existence

By: Yiran Jiang

Art by: Yiran Jiang

Design by: Yiran Jiang

5.

How long are we waiting then?  
Who are we waiting for? What  
if nobody shows up? Are we just  
gonna stay here forever?

6.

I don't know.

3.

But you opened the box of  
possibilities, didn't you?  
That's why you're sitting  
with me at this very moment.

4.

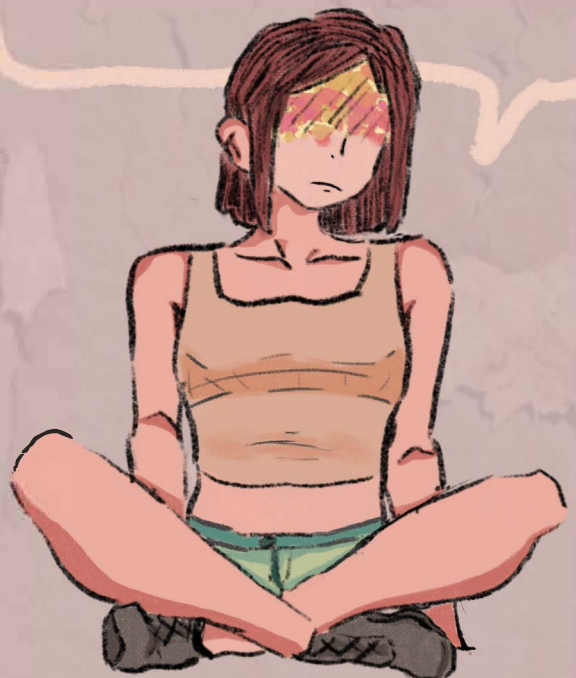
That's true. And I'll become one  
of the possibilities, so will you.  
This is the buffer zone from  
one possibility to another, and  
we're both in a transitional  
state.

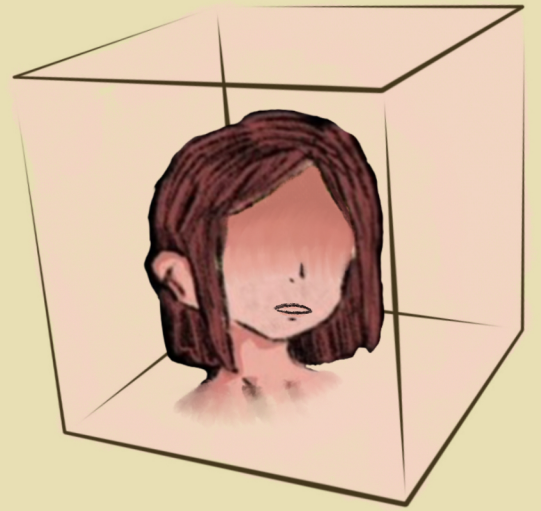
1.

Hey what are you waiting for?

2.

Waiting for someone to roll the  
dice. It turns out that we do not  
get to choose which world to live  
in. I'm merely an observer.





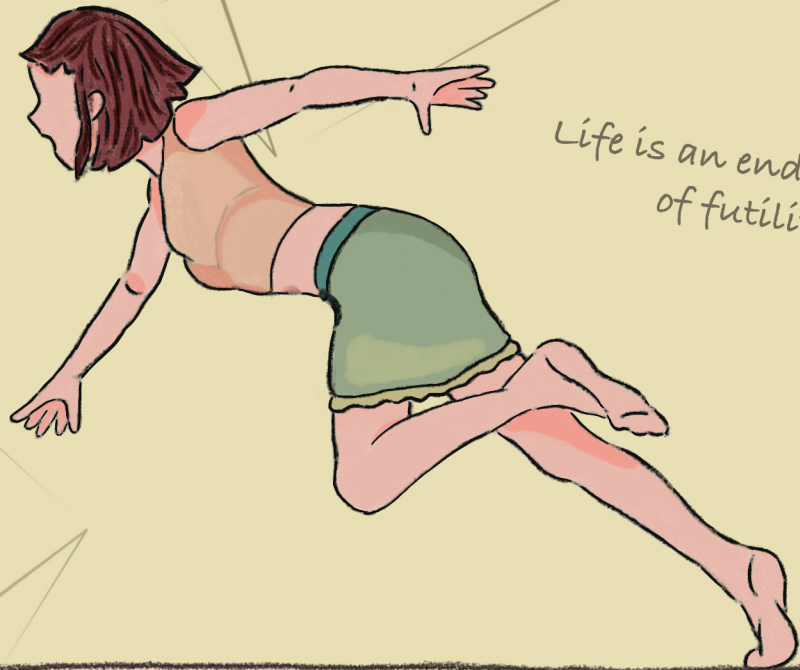
Souls do not exist.  
Consciousness is born  
without meaning. Time is  
merely a continuous decay.



I've been thinking...

There is only one distorted  
space. I, too, will gradually  
be dried out by time.

I'll be left with a  
symbolic torso. And  
this is only one  
possibility.



Life is an endless cycle  
of futility.



But because everything is meaningless, the very moment of 'being alive' becomes incredibly precious.

After I disappear from this world, my will still lives on.



And I find joy in those moments of existence. 🍎

# Pablo Neruda

By: Anika Larson

Art by: Sarah Berman Design by: Emily Chang

cw: mentions of rape

***Pablo Neruda stole my heart and he shattered it into a million pieces.***

While studying abroad in Lisbon, I found myself drawn to bookstores and libraries — my refuge from a language that left my head spinning. As I leafed through each book, my brain mechanically translated Portuguese to Spanish and Spanish to English. I whispered aloud to myself, stumbling over syllables, my brain desperately endeavoring to keep up with my lips. Romances, mysteries, and even a translation of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Gatsby* came into hazy view. Portuguese was a new, exciting, and often frustrating puzzle.

My hands landed on Pablo Neruda’s “*Poemas de Amor*,” a Portuguese translation of the great Chilean’s work. It fell open to *El Insecto*, and I finally let go. No longer did I hold myself to a rigid translation, for poetry was never meant to be strict. His poetry is of tender love, of emotion,



filled with longing and desire. And I saw it all. I was Neruda, an insect surrounded by the great big world. A rose towered over me, its petals crinkling with age. A fire smoldered nearby, and I made the journey down my lover’s body.

## ***Pablo Neruda was a rapist.***



This man, who spoke of love with such reverence. Who told me it was a fragile vase to be handled with the utmost care. A baby to be cradled. The betrayal felt personal. Tainted with the image of his sin, El Insecto was now a parasite, infecting the body of an innocent maid with his filth. The rose overhead shriveled to dust. The fire's smoke filled my lungs as I choked on the truth. The veil had been lifted and I was face to face with a beguiling monster who clothed himself in achingly beautiful language and deceit. How could I separate the art from the artist when they were so intimately intertwined? God – I wasn't just reading a story he thought up for someone.

**I was Pablo Neruda when I read his poetry.** I saw what he saw, felt what he felt, thought what he thought. It all seemed like a cruel joke.

Before, I had wanted to shout his poetry from the rooftops.

I wanted to read it with the middle schoolers I teach Spanish to, to go back in time and whisper it aloud once more in that tiny, Portuguese bookstore. Now I can't even pick up that little blue book of poems. I guess some stories don't get a happy ending. Sometimes there is only heartbreak.



***But if I did learn anything from Neruda, I learned to feel.***

To let love overwhelm my soul and bring me to my knees. **And to cherish it all because es tan corto el amor, y es tan largo el olvido** - love is so short, forgetting is so long. 🍏

# this is healing

by: Diana Tapia

art & design by: Milanne Berg

Content Warning:  
depression, anxiety, ED,  
body dysmorphia, mentions of  
self harm, heartbreak

*When the good days return you think,*

*I'm all better now.*

*Everything is going to be fine.*

And in that moment of pure, unfiltered joy, you decide that you'll chase happiness until your very last breath. But when the high comes crashing down and the illusion shatters, you're met with a paradox: ***the more you chase it, the further it strays from you.***

Dark days become dark weeks and soon you find yourself wondering if maybe the world was always so dim. But a good day comes around, and you can't believe that there was ever anything wrong with you. You cling to that joy like a crying child holds on to its mother, hoping her comforting touch lasts forever. But deep down, you know the darkness is never far. It is always there, watching. And somewhere along the line, dark weeks become dark months, and the good days stop coming altogether.

There comes a point when you can't quite recall why you're sad in the first place. Still, you get up every day at 7 AM to cover the signs of a teary night with a thick layer of makeup.

You go to class and even though you study the material until your eyelids give out every night, you feel small and out of place, so you sink into your chair. You dig your necklace deep into your finger because you've learned to prefer the feeling of a sharp sting to the anxiety that's found a permanent home in your chest.

Lunch comes around and you blow off your friends because you didn't quite like what you saw in the mirror that morning. You tell yourself that you'll eat a big dinner, but your assignments pile up and you never get around to it. You find yourself reading Jeffrey Eugenides and Sylvia Plath because you're an English major, and you should know their work! That's what you tell yourself, but you know the real reason. In your free time, you write shitty poetry about how much you hate your body and you wonder if you'll ever make it as a writer.





# a poem for the one I wish I loved

I offer you this poem,  
My mind and body.  
Your eyes glisten with each stare,  
Your reflection,  
The one who stares back at you,  
Watches as you eye every unwelcome curve,  
Watches as you feel every dimple,  
Every mark,  
Watches as you pull and tug at every unruly curl,  
Watches as your hands get lost in every fold and roll,  
And when you look back at her,  
She suddenly feels so bare,  
So exposed,  
So hurt,  
So unwanted.

I offer you this poem,  
My mind and body,  
To show you that your supple face houses warm cheeks and soft skin,  
To show you the beauty in every stretch mark,  
To show you the strength in your gaze,  
To show you that you are beautiful.  
Take it from me,  
For I am you,  
And I wish I could love you as you hate me.



You're swamped with homework, but your mind keeps wandering to the man who broke your heart with his indifference. When it comes up, you laugh and tell your friends you're over that guy, the one you believed was *the one*, but even now, you cry yourself to sleep every night wondering if maybe he didn't want you because you weren't good enough or pretty enough or skinny enough. You finally gather the courage to ask him, and you know it's really over now. You drink to forget him and fail every time, but you'd rather drown in alcohol than be alone with your sober thoughts. Deep down, the damage is done and you doubt you'll ever feel that way about anyone ever again.

*So you decide to give up on love, and you make friends with the numbness.*

You go weeks without calling home because your mom can read you like a book and you don't feel like explaining to your family that Dartmouth is just as prestigious as Harvard for the umpteenth time. When you do call home, you tell them that you miss them, but deep down you're thinking about how they're the reason you went away in the first place.

You buy self-help books, but you never get around to reading them because they're for people who are *actually* struggling, and you? You're just going through a rough patch, and you have nothing to worry about! Your friends come to you when they need someone to hear them out. You're happy to do it because it distracts you from how miserable you are in the moment. You notice how your friends use men to get over other men, and sometimes you wonder if maybe you should do the same, too.

When you're out with friends, you hate that no matter how much you try to change, you somehow make everything about you and you wonder if secretly everyone hates you for it. They tell you it's fine, but you feel like a burden anyway, so you *never* let them know what you're going through.

*You suffer in silence. You've always preferred it that way anyway.*

In your dreams, you're always running, hoping to escape the hurt. You take long showers so your roommate doesn't hear you crying in the next room. And you walk to Occom Pond at night, where you can be alone with your unforgiving thoughts and self-hatred.

When you look up at the starry night sky, you remember how you've wished away two shooting stars on him. Another one comes around, and you wonder if you should hate him for the void he left in your chest, but you find yourself wishing him happiness instead. And finally, you realize,

*The war is over. The rest is up to you.*

And one day, just as you've made peace with the darkness, the Spring sun arrives, and its warm rays bring light to your world. There are good days again. Days where nothing good particularly happens, but smiles come easy and you are happy to be alive. You know this feeling is temporary, but you embrace it anyway. It is only when you embrace your pain that you learn to truly appreciate your joy.

*This is healing.* 🍎

# Soft Political:

## *On Poetry, Community, Activism, and Love*

By: Ella Grim

Art by: Camille Yang

Design by: Raegan Boettcher

Poetry is not a luxury.  
It is a vital necessity  
of our existence. It  
forms the quality of the  
light within which we  
predicate our hopes and  
dreams toward survival  
and change, first made  
into language, then into  
idea, then into more  
tangible action.

- Audre Lorde

### i. Poetry as Survival

Lately, I've been feeling as if nothing I do has any weight.

Each day brings new disasters, some massive, others miniscule. My friends and I struggle through heartbreak, through death and other loss, with spiraling mental health, with the daily violences that come with situating ourselves within an institution that does not take adequate time to acknowledge our humanity, our identities, and our beautiful, living bodies. Bodies that exist in the fog between definitions. Bodies that carry hurt like a sickness that can't be shaken.

For as long as I can remember, I have been a caregiver; my first reaction to crisis is ensuring safety, listening. Generating solutions. I simply no longer know how to help. The magnitude and frequency of these wounds seem beyond my ability to heal, or even provide temporary relief. I am tired of trying to fix everything. It is lonely. I am lonely.

In these moments of drifting, of weightlessness, I find myself turning to poetry.

Poetry is my sanctuary, my most personal and powerful form of healing. The page is where I go to process, to grieve, to problematize, to dissent, to rejoice, to declare love, to say everything I cannot figure out how to express with prose or speech. I will always write poems. Poetry is my joy. My survival. I know this with the conviction of a rainstorm.

I am constantly questioning whether my impulse to write is *enough*. If, by pursuing a life of writing, I am simultaneously abandoning work that enacts real change, helps real people, has real value in the creation of a radically just, sustainable, and caring future. Art is often framed as soft activism, weightless in the face of real, tangible political states or conflicts. There is pressure to be *serious*: to write *serious*, analytical articles. To talk about *serious* issues. To take *serious*, radical, material actions. These "serious" things are, of course, critical and necessary to feminism and social justice movements. But so is poetry.

What about the poetic is coded as insignificant to serious political activism?

Perhaps in humanity's current capitalist-patriarchal-technocratic-carceral state of existence, the poetic insistence on emotion — on attention to an embodied praxis of feeling deeply the pain, joy, suffering, whimsy, etc. of our lives and the larger world that is insisted upon by poetry — *must* be framed as *unserious*, *insignificant*, and *soft*. Perhaps there is a desire to maim, to injure, to hate, without the interference of poetry's insistence on the unveiling of that hurt. With willful ignorance towards the material pain caused on real individual bodies subject to a regime of emotionless, institutionalized inattention.

What happens when we reframe our understanding of the poetic as necessary to radical political transformation? When we open ourselves to the possibility of a mode of

*What happens when we insist on an active praxis of serious joy? When we lean into the poetic, not as a crutch or an alternative, but as a fundamental, necessary condition for activist existence?*

activism that both openly tackles the most serious issues of our time head on *and* insists on taking the time to heal the physical, emotional, and psychological wounds that activist bodies sustain, through a constant regrounding

in community via artistic practice? What happens when we insist on an activist praxis of *serious joy*? When we lean into the poetic, not as a crutch or an alternative, but as a fundamental, necessary condition for activist existence?

In this manifesto, I illuminate the links between poetry and feminist activism as they appear in my life, within Spare Rib, and in the larger world. This article is part personal narrative, part collective accounting, part annotated bibliography, part love song. It is, in a way, a justification of my urge to write. It is also a rejection of that need to justify — an attempt to reframe care work and creative labor as historically and currently fundamental to our politics, activism, and existence.

## ii. Poetry as Mirror

But little by little,  
as you left their voice behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice  
which you slowly  
recognized as your own,  
that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world

- Mary Oliver, *The Journey*

In the archive of my memory, I open the box labeled *times poetry woke me up*:

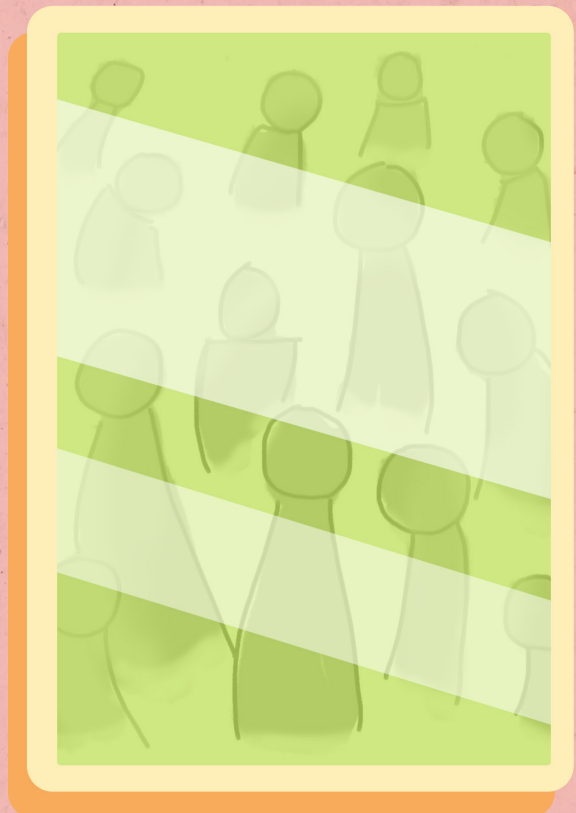
I sneak the thick red copy of *Contemporary American Poetry* off the grown-ups' bookshelf when no one else is home. It is electric and heavy in my

hands. I realize I am not the only person in the world who plays with words.

I read Mary Oliver's "The Journey" online while bored in 10th grade chemistry class. It tells me what I already know: I am the only person who can heal my wounds. I realize I am not the only person in the world who is trying to get out.

I lose the Poetry Out Loud state competition, but it does not matter because I am already 20 pages into the free book they gave the runners-up. Ada Limón, *The Carrying*. I am transformed by these pages, by the elegance of the language, the melding of body and land, emotion and pointed political critique. I realize in this moment that everything I want to accomplish can be done through poetry. I decide to be a poet.

I sit on the first ever *Climate Emergency Poetry Zoom* call during the height of the pandemic. I'm the only person under 40. I wait with building anxiety to share a poem. It is my first time reading my own work for an audience. I speak of rivers, of drought. When I finish, a woman sends me a chat message: "A lovely poem and you make a fantastic presentation in your reading. You're in great company with Hirschfield and Orr. Hope you continue to write." It's electrifying. I realize I have the power to write things that resonate with others. I, too, can build mirrors with words and prompt reflections.



It is my first week of college. Serena and I sit on the ROBO steps licking dripping ice cream cones. Out of nowhere, she goes “So you’re queer right?” and it is euphoric. The next week, we bookclub Sappho, who writes, “We live the opposite daring.” I realize my desires stretch back for eons, and that I am not the first person to write about this.

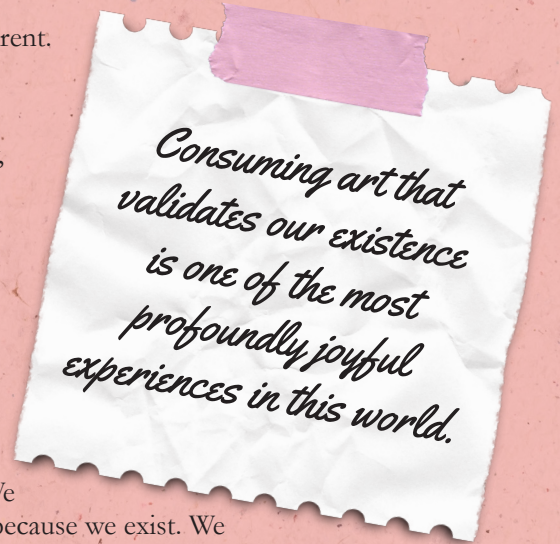
Consuming art that validates our existence is one of the most profoundly joyful experiences in this world.

The first joy I found in poetry was the realization that I was not alone. It is terrible to feel alone, especially as a child, and there were several years of my adolescence where I truly thought no one would ever be able to grasp my thoughts, my loves, or my wonder. Those first, illicit, stolen poems I read started to slowly burn away at this fog. I heard voices. They echoed mine. I echoed theirs. They gave me a purpose. A goal: to read and write. A glimmer of hope that I would find a voice, claim it as my own, and be kept company by it, and by the voices of all the other poets who had found and claimed their voice long before I came into this brutal world.

When we realize we exist outside our bodies — or more accurately, that other bodies exist that look, think, or feel like us — we start to lose the fog of isolation. We wake to the network of humans we are connected to: by experience, by hope, by circumstance, by choice. We realize no one is exactly the same, but that no one is

completely different.

Poetry is a mirror. One of those big, twisty, fun-house-at-the-county-fair mirrors. A medium for reflecting our thinking, our dreaming, our schemes, our love, our hope, our existence. We exist. We write because we exist. We write, too, because we know that we have not always known that existence. We hope someday a stranger reads our poem, and thinks: *Oh, I know that feeling. I, too, feel this. I, too, am this. I exist.*



### iii. Poetry as Community

enough of can you see me, can you hear me, enough I am human, enough I am alone and I am desperate, enough of the animal saving me, enough of the high water, enough sorrow, enough of the air and its ease, I am asking you to touch me.

- Ada Limon, *The End of Poetry*

My inbox is full of messages, and because I am methodical, I read them all.

There are some I am indifferent about and some that bring stress. The sum total is a steady trickle of bad news, conference reports, brochures for events I will never attend — the messages are constant, like a drippy faucet.

On the rare occasion, though, I receive a poem.

Spare Rib has a poetry circle with 25 people, and we send our work to each other over email. This group was started before I matriculated, and has ebbed, flowed, and grown over the past two years. We revived it recently. Started sending poems on themes: *Time. Instinct. Scar.*

Poetry is, at its core, a communal, circular act.

In my classes, I've learned about



early English epic verse, like *Beowulf*, written down but likely sung or recited to audiences. I've learned about manuscript culture in the early modern period, about the circulation of poems through the courts and through the hands of poets and writers, who copied them down before passing them on. I've learned about Ginsburg and the [Beat Poets](#), how together, they pushed the boundaries of language and built a counterculture poetics. I think of [Ada Limón and Natalie Diaz](#), who spent almost a year writing letter-poems back and forth, building on each other's images and responding to current events in each other's lives and in the world around them. I think of Franny Choi, who visited Dartmouth's campus in the early spring of 2023 and spoke of many things, among them her strong connections to other young, queer poets, like Danaz Smith (who, coincidentally, is the author of my current favorite poem, [I'm Going Back to Minnesota Where Sadness Makes Sense](#)). I think of my dear friend from high school, how we have sent each other poems back and forth each April for the past 5 years. I think of Spare Rib, our little email group, the plethora of recent poems delivering little sparks of joy to light up my days.

We often envision the poet as solitary. Alone. Struggling through dark emotions at a desk lit by a dim lamp, pushing around

words on blank pages, producing something isolated from everyone but themselves.

This is so far from the truth.

Poetry is community, and, as Franny Choi puts it, "circles rise together."

Choi means "rise" in a literary and professional sense, which is true. This is not, though, the only function of poetic circles, or the only way they rise. Our circle is one of attention, of inspiration, and of care. Our work as feminists can be brutal, exhausting, disheartening stuff. The fight against oppression is long and complex. It requires, I believe, a tremendous amount of care labor and care practices — little infusions of joy, hope, community, and belonging to sustain our praxis. Tending to activists is itself a form of activism. No one can do this work alone, and no one can do this work without the care, respite, and love of a beloved community. We happen to be building ours with poetry, among other things.

Poetry is community. Poetry is hope. It is joy. Poetry is care. Poetry is activism through care. Activism through critique, too, through cries and fight songs and dreamscapes.

Without care, we cannot sustain our activism. We grow cold, isolated, bitter, cynical. Through care, through poetry, we breathe. When we breathe, we can fight.

#### iv. Poetry as Archive

No poet is above political responsibility.

— Genevieve Taggard

I like things that are quiet. I like things that speak without speaking.

This is why I work in archives. I open boxes coated with thin layers of dust. Of time. I pull out thin, translucent pieces of paper. Letters. Old photographs. Manuscripts.

My ongoing archive work is on Genevieve Taggard, a poet, feminist, professor, and socialist from the early 1900s. Dartmouth has eight boxes of her ephemeral documents. She published prolifically during her life, won awards, and mentored many other women poets. She was deeply embedded in the modernist poetic networks of her time, yet is rarely discussed today. Most of her later work was deeply political. When she is remembered, she is held up as a brief example of women's leftist poetry of the era, then promptly put back in her boxes.

Is Taggard forgotten, or willfully erased? My hypothesis, based on preliminary research, is that the driving factor in her erasure from the canon is her radical politic.



When we write poetry that is not starkly political, we are told to be more serious. When we write overtly political poetry, we are silenced. Left out of the canon. Reclaimed, perhaps, if lucky, almost a hundred years later by a student with a proclivity for archives, for boxes.

When we write, not everyone will listen.

When we write, we risk censure.

When we write, we are participating in an inherently political act, merely by the fact of our existence as women putting our voices and opinions and visions down on a page.

When we write, we leave a legacy.

Poetry speaks, if we are willing to listen.

-

## v. Poetry as Portal

By the time the apocalypse began, the world had already ended. It ended every day for a century or two. It ended, and another ending world spun in its place.

- Franny Choi, *The World Keeps Ending, and the World Goes On*

To build the future, we must see it.

To see the future, we must vision.

To vision, we must write.

Poetry is a medium for speculation.

There are millions of versions of the future. To reach the ones we want, we have to have somewhere to envision what they look like, how they taste and feel, how they sound, how they hold us, how they could care for our soft sweet sick bodies that only want a world that is not perpetually ending on us.

This poetry is best read, so I will point to a few sources. Franny Choi's new book, *The World Keeps Ending and the World Goes On*, is one. Octavia Butler's *Earthseed* novels, each chapter prefaced by a visionary poem, are another. [Maanasi Shyno's poem collection](#), "How to Survive the End of the World," in a past edition of this zine is a final starting place for reading poetic work that insists on enacting a visionary politic.

Poetry is dreaming. It is scheming. It is a portal to a world we are just beginning to construct. We will not stop reaching towards it until we enact it, and poetry is one way of reaching.

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## vi. What This All Means

I need poetry.

We need poetry.

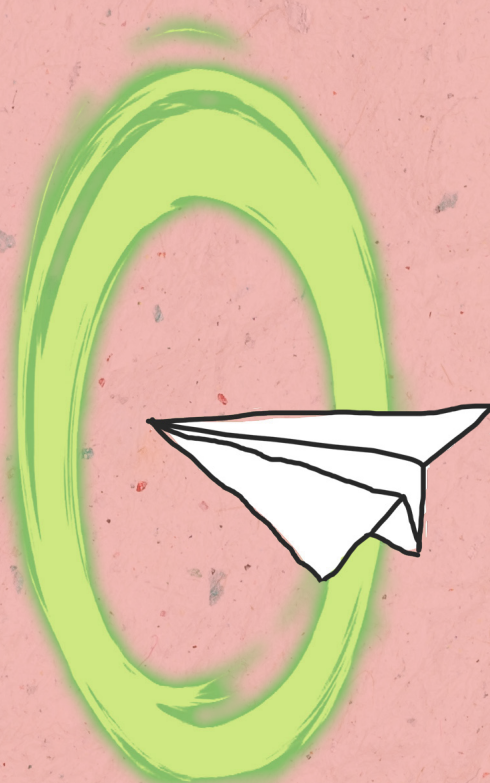
Feminism needs poetry.

This world — this beautiful, elegiac, stupid, broken world — needs poetry.

With poetry, we see the future.

With poetry, we hold each other together.

*With poetry, we cradle hope.* 🍏





# *Friendlove*

By Maanasi Shyno

Art and Design  
by Shena Han



## It is hard to believe...

...that this is the 23s' final edition. When we began in 2020, I really could not imagine what our little project would become. Now ten editions later I sometimes am overwhelmed by the feeling that Spare Rib is some of the most important work I'll ever do in my life. It is so bittersweet to leave, to enter a new era in our friendship, away from how it all began.

This piece is a series of letters to the four 23s who have been my partners since day one.

MADNESS  
MADNESS  
MADNESS

### To Sophie

We'd been parked in front of my dorm for hours, unable to say goodbye. The sun was setting, but there was so much to say after the trip to the ArtsEmerson Theater, so many tiny, precious memories packed into one day. We felt the need to turn them all over in our hands, laugh together at the mishaps and madness.

We talked about the new friendships we saw forming and the inside jokes that were cracked. Something new had blossomed in our tiny passion project, a little spark of togetherness so tender we ached to see it ignite. We had no idea then how quickly it would spread, that the sense of community would become everything to us.

Somewhere amidst our rumination, I said I could die happy tomorrow. It was a dramatic thing

but I remember you knew exactly what I meant. You have a way of asking questions, of explaining your thoughts and weaving everything into a beautiful realization. There is something to discover in every conversation, a new road that emerges in the unending journey we are traveling together.

There were many discoveries that night in the car, but the simplest was that we had built something precious. In the heat of a challenging existence, we had found ways to create something worth living for, something life-giving. It dawned on me that we do not have to do big things to change our lives, to create a microcosm of joy. I realized the impact of every small action, which rippled onwards, splashing onto shores I didn't know existed. And suddenly, everything we did was aflame with purpose. I kept thinking, this is why I'm doing this. This is why I do everything I do.

"In the heat of a  
challenging existence,  
we had found ways  
to create something  
worth living for,  
something life-giving."

There is a specific joy to learning that there is so much to hope for, that even the flutter of a butterfly's wing can move mountains and create storms. In the darkest moments of existential dread, this realization calls out to me. I am forced to see all the light in the world, not as something which simply exists, but is created. This joy of this finding has spread into every corner of my being. It has lingered like a whisper, infused into every moment since.

## To Cathy

We all stood in awe as you blew into the wood stove, kindling the dying embers into robust flames. A group of ribbers had been trying to start a fire for the last 30 minutes to no avail, but you got it going, explained to us that fires need breath. Warmth spread throughout the cabin and you made sure it would last the night. There's a reason that everyone says that they'd hope to be with you if they were marooned on a deserted island or living through an apocalypse.

It has been a blessing to be able to work with someone as capable as you, someone who holds everything together even when it looks like it is bound to fall apart. Creating a spark is easy, but there is a lot of love that needs to go into tending a fire once it catches. In reflecting on how far we have come and in my prayers for the future, I wonder how do we keep a dream burning? How do we survive?

Recently, when we talked about the beginning of Spare Rib, you said "we invented because we loved." In a college not quite made for us, we needed a place in which we could express ourselves, learn freely, and laugh wildly. We loved our vision, and we loved what it could become for us if we only tended the soil in which it was planted.

Today we are still working, still fanning the flames, no longer of a vision, but a robust, flowering reality. When I think of you heating up that cabin, laughing and happily explaining the process to us, I think to myself that what is watered will continue to grow. When we are around the right people, when we love each other and what we gather to do, the stars need not align perfectly. What we have loved into existence, we will love into survival. We will teach each other and pass it down, we will adapt and evolve.

Lately, many members have told us they don't know what they'll do once the 23s are gone. And we all smile and say the same thing: that they will do what this community has always done. They will love so they will invent. They will worry and then remember. They will think of you and breathe life into the fire again and again. The flame will rekindle and they will survive.

## To Anne

We all breathed a sigh of relief when we finally got through our list of things to talk about during execs. We were on track to finish our second edition. It was proof that Spare Rib was not going to be a one-time thing, that we were building something that would last. As happened often during the early days of the magazine, there was this sense of awe that settled in. Suddenly you said, "Guys, we should be friends, why aren't we friends?" and we all burst out laughing.

We were friendly, but not quite friends yet. It was an interesting relationship to have read someone's most intimate poetry, but not know if they had any siblings or why they chose their major. And slowly, we grew closer. How could we not, pouring our passion into Spare Rib? Pulling all the stops to scrape together every edition like our lives depended on it?

YOU SAID:  
"WE INVENTED  
BECAUSE  
WE LOVED."

Your question has stayed with me for years because there was a specific, unassuming knowledge in it: that friendship and fun should always be part of the equation. You truly embody this practice. You make us smile endlessly with your fun facts. The way you accidentally derail meetings always brings us closer and closer. (One week as we were bonding over childhood injuries I thought to myself, this is what feminist community means.) Whether it's organizing a family dinner for those who don't have anyone visiting during family weekend or teaching everyone to knit just because you can, you are always making everyone feel essential. There's so much we began doing to build community that can be traced back to your simple question.

Today what attracts people the most to Spare Rib is that we are a community first. To those who aren't part of our organization, community might seem like it should be a luxury, something that isn't quite as important as what we are struggling for. But you have taught me and so many others that community is a necessity. That joy is the whole point.

I think without you, I would have worked myself to the bone, I would have given myself until there was nothing left. But instead I opened my eyes to the abundance of happiness in this world, in the small microcosm of Spare Rib. I opened myself up to receiving and found myself full and happy and surrounded by love.





## To Elaine

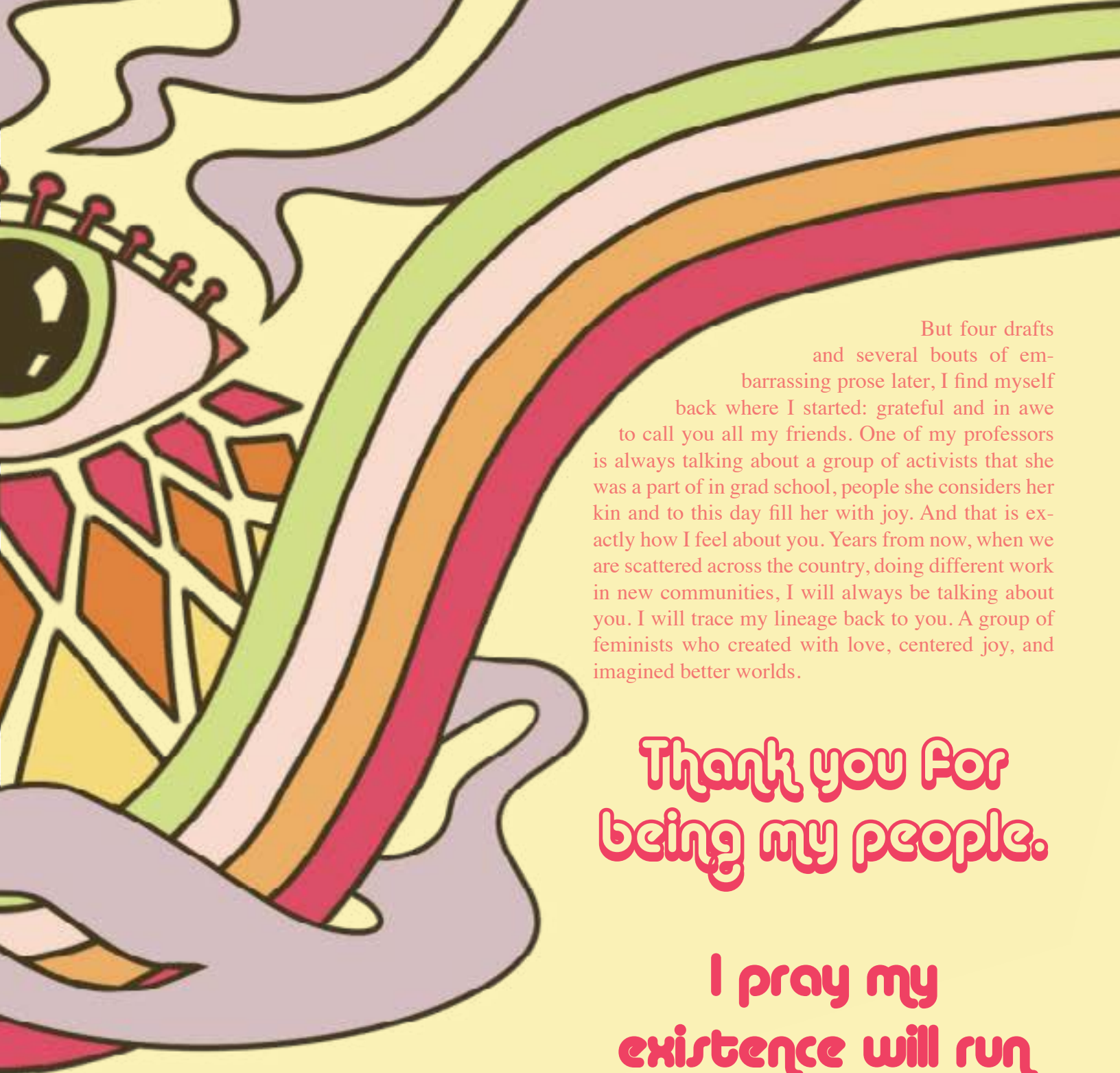
We were sitting on the couch in the NAH basement, trying to compose an urgent email. I tossed out random lines while you threaded them together, trying to find the perfect combination of words. But we couldn't figure out how to catch recipients' attention without sounding super desperate. Laughter bubbled between us as we tried capitalizing and then adding emojis. With every line, we cracked up more and more until we teared up. When we finally finished, I told you I was embarrassed to put down my contact at the bottom and let everyone think I had written the email myself. You grinned and said "don't worry, we can put mine too."

In that moment I thought about how much I love working with you and how it was one of the last times we'd sign off on something together. Whenever I want to bring an idea to life you are my very first call. You bring so much to the table, but it isn't your skillset or your track record of getting shit done that makes me think of you first. It's the way you never shoot down wild ideas and always ask "okay, so how would we do that?" It's the way you are willing to do things that have never been done before, how you're not afraid to put your name on something a bit ridiculous. There is something about this that makes me believe in our ability to create new ways of living in this world, of building new ones, of doing the impossible. You make me believe in my own visions and the futures we imagine together.

Anytime I work in other groups on campus, I always realize that there is something different about how we do things in Spare Rib. There is a shared understanding and respect and love that is embedded in everything we do, a feminist ethos as you call it. In my conversations with other ribbers, everyone has struggled to describe exactly what this looks like or

where it comes from. It is indescribable, impossible to put into words. But when I try, I think about you.

Working with you, and all the others, has changed what dedicating yourself to a cause means to me. And now that I've experienced collaborating in this way, I don't know how I'll go on and do good work with anyone else. Sometimes I imagine I won't. I imagine we will find ourselves in the same city, with a new idea, ready to start all over again.



But four drafts and several bouts of embarrassing prose later, I find myself back where I started: grateful and in awe to call you all my friends. One of my professors is always talking about a group of activists that she was a part of in grad school, people she considers her kin and to this day fill her with joy. And that is exactly how I feel about you. Years from now, when we are scattered across the country, doing different work in new communities, I will always be talking about you. I will trace my lineage back to you. A group of feminists who created with love, centered joy, and imagined better worlds.

**Thank you for  
being my people.**

**I pray my  
existence will run  
through yours  
over and over  
again. 🍎**

...

I had a lot of dreams for this piece. I thought I'd finally be able to put into words every strong feeling I've had about all of you and this community we've built together. I thought I'd explain all the way I've been reading the work we do through Lorde's idea of erotic work, how it has tapped into something deep within me and how connected I feel to all of you. I thought I'd write poetry.

# THE FUNERAL HOUSE

*learning what to do with my  
hands and your condolences*

*by Zeynep Bayirtepe*

swallowing blood and spitting soil  
i don't know how to live  
with a million pairs of loving eyes on me  
they call me their violet, beloved  
throw me a birthday party everyday i choose to stay  
i pluck out petals to get a hold of your mind  
i assure them i don't have a knife  
savor a pair of safety scissors  
i shall not disappoint and i shall not forget  
my evil butterfly, i will clip your wings and hang them dry  
i will suck the special out of you and season it with spite  
a dial of poison to cherish and remember

i know now why maddening women take to pen and ink and blood  
when your body is falling apart every word might be your last  
and there is nothing to do but to act everything out  
make sure you go out screaming, kicking, honest  
i cuss out the audience they knock at my door  
chew out their condolences and cold meals  
i spit on your grave, you grow flowers in spite of me  
your flowers i won't forgive  
your flowers i can't forget

i have crosses on the calendar for each confession  
i burn the pages like sage, inhale the incense, make a wish  
breath out smoke, choke on words, hold onto the smells  
i wet the ashes and mold them into a body  
i kiss the earth that raised you  
i build a tomb and sleep with my socks on  
claw marks on the calendar i will wait for you  
i am the poet in a warzone  
nothing to my name except for an enchanting elegy  
i wait at home with the children  
i promise them you will be back  
i feast on a goodnight  
i make everything about you  
start every line with an overbearing i

and i am a smiling widow  
as i vigilantly watch the earth satiate its thirst  
with the tongues you used to puncture  
black drips off of my lashes and becomes a night  
where the moon no longer is a broken plate  
but a mirror, a mutilation of the sun, proof of life  
i loved you and you are dead  
i strike a match and take down love letters, keep them in order  
i burn the funeral house down  
to call my memories my own and give us peace  
i kiss my fickle heart with flaming lips  
scare the worms out, breathe in and out



you must change your life, the poet cries  
as i gaze into the stolen eyes of apollo  
friends as fresh as scars, archaic as heartbreak  
i paint my hands black, nails and lips blue  
touch your face, avert my gaze  
there is a me-shaped hole in the love i build  
a sunburn shade of shame that i hide in the shadows

if i bit my tongue off and fed it to the cats  
if i was cooler, crueller, colder, calmer  
if i could be fixed, i would  
pluck my eyes out and play pretend  
and keep your twisted love pressed between pages  
breathe life into it until i'm nothing but labor and dust

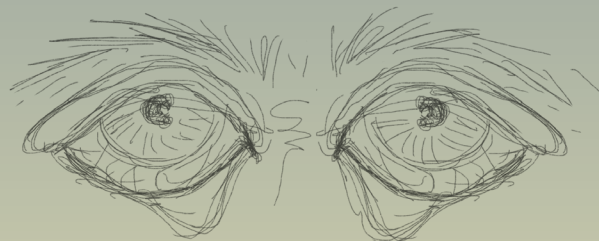
*“what they call  
mourning  
i polish and pray to  
every morning”*

my sheets smell only of me and  
the girl that loves me dries my tears off of me, tenderly,  
like my mother does in her drunken dreams  
and doesn't ask for the time i wasted back  
my sick sleep of relief gets captured by dreams of grief  
and the guilt of the days i neglect her for you  
the beautiful days i count down for nothing have moth bites in them,  
a million you-shaped holes

i carve a monastery into shame and gild it with gold  
try to melt my ice over a burning bridge  
pray for wings and kiss the sun  
i fall (i fall) but i never crash  
i go out clean, without evidence  
not the porcelain doll i should have been  
no shrapnels for you to kiss and put together  
with the blood on your lips  
you would sign love letters to foreign lands

they see you with your new colors blank eyes fresh tattoos  
and i become the punchline to a heartbeat i can sing along to  
what they call mourning i polish and pray to every morning

and i am a smiling widow  
as i vigilantly watch the earth satiate its thirst  
with the tongues you used to puncture  
black drips off of my lashes and becomes a night  
where the moon no longer is a broken plate  
but a mirror, a mutilation of the sun, proof of life  
i loved you and you are dead  
i strike a match and take down love letters, keep them  
in order  
i burn the funeral house down  
to call my memories my own and give us peace  
i kiss my fickle heart with flaming lips  
scare the worms out, breathe in and out 🍎



*Art by Raegan Boettcher  
Design by Noelle Blake*

# Nonresident Alien

By: Eda Naz Gokdemir  
Art by: Idil Sahin  
Design by: Ella Grim

Content Warning: mentions  
of murder and bodily harm

“Hey, you are vofing, right?”

“I’m so sorry; I cannot!”

“You do not have to apologize to me.”

It’s nine in the morning, and I wake up to shame. I stare at the message my friend back home sent me. It’s already five in the afternoon for her. She has returned from classes, scrolling through her phone, probably reading about citizens abandoned to die under the rubble of buildings built to collapse, a woman’s murderer walking free once again, and how to prevent a potential, highly likely, election fraud or a civil war in a far-away, “democratic” nation I once called my own.

Five in the afternoon was when despair started hitting me. It was when I came back home from school, exhausted, confronted with a pile of homework that was my ticket out of a crumbling country. We are ruined, the news anchor said in the only remaining “independent,” “left-wing” TV channel, accompanied by dinner chewed silently every eve-

ning. I remembered watching the news on countless nights like this — I remembered how they found the dismembered body of a high school girl murdered by her boyfriend, red nail polish on her fingernails, her arm left to rot in the trash can. I remembered how I could not paint my nails for months. Somehow, by the age of ten, I was taught that femininity killed, not men. That if a woman was beaten by her husband, she deserved it. I did not yet know at the time that I would keep thinking of the girl with the missing arm every time I painted my nails, for it would take me years to stop feeling vulnerable, stupid, afraid every time I presented more feminine than usual. It would take me years to feel the tiniest bit of security in my womanhood, to stop feeling shame for all the ways others could hurt me, to realize that I did not put my body in danger, others did. I remembered how bombs kept going off in airports, tourist attractions, and the busiest streets in the city where I went to school. I taught myself how to be afraid of crowds, lonely men with backpacks, walking alone in the city I was supposed to make a home in. I remembered how they put journalists in jail one after the other, I remembered how we learned to joke about it: *Silivri is cold*.<sup>1</sup> I remembered how I was lectured by the school principal, to count myself lucky that she was protecting us from the dangers our pens could bring us, by acting exactly like the very dangers she was trying to denounce. Yet, nothing *bad* had happened to me; I was guarded, privileged, secure in the comfort of a regular, secular middle-class family. I felt weak for fearing my country, and feeling weak made me fear it more, to hate myself and my place in it. *You need to get out*, my parents said over the news. *We are doing everything we can so that you can be free.*

I find myself on the land of the free. I do not know why I am here. It feels like running away. It feels like I never wanted to be here in the first place. I just *had* to be, yet it is a privilege to *be*. It is a privilege, I remind myself, as I am waiting at the customs line in the Boston airport. I watch the K-9

<sup>1</sup> Silivri is a prison in Istanbul. The phrase “Silivri is cold” is said in response to people who criticize the government in daily conversations to imply how easy it might be to find yourself in prison.







dogs, police officers, and warnings on the screens; I'm privileged, I'm a nonresident alien with "rights," protected by the laws that were built to keep me out. I'm lucky that they stamped my good-for-nothing passport and let me in instead of locking it away. I'm lucky that I pass as white: my identity, unbelonging, foreignness invisible. The closest family member is an ocean away, but I am grateful that no one can notice me enough to hate me here yet. My accent gets heavier when I'm in distress, when I get sick, when I do not know where to go, but at least they cannot tell I am a nonresident alien until I start speaking, if only I can stay silent long enough. I work for twelve dollars an hour, ten to fourteen hours every week, when my friends back home spend that time walking around a city I just learned how to love, shouting for my rights in protests where they can get arrested, tear-gassed, beaten. "It's a privilege to earn that much money," my friend tells me, "that's the equivalent of an entry-level job in engineering here." I'm grateful, I tell myself, as I get taxed on my financial aid for food and board. It's your income, the US government says, it's the price of your privilege. My privilege costs my parents almost twenty thousand in my home currency to have me back home, to hug me, to speak to me in my mother tongue. I'm forgetting how to speak my native language, feeling out of place in the conversations of friends who stayed behind. Yet I'm privileged that I learned English when I did. "I envy you so much; you do not have to do drill!" I sit and smile when they make jokes about places I've never been, cultural moments I've never celebrated, rights I've never had. They are speaking a language I will never learn, but I'm grateful that they are not laughing at me even when I cannot laugh with them. I'm lucky that no one asks me to account for the crimes of my ancestors, that they are kind

enough to ask me how to pronounce my name, that no one treats me as a terrorist.

### **If is a privilege to be this free.**

It's nine in the morning, and I remember I cannot vote. That I did not care enough to vote. That I was tired of caring, of not belonging, of feeling displaced. I make excuses for my apathy: I cannot vote because I missed the deadline to go to the consulate first to prove my residency, second to vote. Two trips that take twelve hours, cost a hundred and sixty dollars that I only earn in thirteen hours. Twenty-five hours out of my life for an election I cannot bring myself to be hopeful about, for a people that kept electing leaders that brought them to ruin, for a country that taught me how to be ashamed and afraid of who I am.

I hate that I hate my country. I hate that it left me no choice but to leave, not knowing where I will belong next, when, if at all, I can belong again. But perhaps I never felt like I was at home. **Home felt like displacement.** I felt like God made a mistake in putting me where I was: a queer woman with internalized homophobia, who cannot come to terms with her gender, sexuality, religion, ideology... A country that raised a generation of cynics too afraid and weakened to hope. A country that expects us to return and "fix" what the past generations broke. "Go and study abroad, then come back and change your country," our history teacher used to tell us. The same teacher who taught us how our people kept making the same mistakes over and over again throughout our history of discrimination, subjugation, and fear. The same teacher who taught us how to apologize for the crimes our country committed, how to build defenses against the prejudices of the westerners as if we were representatives of our nation, how to carry the weight of knowledge in a land



elsewhere 2



**“Somehow, by the age of ten, I was taught that femininity killed, not men.”**

of ignorance and amid a plague of forgetfulness.

Why should I have to carry all of *this*? Why should I be responsible for all the past mistakes, present misunderstandings, future worries of an entire nation? It is heavy, and carrying it all my life left no power in me. I feel old, as old as the land I am from, yet young, too young to know what to do with it all. Why should I care, I ask myself. I just happened to be born there. I only care about the people I love, the family and friends who are still stuck there. I owe nothing to a faraway, autocratic state that is barely a republic anymore. Why waste my breath and time talking about the endless political controversies of a nation when I can preserve that energy to help the people around me, when my hardwork and skills are better used elsewhere, when I only have a limited amount of stamina? I *should* choose who to care about, who to love, not the conditions of my birth. Yet I am afraid. I fear for all the loved ones left in the country. “Can you find a way to leave?” I text my mom after the first round of election results are announced. I cannot stand having my loved ones remain in a country I do not trust. I feel guilty. I *should* have voted. I should have screamed in protests, I should have gotten myself arrested, I should have written more, spoken up more. I was frightened, silenced, disciplined to the bone.



I was  
frightened,  
silenced,  
disciplined  
to the bone.  
I've been,  
and still am,  
and still am,  
complicit.

I've been, and still am, complicit.

After all, I should have voted not for a country, but for a people. For children like me who are scared of something they cannot even name — frightened of themselves, of their own desires and hopes, of crossing boundaries built centuries ago. Children who died under rubble because their parents could not afford better housing, in buildings the authorities enabled through bribes and lies, where they abandoned families to cry out for someone to save them until they ran out of breath. Children who are taught to hate and blame each other. Children who have to learn by themselves how to love and rejoice in who they are and where they are.

It's nine in the morning, and I let shame consume me. "*You do not have to apologize to me.*" I stare at the text my friend sent me. I do not know who to apologize to — murdered women, victims of earthquakes, or myself? I feel like both the perpetrator and the victim of decades of wrongdoings. **I am uncomfortable in my pain: there are centuries of hate crimes, unfair laws, femicides, censored cries in my chest.** I feel guilty for carrying it all, and doing nothing of substance about it. I cannot channel my anger into something "productive," "political," or "revolutionary." I taught myself that to hope was pointless, foolish, naive. I recognize that my pain is a form of privilege, but it still hurts. After all, I still call that faraway land I hate so much *home*, if that word even means anything anymore. I find no sense of reconciliation, comfort, or safety in it perhaps because I am still trying to teach myself that to seek joy in home is not a privilege, it is a right. 🍎



# THE BOUNDARY-TRANSGRESSES BETWEEN OTAKUS AND VIRTUAL

## DISSOLVING RECONSTRUCTING ACT

### THE UPROAR IN THE CROWD SIGNIFIES THE START OF THE

**SHOW.** A girl with swinging blue pigtailed appears center stage, shining in the heavenly glow of the stadium lighting like a goddess. Her movements and voice resemble those of a real person, but she is far more perfect than any human with her flawless appearance, attractive voice, inexhaustible energy and in-depth individual connection with the audience below. She is Hatsune Miku\*, the first Japanese vocaloid (Singing voice synthesizer software product) to be developed and distributed by Crypton Future Media. Initially released in August 2007, Miku soon received great popularity in Japan and other fast-developing Asian countries. Different from real objective entities and virtual narrative idols constructed in novels and comics, vocaloids, or virtual idols, are constructed with digital reproduction technology (3-D projection), artificial intelligence, and music synthesis software. The target users of vocaloids are *otakus*: socially isolated people who have a greater connection to virtual beings than to reality. The “high tech, low life” condition in modern Asia, which refers to the lack of real, deep connection between humans in the modern world dominated by fast-developing technology, accounts for the birth of virtual idols and *otakus* since a group of people started to seek their emotional connection with a technical product.[1]



こんにちは、私  
の名前は初音  
ミクです

Source: TenneLuna, DeviantArt, 2020

This paper examines such connections between people and technology, especially attending to the parasocial relations that *otakus* forge with virtual idols. I propose that such relationships are often rich, interesting, and satisfying; that, as such, they can be as real as are our relations with other humans. Exploring the question of whether an *otaku's* relationship with virtual idols is substantially different from our relationships with other humans, I argue that relating is being (it is through relating to virtual idols that *otakus* come into existence); it is not the material form of the actors (*otakus* and virtual idols, the two members engaged in the relationship) but rather the kinds of relationships that the actors craft with each other, that hold together the actor networks (made up of various relationships between different members) forming the conditions of their existence.

# EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP WITH VIRTUAL IDOLS:

## MOVING DUALISM AND TOWARD NETWORK SYSTEM



My motivation for the research is my fascination with the non-orthodox, real relationships (here “real” means a concrete feeling of substantial interaction and engagement) humans can form with virtual beings. This kind of relationship is even more intriguing when it comes to *otakus* and virtual idols, due to the complicated co-dependence between the users and the technologies that bring each other into being, reorienting the relationship between audience and performing artist. What’s more, the relationship dissolves traditional Western dualism and questions the conventional feature of the actor that determines a relationship. Despite previous social critique of *otakus’* relationship with virtual idols as inferior and non-substantial, it is found that *otakus* report feeling the deepest sense of joy and belongingness when they interact with virtual idols.



**BY: JOYCE LI ART BY: SARAH BERMAN  
DESIGN BY: CATY BROWN**

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OTAKUS AND VIRTUAL IDOLS: AN ACTOR-NETWORK APPROACH

Virtual idols and *otakus* exist in a complicated, mutually constitutive set of relationships: a network consisting of interactions. Although Miku is a virtual figure, she is able to “live” in the three-dimensional world, presenting as a human-like singer with a body, performance and a voice, as well as interacting with real singers and audiences in this form. In addition, she functions as an instrument for songs written by any composer, providing the opportunity for ordinary people to make their music heard by themselves and by others. Users, meanwhile, can DIY the preferred appearance and characteristics of their own virtual idol, which is a personal interactive version of the original setting, in their technical devices; eventually the most popular songs, appearances and characteristics designed by individual *otakus* are shown to the fans in the public concert.

In other words, every *otaku* is involved in the creation process through which Miku comes into existence; she becomes more human-like as the public’s interventions enhance the various aspects of her design. Thus, Miku “comes into substantial existence” through her complicated interaction, or “relating” with *otakus* in a social-technical network. The network is defined by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law as an “actor network,” which includes the non-human-centered process of ordering or the ways in which societal order is achieved. It also includes the role material elements and other nonhumans play in that process, seeking to develop a ‘symmetrical’ view across the previously inscribed nature/culture/technology divides.

It assumes that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations. Its studies explore and characterize the webs and the practices that carry them.[2] Essentially, actor network approach describes human and nonhuman actors with the same language, and grants them equal amounts of agency within “webs” or “actor-networks.” The actors are simply constituent nodes that facilitate a larger functioning. Anthrax spores, Portuguese navigators, car batteries, Thomas Edison, the Renault Car Company, and scallops are all given equal treatment as nodal points within an actor-network.[3]

According to the actor network theorists, actors can be all kinds of things and are all inherently equal. As Latour puts it, “any social system is an association of heterogeneous elements such as humans, norms, texts, devices, machines, and technology, thus granting equal weight to humans and non-human (machine) entities in the analysis of the social”. [4] Law agrees that the social elements in a system should not be given superior status. [5]

In fact, the natural world and artifacts may enter the account as an *explanans*, instead of *explanandum* with no voice of their own in the explanation. Thus, an actor-network approach suggests that Miku and *otakus* hold equal weight as actors in the network regardless of their attributes. It serves as a fundamental premise for later analysis, especially of power and mastery.

In terms of power distribution, relationships may afford certain actors more power than others, depending on the circumstances. As humans are not superior actors in the network according to the prior feature, we don't have a constant state of dominance in power attribution as well. Power balance shifts all the time in the *otaku*-Miku relationship: sometimes *otakus* are the creators that define Miku, in other occasions Miku motivates *otakus* to do certain things (*faire faire* / attachment), inducing them to act according to their previous projections on her (counter-projection/expectation), or offering them material for subjective processing (imagination).

The "attachment" process is similar to what Gomart and Hennion refer to as "consensual self-abandonment" in their analysis of attachment to music and drugs. The concept means accepting the external forces that take possession of the self and bracketing away one's own control and will in order to be expelled/rendered 'beside oneself'. [6] In the experiment conducted by Baylor, she

**THUS, AN ACTOR-NETWORK APPROACH SUGGESTS THAT MIKU AND OTAKUS HOLD EQUAL WEIGHT AS ACTORS IN THE NETWORK REGARDLESS OF THEIR ATTRIBUTES.**



found that the visual presence and appearance of anthropomorphic virtual agents can impact motivational outcomes such as self-efficacy and attitude change. Such anthropomorphic agents can be designed as simulated social models, providing social influence as virtual 'role models' for a target audience and context. [7] Likewise, *otakus* have the tendency to act in accordance with how their designed virtual idol acts or how they imagine that Miku expects them to act. In terms of subjective processing, an interviewee told me what he, an *otaku*, considered as the most important factor in his relationship with Miku was the imaginary space Miku provided. "I truly feel her existence not when I look at her image but when I close my eyes to imagine her standing by my side and we together having incredible adventures... Yeah all these are in my imagination, but they make this relationship feel real..." Indeed, Miku is both concrete and potential, with vivid characteristics like a real human but also potential space for users to imagine their own experience/stories with her. In this extended interaction, she guides *otakus* along in their imaginary interaction (an element of fantasy), offering them another level of connection. ●

**WANT  
TO KEEP  
READING?  
SCAN HERE**



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# lost, again found

content warning: discusses  
depression, mentions of suicide

BY: NAYA LUNNEY

ART BY: SAM PAISLEY

DESIGN BY: KATHERINE ARRINGTON

## 1. RETRACING MY STEPS BACK TO JOY

It's hard finding your way back to something you don't remember losing. Tediously picking through memories, searching for the moment when it silently

disappeared. The shocking discovery that you're missing a part of yourself which you thought was integral to your very being.

## TAKE A STEP BACK

The last Sunday of February, 2023. That was the day I realized I'd lost my joy. I remember because I was on the phone with my parents. It wasn't the first time I'd broken down over the phone to them that term. It *was* the first time they'd asked me if I would consider talking to a psychiatrist. Something about mood stabilizers. A second passed... two... three... I forced the stale air out of my lungs.

How had I missed it? How did my parents half a world away recognize the change in me which I had been ignoring for so long? What possibly could have changed things so drastically?

## ANOTHER STEP BACK

The mood swings didn't appear out of nowhere. They crept up slowly from behind, encroaching upon my periphery until my entire vision was blurred. I couldn't see. Clearly.

## ANOTHER STEP

The first wave of uncertainty. An upheaval. Blunt. I knew this part was coming. They said it would. It's normal. It will pass. Probably.

## ANOTHER

December 19, 2021. The day I started taking oral contraceptives.

\*\*\*

## 2. THE RECLAIMING

Let's be clear. This story is *not* anti-contraceptive. It *is* a reminder for anyone choosing to take oral contraceptives to pay close attention to the ways their medication affects their mental and physical wellbeing, whether that occurs in a positive or negative way. Everyone uses and responds to contraception differently, which is why we need to stop sweeping this conversation





under the rug and instead work on dismantling common perceptions of what it means to be on “the pill.”

My own experience with oral contraceptives has been turbulent to say the least. It takes time to figure out which medication meshes with your body the best, or rather which one has the lowest impact on you. It is incredibly frustrating when you spend months coming to terms with your specific reactions to new medication, but you end up having to switch to a new prescription due to uncomfortable or intolerable side effects and the process of adjustment begins again. The first three months on a new pill is always the hardest for me. With different levels of estrogen and progesterone being flung through my body at new intervals, it takes a while to figure out what my new “normal” will feel like. I bled for two months straight when I first started using the medication I’m on now. While that was physically noticeable, the mental and emotional effects of changing hormone levels can be more difficult to peg.



Medication-induced mental health changes become even harder to recognize in environments of ever-changing conditions. Living as a college student, for example. Am I feeling crappy because I switched to new meds a couple weeks ago, or is it because my course load is a lot heavier this term than it was last? Am I in a funk because my cortisol response has been blunted or because it’s winter and I’m also facing seasonal depression? Am I having a meltdown because my hormone levels are shifting or because I’m homesick? It becomes impossible to separate the everyday life stressors from the hormones.

What most concerns me, though, is that we still don’t have a complete understanding of the physiological and psychological effects oral contraceptives have on our bodies. Oral contraceptives have been approved for sale in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration since 1960, and yet more than 60 years later there are still alarming gaps in our knowledge about women’s contraceptive health.<sup>[1]</sup> We know very little about

the neurological impact hormonal contraceptives have on women’s brains, and we’ve accumulated even less knowledge on their psychological consequences. However, research has recently begun expanding to include mental health issues in literature focused on oral contraception.



A 2016 study from Denmark provides compelling evidence for increased rates of depression and anxiety in women taking oral contraceptives.<sup>[2]</sup> Basically, Denmark keeps track of its citizens' individual social behavior and health through a series of social registers. With this data, researchers tracked the mental wellness of all Danish women and adolescents aged 15 to 34 years old, who had no prior documentation of depression diagnoses, over a timespan of 19 years (Jan. 1995–Dec. 2013). What they found was that women on hormonal contraceptives were 50% more likely to be diagnosed with depression and be prescribed antidepressants than women who were not on hormonal contraceptives. Women on hormonal contraceptives were also twice as likely to have attempted suicide than women who were not, with the number of fatal suicide attempts rising higher in women on hormonal contraception — triple that of their counterparts who did not use hormonal contraception.

Of course, this is only one study and we cannot claim that these correlations equal causation. Hormonal contraception is just one of the many factors that may have contributed to these women's experiences with depression. Nevertheless, these statistics should raise red flags. I understand that studies like this one can be hard to swallow. Not only are its statistical results and conclusions difficult to process emotionally, but I find it extremely counterintuitive to criticize contraceptive options.

Take away birth control and you take away a woman's freedom. It is that simple. Her right to choose how she lives her life depends on her ability to decide if, when, and with whom she wants to get pregnant. While contraceptives may negatively impact mental health, the benefits of having contraceptive options at all arguably outweighs the risk. The ability to live independently, plan for pregnancy, and avoid unwanted pregnancies has been shown to greatly reduce stress and anxiety for women who are not ready, for whatever reason, to take on the responsibility of raising a child.<sup>[3]</sup> This has an immensely positive effect on women's mental health which should not be discounted.

'The pill' was a huge step towards women's liberation. It is because of birth control that we no longer

have to view pregnancy as the biological binding which men have historically used to restrain us to domesticity. We can decide whether or not bearing children is a joy we want to embrace. It is only with this choice, when women are able to have sex and not face the consequence of pregnancy like men, that the two can be deemed "equal." I get it: it's completely reasonable to feel protective of contraceptives, but that doesn't mean we should hold them beyond reproach.

Anyone who has used oral contraceptives knows that potential side effects can be concerning and often contradictory. Weight gain is a common fear among oral contraceptive users, but depending on the prescription it could just as easily cause noticeable weight loss. Some might bleed excessively after starting medication while others won't bleed at all. One person might be thrown into overwhelming anxiety by their meds, while another uses the same contraceptive for the purpose of treating PMDD (Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder) symptoms including anxiety and depression.<sup>[4]</sup> At this point, it feels like we're pulling numbers from a hat. So, how are we supposed to negotiate these conflicting risk factors?

I can't say I know the answer to that question. What I do know is that we need the knowledge to protect ourselves and make informed decisions, and for that to be possible we need a more comprehensive understanding of what oral contraceptives do to our bodies, especially to our brains. Until then, we need to take care of ourselves and each other. If you're starting a new medication (contraceptive or otherwise) that has the potential to impact your mental health, consider asking someone close to you to pay attention. They may notice changes in your mood or behavior which you might not have discerned. Alternatively, keep a journal to help track your mood alongside your new medication routine. What's important is that you are in touch with subtle, gradual shifts — that way it's harder to be overwhelmed by seemingly sudden transformations.

There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to birth control. Every person's journey with contraception is unique and deeply personal. While no one should feel obligated to talk about their private experiences, we should be working harder to destigmatize discussions about contraceptive effects on women's mental and



physical well-being. We need to initiate these conversations by making information about oral contraceptives and their potential effects more accessible, creating a supportive environment for people to share their own experiences. Otherwise the relentless cycle of shame, silence, pain and isolation will continue for those who fear no one will listen to their story. It is up to each individual to choose what they do with their own body, but it is up to us to provide a framework of compassion to ensure open dialogue is not just allowed but considered the norm. 🍏

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# Oh, Baby...

By: Caty Brown

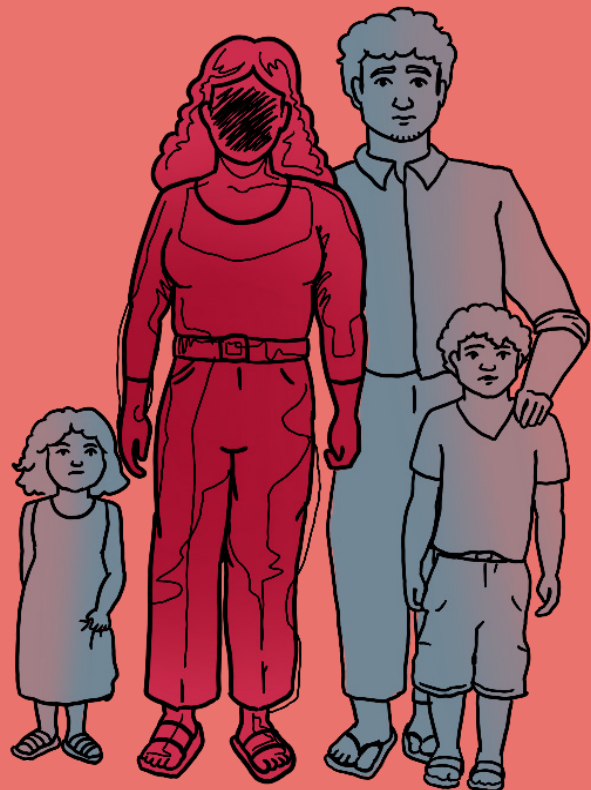
Art By: Camille Yang & Kaitlyn Anderson

Design By: Kaitlyn Anderson

## Preface

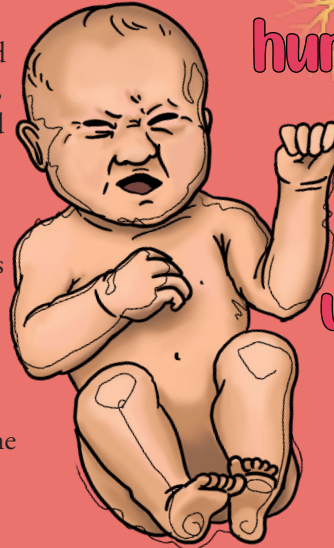
**Humans, or at least something we can recognize as human,** have been giving birth for 2 million years. With this long, long lineage of mothers behind each of us, I doubt I have anything new to say about birth, pregnancy, and babies. But man, does it feel like it. I can't stop thinking about how my ovaries are full of slowly dying eggs, bound to a time clock that will at some point expire. About how I'll have a 3 year window to get real busy between the end of residency and the age where I'll have a geriatric pregnancy (35, if you're wondering). About how the only pregnancy stories I've heard from my mother and grandmothers are horrible experiences, and maybe I will have a horrible pregnancy too. About how I'll have to figure out if I can breastfeed while also being a doctor. About how I'm assuming I'll even have a partner to make babies with in this golden window. Why do all these thoughts feel so new and unfamiliar? Why do I feel like the first person to ever think these things? Why do I feel such a strong pressure to write them down, to make people read them? Maybe I am terribly self-centered, but maybe it's because women's histories are no longer passed down, my grandmother's life-world doesn't go further than her. Though it isn't just women who give birth, women exist at a unique nexus in the world, living with a harshly gendered expectation for moral reproduction as well as efficient production. By and large, it is women who bear the brunt of the ethical weight to produce the next labor force and give them all of the support and nutrients they need, while also being expected to act as productive laborers themselves. How does the business of baby-making ever happen under this weight? Especially without anyone to warn us, to prepare young women for the unique challenges of birth, babies, families, and maintaining an individual life.

Had I not asked my grandmother directly, I wouldn't have ever known that she gave birth under the horrors of twilight sleep, treated as a reproductive body as doctors knocked her out, removed her baby from her body, and woke her up again. I wouldn't have ever known that she believed in breastfeeding until three as an act of love and caring, setting her babies up for the best life she could. I wouldn't have ever known that she learned to drive just so she could attend her obstetrician appointments that my grandfather was too busy working to drive her to. I wouldn't have ever known that she thought something was wrong with her anatomy, and that's why she had two Cesareans. Why aren't these stories told anymore? When did birth become something unworthy of talking to your family about?



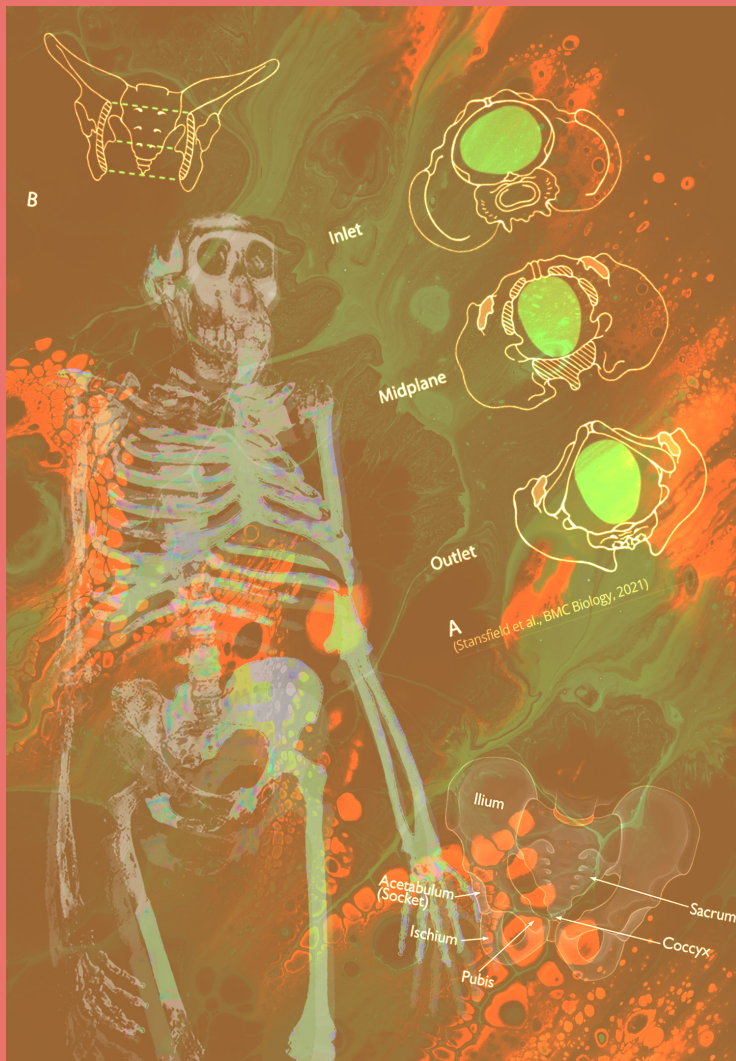
## Me & My Rotational Birth Canal

Humans have difficult births, with risks of obstructed labor, hemorrhage, tearing, fistula... the list goes on. The entire discussion here could be about that, honestly, given the host of interconnected factors that affect how well birth goes for mom, and for baby. Compared to our closest primate relatives, we have significantly longer, more complicated, and more painful births. Some of those differences are deeply connected to why we are human. For example, humans are obligate bipeds. This evolutionary shift to stand upright required changes to our pelvis shape to stabilize our hips via decreasing the flexibility of the pelvic joints, changing the angle of our leg connection, and shortening the pelvis (1). This reduced the size of our birth canal, and made its stretch more difficult, creating a tight squeeze for the skull of the neonate.



"Standing up straight and caring about one another are uniquely human behaviors that are intimately connected to the way we give birth."

Human babies are born with unfused skulls (unlike most primates), which are often forced to deform as they flex and squeeze within our bony birth canals. This is likely an evolutionary adaptation to try to avoid the obstructed labor common in humans. Not only are babies born with big heads due to our giant brains, but also with wide shoulders, necessitating a rotation during birth in order to match their widest plane with the widest plane of the birth canal as they pass through it. Human babies, in contrast to most other primates, are therefore born facing backward relative to mom. Some argue that this brought about the oldest human profession, midwifery. Because mothers cannot reach down to pull out their own babies without risking damage to their spines, a birth helper was needed to help with this last stage. The word origins of midwifery mean "with woman," describing the highly social, supportive role other humans play in keeping babies and mothers safe. No other primate species has help during birth, but it is a human universal. It's hard for me to imagine going off on my own to have a baby, without anyone to reassure me, bring me water or hot towels, hold my hand. Much more than just baby catchers, midwives are part of our human family, making our difficult and dangerous births a little easier. Standing up straight and caring about one another are uniquely human behaviors that are intimately connected to the way we give birth.



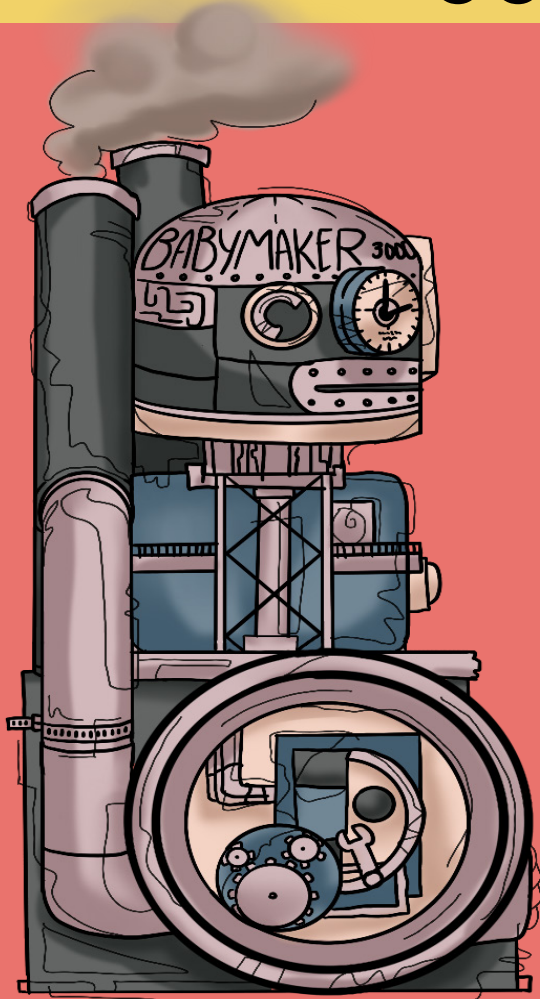
## A Productive Enterprise

Why do we even give birth at all, if it's so difficult and dangerous? Though I would love to answer that women decide to become mothers because it brings them joy, I fear the answer is far more complex than that. In some languages, the word womanhood is synonymous with motherhood, meaning that a childless woman isn't a woman at all. For example, in Egypt, the word "أُنوثة" can translate to either womanhood or femininity. Childlessness therefore erodes the identity of the woman herself, who is blamed and held responsible for her reproductive failings. This is also the case in Bengali, where womanhood is a synonym for femininity. Bangladeshi women are viewed as successful women only if they are successful mothers. This is felt most strongly by poor Bangladeshi women (whose livelihoods rely more strongly on agriculture and children as labor, which will be discussed below), but

even affluent Bangladeshi women feel guilt and stigmatization if they fail to prove their fertility. There is the expectation that a good wife will "prove her usefulness...contribute to the prosperity of her in-law's family" by giving birth to many babies. If she fails to prove her fecundity, she will remain a stranger to her new family, never gaining acceptance, and in the case of poor women, even being denied food and being abandoned (2). This same sentiment is felt across cultures, even when womanhood and femininity are recognized as being distinct. For example, affluent women who struggle to get pregnant in highly medically developed regions often turn to in-vitro fertilization. IVF often constructs the reproductive body as failing, while the clinics pride themselves on their success statistics for women

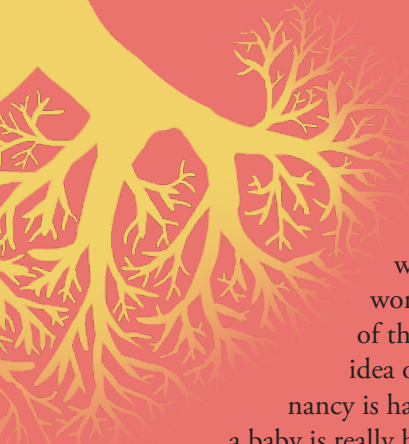


# "Don't fail, eggs, don't fail, uterus."



who couldn't get pregnant the old-fashioned way. The hopeful women compare themselves to other patients in the clinic: "and wonder who will make the statistics. The woman next to you tells you she has fifteen eggs, yesterday you'd been told you had five but one was bigger than the others... You beg those little ones to grow." (3) Don't fail, eggs, don't fail, uterus. Don't fail, woman.

Birth is never just birth, because babies are never just babies. Babies are labor power, and women are the productive and reproductive entities that bear the burden of the next generation of workers. This view is by nature incredibly generalized, but it does explain many of the population dynamics cross-culturally and across time. "Around the world today, the general picture is of declining fertility...lowest overall in Europe and East Asia, where below replacement fertility (meaning that women are having fewer children than are required to replace population) has become the norm" (4). In contrast to days past where "women have had an average of five or more live births each," women now are largely choosing to have fewer children. The regions where this is not true are primarily "sub-Saharan Africa, some countries in southwest Asia and the Arabian peninsula, and Papua New Guinea" (4).



What is the difference between the majority of women now, versus the women in these areas and the women of the past? A whole host of things, all of which tie into the idea of reproductive costs. Pregnancy is hard, birth is hard, and raising a baby is really hard. This might be worth it if that baby proves to be a boon to your family, an additional laboring body that helps to raise crops or tend the herd (explaining some of the very high fertility rates seen amongst agriculturalists and pastoralists). It might not be worth it if the woman herself is already acting as a laborer (explaining how increasing women in the workforce decreases fertility rates) or if she wants to pursue higher education (explaining why increasingly educated women have fewer children). If I were to have a baby right now, I would probably

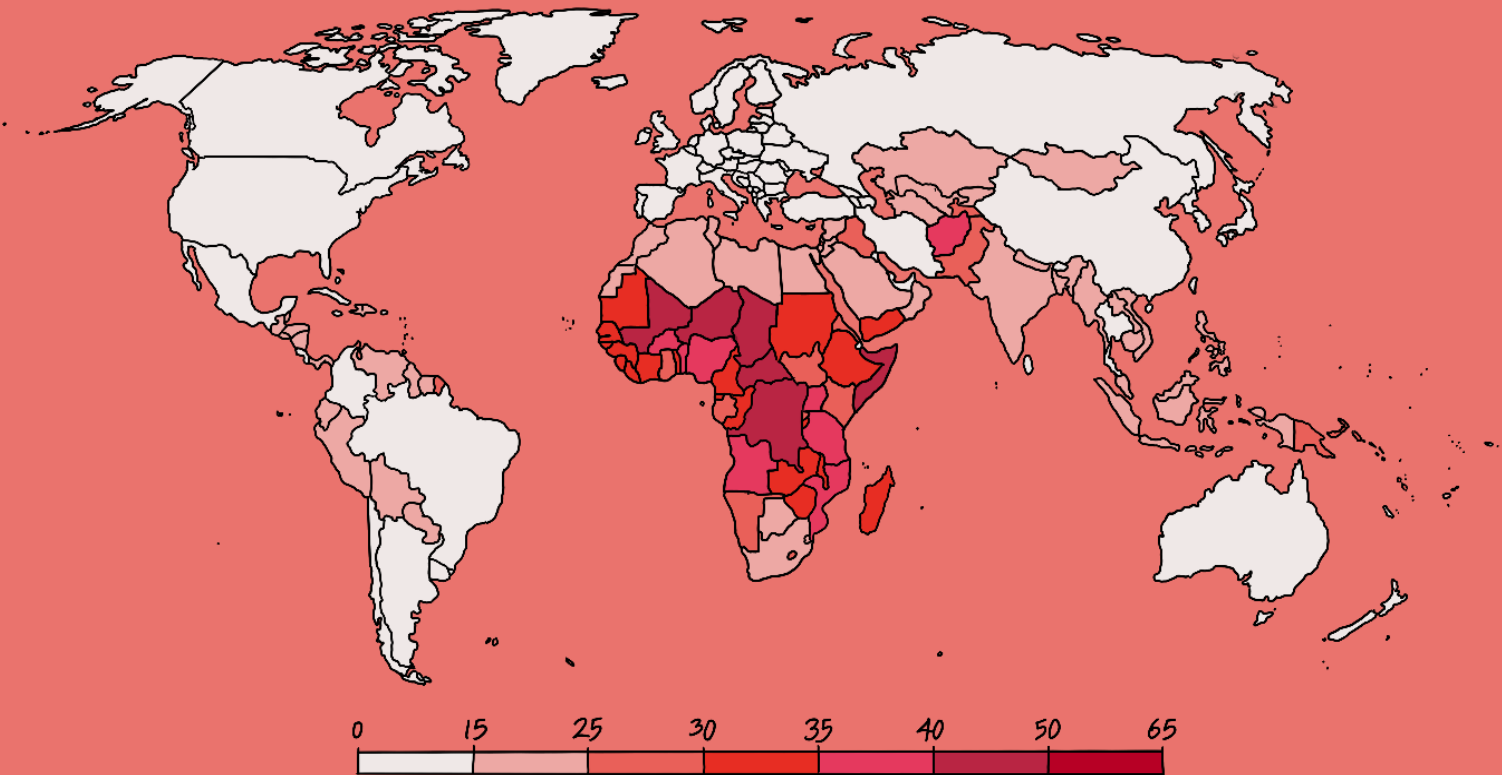
manage to finish undergrad here at Dartmouth, but I would probably never be able to make it through medical school, given that I would have a two-year-old during my first year. I simply don't have the time.

Babies in lower-fertility regions act to decrease some of the social and economic mobility of their mothers not only while they are infants, but also throughout their teenage years and early adulthood. I am still dependent on my parents, economically primarily, even though I'm of reproductive age myself. Having a child, for many women across the world, is not an economic benefit, especially since most of us aspire to ensure our children's social success, providing them with all of the expensive opportunities to succeed, like university education. It's no surprise that birth control is so important to so many women, allowing them to decide whether or not to have these very costly children on their own time.

## *Don't fail, woman."*

### Birth rate, 2021

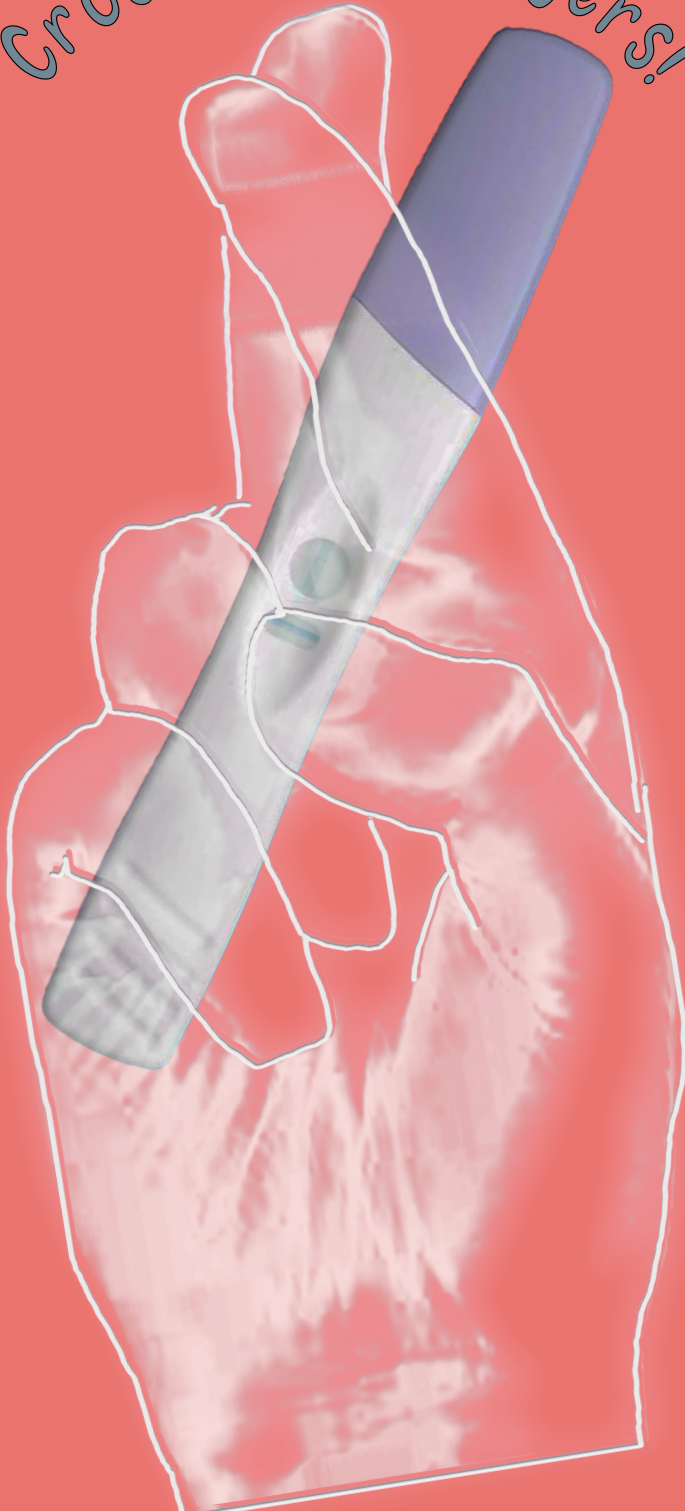
The number of live births occurring during the year, per 1,000 people.



Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects (2022)  
& Our World In Data. [org/fertility-rate](https://ourworldindata.org/fertility-rate)

"Pregnancy grows ever more morally charged, necessitating a strict script for behavior that is almost impossible to follow."

Cross Your Fingers!



## Wondermom

Between you and me, I don't know how I'm ever going to manage having a baby. My life plan, as I've alluded to, is pretty tightly scheduled out. When I graduate from undergrad in a few months, I'll be 22. I'll move away from Hanover, spend two years working at a research lab before almost certainly moving again, to wherever I'll go to medical school. I'll be 24. I will (cross your fingers!) spend four years there, before moving again to wherever I will complete my residency. I'll be 28. Residency, at minimum, will take 4 years. I'll be 32, and that's the beginning of my window. Let's all cross our fingers that amidst all the moves I have a partner at that point to get to the baby-making with. There will be 3 years during which I can try for a baby, and hopefully (cross your fingers, if you still have some to cross) I have no problems getting pregnant.

Woot woot, baby time! Just kidding. After that begins the actual pregnancy part! Much of which will be taking place during the final phase of my doctor-planning, where I'll be a long-awaited attending physician. The real deal, exciting new phase of my career where I'm *sure* I'll be respected as a do-it-all wondermom by my colleagues and patients while pregnant. During this, I will be navigating the ethics of what to eat (get your folate!), what not to eat (you would eat *raw fish* during pregnancy?), how much to eat (don't gain too much weight!), can I even eat (morning sickness getting to you?), and so much more. Pregnancy grows ever more morally charged, necessitating a strict script for behavior that is almost impossible to follow. At the end of it, I will be rewarded with the chance to have a difficult birth just like my mother and grandmothers. Cross your fingers!





# Doctor Mommy

It's honestly kind of a wonder anyone wants to get pregnant at all, given how much of an uphill battle it seems. And though healthcare has done a wonderful job decreasing the high maternal mortality rates worldwide, it hasn't all been a blessing. Many of the advances in women's healthcare have come at the cost of women, especially women of color. For example, J. Marion Sims' research on vesico-vaginal fistula (a dangerous complication after vaginal delivery) relied on Black enslaved women, their bodies made into inert research objects used to advance the discipline of gynecology. (5) The women's personhood and health was secondary to Sims' own notion of medical discovery, as evidenced by his use of their bodies for continued cruel experimentation and his returning of the women to their enslavers. The field of gynecology, and more broadly the field of women's healthcare, began by privileging the enlightenment of doctors at the cost of women, constructing their bodies as objects that could be understood through surgery.

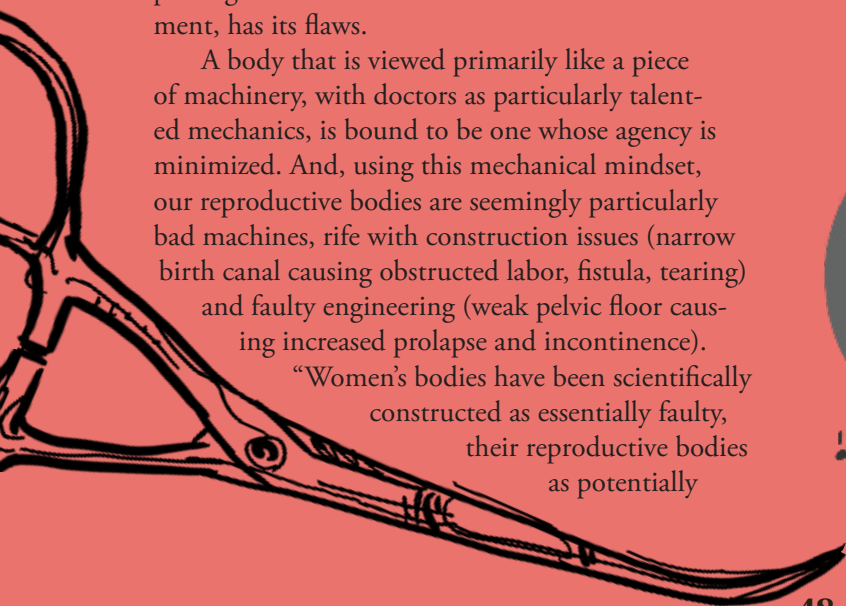
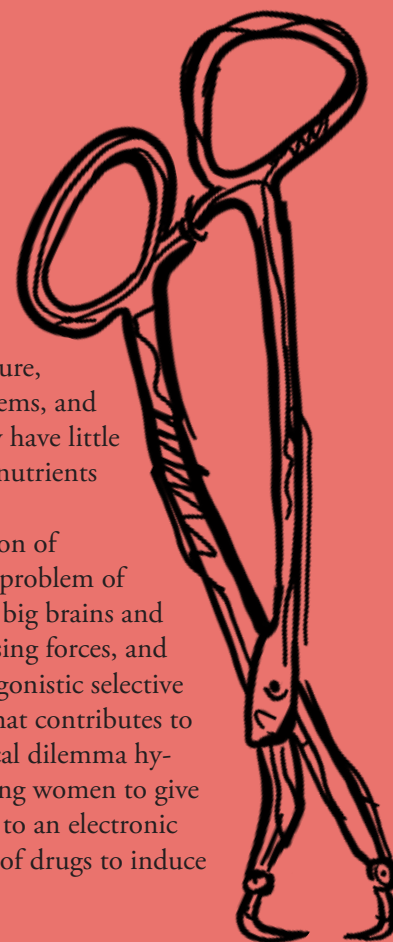
Much of biomedicine's inherent premise relies on viewing the body as a machine, a functional unit that can be mechanistically interpreted and understood. Sometimes this serves to expand the biological boundaries of women's lives. For example, in-vitro fertilization has allowed women to get pregnant who are old, who spent their prime reproductive years chasing career aspirations (potentially, women like me one day), who have bad eggs, or a bad uterus, or just bad luck. All of this is possible for quite a fee, of course. A functional body is hardly ever free. But this panoptic gaze of the medical establishment, capable of extracting my eggs, making magic, and putting them back inside for 9 months of nourishment, has its flaws.

A body that is viewed primarily like a piece of machinery, with doctors as particularly talented mechanics, is bound to be one whose agency is minimized. And, using this mechanical mindset, our reproductive bodies are seemingly particularly bad machines, rife with construction issues (narrow birth canal causing obstructed labor, fistula, tearing) and faulty engineering (weak pelvic floor causing increased prolapse and incontinence).

"Women's bodies have been scientifically constructed as essentially faulty, their reproductive bodies as potentially

dangerous to babies; child-birth so fraught with danger as to be unthinkable without biomedical surveillance and intervention." (6) Mothers are treated by scientific literature, by doctors, by healthcare systems, and often by themselves, as if they have little to add to pregnancy, beyond nutrients and a questionable exit route.

But perhaps this perception of women's bodies is part of the problem of birth. Likely it's true that our big brains and bipedal locomotion are opposing forces, and that they cause uniquely antagonistic selective pressures on the birth canal that contributes to difficult labor, as the obstetrical dilemma hypothesis suggests. But expecting women to give birth on their backs, tethered to an electronic fetal monitor, with a cocktail of drugs to induce



**WARNING**

**Nellie:**

2. This pic

- my hole's 4" in 50%
- only if collecting...
- ok risk for conception

• A friend or hand entering

• another pic baby's stomach

583-162 pth  $\left(\frac{238a}{35.12}\right) (15.4) =$

P/S → 22.2

icth... Rayberg 4% pic

4% pic

1.23 Examples experienced a traumatic "episode" head out and bleed

Body are owned by the state and not allowed autopsy

24% This part is not done

512/ I am brain app for most

## What's Love Got to Do With It?

labor on a doctor's schedule, might also be part of the problem. Silencing the signals from their own bodies, hormones speaking from millions of years of evolution overridden, suddenly much less important than a technocratic, scopically-empowered medical authority. Perhaps the way labor has been constructed, normalized, and scheduled, is so distant from birth the way our bodies intended that we make some of those bad outcomes happen. Speeding birth up with hormones to artificially induce contractions might cause tearing, putting women on their backs might be preventing optimal alignment of their birth canals. But hey ladies, labor is *your* problem.

In classic neoliberal fashion, all of the problems with birth and babies belong to women and women alone. If my baby is too big, it's because I'm obese, if my baby is premature, it's because I am too anxious. If something goes wrong, it is my fault. Women are constructed as flighty and selfish landlords, and are increasingly criminalized for the outcomes of their pregnancies, whether that be abortion or babies born addicted to drugs. Women are "receptacles, not citizens," where their "individual responsibility and competition trump equity and citizenship." (7) Not only are women constantly surveilled to ensure they are embodying the cultural ideal of good motherhood, but they are also expected to embody the neoliberal ideal of economic productivity. Tread the line ladies, if you can, just know that if the balance becomes too much, the "assumption is that women must sacrifice their needs and career aspirations" for their children. (7) Consider how increasingly popular breast pumps are as gifts for new mothers, allowing them to return to the workforce to be productive entities, as they fulfill their reproductive duties to provide their newborns with nutrition. Perhaps it is enabling women to pursue careers while being mothers, but "perhaps promoting breast pumps and even allowing time for pumping at work, avoid[s] harder—and divisive and more stubborn—social and economic issues about parenting and the needs of women and their families." (8) Reproductive and productive bodies, reaped for all they are worth.

How did we get here? Am I damned to always think in monologues about birth as if it's something that is both all my responsibility and all my fault? Wondering what it means to dream about my productive career potential and reproductive birthing potential, hoping I can do both and fearing where that leaves me, the person? I don't want to be alone to give birth, and I don't want to be all alone thinking about it either. Humans aren't meant for it. We give birth to backwards babies who can't walk, crawl, or eat without help, and mothers can't do it all alone. We need our midwives to catch babies, grandmas to watch them, partners to hold them. Part of the human condition is to have difficult births. And part of the human condition is to have people to support you, hold you and love you. I hope I get that. I hope I can do that for my babies, when they are tiny and when they are just like me, thinking brand new thoughts for what feels like the very first time. 🍎



**"Part of the human  
condition is to have  
people to support you,  
hold you and love you.  
*I hope I get that.*"**

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# HANOVER

By: Chloe Cordasco

*\*content warning: references to sexual assault, addiction\**

A car starts in the parking lot, remotely.

It must have been remotely. I see no one.

No shivers, no calves, no knee-length puffers, no clue.

I have absolutely no clue, no one. No one clue.

Let us count the things I do have — nausea, cloudiness, hip dips and too much coffee. My sisters addicts like me, the trees that will never love me, a burning poisonous unrequited humming in the very center of the universe (misplaced).

I have the spiders I do not snuff out, the guests overstayed and staying — for better or for worse — the sorry excuse of words, words, words, more words, money, more money, less money, money, money, less words.

I mean it. I mean less. I am not clueless.

Not to suggest that language and a clue are brothers; if they are brothers they gather their silphium up in arms and fuck and rape and conquer (they want me to say seduce) together.

Who knows, they might get into it together. It's incest, but sex this time. (May I watch?) I have sunflowers, the concept, and the actuality of rain but I lack its metaphor.

Maybe, baby, sometimes, things are just too hard. Some things just ache.

We have to go back to accounting. Let's see.

I have cold plastic ass and period underwear that might give me cancer one day (high-waisted, black with sheer, gorgeous; ty thinx) and binder, chains tears n smoke.

# OR THE LOT BEHIND

## MID MASS *after Kazim Ali*

I've got good working pen The Cure many cures and of course a plethora of neuroatypicalities to choose from: your heart, your tongue, your beating brain, your fogged up smoky soul.

I've got effusive friends, in love and in hate with the idea of fruit and each other, thin wire railings and railings, comforter, memories I'd like to lose.

I've got my sanity — wolves — hard fucking time — golden gold. Gold dawn peering over GOLD coast, breathing Sunrise breathing out of here into here, slow now, slow down, baby you can make it here.

I've got good. Good good, that good good love, so much good, good to give good to take, and a parking lot to cry in. Got it good.

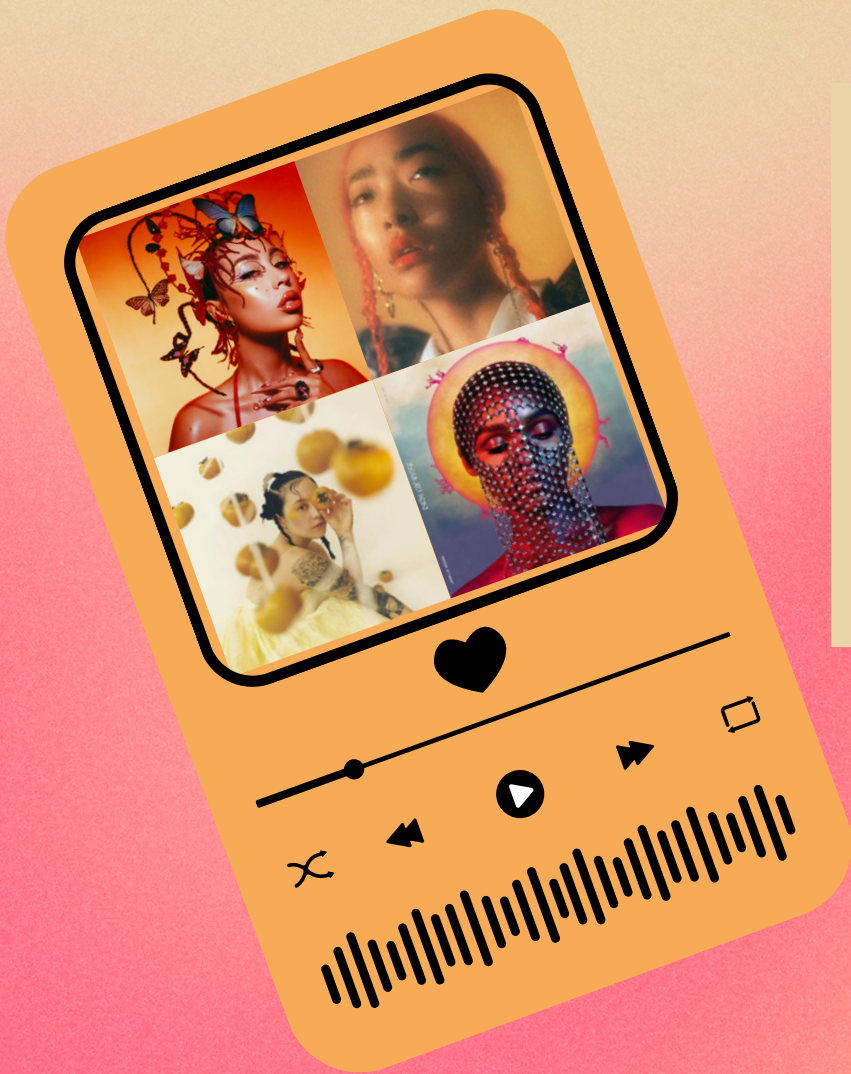
I've got it all. 🍏

Art by: Akshee Chopra

Design by: Maanasi Shyno

# COLLECTIVE JOY PLAYLIST

FEAT. JAPANESE  
BREAKFAST, RINA  
SAWAYAMA, MUNA,  
AND MORE

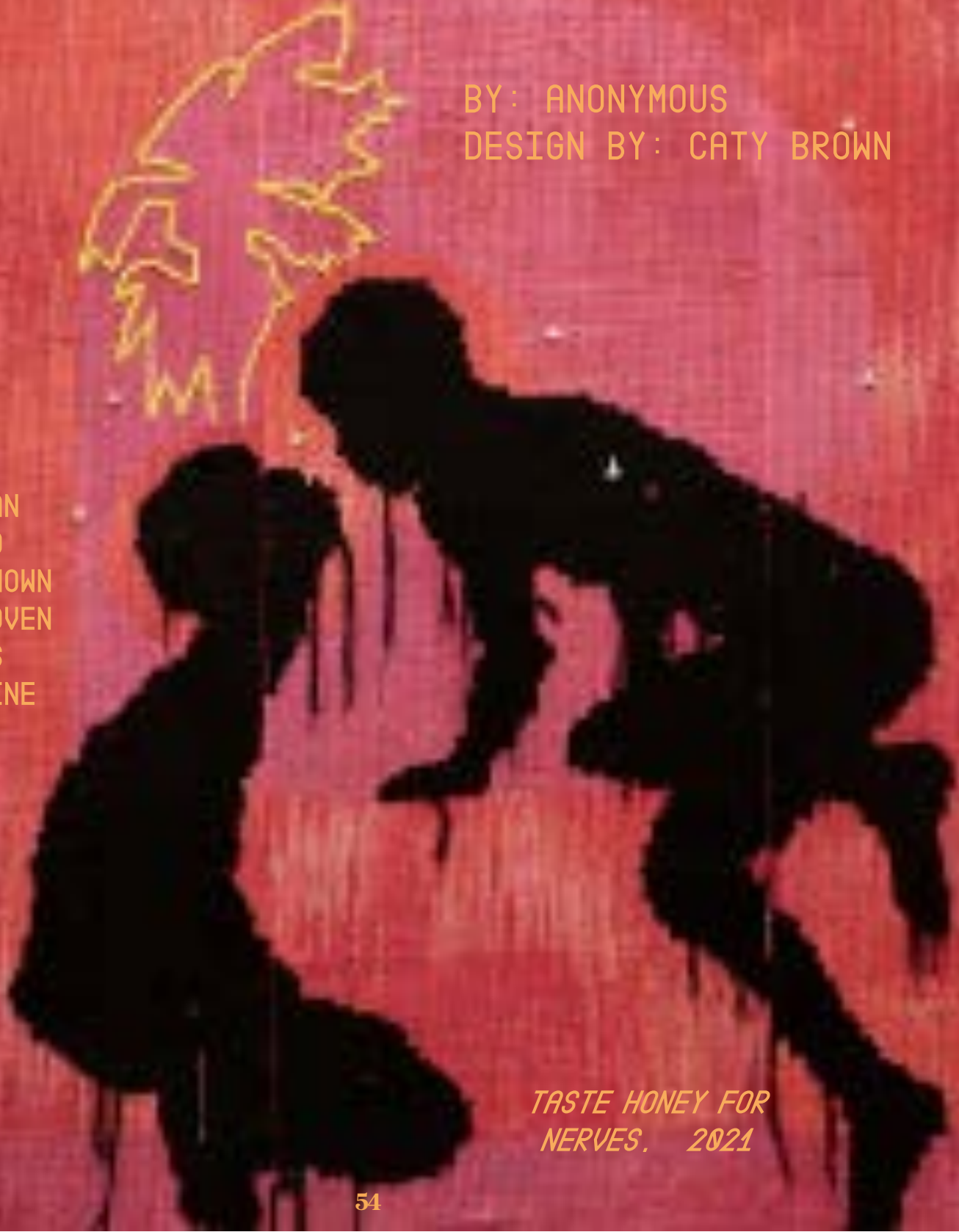


**LISTEN NOW**

# QUEER DESIRABILITY ARCHETYPES, COMMUNITY FORMATION, AND SELF-EXPRESSION

BY: ANONYMOUS  
DESIGN BY: CATY BROWN

ART BY:  
DIEDRICK  
BRACKENS,  
AN AMERICAN  
ARTIST AND  
WEAVER. KNOWN  
FOR HIS WOVEN  
TAPESTRIES  
THAT EXAMINE  
AFRICAN  
AMERICAN  
AND QUEER  
IDENTITY.



*TASTE HONEY FOR  
NERVES. 2021*

As queer love becomes an increasingly visible part of American society, with explicit media representation and the dramatic growth of queer dating apps, it is critical that queer communities interrogate the beauty standards these institutions promote. Queer people don't exist within a vacuum — queerness is often associated with non-normativity, social deconstruction, and perhaps even revolution, but the reality is that we are raised in a society where racism, misogyny, and fatphobia infiltrate every facet of our existence. These systems of oppression are reflected in the labels and categories that queer people regard as desirable forms of self-expression, what I will refer to throughout this article as desirability archetypes. One example of a desirability archetype is the idea of a twink, a skinny, young, and typically white cisgender gay man. Unsurprisingly, twinks are considered highly desirable within gay dating pools and the physical features that are associated with this label are naturally tied to white supremacy and fatphobia. Within lesbian dating pools, there can be immense pressure to present in romantic or sexual contexts as either "masc" or "fem," labels that can be interpreted as a reflection of heteronormativity. Yet, while it is evident that queer people can internalize harmful beauty stan-

dards steeped in systems of oppression, there is significant nuance to extricate in how queer desirability archetypes manifest differently from heterosexual desirability archetypes. In this article, I will draw from my personal experience as a queer person of color to provide one perspective on the role of desirability archetypes in the formation of queer sub-communities and the harmful effects of rigid labeling on authentic self-expression.

If you spend an hour in a room full of single gay men, it's more than likely that you'd hear at least one of them complain about an experience they had on the dating app Grindr. One common statement you might hear in the conversation might go something like a "gay man's obese is a straight person's skinny" or a more general complaint about how hard it is to get laid as a gay man of color. Grindr's anonymity allows users to not use a profile picture, unlike other popular dating apps such as Tinder

or Hinge, and therefore it's not unusual to see profiles that explicitly prohibit certain races or body types from reaching out with a statement like "No fats, no fems, no Black, no Asian."

It's important to recognize this fact as we simultaneously validate these experiences of blatant fatphobia, racism, and misogyny, while

*NUCLEAR LOVERS.  
2021*



realizing that it's reductive to distance these issues from broader systems of oppression. Fat people, women, Black people, Asian people, and others who hold one or more of these marginalized identities experience these struggles on a daily basis, even if they do not identify as a gay man. The failure to acknowledge how queer beauty standards derive from systematic oppression and that they affect groups beyond spaces inhabited primarily by gay men is harmful to those groups.

In addition, it can reinforce stereotypes that gay men are uniquely superficial. Popular media often depicts queer men as superficial and appearance-oriented, from entire shows like *Queer Eye* to individual characters like Jonah on *Never Have I Ever*. While some of these tropes are rooted in homophobic stereotypes imposed by heterosexual directors, it is important that queer communities introspect on how certain intra-group behaviors can contribute to this budding narrative. Fixating on desirability archetypes as means of classifying people into rigid groups, while not exclusively limited to queer people, can be interpreted as a superficial behavior that is especially prevalent among gay men.

Given the harms of queer desirability archetypes, how can queer people begin to deconstruct them and make room for more authentic forms of self-expression? It is first important to acknowledge that categorizing people can be a form of community building. Particularly for queer people who may have had less opportunities for belonging, attaching oneself to a label might help them feel more included in queer circles. And yet, these labels remain rather limiting and largely tied to oppressive beauty standards. I do not have all the answers to resolve this dilemma but I believe that descriptors that are tied to interests, passions, and personality traits instead of appearance might facilitate more positive forms of queer community building. For example, many gay men are beginning to adopt labels such as "side" to signal a lack of interest in penetrative sex, a subversion of traditional top-bottom classifications, or other personality-based labels such as "gay-me!" to describe an interest in video games. I imagine a world of authentic queer self-expression, one where queer people can embrace every facet of their existence without feeling pressured into certain predefined modes of behavior. 🍷

*A YEAR OF  
ASSURANCES.  
2021*

By: Raegan Boettcher

Art by: Janylle Gomes

Design by: Chloe Cordasco

# Survival Mode

: A quasi-philosophical argument for people's inherent goodness

During Winter 2023, I took a philosophy course about the history of materialism and discourses of life and death. In all honesty, it was kind of torturous and horrifically boring, but at least I successfully completed my TMV requirement — and I can happily say that it is over and I never have to suffer through Aristotelian philosophy again. And I admit, I did learn some things about Marxist materialism and Foucaultian historicism (including a distaste for the latter). I also learned that a lot of philosophy is bullshit. (Don't get me wrong, I think some philosophy can be useful. But still — a *lot* of philosophy is bullshit.)

Nonetheless, if I had to pick one thing that really stuck with me — across hundreds and hundreds of pages of Kant, Socrates, Sartre, Hobbes, Locke, Lacan, Foucault — it would be that we need to believe in people's inherent goodness.

I remember, very clearly, when we read excerpts from Hobbes' *Leviathan*, discussing his conception of the state of nature and insistence that a sovereign is necessary to control man's inherent violence. Hobbes famously said,

“during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man.”<sup>[1]</sup>

We're in a constant fight for our lives.

The crisis in question? I mean. Look around you.

Hobbesian philosophy argues that the state of nature is war and rails against arguments for autonomy or self-governance. (Hobbes specifically argues for monarchy, but I would argue that there are few, if any, governments that actually provide their constituents complete autonomy.)

I just couldn't fathom thinking like this — because if I didn't believe that people were inherently good, I wouldn't survive. If people are inherently evil, if all we want is war and violence, then what do we fight for? What am I doing here, if not learning to better love and care for people? But then, if people are inherently good, why do bad things happen? Why are there arguably *bad* people (or at least, people that do *bad* things)?

I would argue that it is because we're in a constant fight for our lives. People in crisis, in survival mode, do drastic things to secure their own well-being. The crisis in question? I mean. Look around you. I'm mainly talking about capitalism (as it plays a significant role in the development of other forms of exploitation, like patriarchy<sup>[2]</sup>), but please take any other oppressive system that has made society as we know it basically irredeemable and insert here: [ ].



I refuse to believe that we have a natural tendency to step on each other to gain traction in the rat race. We're highly social creatures — we love to be social so much that we domesticated wolves and spend a lot of time and money and food to maintain this relationship even now. (And they let us do this for them, because they, too, are highly social creatures and instinctively understand the value of mutualistic relationships.) At our core, we are made of love and we want to share it.

People are naturally competitive, I'll give you that, but usually it's playful. It's enriching. Competition is useful, in an evolutionary sense, and interesting, in a neurological sense — but neurology tells us that competition is only half of our programmed social cognition. The other half is *cooperation*.<sup>[3]</sup>

At our most basic level (and when I say basic, I mean when our needs are reasonably met), we thrive in community. Have you heard the saying — “it takes a village”? It's true — it does take a village, whether the task is raising a child, feeding a family, or learning to do more than just *survive*. A village thrives when we put our efforts into building community and caring for each other. That is one of the most revolutionary acts for us to pursue today. For just a few examples — the Student Worker Collective at Dartmouth, the Writers Guild strike at the time of writing this, mutual aid networks created by Sunrise and other various organizations on campus, feminist consciousness-raising in Spare Rib. Unions, strikes, mutual aid, radical worldbuilding — these are not actions of people in isolation. They are radical acts of community care.

At our core, we are made of love and we want to share it.

The survival-of-the-fittest, rat-race attitude is carefully taught and cultivated. We're taught that we live in a society of scarcity, that only some of us will survive, but that could not be further from the truth. Our resources are not scarce — they are sequestered at the top, for the benefit of the few; they are hoarded in imperial countries, for the wealthiest citizens. I mean, have you seen those videos of restaurant staff throwing out massive amounts of food after closing?

Think about price gouging during natural disasters — the justification being that we have to raise prices, otherwise people will buy too many and we'll run out. As if selling a pack of water for \$40 is morally correct (and as if selling water is ever morally correct, in the first place). There are over 16 million empty homes in the United States, consistently outnumbering the number of unhoused people in any given region. Syracuse, NY alone has 110 empty homes per unhoused person.<sup>[4]</sup>

Our society manufactures scarcity to perpetuate a reliance on capitalist modes of production. We are taught that this is the only way forward. But housing and food are not scarce. And neither is our collective capacity for care.

I just can't bring myself to believe in the rat race because all of the people in my life that I love, because they have brought me so much joy and laughter and care. And the effort that it takes to be kind in a world that looks like this proves (at least to me) that our basic state is one of love. That doesn't mean that love isn't hard and being kind isn't laborious at times. Maybe it would be easier to be thoughtlessly unkind, to take your anger at the world out on other people, but the care work is necessary. It is a central part of our nature.

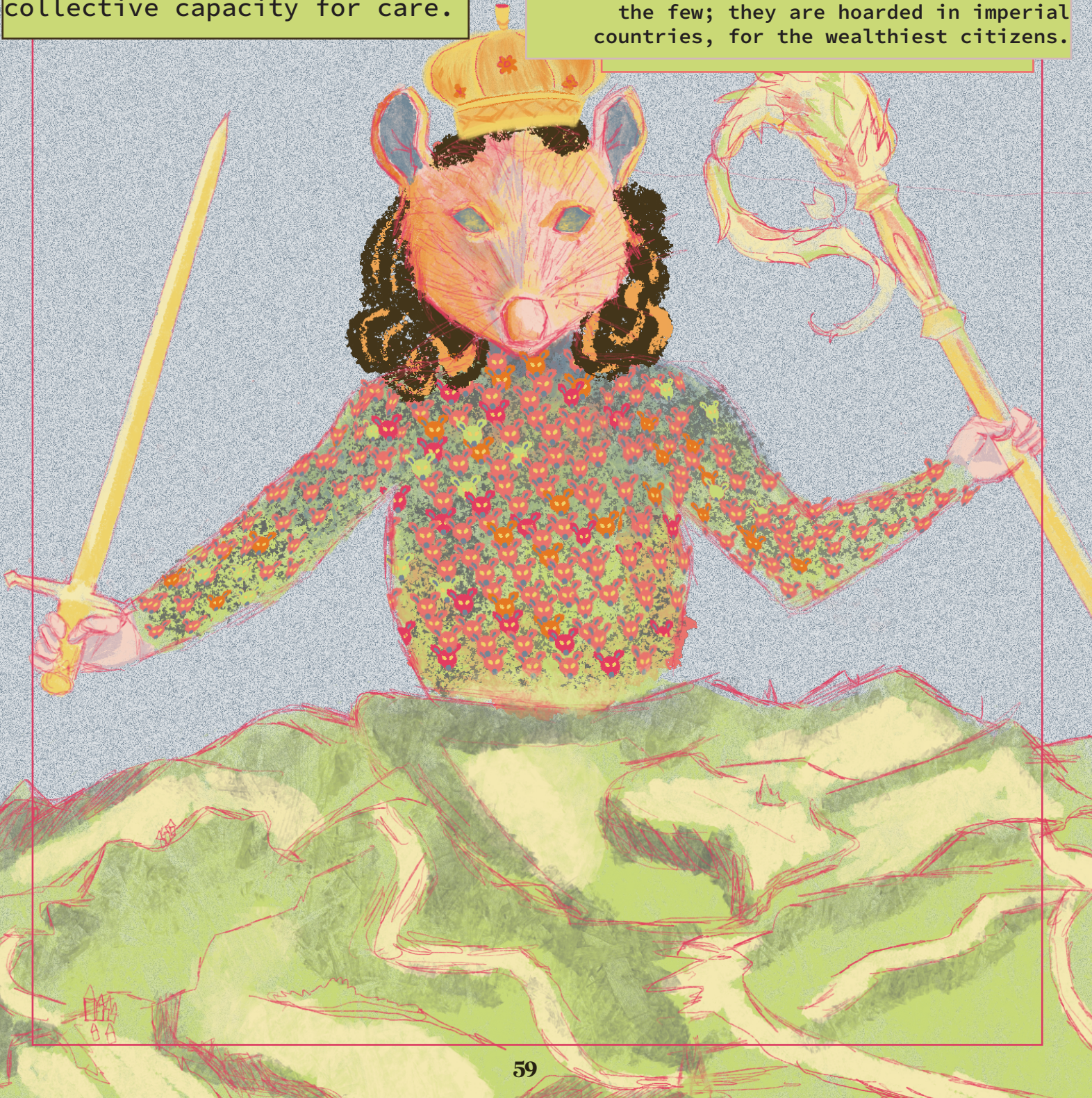
There are over 16 million empty homes in the United States, consistently outnumbering the number of unhoused people in any given region.

I think Hobbes is ridiculous and pessimistic, but I also understand him, and I cannot stop thinking about him because I know what he was feeling. Hobbes wrote *Leviathan* after witnessing the carnage of the English Civil War. I cannot even blame him, truthfully — who wouldn't believe humans are fundamentally evil after watching your friends and neighbors tear each other apart?

But housing and food are not scarce. And neither is our collective capacity for care.

Trauma and isolation make you feel like everything is terrible, everyone is evil, and nothing is redeemable. And isn't that the entire point? This world-in-perpetual-crisis makes us feel traumatized and isolated, so we keep perpetuating this system because we feel like we have no other choice. It makes us feel like everyone else is surviving, and doing it well, so we must try to do the same, and try to go it alone.

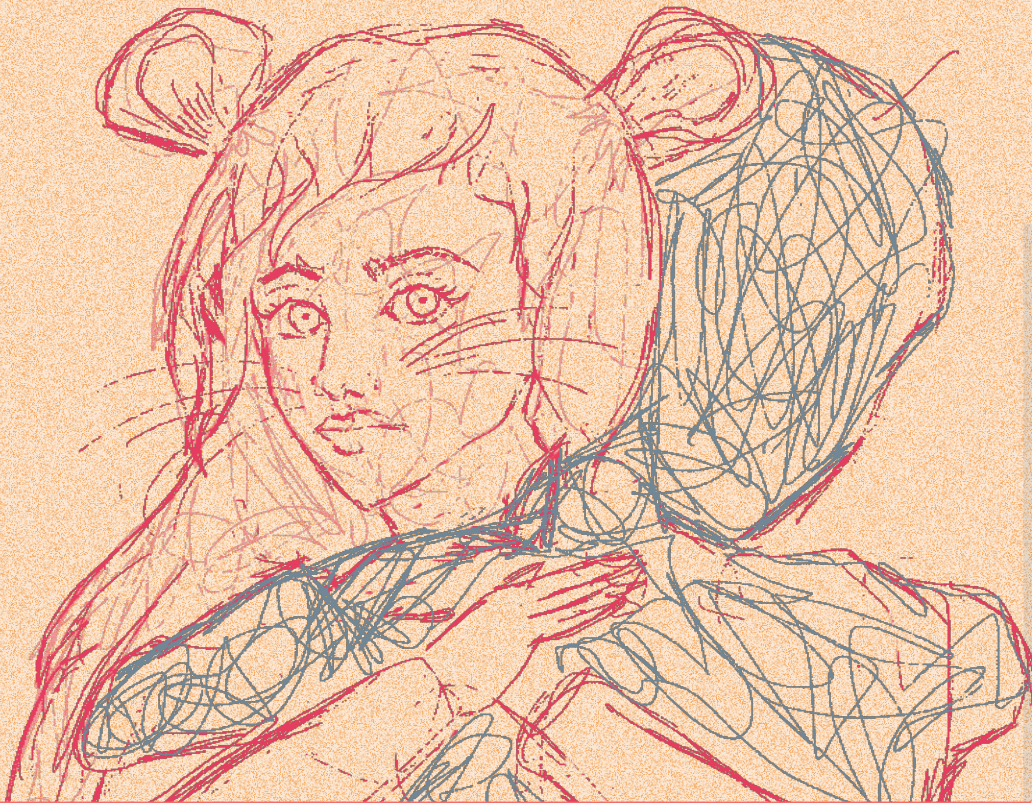
Our resources are not scarce — they are sequestered at the top, for the benefit of the few; they are hoarded in imperial countries, for the wealthiest citizens.



We don't have to go it alone. The most radical thing you can do is reach out a hand, to make a connection, to live your life with love, and to open your heart to others. We can decide that this isn't good enough — that there has to be something beyond the rat race, that we all deserve something better. adrienne marie brown describes this as a radical imagination, a visionary practice. [5] We live in a society created by the ruling class, but we have the power to imagine otherwise.

We're shoved into the world like rats in a maze and we're too busy pressing the pleasure button, so often at the expense of other people, to look for an exit. We don't have to keep pressing the button. We can find our way out of the maze. 🍎

**We can find our way out of the maze.**



**Unions, strikes, mutual aid, radical worldbuilding – these are not actions of people in isolation. They are radical acts of community care.**


## Notes

- [1] [https://courses.washington.edu/hs-teu302/Hobbes%20selections%20\(edited\).htm](https://courses.washington.edu/hs-teu302/Hobbes%20selections%20(edited).htm)
- [2] <https://www.spareribdartmouth.com/post/revolution-through-a-woman-s-eyes-a-history-and-manifesto-of-marxist-feminism>
- [3] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3640982/>
- [4] <https://united-waync.org/blog/vacant-homes-vs-homelessness-by-city/#:~:text=Sixteen%20million%20homes%20currently%20sit,thousands%20of%20Americans%20face%20homelessness>
- [5] <http://adriennemareebrown.net/2015/10/28/there-is-an-edge-ode-to-radical-imagination/>



# In Defense of YA

By: Rachel Roncka Art by: Kaitlyn Anderson Design by: Chloe Cordasco



*You have entered the realm of young adult – or, more fondly, YA – Fantasy and science fiction.*

**T**here is one particular corner in every bookstore that seems to exist in isolation.

As you wander between its shelves, the once vibrant colors around you begin to darken, and the atmosphere shifts. Those browsing the wares around you appear mostly female, in their early to late teens. As a rule, no hardcover is less than 2 inches thick, and each jacket features an embossed title and some symbol — a sword, crown, maybe an especially sinister-looking flower (extra points if it's dripping with blood) — foreshadowing a tale of adventure and suspense.

You have entered the realm of young adult — or, more fondly, YA — fantasy and science fiction. This genre marks an obligatory phase for almost any girl who claims the title of “bookworm,” and is unparalleled in its ability to transport the reader. Like most cultural phenomena associated with teenage girls (think rom-coms, pumpkin spice lattes, boy bands), YA has weathered plenty of criticism. Many are familiar with its near-comical overuse of tropes, but fewer recognize its subversion of traditional expectations for female characters and the profound impact this has on teenage girls and non-binary individuals.

The initial allure of YA lies in escapism. Those glossy covers promise refuge from the hail of awkward blunders and uncomfortable emotions that comprise female adolescence.

Haunted by the memory of a joke no one laughed at, an outfit malfunction, or rejection from your crush? Indulge in witty banter between knights dueling for their honor. Let the salty spray of the high seas wash your embarrassment away as you shadow a ruthless captain and her motley crew. Console your own heartbreak with romance that seems pure enough to transcend class division and political conspiracy, only to \*spoiler alert\* end in betrayal.



There is no end to the comfort YA provides. Each saga is as long and winding as the epic poetry of ancient Greco-Roman tradition, and replete with similar archetypes. Heroes with fantastical abilities. Conniving villains. Kingdoms in peril. However, contrary to the legends of old, these heroes are most often women. With an authorship and audience dominated by young women, these characters can exist free from the distortion of the male gaze. Instead of being relegated to the role of romantic interest or damsel in distress, these young women are leaders of revolutions and prophesied saviors. No other genre affords its female characters such unprecedented levels of agency and importance. Today, film and TV adaptations extend the impact of YA to the screen, changing the narrative of female strength for even wider audiences.

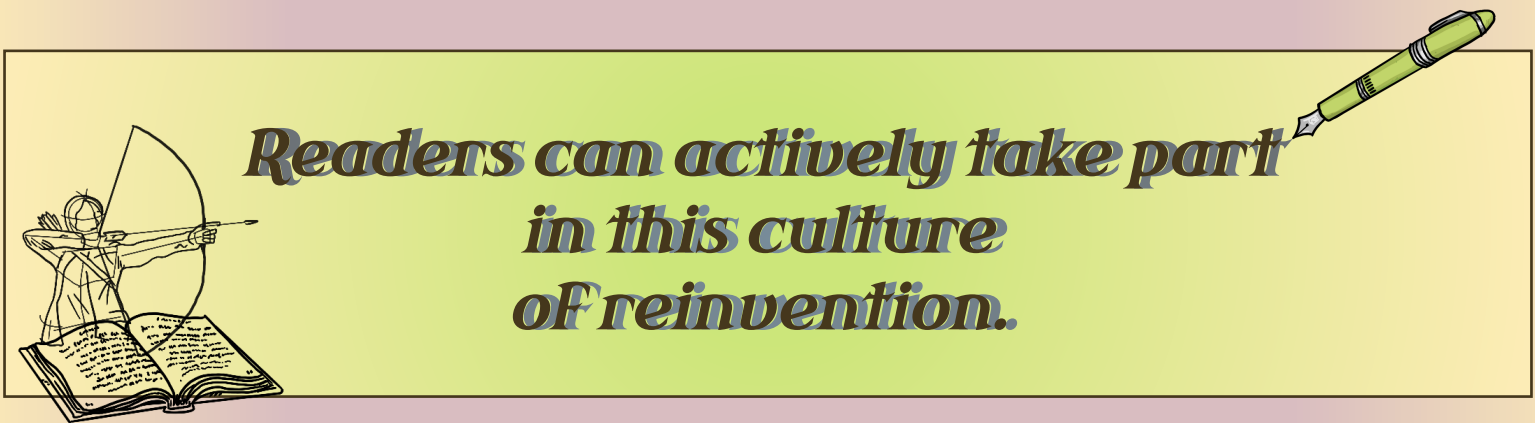
Critics of YA bemoan the surplus of sullen, sarcastic teenage protagonists, but there's immense value in heroines who stray from conventional feminine ideals. Intentionally or not, many popular works attribute undue value to a woman's physical beauty. From Dostoevsky to Disney, classic novels and films often portray women's appearances as reflections of their virtue. We are led to subconsciously link beauty and character, and assume only conventionally attractive women can be the center of a story, in fiction and reality.



Thanks to YA authors, this is changing. For all the teenaged heroines toppling governments or fighting mystical creatures, appearance is irrelevant. Descriptive imagery is devoted to constructing vivid landscapes instead of perpetuating narrow beauty standards. Rather than objectified, beloved characters like Katniss Everdeen, Linh Cinder, and, yes, even Bella Swan are multi-dimensional individuals, as real as the girls pouring over every page.

I won't defend the deficiencies of this genre. Among the complaints directed at YA is the idealization of unhealthy relationships (although not exclusive or inherent to YA), but perhaps the most prevalent issue is YA's lack of diversity. While reflecting on the novels that were most formative in my own life, I am painfully aware that almost none of them were written by women of color. Despite their own lack of experience, several white authors make a conscious effort to conceive casts of characters that reflect the diversity of the YA audience. I can't help but feel some gratitude to them; when so few forms of media centered mixed-race narratives, these authors gave life to complex characters with whom I could identify. Nevertheless, no amount of good intentions can suffice as real representation of authors of color on the best-selling charts, and it would be remiss not to acknowledge the trope of the mystical minority that some authors perpetuate.

***I won't defend the deficiencies of this genre.  
I won't defend the deficiencies of this genre.***



## Readers can actively take part in this culture of reinvention.

There is far more to the discussion of race and representation in YA fiction than I could ever fit into this piece. Every ounce of criticism is necessary, for the genre continues to evolve with every new demand from the vast community that has sprung up around it. This is the legacy of a genre that encourages its readers to challenge the status quo. Now more than ever, authors are using YA fiction as an opportunity to normalize marginalized identities within historical and fantastical contexts. Malinda Lo's *Ash* (2009) situates a queer love story within the framework of a beloved fairytale, entwining lesbian identity with a staple of the dominant culture. R.F. Kuang's *The Poppy War* (2018) weaves together a magical tale grounded in East Asian imperial history. Kristin Cashore's *Graceling* (2008) portrays its female leads as powerful heroines within a medieval setting rife with dragons and (the equally formidable) period-typical sexism. With every page, these authors are reconstructing women's, queer, and POC histories, casting them in a sheen of magic and wonder. In some of these fictional realms, racism and homophobia are entirely unheard of, allowing readers to indulge in worlds where one's mere identity is not an obstacle.

Even readers can actively take part in this culture of reinvention. Who didn't pour over cheesy Wattpad fanfictions (or their more refined counterparts on AO3) and scroll through streams of fanart on Tumblr for a book you just couldn't get out of your head? For many young girls, the YA genre inspires a deep love of storytelling through a multitude of mediums. With this comes a necessary outlet, one that allows girls to hone the language needed to explore the messy emotions and tumult of adolescence. These budding young authors learn that not only can they be the protagonist of their own story, but they can take up their pens and construct entirely new literary universes worthy of being shared with the world.

In sum, I count myself as lucky to be among the generation of girls raised by the fierce, capable heroines who leapt off the pages of YA novels. Between those gilded covers I discovered empowering role models — the older sisters I never had. These characters reflect our deepest insecurities and breathe life into our wildest aspirations. Through every witty remark and heroic endeavor, they encourage girls to confidently embrace and explore every facet of who they are, and to take up space in a world that wasn't built for them. 🍎

## This is the legacy of a genre that encourages its readers to challenge the status quo.





# RE: JOY

*A Collective Encyclopedia*



by:  
anne johnakin  
emily chang  
maanasi shyno  
caty brown  
&  
noelle blake

art by: sophie williams  
design by: ella grim

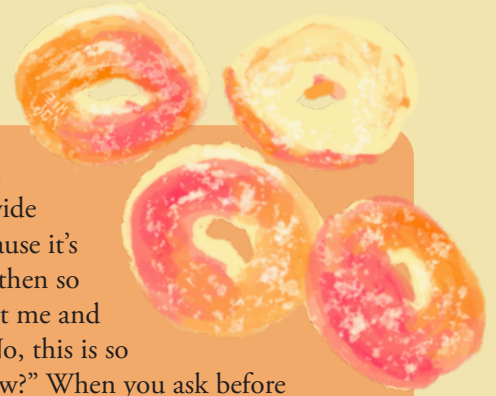
# AUTISTIC JOY

*by: Anne Johnakin*

Part of me hates Christmas. And my birthday. And surprises. I hate when you stare at me with expecting eyes, waiting for my reaction. I can nail down most autistic emotions, I can parrot them, perform them. But I've never perfected joy. Because you do it in a measured way, corners of lips upturning, a gracious "I love it!" A quick hug maybe. I do joy differently, and you've always hated that. Made fun of me for it. Took a step back reflexively, uncomfortable with my big, loud joy. Because when I see monkeys, I cry. When I see deer, I cry. When I eat food I love, I wiggle in my chair. When I talk about my special interests, I talk and talk and talk and you all hate that but by god, I love it.



I love when I listen to a hyper pop song 20 times in a row because it scratches my brain right. When things are the right texture in my mouth fizzy drinks and wide rice noodles and gummy candy. When I move my body in the way I want to, because it's my body, not yours, and if I want to move my arms like airplane wings as I walk, then so fucking be it. When a truck honks as it passes us on the sidewalk (gross, noise) but me and my ADHD friend repeat it at the same time (beep beep bitch). When you say: "No, this is so interesting. Keep going!" "How's Taylor Swift doing?" "What are you knitting now?" When you ask before you hug me but when you do it's so tight it squeezes out every bad sensation my body has ever held.



"I believe you, Anne. I know you're autistic, I've researched what that means for you, I know what accommodations to offer and what makes you shutdown so we can avoid it, and I know that you don't always say what you mean but I don't take it personal because I know the wires were crossed and inside your head you love me as deep as anyone ever could. I know that you're struggling, that you need to sleep, that you need to cry and I will be there while you do all these things and when you're done for the day we can watch *Bones*. Because that's one of your special interests, and I love when you tie everything back to a specific episode and that it makes you feel less alone. I know that we are different, that I can never understand fully but I'm trying. I know autism seeps into every aspect of your life, it is you. It is your conceptions of gender, your asexuality, the way you love, your passion, your depression, your joy."



What a gift—to induce sound, to infuse it  
In breaths as you stoke life into clay  
You bake a layer cake, the golden brown  
Wafts through doorways, lingers in the sway  
Of bodies beside you, every note pulsing

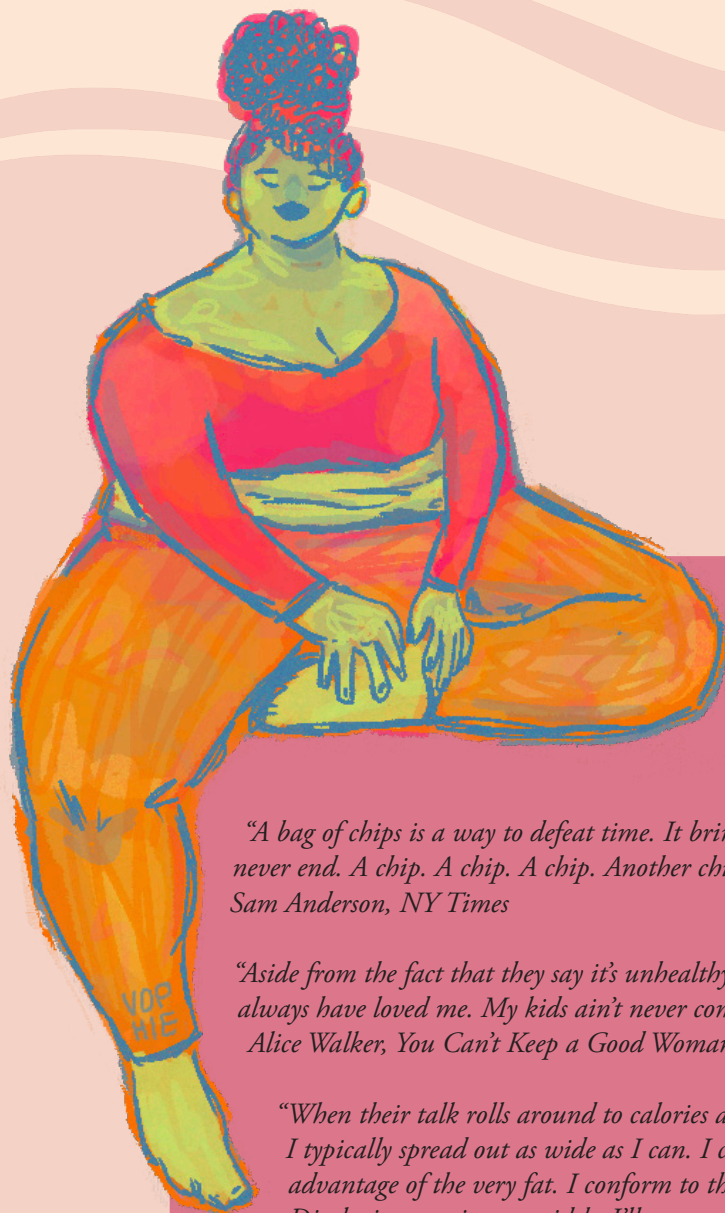
Stormy waters part, you can sing  
Through anything, you clap  
And you know you're happy  
They tell you "you're like music to my ears"  
And every bone will remember  
How you shivered with joy so strangely  
In a warm honeyed embrace

Sometimes you are sick of it all  
And every song is flat and grey  
But then a channel opens, whistling sparking burning  
Pounds like your feet up the hill, screams into the day  
Like the setting sun for an instant before its retreat  
Again your world is enveloped in a shadow  
But the channel remains, open to the air  
A conduit to breath through  
Melodies saved and patted into your pocket  
Lullabies tucked into a blanket of stars  
Tiding you over until dawn

# MUSICAL JOY

by: Emily Chang





# FAT JOY

by: Caty Brown

*“When you’ve spent all day wading through the swamp of your own inadequacies, there’s no absolution like spaghetti dripping in pepper and cheese.”*  
Jia Tolentino, *bon appétit*

*“A bag of chips is a way to defeat time. It brings temporary infinity: a feeling that it will never end. A chip. A chip. A chip. Another chip.”*  
Sam Anderson, *NY Times*

*“Aside from the fact that they say it’s unhealthy, my fat ain’t never been no trouble. Mens always have loved me. My kids ain’t never complained.”*  
Alice Walker, *You Can’t Keep a Good Woman Down: Short Stories*

*“When their talk rolls around to calories and their moral obligation to hate themselves, I typically spread out as wide as I can. I can expand like a jellyfish; it is a particular advantage of the very fat. I conform to the shape of my container like a water balloon. Displaying maximum width, I’ll eat anything I can get my hands on while they talk”*  
Meg Elison, *Big Girl*

I refuse to be unhappy about the only body I will ever have. If no one will love my jiggling arms, my soft jaw, my enormous ass, my hanging stomach, then I sure as hell will. I will eat the whole world if I must, experience its joys, feel its weight within me. I’m here to tell all the little girls just like me out there that “Good girls *can* get fat.” Live large, you fat girl, you.

Where do folks get the energy to be so upset at my body? Where do they find the time? Are you going to hate me for being poor? For being addicted to sugar from the first meal I ever had? For existing in a world where health is reserved for a privileged few? I don’t really care. At the end of the day, I’m gonna come home to myself. I’m not going to spend my time hating myself for my stretch marks or out-grown jeans. Forgive me, body, for the years I did. I want to be your friend, every pound of you, every inch. I will feel the same joy for my fat body that I would feel for my thin body. It is mine, and that’s all it needs to be for me to love it.

*xoxo - my beautiful fat ass*

# KILLJOY JOY

by: Maanasi Shyno

A killjoy is someone who gets in the way of other people's happiness. Historically this word has been used against feminists to decry us as causing misery. "Why can't you take a joke?" he asks us as he jokes about the intellectual inferiority of immigrants and the promiscuity of Black and Asian women.

The feminist killjoy frowns. She rolls her eyes and begins to break down the joke to its racist, sexist, homophobic core. She says "How is that funny?" and engages in the inconvenient "I'm not a bigot!!" conversation that ensues. They use words that make people flinch — sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, classism. Patriarchy, white supremacy, Western imperialism. Being a feminist killjoy is exhausting work.

The feminist killjoy is disliked because she disrupts the situation. They are disliked because they critique the happiness of situations that are considered comfortable. They question social norms, they hold them up to the light and ask "who is made uncomfortable here for your comfort?" They ask "is this really necessary?" In pointing out that there is a problem, the feminist killjoy comes, somehow, to own that problem as if they have created it by naming it. And then she is criticized for being all angles, for being sharp and edged, for bursting the bubble. A feminist is a killjoy because she points things out and gets in the way.

When telling other ribbers about this tribute to Sara Ahmed,<sup>1</sup> many were unfamiliar with the phrase feminist killjoy. These days, feminists are more likely to be called social justice warriors (sjws).

While linked, these terms denote different things. The sjw rails against systems of oppression and possesses a crazed commitment to speaking up, to declaring war. The feminist killjoy is a bitch. They are a debbie downer. She is unamused, she says "That's not fucking funny, Robert" and "For the love of god read a book, Jared" They are there to say fuck your joy. The feminist killjoy is specifically a joy killer. She takes up unhappiness and is willing to cause it.

If there's one constant, heirloom situation experienced by every iteration of this movement, it's the attempted assassination of the feminist. The characterization of feminists as ugly, sexless creatures, angry beyond measure. To call a feminist unfuckable is an attempt to make her small, to deem her irrelevant, to somehow delegitimize her by metrics she has completely rejected. By nature, the sjw, the killjoy, and every iteration is an attempt to attack feminists.

Anyways, are we really causing unhappiness? Or are we simply exposing the unhappy, harmful truths ever-present, tucked under socially accepted ideas of joy? To kill joy is not at its core an act of murder — it is one of exposure, of painting a target on disguised harm. But in exposure, in disruption, something is still killed: fantasy, complacency, ease.

We must be unhappy with this world. We must cause the world trouble through our feminism. We must reject attempts at assimilation into an unjust society. We must cause misery. We must seek destruction as a creative force. If to kill joy is to speak up and talk back, if to be a killjoy is a commitment to doing so, then killing joy is a commitment to redefining joy. Is then, that redefined joy, something we killjoys are simply working towards?

I'm not sure. When I'm with other killjoys, there is already some intimate, undescribed sensation of an alternative joy. There is a knowing, an understanding, a humor all its own. It is a radical potential, a comfort, a happiness, a killjoy joy.

When my killjoy shoulder brushes against yours, I'm suddenly aware of your words. They hum, reverberated through a killjoy crowd. We move forward, in unison, laughing and chatting. We squeeze onto a couch in the corner of a coffee shop, lay side by side on the grass and soak in the sun. We talk by candle light and scribble angry diagrams on notebooks and paint in silence while drinking wine. We pick each other up and dust each other off, we cook each other pasta and play with our dogs. We write poetry and share it, we read poetry and smile. We struggle and struggle and keep coming back for more. We create space to create, to love deeply and desperately. This is the sort of happiness we hope to establish everywhere. This is our dream, and living in it now is a killjoy practice. This is a joy we have excavated from a challenging world, a joy we have birthed. This is killjoy joy.

*“We must be unhappy with this world. We must cause the world trouble through our feminism. We must reject attempts at assimilation into an unjust society. We must cause misery. We must seek destruction as a creative force.”*



[1] Ahmed, Sara. “Feminist Kill-joys (And Other Willful Subjects).” *The Scholar & Feminist Online*. Accessed May 24, 2023. [http://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/print\\_ahmed.htm](http://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/print_ahmed.htm).

# LITTLE JOYS

by: Noelle Blake


For the longest time, I didn't understand when people said, "It's the little things."

When I thought of joy, I thought big.

Joy was the last day of 2nd grade. Joy was the beaker-shaped cake at my science-themed birthday party. Joy was sweet victory after conquering the scariest roller coaster of my life. Joy was finally hearing my Dad tell me that I did well without any qualifiers to humble me. I think when I was younger, I needed those big joys. Back then, all my feelings were big. I didn't understand little joys, because I didn't know that feeling doesn't have to consume you, eat you alive. My joy was big, but so was my sadness, and my anger. Too big for little me's body.







I get it now. My feelings aren't any less big; I just grew into them, the way you do hand-me-downs. My feelings were big because there were so many things that I had yet to understand: why I lived differently than people around me; why people judged me for things I couldn't control. The answers lay in my race (it's crazy that that concept still means something), my age (my naïvety, my maturity, my mini-adulthood that was placed upon my little shoulders before i even knew what it meant to be young), my sexuality (not that it matters, anyway), my family (let's not unpack that), their income (which burdened me more than it should have, by the way), my school (hated that place from kindergarten to senior year!), and other things that hurt my head and produce big big feelings, even now. I don't think I was wrong to feel that way. In fact, I think it's reasonable, given the circumstances.

I've grown up and into my feelings. I grew into understanding that joy is power. I win when I feel joy in a place designed to make me feel anything but.

Joy is going on walks to my favorite songs. Joy is finishing my homework before 11pm. Joy is whispering an inside joke in my friend's ear. Joy is getting coffee with the girl I like. Joy is watching reality TV with my roommate before bed. Joy is adding another book to my StoryGraph, even if I don't like the book. Joy is my favorite perfume. Joy is falling asleep on the Green in the sun. Joy is waving 'hi' to a friend in passing. Joy is being present. Joy is being alive. Little joys for little people with not-so-little power.

It may be a small win, but hey! It's the little things. 🍎

VOP  
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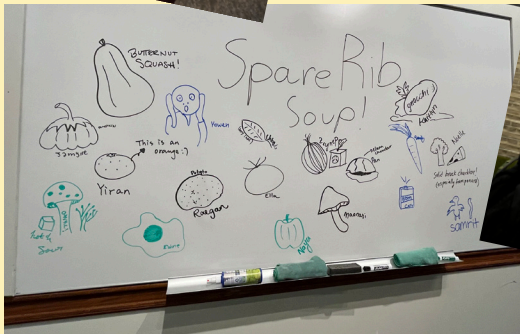


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and a very special thanks to our marketing Leads!

# Join Us!

Whether you're a writer, artist, designer, or just want to hang out, we want you in our community! Open to folks of all genders and backgrounds!



# WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

MR. LLOYD GEORGE ON LIBERALISM—LADY ASTOR ON CONSERVATISM—MR. J. H. THOMAS ON LABOUR—NORMAN ANGELL ON FOREIGN POLICY AND BUSINESS—MR. S. LOW AND THE TRADES

## MR. LLOYD GEORGE AND LIBERALISM

MR. LLOYD GEORGE, writing in the Daily Chronicle, an ex-General Secretary, says that the only real advance was that made by the Liberals. In comparison with the Conservative and the Labour parties, the Liberal party has not moved any very far. The Liberal party has not moved any very far.

## MR. J. H. THOMAS ON LABOUR

MR. J. H. THOMAS, writing in the Daily Chronicle, says that the Labour party has not moved any very far. The Labour party has not moved any very far.

## LADY ASTOR AND THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S MORAL FORCES

LADY ASTOR, writing in the Daily Chronicle, says that the Conservative Party has not moved any very far. The Conservative Party has not moved any very far.

## MR. S. LOW AND THE TRADES UNION MOVEMENT

MR. S. LOW, writing in the Daily Chronicle, says that the Trades Union Movement has not moved any very far. The Trades Union Movement has not moved any very far.

## MR. NORMAN ANGELL ON FOREIGN POLICY AND BUSINESS

MR. NORMAN ANGELL, writing in the Daily Chronicle, says that the Foreign Policy and Business has not moved any very far. The Foreign Policy and Business has not moved any very far.

...that the Conservative Party is the party of reaction, and the other parties the parties of progress. The moral, spiritual and domestic forces of this country are becoming more powerful every day. Any party which hopes to govern this country must reflect the general feeling that such a change of policy is required by the country.

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...the world has been filled with bitterness. The Great Britain of old greatness, the responsibility of the world, the responsibility of the world, the responsibility of the world.

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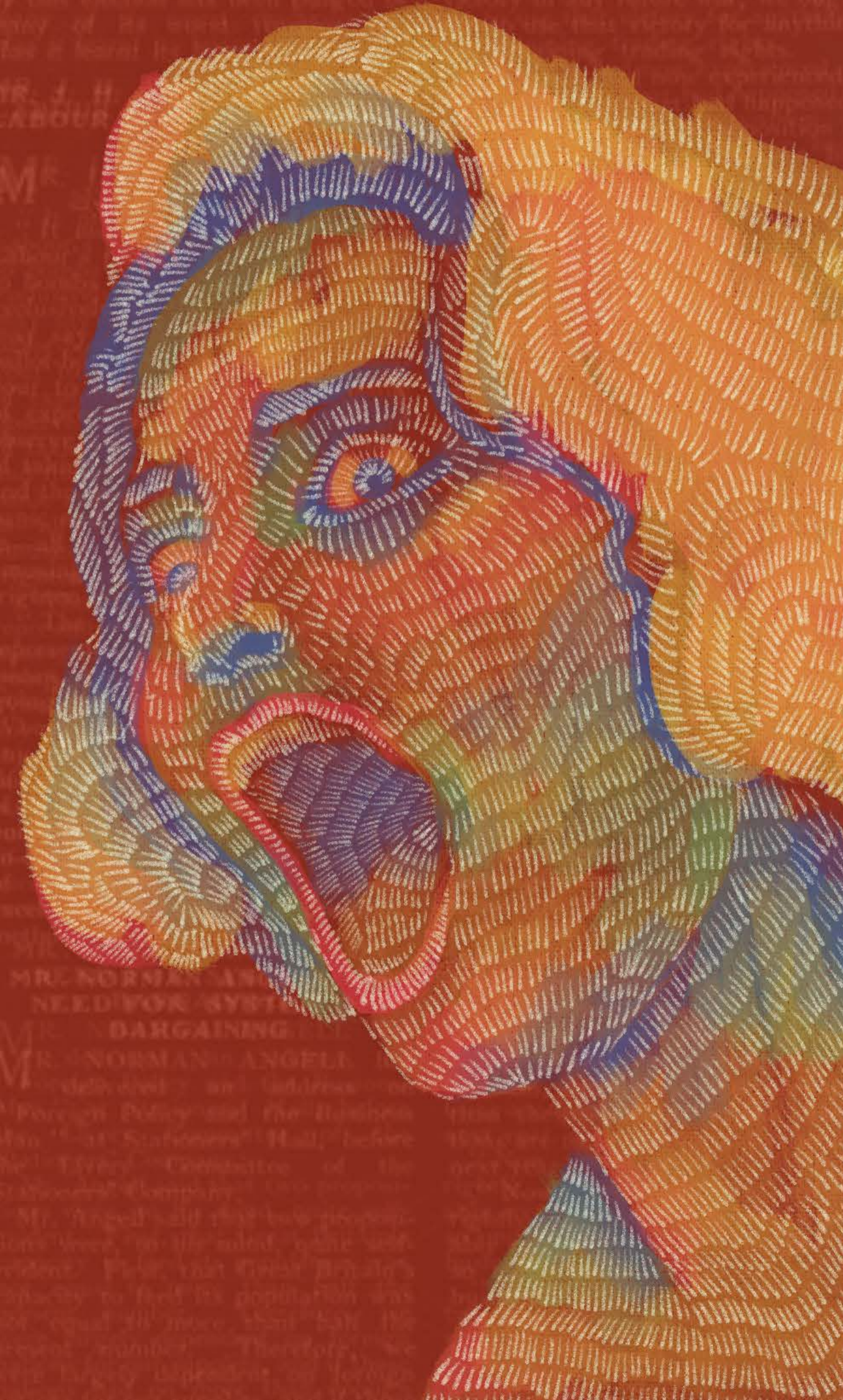
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William Bay

# Get Involved

There are many ways you can get involved:

- Writing an article
- Creating a personality quiz or a crossword puzzle!
  - Creating art to accompany an article
- Creating standalone pieces of art (digital, photography, traditional, etc.)
- Working with Adobe InDesign to create the layout for an article
- Creating art for the cover
- Working on our social media
  - Working on meeting logistics and planning event
- Developing our community and presence on campus
  - Working on special projects of your choosing
  - Helping to guide future interest in Spare Rib

**Or just coming to meetings  
to make new friends!**

**We create a magazine each term, focused on a theme  
(like this edition's theme, JOY).**

**You can be as involved as you can each term. Our space  
is always open to all! Slack is our most used form of  
communication, and we use it both as a  
workspace and social space.**

**If you're in-  
terested in joining, contact us at  
spareribdartmouth@gmail.com or  
spare.rib@dartmouth.edu!**

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# Our Staff

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Together, every term, we make a zine. That itself is a revolutionary act of care. Last term we kept doing that. But more important, and more revolutionary, we make community. We make a radically joyful community, or we try. We always try. We keep trying. Because, after all, as our 23's and intersectional feminist literature have taught us, the magazine is the method. <3

There is so much care in these pages. But it's not just on the page, or in Slack, Google Drive, InDesign, etc. (Though it is certainly evident in those places.)

We give care, maybe the most difficult kind of labor, everywhere in this community, because we need to; because we have to, for each other — for ourselves; because giving is a practice like breathing. Of course, you have to make sure you don't run out of air.

At this institution, you all make it easier to breathe. So thank you. Thank you for all the work. But even more vital, thank you for the joy. It is sustaining, and it is so, so necessary.

Those of you who have graduated, thank you. Ridiculously, thank you. You got this. Those of you who haven't, thank you. Absurdly. Like, absurdly. You also got this. We got this. <3

Thank you, Spare Rib. 🍎

Love,  
Caty Brown, Aryma Moore, and Chloe Cordasco, 23X Design Leads <3

**Akshee Chopra '26 – art**  
**Anika Larson '26 – writing, audio editing**  
**Anne Johnakin '23 – writing, editing**  
**Aryma Moore '25 – design**  
**Camille Yang '25 – art**  
**Caty Brown '23 – writing, design, cover design**  
**Chloe Cordasco '24 – writing, design**  
**Diana Tapia '25 – writing**  
**Eda Naz Gokdemir '25 – writing, editing**  
**Elaine Mei '23 – editing**  
**Ella Grim '25 – writing, design, editing**  
**Emily Chang '25 – writing, design**  
**Grace Hillery '25 – writing**  
**Idil Sahin '26 – art**  
**Ivie Aiwuyo '26 – writing**  
**Jamylle Gomes '26 – art, design**  
**Joyce Li '26 – writing**  
**Kaitlyn Anderson '24 – art, design**  
**Katherine Arrington '24 – design, editing**  
**Maanasi Shyno '23 – writing, art, design, editing**  
**Milanne Berg '24 – art, design**  
**Naya Lunney '25 – writing**  
**Noelle Blake '26 – writing, design, editing**  
**Rachel Roncka '26 – writing**  
**Raegan Boettcher '24 – writing, design, art, editing, cover art**  
**Samantha Paisley '25 – art**  
**Samrit Mathur '23 – writing**  
**Sarah Berman '25 – art**  
**Shena Han '25 – art, design**  
**Sophie Williams '23 – art, editing**  
**Tiffany Chang '24 – writing**  
**Yawen Xue '26 – art, design**  
**YaYing Yu '26 – art**  
**Yiran Jiang '26 – writing, art, design**  
**Zeynep Bayirtepe '26 – writing**



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