



Issue 19: Winter 2017

Dearest darlings,

Greetings and holiday love to all you PCP members out there and a special welcome to new friends! We're excited to share this wintry treat with you, filled to the brim with enough informative submissions and hot gossip to keep you warm on the increasingly frosty nights ahead. In this edition we've got some thoughtful responses to our theme "The Butterfly Effect", the ghost of Halloween past brings us some spooky gay celebrity gossip, there's of course a titillating crossword, some new age goodness in the form of homosscopes, a truly revolutionary edition of Lavender & Red, some news articles that aren't your average mainstream headlines, and of course art, commentary and writing from all you lovelies that grace the pages of this here newsletter. In the wake of our last 10th anniversary edition of the newsletter we're also asking y'all a bit of a favour – we've included some special 10 year anniversary feedback questions and if you can spare the time and postage, we'd love to hear your thoughts on the project, your history with it and your hopes for the future!

Stay warm, cosy and fabulous!

In struggle and solidarity,
Your friends at the Prisoner Correspondence Project

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TO PRISON MAILROOMS: If you are rejecting this newsletter, please send a digital copy of the rejection notice to info@prisonercorrespondenceproject.com so that it is received within the appeal period.

Since We've Been Gone

Well fam, it's the end of Prisoner Correspondence Project's tenth year, and our space is more bustling than ever! We've hosted two volunteer orientation events in the past months to introduce the space and the project to people who are interested in volunteering, and since then we've welcomed several new volunteers into the fold! We also have some more students from the HIV/AIDS class at Concordia University who will be working with us for the next few months (at least)!

We participated in two events during Montreal Pride: hosting a booth at Community Day in the Gay Village, and selling resources from our library at the book fair *Queer Between the Covers*. In September we hosted a panel on prison activism as a part of QPIRG-McGill's "Rad Frosh," an event to kick off the school year.

In the last newsletter, we told you about a campaign that we launched to demand that Correctional Services Canada change their policies around housing and treatment of trans prisoners in federal prisons. Since then, the campaign picked up quite a bit of steam! Our online petition has

garnered almost 5000 signatures, and in August we hosted a Day of Action where we hosted an information session and encouraged people to call the CSC representatives in charge of changing the policy. The CSC hasn't released their new policies yet, so we're going to keep making noise until they put the rights of our family first!

We might seem like just a pen and paper kind of group, but that doesn't mean we can't take to the web! We're hitting the social media scene with a brand new Instagram account, where we grace the internet with artwork you've sent in for sharing, photos of the collective in action, graphics, and info about the project and our events!

And finally, the times they are a-changing as we welcome Mason to the collective, while bidding a very fond farewell to Kristin, Patrick and Eve Parker!

In solidarity,
Adrien, Amber, Beatrice, Bruiser, Carlos, Catherine, Cherrie, Dema, Dustin, Gavin, Josh, Maggie, Mason, Olivia, Rene, Sara, and Tiffany

Chelsea Manning: Life after Prison

Manning was released from prison on May 17 and has been documenting moments from her daily life on her Instagram and Twitter account, posting pictures of her taking her first steps out of prison, playing video games to hanging out with friends.

"I've been given a chance," she said. "That's all I asked for was a chance. That's it, and now this is my chance."

When asked about her thoughts on the LGBTQ movement Chelsea had this to say "It's not that I don't support marriage equality, but I thought it was a goal that didn't help homeless queer kids, it didn't help homeless trans kids, I was a homeless gender-queer kid and how was marriage equality going to help me in that situation?"

When asked what she is going to do for the LGBTQ movement Chelsea said "My plan is to fight, I think the most important thing we have to learn is that every single one of us has the ability to change things, each and every one of us has this ability. We need to look to each other to realize what our values are and what we care about and to take actions in our political discourse. Because it's not going to happen at the ballot box, it's not."



Trans Prisoner Awarded \$167K After Being Refused Hormones

The Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) has been ordered to provide hormone treatment, bras and women's underwear to Michelle Wright a trans woman who is incarcerated in Oregon. In addition, the ODOC will consider transferring Wright to the state's only all-women's prison as part of a settlement agreement announced last week. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed the case on behalf of Wright, who is currently serving a five year sentence for attempted armed robbery. In September 2016, the state's "gender-non-conforming committee" turned down the prisoner's request for hormone treatment and instead recommended she undergo therapy. The ODOC must now pay \$167,000 in compensation to Wright, and \$100,000 to the ACLU to cover legal fees.

Federal Report Blames Corrections Services of Canada for Saskatchewan Prison Riot

A report into a prison riot at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary said it was likely triggered by disputes over food, mistreatment of inmate kitchen staff and small cells. As many as 200 medium security inmates took part in the riot that caused an estimated \$3.6 million in damage and left some cells uninhabitable.

Ivan Zinger, the correctional investigator of Canada wrote that "prison administrators have opportunity and warning to address precipitating factors and thereby prevent a full-fledged riot from occurring in the first place."

"The whole issue about food, which was about quality and quantity of food, was one of several triggering events and I think the service has to investigate on it and make sure they incorporate lessons learned moving forward," Zinger told Global News.

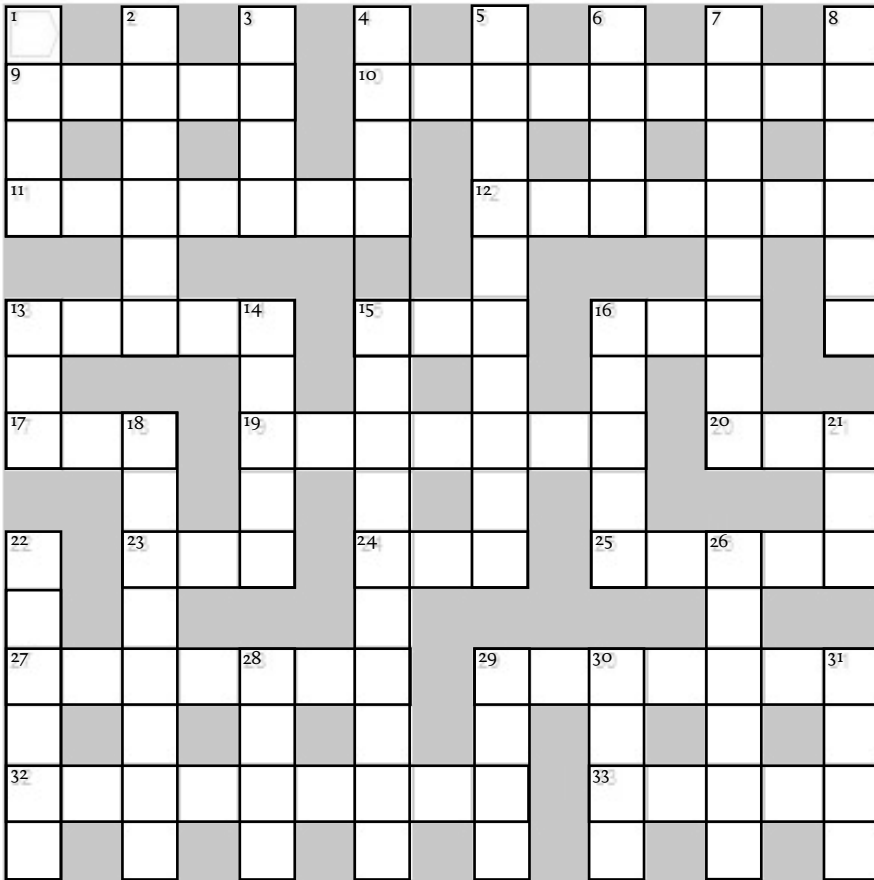
"If there are legitimate issues, they have to be resolved and there has to be constant dialogue between the correctional employees and the inmate population to resolve issues," Zinger said.

10th Anniversary Questions

We are putting together a small 10 year anniversary event and we definitely want your voices present. To help get the ball rolling, we put together a small list of prompting questions. Feel free to use them or not.

1. How did you first hear about the project?
Why did you get involved?
2. What else are you involved with in your daily life? (jobs, legal cases, family, relationships, etc)
3. What does the project mean to you? What does your involvement look like?
4. How does your involvement affect the way you interact with other members of the project where you are?
5. How is PCP different than other organizations that are similar/ you are involved with?
6. When did you receive your first newsletter?
What did you/do you think about it?
7. What's something you've learned or understood in a new way through being involved in the project?
8. What does the future of the project look like to you?
9. Who are your gay/trans icons and inspirations? Can be friends, celebs, activists, etc.
10. What is a future you would like to see? (for yourself, community, society etc. - can be as silly or serious as you want)

True Colours Crossword



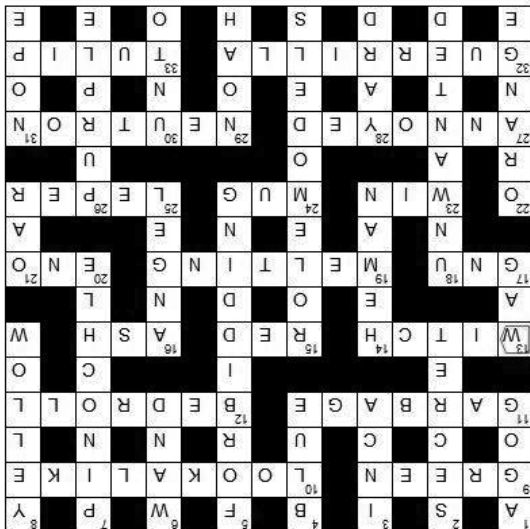
Hot Tip for Crossword noobs: Crossword clues and answers often rely on wordplay. If a clue has a question mark at the end of it, that means something tricky is afoot in the answer--usually a pun or play on words. So a clue like "Fat feline's favourite Olympics category?" might be "track and Garfield" (instead of "track and field"). 3 and 31 Across, and 1 and 14 Down in this puzzle are this kind of tricky clue.

Across

9. 4 Down + 8 Down
10. Doppelganger
11. Trash
12. Portable mattress
13. Endora or Madame Mim
15. Seeing _____ (mad)
16. Common name of the Fraxinus tree
17. Wildebeest
19. What the clocks in a famous Dali painting are doing
20. Composer Brian
23. _____, Lose or Draw
24. Face, slangily
25. Colony denizen
27. Bothered
29. Subatomic particle
32. Revolutionary
33. Dutch flower

Down

1. Eager
2. The _____ Garden (1911 novel)
3. Ancient Peruvian empire
4. Sad
5. Not welcoming
6. Harry Potter's was made of holly
7. Classic 48-card game
8. Cowardly
13. _____ The Dog (1997 movie)
14. Prince Adam's buff alter ego
15. You look up to them
16. Gabriel or Metatron
18. Not desired
21. Paddle
22. 15 Across + 8 Down
26. 15 Across + 4 Down
28. Place for exercise
29. Ark captain
30. "Do _____ others..."
31. Nuh-uh



Gay Celebrity Gossip: The Horror Movie Edition

Good evening my frightful and most dreadful companions. As the dark witching hour of Halloween casts its shadows upon our terrible souls, I am reminded that, you know, it is not only human beings which happen to have the elegance and intelligence to participate in (and don't forget...propagate!) the despicably evil and terrifying culture of homosexuality, but our nearest cousins, the dead, the undead, and the doubly dead, are almost always always papa poofs, Diana dandy's, lipstick lezzies, homeless butch queens, and diamond diva transsexualites. It doesn't take a molecular Class AAA atomic rocket scientist to understand that the moral of every single hollywood horror movie ever made is don't let your kids be homos and don't ever become friends with gay people because they are horrific blood creatures of the night and also clearly only find babies and straight people to be acceptable food ingredients for breakie, light lunches, and dinnertime as well.

The weird thing though (and this is hilarious!!) is that literally no straight person understands that these movies aren't metaphors, but just simple documentaries about normal gay people we all know and love. LOL!! How are straight people so weird? Like, hello, reality check, we're here we're queer and Frankenstein isnt a made up monster he was my goddamn second boyfriend that I met at the hair salon and who like dumped me for Paul after I refused to go to Burning Man with him cuz I don't like being in direct sun and giant wooden effigies freak me out. Anyways, I guess it's true I don't love Frankenstein anymore, but I do know him. He's just a normal gay around the block and that movie about him was a documentary just following him around for a day or two. It wasn't even good!! Like okay cool, Frankenstein wakes up at a rich dates house and then is heartbroken and horrified when the dude tazers him and kicks him out cuz he was freaked out after doing drugs all night! And then as Frankenstein leaves in a panic he repeatedly gets chased by homophobes in the dumb small town he went to for this hookup. Like that exact scenario happened to me six hundred times yesterday! Could you possibly have made a more boring, redundant movie in the history of cinema?? No, the answer is one hundred percent no.

But here's the thing...Frankenstein isnt the only "monster" in a "horror movie" that is actually just a boring lgbtq person lucky enough to have a really boring documentary made about them that straight people think is just "horrific" and will "chill you to the core". Take the Blair Witch Project for example. That, is not a movie about a witch in the forest!! It's a movie about a lesbian cruising spot deep in the woods run by my friend Blair. She's one of the most normal lesbians you could ever meet. What was really weird, is how those straight people trying to find her went completely nuts after they heard lesbian sex sounds in the woods and witnessed the aftermath of normal lesbian orgy stuff like sticks being hung in trees and stuff like that. Not only that but it was really funny when they were so scared of seeing gay women have sex in a small house that they fainted and dropped the camera. Like....Blair didn't even get

to be in the movie!! Haha omg, we all laughed a lot when that one came out. Blair is doing great these days though, she is still living in the country and chopping wood and making cheese and stuff like that! She calls me all the time going on about this and that, she truly is a wonderful person.

Another documentary that was total garbage but blew up in theaters all over the place as a "fictional horror movie" was the Exorcist. Like that was super weird to me that anyone even thought that story of a little kid trying to come out to her parents in extremely normal ways was significant. It's wild cuz Regan is old now and completely comfortable with her sexuality and laughs off that movie everytime anyone brings it up. I see her every tuesday almost at the drag queen bingo night uptown at Lucy's. "Haha yeah I had a hard time coming to terms with my sexuality as a teenager, kids will be kids!!", she says. And boy is she right. Almost every gay person I know went through a similar thing. My back still hurts from crab-walking down the stairs and rotating my skull 360 degrees as a teenager cuz it was the only way my body knew how to expend all that pent up homo energy. Also, it's biological people! All gay teenagers have a gene that makes their neck able to safely rotate like that. What was truly tragic however was when that Priest jumped out the window because he couldn't live in a world with gay children. It truly was sad to see, but he didn't even die! Just bruised his knee pretty bad. That was truly excellent editing skills by the camera person lemme tell you. That movie was grade A boring, standard gay documentary about things every gay person has gone through.

So you see, please don't forget this Halloween that not everything you watch on the movies is fake, and more to the point, that gay people are just boring everyday gays who have been in a lot of documentaries that people think are fictional horror movies. Please remember this next time you go to a theater and watch something horrific that is actually just boring and normal and very standard gay.

Thank you.

Widow

Unfortunately, Widow wasn't able to submit her advice column for this issue. Keep sending in your burning questions, and Widow Says... will return in the next issue.

The Butterfly Effect

Willie "Divine" Craig, Jr.

How have I effected someone just by being me? Here's my experience:

I was sitting and reading "Passage & Place" (a queer anthology on Home by Deviant Type Press) when a dude comes up and goes into a tirade about how I'm reading "gay" shit.

He says he can spot a faggot a mile away and he would whip one's ass if they gave him some gay shit to read. Furthermore, he would never deal with or talk to a "punk"; so couldn't understand how I could read that shit!

I laughed and opened the book to Pg 125 and asked him to humour me and read it.

He read the entry on a trans-loving man, and how he would/will treat his woman. And I could see the hatred & rage on his face. However the bottom fell out when he got to the name and mailing info for the writer. It was my name and #, and the prison address! That shit stopped him cold!

Seeing his reaction I asked: How could he not know I wasn't heterosexual? And if he still would whip any faggot's ass who spoke to him.

His response was a stutter, because we both knew he could not whip me. And for months he had been seeking out & utilizing my advice - to his benefit.

So I gave him some more... I advised he never make broad-stroke statements and/or assumptions. Because gay, trans, bi, lesbian, or pansexual (my id) do not equal soft or punk. They equal free! Lastly for all our differences - we humans are all for the most part alike!

After he stomped off a young dude who banged came up and started asking me questions. Turns out he was bi and afraid to let anyone know; lest he be targeted!

He asked me how I was able to do (and say) what he had seen? And still walk the yard? Most importantly... how could he?

My advice: A) get out of the gang - you have no business being a part of something that doesn't want you! B) Be true to you! - People might not like it - but you can win respect; just by being genuine!

Later that night one of the transgender girls on the block came to my cell and asked to read what I had shown him earlier.

After doing so she started talking. Telling me how alone and afraid she felt at times. But how strengthened and empowered she felt by what she witnessed (and read)! Turns out she (and many others) were watching the entire exchange (Wow!)

Of course, some people stopped talking to me (including the 1st guy mentioned) - but a lot more started!

All I lost was some dead misogynistic weight. But I gained some sisters (As word spread quickly to all the girls)

- and at least one little brother.

My advice to anyone similarly situated...Don't let others' outlooks stop you! The only opinions that matter in your life - are those that matter to your life! Choose those wisely!

Lick you later lovers...

Bellaboy

My Dearest PCP Friends (and the rest of the LGBTQ Community),

"The Butterfly Effect" ..hmmm.. I LOVE IT! Very beautiful topic!

I am a 25 year old gay male. I am currently incarcerated in MODOC and have been for the past 7 years. When I first came to prison, very few inmates knew I was gay. I would get defensive about it if asked because I was so scared that I would get raped. Well I was in "AD-SEG" and came across this white gay named "Buck". I liked him a lot. Enough that it was near impossible to hide my "fem" traits. He finally called me on it and told me how much he liked me. We started dating. Needless to say, it didn't last. However it made me open up and see how much the other inmates respected me for being myself (there was still a lot of hateful discrimination though!). So "Buck" convinced this pretty (and believe me I am pretty honey) little butterfly to flap its wings.

Well, because of the flap, 6 years later, I have met the love of my life, and why? Because I wasn't hiding who I was. I wasn't "flaunting" either, but I caught his eye. All because Buck wasn't scared to get me to be me. I flapped my wings. I also encourage others to be themselves!

Gay, Trans, Bi, it doesn't matter!

And a little word of advice for a fellow queen: Listening to "Adam Lambert" will help you through anything and change your life! Listen the "OUTLAWS OF LOVE" on his Trespassing Album.

With Love for all,
From my Husband and I,
Bellaboy AKA "T.T." (and Bobby)
"Never Let Go!"

Michael J. Desmarais

Sometimes small things go a long way. I was a unit rep in Edmonton Max in 2010. At the time prisoners could order magazines once a month from a distributor. I would take their requests, submit them, receive and hand out the

The Butterfly Effect

mags when they came in. Only I knew which mag went to which prisoner.

Lots of guys ordered soft porn mags such as Playboy. I knew of at least one other gay person on the unit. I suggested to him that he is also entitled to porn and mentioned Playgirl. He feared others knowing he had male porn. "No one will know. I'll make sure no one sees me give you the mag." He agreed.

The staff was hesitant so I reminded them it would be discrimination to deny a mag based on sexual orientation. The next month I delivered a Playgirl and made someone happy. Oh yeah, there was also a Playgirl for me!

In 2016, I sent an open letter to a gay newsletter in British Columbia. I expressed a desire to reach out and appealed to others whether prisoners or in the community to do the same. My letter was published and my name and address listed as 'Pen Pals Wanted.' The newsletter also goes to some prisons in Alberta and Saskatchewan. A few months later two other prisoners were listed. One I wrote to has written back. Perchance a new butterfly will spread wings.

These are not major events but the point is to start somewhere. Little things can create major effects. Anyone can contact me at:

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Ravyn Marie

While reading the last two issues of The Word Is Out, I see so many of our family in the LGBTQ community struggling in so many ways, and it genuinely makes me very sad to hear of everyone's struggles. Sometimes I even cry, liberally. I just wish I could hold every single one of you and be that shoulder you can cry on and that person you can come talk to when you need help.

In here, I help out as many of my brothers and sisters as I can, whether they need someone to talk to, asking for advice or legal help, or hygiene. I'm there for them regardless no matter what. I truly respect all those who do the same thing I do for our brothers and sisters, even the people at PCP who put so much of their precious time into doing everything they do for us. Remember, that a little bit goes a long way, and even the smallest of things are always helpful and people will always remember what you've done for them.

I, too, have my struggles in here. I get harassed by officers and all sorts of things. They don't do it much anymore because I stand up for myself and they know I'll just put grievances in on them. Believe it or not, the officers here are pretty much afraid of me, grievance-wise and legal-wise. So they tend to give me a wide berth. I've

been educating myself on civil law for 2 years now, so I'm pretty educated legal-wise. Speaking of that, I was reading a submission by Jakaelynn in Issue 17 of The Word Is Out, and she mentioned the "freeze-frame" policy thing. I am going through the same dilemma here. I have a lawsuit against medical for refusing to have me evaluated by a transgender and Gender Dysphoria specialist and for not providing me any treatment at all. I was even told by several medical staff that they don't provide treatment if I wasn't previously receiving it prior to incarceration. This policy also gives them an excuse not to do evaluations while the person is in jail. In my opinion, this is a violation of inmates' rights, and I intend to prove that in my lawsuit. I don't have a lawyer, so I'm probably going to face some hurdles, but I'll manage. And if I prevail in this lawsuit, then it'll help the next trans girl in here who is denied access to treatment.

If for some reason I do go to prison from here, I intend on starting a support group for all LGBTQ family that are in there. I want it to be the type of support group where everyone can go to discuss all their problems, concerns, ideas, and even where everyone can just be themselves and not have to worry about others judging them. I also want it to be a place where everyone can bond, get to know each other, and become a closer knit family. I'll probably need to find a couple more people to help me organize everything. I also want to set up a charity thing where people who are in the support group can donate items to help all those who don't have anything, such as hygiene and stuff like that. I think that all jails and prisons should have those kinds of support groups for our LGBTQ members. I am going to close for now and I hope that all is well with all my LGBTQ family and those at PCP.

With lots of love,
Ravyn Marie

Lisa Strawn

I made the decision to have an LGBT group here that would truly change the lives of my brothers and sisters. What I didn't know is just how much it would impact not just their lives but mine too.

The first time all of the members were in the room I became very emotional. I started to cry because I felt so overwhelmed that the 13 people in the room thought enough of me to show up and support me.

It was at that moment while crying that I knew this would change all of our lives together. I saw that we all had a place where we could truly be ourselves, even if only for an hour.

And now, almost 8 months later we are going strong and putting together meetings about Acceptance, Love, Forgiveness, Who I am and many other topics. What I see in the group is people that never have been able

to express themselves totally without judgement can now do so.

It is so freeing to be able to share our lives and learn and grow with each other. Because that is what life should be about. What can we bring to one another when the world around us in here isn't so kind and tolerant?

I am so very blessed to have given my brothers and sisters here a place where they can support each other and continue to put together such powerful stories from their lives.

I am so humbled that as a transwoman in a mens prison that no matter who you are, where you are, you can make a difference in the lives of others and yourself.

So for everyone - Whatever you want in your life - you will create,

Lisa Strawn.

“Positive Actions Create Everything”

Next Issue Theme: Censorship

The theme of our next issue is going to be Censorship, how do you experience it, how do you fight it? As always, feel free to interpret it widely, but here are some questions to get your literary juices flowing:

1. What items are censored most often by the mailroom? Other than mailroom rejections, how else do you experience censorship?
2. What are the effects of censorship for you personally, and for prisoners as a whole?
3. Have you successfully challenged censorship in your prison? Are there strategies that you have used other than inmate grievance procedures?

Being incarcerated, I have a lot of time on my hands - the majority of which I spend reading, watching TV, and listening to music. In all of this mass media consumption I've noticed a trend in regards to transgenderism: we are portrayed as downtrodden and suffering. Most media (including my own literary works, it would seem) only works to emphasize the internal and external struggles that we, as trans, face. While this is important, I believe the problem is that eventually we become seen as a miserable people.

We have shown the world the existence of Gender Dysphoria. We have proven that our feelings are real, that our needs are real, and that our struggle is real. Now we need to show them that despite this, we are not alien. We have to prove that we are no different than anyone else. The concept of a transperson - accepted or not, pitied or not - is still an oddity to most people. We are still foreign, yet we are merely souls born in the wrong bodies.

We need to start producing media that highlights this. When will we see a protagonist that just happens to be Trans? When can we play a video game in which the demon-slaying, badass heroine is? Or what an ER show about a transgendered nurse? The majority population will never think to do this - we have to be the ones to take the initiative. Too many people seek resolution of strife through political means but forget that the civilians need to be swayed as well. Media visibility is the most tried and true method of enacting social change. What if Harry Potter had been trans? Or Rambo? Or the sey heroine in the viedo game Lollipop Chainsaw? The impact of fiction should never be underestimated.

I sincerely believe that representing ourselves this way - everyday people - would go far in gaining transfolk ground on the social stage. Because that's my dream - a future not where transfolk will be accepted, but where we will be accepted as a social norm, a future where a young boy can confess that he is a girl, and she will be applauded not for her bravery, but for her self-discovery. Because it shouldn't be bravery to be who we are - it should be expected.

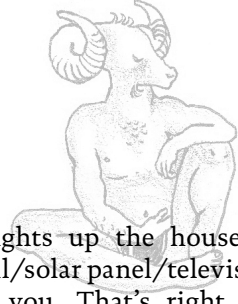
Khaiera Wolf
RGCI

To look at me with disgust
And yet to secretly crave my touch
Is enough to make you dis-trust
The fortitude you've built up
While stewing in the fact
That I can have your woman
And even your man too...
Doing whats taboo
Has you in the grasp
Of whats best described as a S.N.A.F.U...
And its an example of vast views
When whats good becomes great
And the beauty found in the awkwardest places
Becomes the stasis of fear thats queer and audacious
And is the basis of the statement Im making...
Cause when strangers meet
Its dangerously sweet
As from the embers of society's proprieties
Arises whats unique...
And to me its plain to see
That complicated communication
Obscures the articulation
Of the ones who cant percieve
That I dont need you to attempt
To scientifically understand me
As if me being what Im supposed to be
Is a type of disease
And anything other than a beautiful entity of energy...



Aries

Your compelling rage lights up the house this holiday season. You are a windmill/solar panel/televised fireplace that infinitely warms you. That's right aries, the source of your rage right now is also its target, which is you. That means, astrologically speaking, that the grand purpose behind your cute and less-cute outbursts is actually an inward process bringing reflection, assessment, and ambition. This will ultimately assist not the person or system you are raging against but (as I already mentioned), you. This is good. Hold your anger like an aries and that will lead to a whole lot of learning and growing and obviously, love.



Taurus

Taurus, I'm sorry to affirm this here, but you are in a rut. That crush, that project, that deepfreeze around your heart just doesn't seem to be having a smooth move. In fact, you might be feeling, like painfully sluggish Pluto, that things around you aren't progressing as planned or at all. The astrological wisdom for you, as might be expected, is to work with and not against this trend of *s l o w m o t i o n*. Using this time to gear down your pace, reset your goals and expectations, and find extreme chill and deep leisure will help you be ready when life speeds back up again. Lazy river through the grease in the pan because soon you will feel entirely ready to fry up the perfect thing.



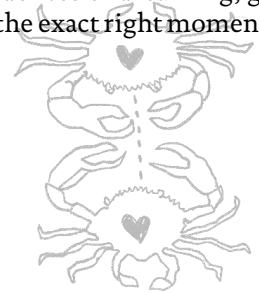
Gemini

Darling, Gemini: this past Halloween you wowed us with your ability to clean up dazzling, to tell frighteningly essential stories, and to radiate a certain glow. Your urge following this happy candy-filled, dress-up moment to continue to transform yourself and others will propel you forward into very intriguing kinds of engagements in the coming months. Do not resist this aim to showcase the parts of yourself that are normally buried. Like a zombie, raise yourself from the earth with your fist up to the stars and forever transform us all.



Cancer

Leverage the care you feel for others onto the secret thing you want the most. There are many practical reasons to hide from this thing or to see its fulfillment as horrifically selfish, or unimportant, or besides the point, but Jupiter's transit into your sign asks you to deeply re-prioritize your hidden wish. You know what I'm referring to. You know it's just what you need right now and always. You know that getting what you need will make you a better lover/parent/legend/pal. So please seek the support from those in your circles in dealing with the consequences of dreaming; good things will come of it, and now is the exact right moment for this.



Leo

Sweet Baby Lion, your work is really throwing you for a spin. How will you fit it all in? Will you do an appropriate job? What does it all mean, anyway? Although Mercury is imposing these types of boring questions into your otherwise meaningful days, attempting to answer them would be even more tedious and would actually sap the attention you really need to just get your jobs done. If you can just work during the appropriate hours, your capacity for play will expand endlessly into the night and early mornings and this will be extremely pleasant. Take these pleasures as they are offered and you will soon forget about all things not worth your ferocious focus.



Virgo

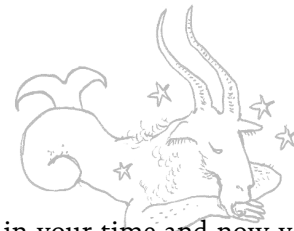
Hello, virgo. Getting grounded has never been your problem. You are good with routine or at least understanding its powers. You know how to tuck someone into bed. You know how to balance a meal. What you could use a little bit more of this holiday moment, is chaos. Not that you will have a choice in the matter, because Saturn is coming right for you (and Saturn always brings chaos). What if you ate nothing but chips and stayed up way past everyone's bedtime? I am not suggesting you release order but if you welcome variety in the coming months, the rituals that support you will become truly golden.



Libra

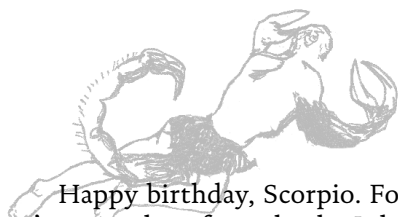


Do you ever feel like you'd rather tell a small lie than hurt someone's feelings? What if I asked you a question that you just knew would just lead to a lot of drama and upset? Would you select honesty over smooth sails or just candy coat things just a tiny little bit? What I'm insinuating, Libra, is that people sometimes like to know what you really, really think. People sometimes yearn to feel the kind of truths that will actually open spaces for vulnerability, disappointment, and all the most terrifying realities that already exist. If you can be perfectly blunt right now, you might actually improve the quality of your connections rather than destroy them. Just saying.



Capricorn

You put in your time and now you are in a totally different place than you were in on your birthday last year. All the confusing, weepy times are shifted, Neptune is moving, and you now really are in a way better zone. Things might still feel really messed up, but compared to a year ago, you have actually become a wizard, a knockout, an underdog hero, and all kinds of insightful. Make a list! "These are the things that I worked for and got." "These are things I now have. These things rule." Might I propose that you celebrate your dedication with a small party or daily self-congratulations? Your drive is commendable and you deserve several kinds of trophies in a very attractive case.

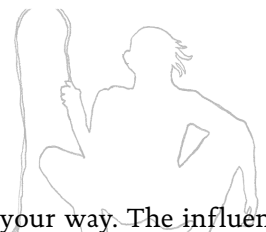


Scorpio

Happy birthday, Scorpio. For whatever reason, we haven't seen a lot of you lately. I do have some questions about this trend: 1. Is there room in your hiding place for a big and/or little spoon? 2. Do you know that we dream of you often? 3. Did I say something or do something that may have led to your current period of reflection, and if so, how can I get you to teach me the lessons that I'm teaching you? If you answered "yes" to any of the above, please join me for a dinner party with a goth theme at sunset, I will prepare a lasagna and tell you all of my secrets. You can bring dessert.

Aquarius

The lovers are coming your way. The influence of extreme babe/s or of a newly awake part of your sweet little heart will be pulling you into a life of passion that feels new and scary and steamy and real. This will be intense and all consuming. Other astrological signs might find this scary or daunting but not you, Aquarius. You are open to seeing this through. You are curious as to where these pulls might go. Your sense of adventure is finely tuned at the moment to make you hunkier, prettier, and more dashing than ever, so use this turn of events to carry you to the softest places.



Sagittarius



Well, avoiding certainly does have its merits. You might, for example, have more fun drifting in an inflatable donut hole floating down the lazy river with a cool breeze messing up your hair than you would have right here, facing me. It could, for example, be sweeter to doze in and out of the most relaxing nap and feel the soft cotton of a shirt against your back than catch yourself looking into my captive gaze. But what if, Sag, standing right in front of you, was someone really trying to bring you into the present? What if the things I could offer you might somehow cure a nagging feeling in the pit of yourself that won't seem to go away no matter how often you astral project? All I'm saying is, I want to look into your far away face and bring you back here with me. It could be worthwhile.



Pisces

Overcome by recent waves worry, you do not always have the easiest time with big sorts of change. While unusually adaptable, you see yourself as timid and as swept away beyond all control. You are a kitten in a 6-year old's pocket. You are the cheese on a pizza going into a human mouth. Why does everything need to feel so hard? Try, in facing what is gone, to kiss someone gently who makes you feel ready for what is on. Try to get lost in your sleeping bag, lucid in a nightmare, soothed by things that seem unusually warm. Share a makeup tip or a pep talk and know that you Pisces, are a tremendous force.

Lavender & Red

This issue's installment of Lavender & Red was chosen to mark the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. This excerpt is one of 11 sections looking at sexuality in Russia and the Soviet Union, all of which are available in our Resource Library.

During the 1920s, in the first decade of the Russian Revolution, signs that the struggle to build socialism could make enormous social gains in sexual freedom--even in a huge mostly agricultural country barely freed from feudalism, then ravaged by imperialist war and torn asunder by civil war--were apparent.

The Russian Revolution breathed new life into the international sexual reform movement, the German Homosexual Emancipation Movement, and the revolutionary struggle as a whole in Germany and around the world.

It was a historic breakthrough when the Soviet Criminal Code was established in 1922 and amended in 1926, and homosexuality was not included as an offense. The code also applied to other republics, including the Ukrainian Republics. Only sex with youths under the age of 16, male and female prostitution and pandering were listed. Soviet law did not criminalize the person being prostituted, but those who exploited them.

For example, author Dan Healey states, "The revolutionary regime repeatedly declared that women who sold their bodies were victims of economic exploitation, not to be criminalized, and campaigns to discourage them from taking up sex work were launched." The growth of prostitution had of course been spurred by the chaos and dislocation of people accompanying war.

Historian Laura Engelstein summarizes, "Soviet sexologists in the 1920s participated in the international movement for sexual reform and criminologists deplored the use of penal sanctions to censor private sexual conduct." ("Soviet Policy")

In 1923, the Soviet minister of health traveled to the German Institute for Sexual Science and reportedly expressed there his pride that his government had abolished the tsarist penalties against same-sex love. He stated that "no unhappy consequences of any kind whatsoever have resulted from the elimination of the offending paragraph, nor has the wish that the penalty in question be reintroduced been raised in any quarter."

Also in 1923, Dr. Grigorii Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Soviet Hygiene, published a pamphlet titled "The Sexual Revolution in Russia." It stated, "Soviet legislation bases itself on the following principle: it declares the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters, as long as nobody is injured, and no one's interests are encroached upon."

And the pamphlet spelled this out clearly, "Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offenses against public morality--Soviet legislation treats these the same as so-called 'natural'

intercourse."

In Germany, the vicious Prussian Paragraph 175 was the law of the land in 1923. That same year in the U.S., where anti-"sodomy" laws aimed to padlock closet doors, the FBI had labeled anarchist Emma Goldman "most dangerous woman in America" because of her vocal support for gay rights and other forms of social equality. (gaysouthafrica.org)

In Britain the "Buggery" Act of 1533 had proscribed death by hanging--the death penalty not formally removed until 1861. But the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act criminalized any form for male homosexual expression that offended a jury--"gross indecency"--with up to two years with or without hard labor. Oscar Wilde, a feminine homosexual, was convicted under this law in 1895. It took 82 more years to repeal this repressive measure. (lawyerscollective.org)

Ups and downs

On Jan. 15, 1921, a raid took place in Petrograd that may have been sparked by official fears of a large private gathering of soldiers and sailors. It turned out those gathered were carrying out a wedding ceremony.

Some 95 soldiers, sailors and civilians were arrested in the only such raid known during that period on a party of male homo sexuals and cross-dressers in Petrograd. Healey explains, "A lone Justice Commissariat lawyer argued that this raid was justified despite the decriminalization of sodomy, for public displays of 'homosexual tastes' endangered suggestible personalities. He proposed prosecuting such overt demonstrations of these tastes ..."

When the Bolsheviks struck down the tsarist anti-gay laws, that political act challenged the prejudices that were deeply embedded from centuries of class rule. But it could not change everyone's attitudes in the population overnight. From that standpoint, however, Healey's findings are very significant: No such charges based on cross-dressing or public displays of homosexuality have come to light. "Few other jurists advocated such a criminalizing approach, and most explained the absence of a sodomy ban as a feature of the sexual revolution." ("Russian Queen")

The eminent psychiatrist V.M. Bekh terev wrote about those arrested as "sexual deviants." It's worth recalling that he began his career of professor of psychiatry at the Academy of Military Medicine under the tsar--the same military that had adopted legislation in 1706 and 1716 mandating the death penalty as punishment for male same-sex love between soldiers.

While feminine males were generally not as socially accepted as masculine females, Healey notes, "Soviet sources of the 1920s continue to mention the use of female nicknames and occasional indulgence in cross-dressing, although these practices were evidently reserved for private events and spaces."

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The great Russian novel "Wings," by Mikhail Kuzmin, about same-sex love between men, was re-published and brought out in Berlin in 1923 by a literary house owned by the Soviet government. (Simon Karlinsky's essay in "Hidden from History")

Modern anti-communist historians have denounced the early Soviet workers' state based on reports that the Bolsheviks used charges that male clerics were having sex with boy children during public trials of church officials.

While not underestimating the impact of political backwardness about same-sex relations in the trials of clerics from the church hierarchy, more study must be done to find out how much of these measures resulted from outrage at sexual abuse--much like the outrage over exposures of the rapes of boy and girl children in the modern Catholic Church scandal.

More thorough primary research about these trials is needed. Any attempt to gloss over instances of backwardness only sets back the struggle to build socialism in the long run. However, simplistic, anti-communist arguments do far greater damage.

'Survivals of primitive custom'

While the October 1917 Revolution in Russia--the heart of the tsarist oppressor nation--eradicating the laws against homosexuality, Soviet governments in the Caucasus and Central Asia, where homosexuality was reportedly widespread, did enact laws against some forms of same-sex expression in the 1920s.

In 1928 the People's Commissariat of Justice of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic replied to a request from Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in Germany, which wrote to ask the state of homosexuals in the Soviet Union.

The response stated in part that "pederasty"--sexual abuse of boy children by adult men--was punished "[i]n particular republics where pederasty is especially common." ("Sexual Desire")

The Bolshevik's struggle against sexual exploitation of children is a matter of public record. However, there is also backwardness in this attitude towards the Republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus that cannot be examined outside of the context of the "national question" and the centuries of entrenched "Great Russian" chauvinism towards these formerly oppressed nationalities.

These vast new republics of the Soviet Union had different customs, languages, and economies than Russia had--and diverse attitudes towards the sexes, gender expression and sexuality. Some of these societies, closer to the legacy of their communal pasts, appeared to retain more widespread acceptance of same-sex love and trans expression, even where class divisions had formed.

Historian Laura Engelstein writes that in the early 1900s in tsarist Russia, jurist V.D. Nabokov had noted

that laws of homosexuality "had changed over time and still varied across cultural traditions; there was no single, absolute standard common even to the Christian world upon which to base consistent legal norms."

She concludes that "Nabokov must have been aware of the testimony of judges from the Muslim areas of the Russian empire, who explained the impossibility of enforcing the [tsarist] antisodomy laws among peoples who did not disapprove of homosexual behavior." ("Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia")

Under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, the early Bolsheviks unlocked the cell door of the tsarist "prison house of nations" by forming a voluntary Soviet Union of Russia with the formerly oppressed nations that had been coerced under tsarist rule. Lenin steered his party to support the right of self-determination, including the right to separate from Russia, of nations that had been forcibly held in bondage by the imperial state. At the same time, the Bolsheviks organized unity and class solidarity of the workers and peasants in the oppressed and oppressing nations to fight the propertied classes that exploited their labor.

Even the seizure of state power and the setting up a government that defended the right of self-determination, however, did not end racism, national chauvinism or anti-Semitism among "Great Russians" with a single blow. The effort to eradicate every vestige of national oppression and the attitudes it engendered was a process, and an uneven one.

And there had been as yet no thorough historical materialist view of sexuality. The painstaking task of examining questions of society and culture in order to weed out bigotry and superstition that had resulted from centuries of ruling-class ideology was severely impeded by the relentless imperialist onslaught.

The Soviet Union had no Homosexual Emancipation Movement like the one that had arisen in Germany and had gathered and archived vast cross-cultural, cross-historical information about the sexes, gender expression and sexuality.

Sexual exploitation

Laws were enacted against sodomy and the keeping of "bachi"--cross-dressed, feminine boy dancers kept as prostitutes--in the Soviet Republics of Azerbaijan in 1923, Uzbekistan in 1926 and Turkmenistan in 1927.

The 1928 Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic criminal code, for example, grouped eight laws against male same-sex relations with others adopted against "survivals of primitive custom."

The role of Russian national chauvinism and backward attitudes towards same-sex love and what today would be called "transgender" needs to be thoroughly examined. The greatest contributions, of course, will be made by revolutionary researchers from those nationalities, who can disentangle historical forms of gender expression and sexuality in their historical context--both ancient and

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enduring--from forms of commercial exploitation that arose with the development of class relations.

The struggle against sexual exploitation was an important focus of these Soviet laws.

Healey gives the most thoughtful account of this aspect of the laws' intent. "Just as revolutionary jurists had rejected the criminalization of female prostitutes in the Russian republic, in Uzbek and Turkmen law the male prostitute himself was not banned, but virtually every other aspect of the masculine sex trade was prohibited." ("Desire")

Healey elaborates, "The men who kept youthful male prostitutes were regarded by Bolshevik legal drafters as class aliens, capitalists making deals with families to maintain male children and youths, 'educating' their charges, and exploiting them sexually while providing public entertainment. In their first Soviet criminal code of 1927, Bolshevik jurists in the Turkmen SSR adopted similar but less elaborate language, primarily directed against those who committed offenses involving bachi who were minors."

And, "In Uzbekistan, the sexual harassment of men was made a crime, in language that mirrored the Russian republic's pathbreaking 1923 statute protecting women from the same offense."

Leslie Feinberg was born September 1, 1949 in Kansas City, MO and raised in Buffalo NY in a working-class Jewish family. She earned her living for most of her life through a series of low-wage temp jobs, including working in a PVC pipe factory and a book bindery, cleaning out ship cargo holds and washing dishes, serving as an ASL interpreter, and doing medical data inputting. Her impact on mass culture was primarily through her 1993 first novel, Stone Butch Blues, widely considered in and outside the US as groundbreaking work about the complexities of gender. She was a member of the Workers World Party and was involved in organizing with the March Against Racism, Buffalo United for Choice and Rainbow Peacekeepers. Lavender & Red ran as a 120-part series on the links between socialism and LGBT history in the Workers World newspaper. Leslie Feinberg died November 15, 2014. Her last words were "Remember me as a revolutionary communist."

New Resources

Here are the new resources that we've added since the Summer 2017 issue of The Word is Out. You can still request the free LGBTQ publications from our last resource list. Send us a letter if you want to receive an updated list of our entire resource library!

Self Care On The Inside

A 16 page booklet put together by the Sylvia Rivera Law Project filled with tips & activities for self care.

Dema Days

A Zine designed to keep prisoners busy during lockdown or an otherwise boring day.

Sober Queers Do Exist

A compilation of personal stories about being sober and queer (not specific to prisoners).

Feminizing Hormones and Surgeries

An 18 page document created by Trans Care British Columbia containing basic and up to date information about feminizing hormones and surgeries including including breast augmentation, orchiectomy, and vaginoplasty.

Masculinizing Hormones

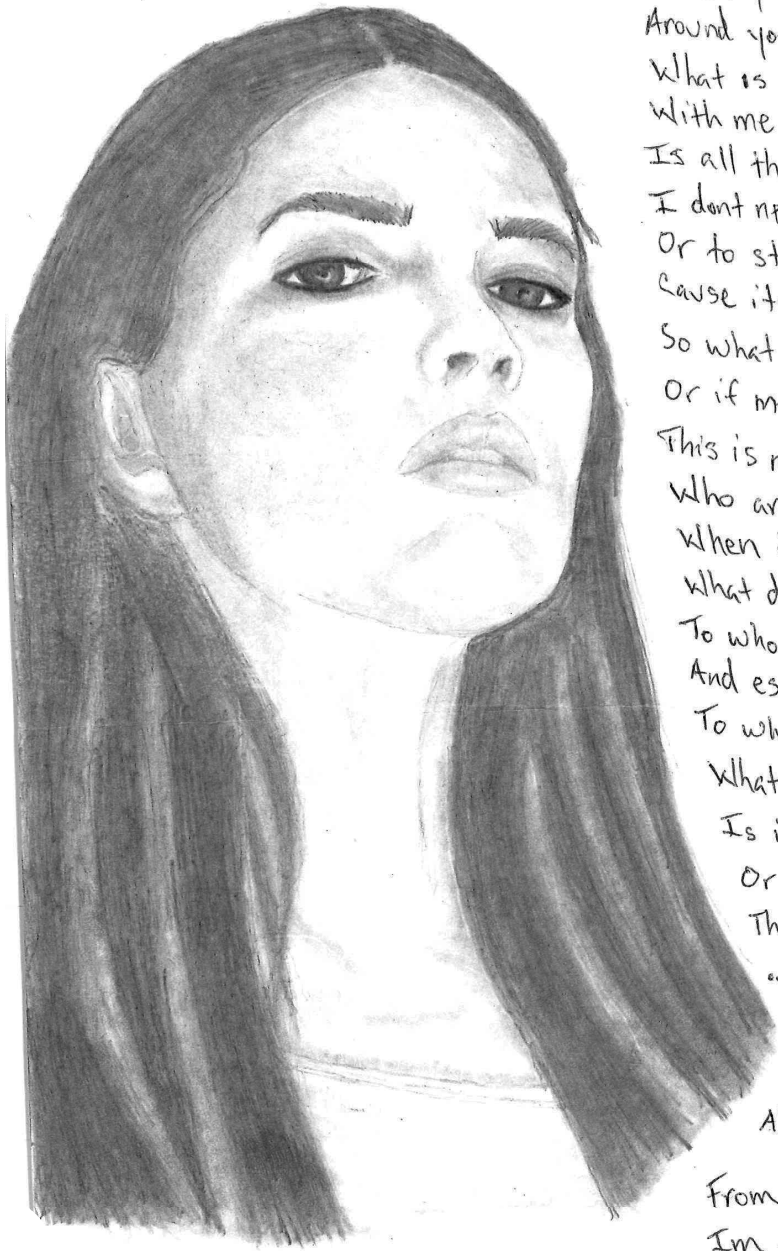
A 26 page document created by Trans Care British Columbia containing basic and up to date information about masculinizing hormones and surgeries including including chest surgery, hysterectomy, clitoral release, metoidioplasty, and phalloplasty.

Faggpunk 12

A collection of sexual experiences of a gay boy that digs boots, bondage, and mohawks (words and non-explicit pictures).

Getting a Gender Dysphoria Diagnosis

A Prisoner Correspondence Project resource outlining the information your doctor is using to determine whether you have Gender Dysphoria. This booklet contains the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) chapter on Gender Dysphoria as well as some definitions, breakdowns and notes.



This dungeon you put me under
Could make me wonder
If I'm man, trans, or woman
But your rose wont take me under
cause my resolve doesnt revolve
Around your conundrum...
What is it that you cant percieve
With me being what I'm supposed to be
Is all that you will ever see?
I dont need make-up
Or to stand up and pee
Cause its obvious you'll still label me...
So what if I kiss girls...
Or if my girl was born a boy?
This is my life to live and enjoy
Who are you to envision the paths I take
When its me you didnt create?...
What did I do except be true
To who I am
And eschew your views
To what I'm supposed to be?
What fuels your ruse?...
Is it the rouge...
Or that I'm painted and dusted
That has you straining to discuss me?
... Your hate is disgusting
And means nothing
Because I'm strutting
Above the banal discussions...
From my crown to my feet
I'm fucking beat
And your glance is on repeat
The world is my runway
And its plain to see
Your facetious labels dont pertain to me...

-Mike 21 Oct 2017
AKA Mike



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