

The Creative Issue

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CULTIVATE

THE FEMINIST JOURNAL OF THE CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

ISSUE 5: SEPTEMBER 2023

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September 19, 2023 at 14:53 PM

## Editors Letter

After a year of unfixity in *Cultivate's* team, with changing Editor-in-Chiefs, life has begun to imitate art, as we've leant into the uncertainties and unknowns of creative work/non-traditional outputs. We've also been thrust into a new feminist praxis by sharing the role of Editor-in-Chief amongst three.... think *Mean Girls* when Cady breaks up the prom queen crown into pieces.

With this year's issue we decided to put our peer reviewed article process on hold to spotlight creative works. This year's issue of *Cultivate*, **The Creative Issue**, is not only titled literally but reflects the difficulties of peer reviewing/editing arts based research and creative pieces within traditional academic outputs. Creative research approaches and outcomes have generally been underrepresented within academic contexts. However, there has been a noted shift in efforts to recognise the influence of creative methods on theory and practice, as well as a growing number of academics utilising more experimental and creative approaches.

**"People are able to make statements with images that cannot be fully made with words or quantified with numbers" (Bell 2013, 144pp)**

As we have stated in *Cultivate's* new mission statement, where we grappled with how to bring 'traditional' academia together with creative practices, this issue of the journal champions feminist voices and aims to build and share knowledge. *Cultivate forges dialogues between the academic, the activist, the creative, the verbal and the visual.*

Working at the intersection of art and academia is not always a comfortable position, nevertheless *Cultivate seeks to disrupt our ways of thinking and theorizing through feminist resistance.*

"I AM REACHING FOR THE CREATION OF A GENERAL MOOD, FOR A STIRRING THAT AWAKENS; I AM TRYING TO SHAKE YOU SO YOU WAKE UP AND WAKE UP READY..... HERE IS MY METHOD: ABOVE ALL, FEELING!" (OLUFEMI, 2021. P8)

**Works cited:**

Andrews, Molly, Corinne editor of compilation *Squire*, and Maria editor of compilation *Tamboukou*. 2013. *Doing Narrative Research* / Edited by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, Maria Tamboukou. Second edition. Los Angeles, California ; London: SAGE.

Olufemi, Lola, 2021. *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*. London: Hajar Press C.I.C



September 19, 2023 at 14:53 PM

Creative outputs in this journal speak to a broad range of feminist themes including but not limited to:

- ART AS PROTEST.
- E m b o d i m e n t.
- Motherhood.
- Non-traditional **families**.
- *Sexuality*.
- The female g a z e.
- Desire.
- Bodies.
- Care.
- ~~Violence.~~

Outside of the academy, art making as a site of exploration and activism has long been a tool within feminism. Feminist art can act as a conduit for protest, solidarity and empowerment.

**“...women can reveal institutional and intellectual weaknesses in general, and, at the same time that they destroy false consciousness, take part in the creation of institutions in which clear thought—and true greatness—are challenges open to anyone, man or woman, courageous enough to take the necessary risk, the leap into the unknown.” (Nochlin, 1971)**

*“I used my camera as a third eye, almost as a separate part of me which was ever watchful: analytical and critical, yet remaining attached to the emotional and frightening experiences I was undergoing.” (Spence 1995, 130pp)*

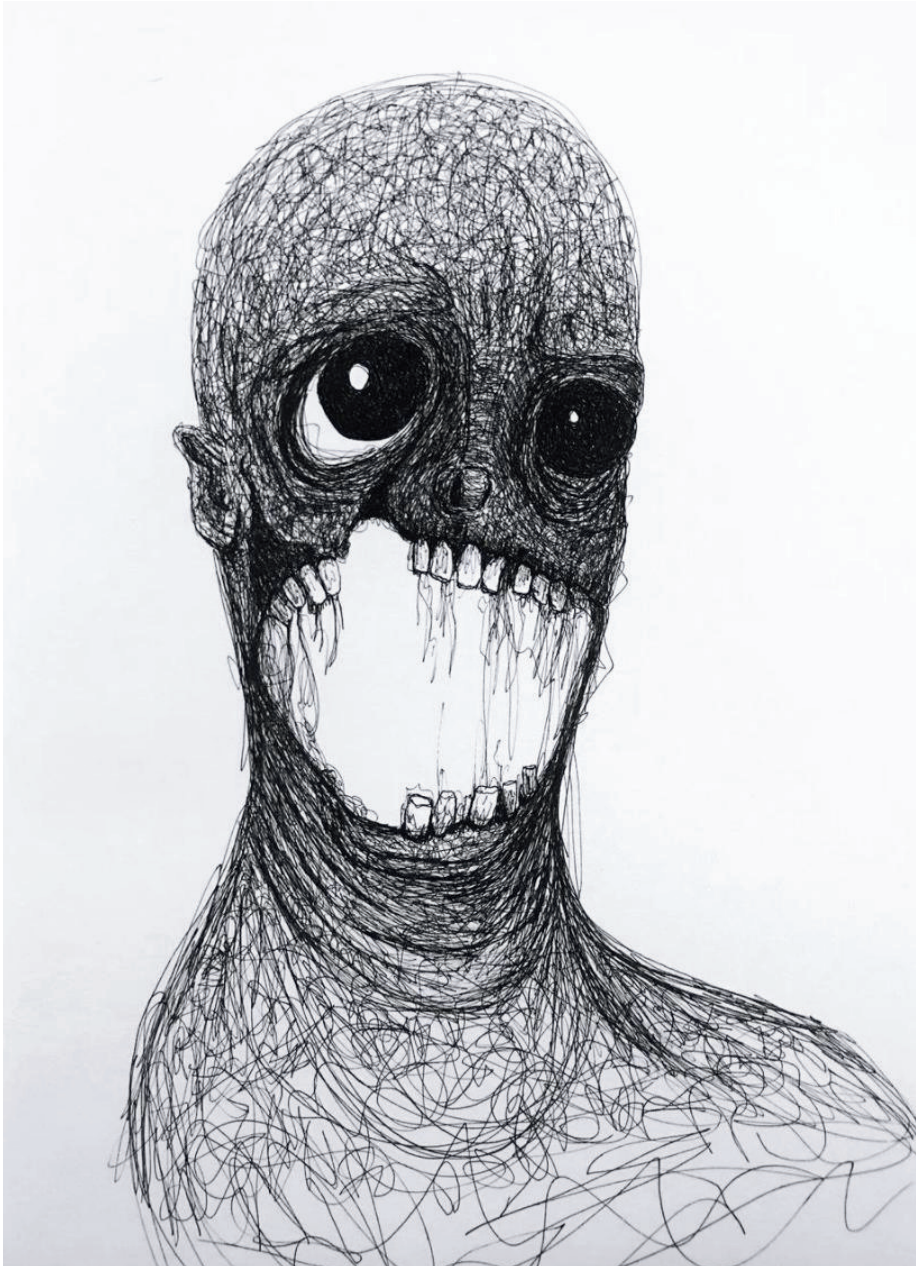
As with all feminist labours of love, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of our team and our advisory board, to whom we are incredibly thankful. We want to acknowledge the help of Maddy French in embedding feminist ethos into the inevitable administrative operations that go on behind the scenes of editing together a journal. Furthermore, this issue would not have been possible without the help and guidance of Dr Lauren Cowling and Dr Rachel Alsop.

**Lizzie Merrill, Daisy McManaman and Sanna Eriksson**  
*Co Editors-in-Chief*

**Works cited:**

Nochlin, Linda. 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' ARTnews, Jan. 1971, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/retro- spective/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists-4201/>. Spence, Jo. 1995. Cultural Sniping: The Art of Transgression / by Jo Spence ; Literary Editing by Jo Stanley, Picture Editing by David Hevey, Foreword by Annette Kuhn. Comedia. London ; New York: Routledge.





Pamela has just enjoyed watching a Cash in the Attic omnibus. She yearns to be as orange as David Dickenson.

# Pamela (Above)

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Alice Wilson

## Statement

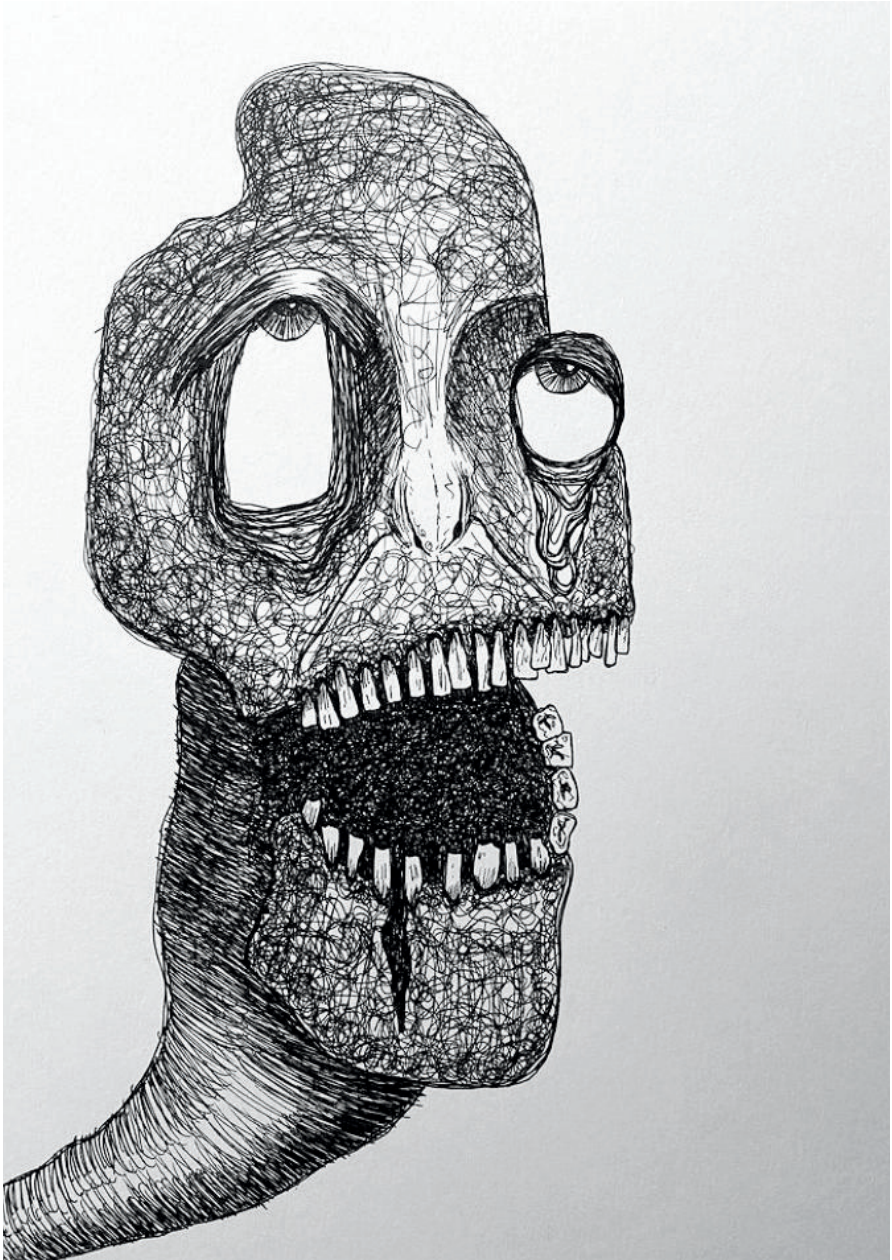
My work looks at 'ugliness' and how it is elided with scariness. I am interested in how beauty is weaponized against women to trap and distract us. I draw ugly scary monsters and then write sweet little humanising vignettes to accompany them. Through inviting a reconsideration of the attributes we subconsciously assign to the ugly, I hope to bring a sense of warmth and connection to ugliness in ourselves and each other. My aim is that this can slightly loosen the choke-hold of the cult of beauty.

## Bio

Alice Wilson is a PhD researcher at the University of York writing about women who build their own tiny houses as a way to resist capitalism and patriarchy. Her work has appeared in Ruminant Magazine, the Apple Valley Review, ZinDaily, and Livina Press. Her flash fiction features in the Sonder Press Best Small Fiction 2022 anthology. Her journalism has been published in The Guardian, The Independent, QueerAF, and Diva amongst others

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(Below) Janet



Janet has just evolved her Leafeon to level 100. The pride is overwhelming.





# A Fantasy in Pink (Above)

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Daisy McManaman

## Statement

My practice centers on representations of hyper-femininity and feminine sexualities. Shifting between fiber-based works and self-portraiture, I craft heightened versions of high-femme ideals to explore my own sexuality and identity as well as to disrupt and reclaim archetypes of the sexualised feminine.

In *A Girl Resembles a Bunny* I wanted to honour the countless women of Playboy, whose aesthetic labour and masterful performances of feminine sexualities are a constant source of inspiration for me. Created in 1960 as a costume for female workers in the Playboy clubs, the Playboy bunny costume has become emblematic of high-feminine sexuality, and seen replicated in numerous halloween and fancy dress costumes. I've had a long-held fascination with the bunny suit, I love how tall it makes me feel and the discipline that goes in to wearing the tightly corseted garment. By rhinestoning a Playboy bunny suit with over 10,000 crystals I wanted to transform it into a spectacle.

Intrinsically connected to notions of femininity for better, or for worse, the colour pink is something I find personal joy and euphoria in. In *A Fantasy in Pink*, I saturate myself and my environment in pink as an act of celebration.

## Bio

Daisy McManaman (she/her) is an artist and researcher based in Glasgow, Scotland. She is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York. Her PhD research re-analyses representations of women in Playboy, seeking to shift the lens from Hugh Hefner, and onto the women who consumed, produced and featured in Playboy content. Daisy also holds an MFA in Fiber and Material Studies from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BA (hons) in Fine Art Photography from the Glasgow School of Art.

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(Below) *A Girl Resembles a Bunny*



# Fur babies , speculative endings and the (post)human vet

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*Vanessa Ashall*

‘Make kin not babies’ says Haraway, ‘Have babies not pets’ says The Pope  
What is a human vet, like me, to think?  
Fur babies are the bread and butter of a human vet.

Their reproductive organs slither out of our incisions,  
Lest furry babies should have babies of their own.  
Our needles still their (furry) beating hearts, whilst (non-furry) human  
hearts are breaking.

These furry babies never do grow up, you see.  
What is a vet to think, then, of the technoscientific future?  
Of non-furry, fur babies? Genetically designed to be even more like actual  
non-furry babies.

What is a human vet to do with a genetically designed non-furry, fur baby?  
Would their slithering reproductive organs and ageing hearts (still) (not)  
have fur?  
Perhaps it is the beginning of the end, of being a (human) vet?

What is a (human) vet to do, when there is no fur left at all to clip away?  
And the needle slides too smoothly under the soft skin of this forever  
baby, at the end.  
Perhaps it is the end of beginning to be a (post)human vet.

I have some questions please.  
Will posthuman vets still need needles, when they no longer need clip-  
pers?  
Will non-furry fur babies need furry or non-furry endings?

We have a lot to talk about then, Me, Haraway and The Pope.  
For future non-furry fur babies, whose aged hearts must still stop beating,  
Is it only the end of being furry, or being not furry?

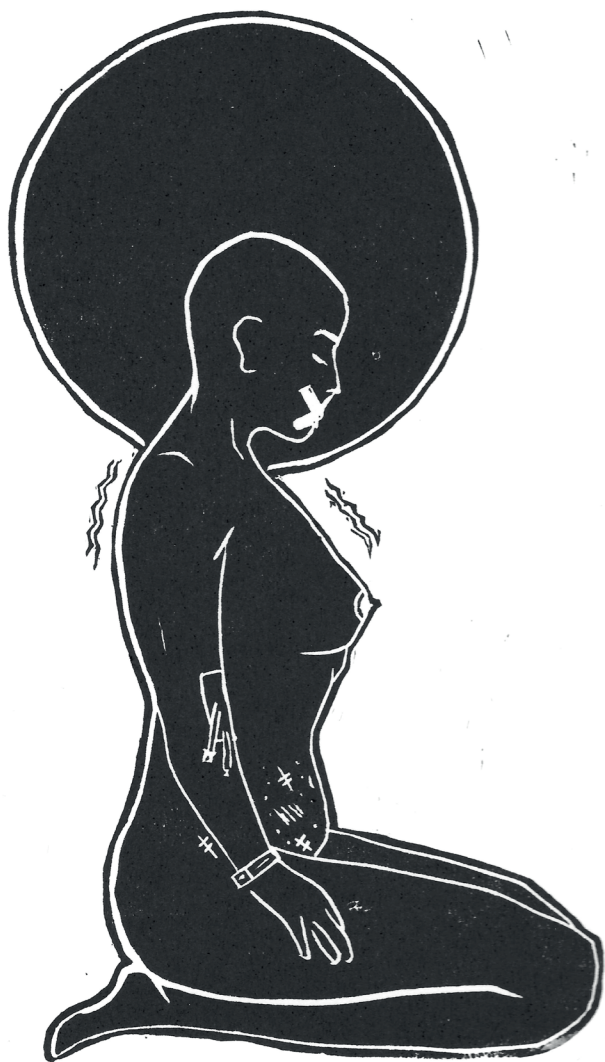
Or perhaps, it is not just about the fur then, in the end?

### *Statement*

This poem reflects on my experiences working as a veterinary surgeon and the increasing ‘humanisation’ of pet animals, specifically exploring the neutering and euthanasia of pets who are identified as non-human family members. I place my professional experiences in the context of posthuman feminist theorist Donna Haraway’s advocacy for kinship relationships between species and the apparently opposing religious calls to prioritise human family relationships over those with non-human animals. I use this tension to examine techno-scientific advances in the humanisation of pet animals, and to contemplate potential consequences for the ethical role of the vet. This creative work brings together thoughts on veterinary medicine, feminist and posthuman theory and STS through a playful speculation on genetic engineering, hairless pets and accepted veterinary practices.

### *Bio*

I am an interdisciplinary health researcher and qualified veterinary surgeon. I am a European Veterinary Specialist in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law, with 15 years of clinical experience working as a veterinary surgeon in the clinic and in the laboratory. I am interested in the meaning and significance of human-animal relationships in the context of health and medicine. As co-director of the Science and Technology Studies Unit (SATSU) I am developing a keen interest in the value of posthuman and feminist thinking for advancing understanding of relationships between humans and animals, including in the veterinary clinic. My current research project, funded by the Wellcome Trust, uses the sociological concept of interspecies entanglement to explore end of life care from an innovative interspecies and interdisciplinary perspective.



# IVF (*Above*)

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Madelaine French

## *Statement*

The lived embodied experience is at the centre of my research. In much of the existing research on Endometriosis, infertility, and involuntary childlessness the body is missing. Treatment for these conditions is enacted upon the body, it can be a visceral, violent, and vulnerable experience yet the body remains curiously absent in research on these topics. Before asking my participants to explore their own embodied experiences through interviews and creative methods, I am exploring my own using artwork and other creative tools. My lino print and poem are expressions of just one section of my experience, IVF.

## *Lino Print*

This is my body map of IVF treatment. It is a representation of where IVF took place in my body and how it made different parts of my body feel. I wanted to step away from the medicalised body maps I'd been asked to complete in consultation rooms and make something that felt like my own.

## *Poem*

Those experiencing infertility are frequently exposed to unsolicited advice, that, far from helping, can imply blame. This poem expresses my own frustration at the advice I received and the 'never give up' narrative.

## *Bio*

I am a PhD researcher in the Department of Sociology at York. My PhD explores the intersecting embodied experiences of involuntarily childless women with Endometriosis as socially constructed expectations of womanhood are negotiated and (re)imagined. Reproductive rights are a central theme in feminist research, yet infertility and involuntary childlessness remains a taboo subject. My research aims to draw attention to these absent embodied stories.

I am also an involuntarily childless woman with Endometriosis.

# They Say

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*Madelaine French*

They say,  
You should *just* relax.  
Try yoga.  
Try acupuncture.  
Try this diet, or that one.  
Try a holiday.  
Try not thinking about it.

We hear that the fault is our own.  
We hear blame.  
We hear that you know better.

We tried the yoga, the acupuncture, the diet, the holiday.  
We tried the blood tests, the scans, the internal examinations.  
We tried the surgery, the injections, the hormones, the transfers.

They say,  
My sisters, hairdressers, best friends' cousin never gave up and they now have twins.

We say, we are the experts of our own bodies.





# Portrait Placard - Brave New World series (Above)

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Catherine Cartwright

## *Statement*

This is a self-portrait - I am holding a portrait placard I made (screenprinting onto layers of glued Japanese paper), and standing on the route of Exeter's Reclaim the Night March. Every year, women (and men) gather to walk noisily through the streets of Exeter, mirroring similar marches in cities over the UK, to draw attention to the pervasive violence against women and girls. This march, and the right to protest in general, is under threat. When I made this in 2019, it was (and continues to be) threatened by the use of facial recognition surveillance, covertly capturing and recording biometric data for ongoing monitoring. The portrait placard is slightly translucent and the face is partially hidden - with this work I am reflecting on the tension between being visible (which is the point of protest), with the fear of being targeted through that visibility.

Credits: Photography: Rob Darc

## *Bio*

Catherine is currently a doctoral student at the University of Exeter (AHRC funded) researching trauma informed community arts practice with a focus on working with women affected by gender based violence. Her research partner is Devon Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Services where she also works as a volunteer, running art workshops and on the Helpline. Catherine graduated from University of the West of England with a distinction in Multidisciplinary Printmaking (2018). Awarded commissions include the National Memorial Arboretum (2018), University of Exeter (2019), Hospital Rooms (2022).

# Multiple Choice

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Kate Keeble

That night before you left the house, did you choose to wear..

- A) a simple black mini skirt, with your slender legs out,
- B) your favourite, slightly unbuttoned blouse,
- C) your hair down and tousled, or
- D) your signature scent - careful not to douse?

That night as you arrived at the bar, did you;

- A) receive a text message from your impatient friend asking where you are,
- B) order a cosmo for your friend and for you a side-car,
- C) flirt outrageously with the ridiculously hot bar staff, until they
- D) gave you a free round of tequila.

That same night as he approached you first, did he;

- A) drink you all in, like he had an unquenchable thirst,
- B) lean into your ear to whisper, whilst
- C) spilling his Rioja, permanently staining your favourite shirt, or
- D) squeeze your wrist a little too tight, until it actually hurt.

That night as you left the venue, did he;

- A) offer to put his leather jacket around you,
- B) offer to share a taxi too,
- C) invite himself into yours for a brew, or
- D) make himself at home, removing his shoes.

That night in your home when you willed him to leave, did you;

- A) freeze, when he
- B) forced you to your knees, did he
- C) call you a prick tease, when you
- D) whispered “no, please.”

That next day, did you;

- A) receive a text message from your friend, asking if you made it home okay, as
- B) the room began to blur and sway, did you
- C) close your eyes and wish it would all go away, because
- D) you must have asked for it anyway.

# Multiple Choice (Above)

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*Kate Keeble*

*Statement*

1 in 4 women have been raped or sexually assaulted as an adult.  
The highest ever number of rapes reported to police within a 12 month period was recorded in 2022: 70,633.  
In that same time period, charges were brought in just 2,616 rape cases.  
5 in 6 women who are raped don't report.  
798,000 women are raped or sexually assaulted every year.  
6.5 million women in England and Wales have been raped or sexually assaulted since the age of 16.

Rape Crisis England & Wales ([rapecrisis.org.uk](http://rapecrisis.org.uk), 2023).

*Bio*

Kate is an inquisitive and assertive feminist. She is currently studying a double MA at the Centre for Women's Studies (University of York) via the GEMMA programme. Kate has accomplished a postgraduate diploma in creative writing. She enjoys prose poetry with a cuppa and a chocolate viennese biscuit (or 4). Her educational journey is walking an autoethnographic pathway to exploring women's agency in a patriarchal society.



# Femiknits – Sweet Tarts (Above)

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Claire F. Richey

## Statement

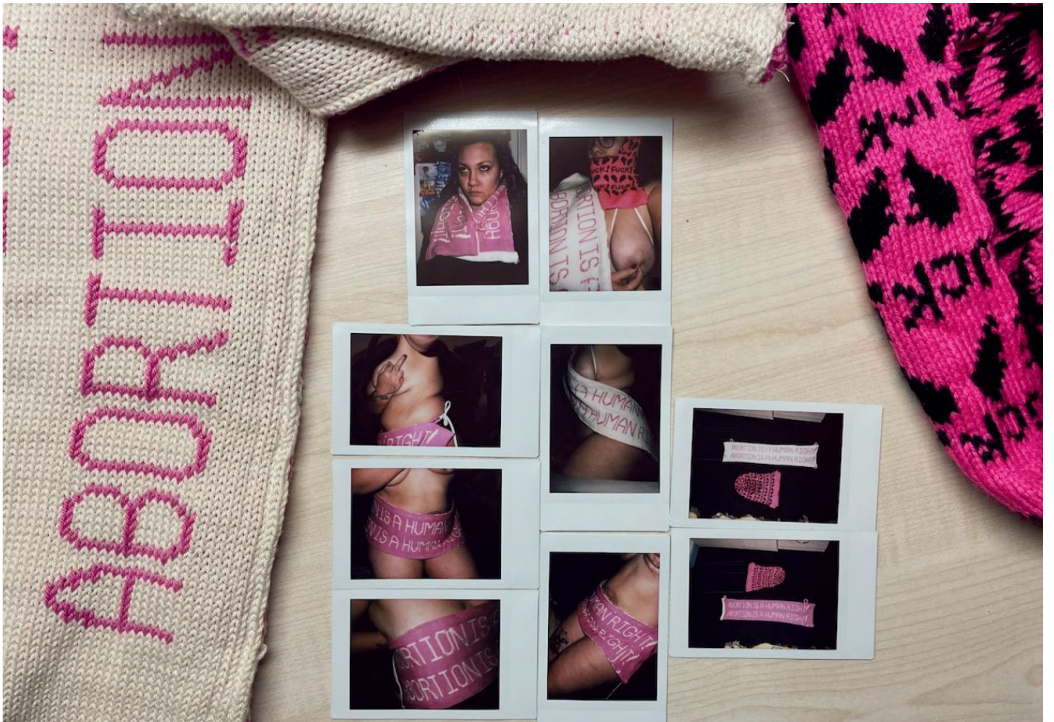
Femiknits Sweet Tarts is an on-going series of handmade knitted textiles with punchy statements advocating for abortion as a human right, LGBTQIA+ rights, and transgender rights. The goal of these textiles is to destigmatize the charged word; and to make abortion fashionable through aesthetic alternatives to the gory anti-abortion posters that currently monopolize the visuals of 'abortion.' These polaroids feature the artist wrapping their body within the Abortion is a Human Right! cowl scarf with a scowl on their face—pictures taken post Roe v. Wade. The Fuck! Balaclava was a scream of frustration with the current clusterfuck of human rights in the United States in 2023 physically processed into a hyper-pop punk statement. The artist—a human—is wrapped and obscured with the partial framing of the polaroids—akin to abortion's new fugitive status in Texas with the criminalization of those who help provide abortion pills, procedures, transportation, or need the procedure to avoid imminent death and decline. Abortion is necessary. Abortion is not women-exclusive. Abortion is queer. Abortion is not a dirty word. Abortion is suicide prevention. Abortion is health care. Abortion is... Abortion is...painfully being pinched away and restricting sexuality and safety across the country.

## Bio

Claire F. Richey (she/they) is an artist, craftivist, and Elle Woodsian academic feminist pursuing their international Gender Studies MA at the University of York and Utrecht University. Claire's thesis is on the methodology of creating handmade textiles as a Queer and feminist communication strategy. Claire won a BFA in Sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design with a minor in Global Studies, and is using their Masters' thesis to combine art, activism, and academic theory into femiknitsm. [Outside of the ivory tower, - enjoys sunshine, boba tea, and petting black cats that cross their path at Midnight under an Eclipse moon.]

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(Below) Femiknits – Sweet Tarts



# thank you!

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*Doğa Rojda Koldaş*

I'm so glad that  
I am not 'normal'  
feeling grateful to everyone  
that made me abnormal, crazy, weird  
woman, kurdish, zaza, alevi  
other, different, strange, tomboy  
feminist, lesbian, bisexual, whore  
dirty, depraved, immoral...  
that helped me not to be happy  
not to be contented with this world  
not to accept its rules  
its normalities  
to question and criticize its truths  
to search and find myself again  
to create new possibilities for life  
to realize that I am not alone  
that helped me love and embrace myself  
accept my madness  
understand and love it  
show my madness to the world  
to turn marginalization into empowerment  
to be proud of myself  
to become more powerful  
to become a light for 'others'  
other others  
like me  
and that's how  
I will never stop  
dancing like crazy  
believing like a dreamer  
enjoying like a child  
because in this world  
I would never choose to be  
on their side  
to be 'normal'  
like them  
so everyday  
I appreciate this life  
for allowing me to be a freak  
instead of being one of them.



### *Statement*

This poem grew from me, as a result of years of marginalization, pain, and anger. It speaks to the intersectional violence I am (we are) exposed to and how much it hurt me (us). All these labels used to humiliate my existence. I was looking for acceptance and normalization of my life so I can enjoy living it. But, something was wrong because I knew the happiness that society promised to us was a delusion and I did not want to close my eyes to hetero-patriarchal, capitalist, colonialist violence, and injustices happening in every part of the world. So I decided I do not want to be happy but instead, I want to fight against this and that is what made me feel really good.

### *Bio*

I was born in Turkey in an ethnic minority group from the eastern part called Zaza and I identify as a bisexual+ woman. I am a queer feminist activist and currently, I am completing my master's degree in women's and gender studies in Spain at the University of Oviedo. I believe in the healing and empowering power of creative arts, and that we can heal our wounds together, which is why I have been doing theater, drawing, and writing.



# My Feminist Empowerment (Above)

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Hayley Yocum

## *Statement*

Competing to model on the cover of a tattoo magazine was a decision I knew would confuse—and enrage—some of my fellow feminist community members. I am an outspoken gender-based violence survivor advocate and research-activist; work that is often framed within certain veins of feminism as oppositional to sexualizing oneself in any way. Posing naked, posting a selfie, dressing “immodestly”—or “incorrectly” modest when it comes to Orthodox Jewish women wearing wigs or Muslim women donning hijabs—is essentialized by such feminists as result of misogynistic brainwashing. Women such as Laverne Cox and Emily Ratajkowski are stripped of their agency when their nuanced discussions of their work are ignored to condescendingly assert that they have fallen prey to the male gaze. We are objectified as pawns that have fallen to a patriarchal agenda to commodify women’s bodies. I respectfully—and firmly—reject such notions. My tattoos speak to the abuse I have survived, the lessons I have learned, and the joy that I have felt. Perhaps my feminist empowerment does not resonate with some, but this does not mean that my empowerment is false, nor a threat to the forms of feminist empowerment that do not resonate with me.

## *Bio*

Hayley Yocum (she/her) is a gender-based violence survivor advocate and feminist research-activist. She earned a B.A. in Sociology from Case Western Reserve University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Women, Violence and Conflict from the University of York. Hayley’s research-activism centers around disrupting all forms of gender-based violence—whether that be epistemological, interpersonal, or structural. She is the co-host of the intersectional feminist podcast Fumbling Towards Feminism and currently lives in Seattle, Washington with her cat, Marsha P Johnson.

# The precarity of queer living

---

Hello and Goodbye

Arunima Theraja

I exist but I also don't

I try to live my life but I also don't

I filter my words

I change my political beliefs

And the pronouns of my lover

Depending on where I am and who I am with

I pull personalities out of my hat for survival

I am a chameleon

I am all  
Or none

Depending on who you are

How do you live your life when you have to spend most of it convincing yourself and the people you love that it's going to be okay?

Coming out caused me to let out a wail. Mostly because I knew life was going to be difficult and different. The joy of discovering who I am came at the cost of accepting the realities of my marginal existence. The wailing grief of the margin outweighed my joy for many years.

Sometimes it is futile to fill your losses with frivolous distractions. An open decluttered landscape of grief allowed me to breathe, roam around freely and understand my queer being. That space is still mine to reclaim whenever and however I want to. I always like to see what I have and can't have.

*The precarity of queer co-dependency and heartbreaks.* The first time you become futile for someone, it hardly registers itself as an actual moment. You swallow it hoping that it's a mistake. And maybe the next time you cry loud enough you will be heard and understood.

But that doesn't happen. It takes you a full six months to realize that you have become a burden. You keep crying in your room hoping your sobs would bring them in but instead it drives them away.

You keep talking and explaining, hoping your voice would soothe them but it irritates them instead.

You are told it's time for you to go. First a bit politely, then a bit forcefully. Back and forth, back and forth until one day you are kicked out on the curb left to find your way home.

And you do. You try to settle into your new home. First a bit politely and then a bit forcefully. What if they come back and see you reeking of homelessness? You cope silently unsure of how much to reveal and to whom. Queer heartbreak is as invisible as queer love.

You have a few headaches. You realize that they were just left over tears going upwards. You yank them down and shed them. You have a few nightmares. You realize that anger still has not left you. You yank it out and yell some more hoping that the next time you hold your glasses in your hand you won't be reminded of the person who broke them.

How many objects, feelings and body parts did you ruin for them? And how many did they ruin for you?

Is that pain equal? NO ITS NOT. They scream this at you.

A few months after you move into your new empty house they gift you a mirror.

Look. They make you stand in front of it.

Look. We both are ugly and not accepted by society, they tell you.

But please accept that you are uglier so that I can move back in with you

They tell you.

*The precarity of queer homes.* I am trying to find a home. Childhood homes shield you from the world for a bit they aren't always safe. Sometimes home is a place where you must constantly earn and justify your presence. You can leave the house you grew up in but that house never leaves you. Home sometimes is a process of making inhabitable spaces habitable again. Sometimes as a queer immigrant. Sometimes a prodigal queer child.

For now, this is home. In transition. Confused. Bleak. Afraid. A longing for belonging, locked up inside but occasionally spilling out. Afraid of being stomped on.

I always tell people I meet that I will keep your home clean; I will keep your home safe but don't invite me to your house if your carpets can't handle a spill. I have a lot to spill.

Healing is a funny process. It always resembles the time you were almost burnt alive at the stake. Except without the fire and the tragic fanfare.

Healing is disgustingly silent. Healing is gloriously unrewarded. Healing is violently solitary.

And it goes on and on and on and on and on, sometimes so quietly that you wonder...whether it even goes on at all?

*Purpose of queer precarity.* Being tossed around so much has ensured one thing at least. I won't settle anywhere easily. And hopefully, I won't settle for anything less.

#### *Statement*

The Precarity of Queer Living is a free-verse piece that describes my experiences of living as an Indian queer woman. 'Living' encompasses my embodied reflections and feelings associated with my coming out, finding abusive love and heartbreak, moving homes and countries as a queer academic mostly without a larger support system. Judith Butler describes precarity as a politically induced condition where bodies are "exposed to injury, violence and death" (2005: 25). Queer lives are prone to precarity due to their marginalisation from cis-heteronormative institutions. An analysis of queer precarity cannot be done without a fore-grounding of privileges and the understandings of the intersections of caste, caste and several other positionalities with queerness (Hollibaugh and Wiess, 2015: 18).

Queer individuals often have to seek and create their own systems of support, kinship and well-being. In my piece, I express my unpredictable and insecure mental anguish where I constantly measure how much - 'to be or not to be' queer depending on the impending threats in my current environment. The piece ends with me realising that my embodied shame, internalised homophobia due to my queer precarity is a never ending and continuous process. It involves me processing my grief while constantly making and re-making meaning in order to create a possibility of acceptance, love and healing.

#### *Bio*

Arunima Theraja has recently submitted her PhD at the Centre of Women's Studies, University of York. Her work focus on queer desire between Indian womxn as expressed in modern Indian life writing. Apart from her work, Arunima enjoys baking, history walks and copious amounts of wine.

#### *References*

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# Her I (Above)

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Quinn Chen

*Statement*

Her I: a photo of my friend's back, in monochrome. She is an exchange student, shaved her hair during her time here at York for several reasons and things she encountered. I think she is a very brave and cool person.

Her II: two women, friends, one is hugging the other from behind. They are the first two models for my photobook 'intimité'. My friend described this one as a beautiful expression of the "female gaze". The beauty of the atmosphere, body curves, intimacy. The way the light brightens the neck.

*Bio*

Quinn (she/they). Photographer. Lesbian. Keen on contributing works for women and queer community.

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(Below) Her II





# To Love A Man

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Rhuan Barcellos

I love a man who has no face  
It's how I make our love perpetual  
Opaque, his image is ever-changing  
Others may say that we look alike

I call him Guillermo  
Sometimes he calls me *mine*  
We are made of the same material:  
Ink, words and pride  
He's my Borgian labyrinth  
Where possibility never let us die  
I'm his Woolf's winter metaphor  
Nature cannot speak without its "I"s

Omission never haunts our love  
Whenever his lips are sealed  
- by the temperament of my own world -  
I adorn my thoughts with Portuguese sentences  
And his voice echoes in return  
"For thou, for us, for life. Promise I will not hurt these rhymes."  
In love, I always reply: "No, you won't."  
*Jamais!*

\*

To love a faceless man is  
To love a borderless love  
It wears no disguise  
And it frees your mind  
To deceive itself -  
What is love if not deceiving?  
What is deceiving if not love?

We dance in the bright gazebo  
Dark, deep and brown are his eyes  
We kiss on the hidden meadow  
Dearest lovable shadow of mine

In the end he mourns my name  
Creator of his mother tongue  
Near the sun it sounds like Icarus  
Near the floor it becomes a riddle  
Hundreds of words are me  
In the absence of the real one  
A faceless name to define a man  
A man to define *none*

*Statement*

“To Love A Man” is a poem about nostalgia for a queer past that never existed. The muse is an imaginary character who portrays the narrator’s desire to escape from the present and find true companionship. Writing and loving merge in the text: they become a path to happiness, change, and freedom.

*Bio*

Rhuan Barcellos is a MA student at the Centre for Women’s Studies (University of York). Writing is his highest love and his favorite way of expressing himself.

NEW FOUND  
STRENGTH  
IN PURPOSE



# La Destina (Above)

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Ezgi Güzey

## *Statement*

Crayons and pen on paper. This piece is inspired by *Women Who Run with the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés. More specifically by the following quote: “For many women the transformation from feeling oneself swept away or enslaved by every idea or person who raps at her door to being a woman shining with *La Destina*, possessed of a deep sense of her own destiny, is a miraculous one. With eyes on straight, palms outward, with the hearing of the instinctual self intact, the woman goes into life in this new and powerful manner.”

## *Bio*

Ezgi Güzey is an Istanbul based artist, designer and architect who took up expressing herself through art from the ripe age of 1. She’s inconsistent with words, and finds it difficult to exist in the physical sphere as a true representation of her sexually fluid and “a bit airy” identity so she draws up ideas from the ether and makes them tangible, in the form of paintings, to communicate her inner world, in the hopes that someone might listen.

### *Statement*

With this piece of creative writing, I aim to bring a feminist twist to the tale of Pygmalion and Galatea from classical mythology. When the sculptor Pygmalion falls in love with one of his creations he calls Galatea, the goddess Venus brings the sculpture to life so that they can be together. In the original myth, Galatea marries Pygmalion. However, my story poses the question: what if Galatea desired a different future for herself? I wanted to explore the idea of the artist and the muse, the stereotype being that the ideal female muse must be beautiful but passive, bound to the male artist, a reclusive genius. In the myth, Galatea, the muse, has no agency over her own life; it is Pygmalion, the artist, who gets to define her appearance, aided by Venus, who casts her in the role of the artist's wife. In my story, I wanted to give Galatea a life apart from Pygmalion, where she is able to decide what she wants for herself.

### *Bio*

Lili Szomor is a postgraduate student studying History of Art at the University of York. Originally from Budapest, Hungary, she grew up in Spain before moving to Scotland for her undergraduate degree at the University of St Andrews. She writes fiction, mostly short stories, with hopes of publishing a novel in the near future.

# Galatea

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Lili Szomor

She drew her first breath in his dusty studio, surrounded by clay and stone. Wide-eyed, she took in his tools strewn about the workbench, the other unfinished sculptures. Then she turned towards the open window, towards birdsong and sunshine. *I need to see more*, she thought. *I need to see everything*.

But the artist kept her inside, kept her close.

He tried to impress her by carving stone and marble, wielding his chisel and hammer as he talked about art and creation as if they were concepts out of her reach. He called her his muse, his masterpiece. It did not occur to him that she found his work boring and mediocre.

“You must be hungry,” he said to her after several hours had passed.

The thought of tasting food for the first time made her mouth water. She pressed a hand against her empty belly, feeling her own unfamiliar warmth through the silk dress.

“Why don’t we go for a walk first?” she suggested instead, feigning innocence.

Her legs were still weak, and the artist grasped her by the arm to steady her. She flinched – at the coldness of his skin, at how easily he touched her. At his rough hands, which had already felt every part of her. But he did not notice, and his fingers left deep red imprints on her ivory skin.

When her bare feet touched the freshly cut grass for the first time, tears sprung to her eyes. The bright sun tickled her teasingly, sending goosebumps down her arm. The artist watched her intently, like he always did, his mouth slightly open. She snatched a nectarine from a nearby branch. As she took a bite, its juice burst and ran down her chin and wrist. She caught the artist turning away, wincing at her clumsiness. He probably never imagined he would find her repulsive. She devoured the rest of the fruit with relish, slurping loudly.

The pit she squeezed in her palm, unsure what to do with it. Throw it away? Bury it in hopes of watching it grow? She wondered what her own hands could do, create and destroy, heal and bruise, explore and –

“You must be tired,” he interrupted, no longer able to hide his impatience. “Let’s head back inside.”

“Why don’t we wait till sunset?” she asked sweetly.

“I really don’t –”

“Just a few more minutes.”

He hesitated. “Fine. A few more minutes, then.”

Without waiting for permission, she crossed the garden, headed out the gate and towards town, the artist struggling to keep up with her. Each step she took was more surefooted than the one before. She caught herself leaning forward, itching to see more, striding ahead faster and faster, the world at her fingertips, feeling like a bird about to take off.

He managed to catch up to her just as they reached the town square. “We really must head back.”

She imagined the artist before she had come into his life, before Venus had made her flesh and blood: his self-imposed imprisonment in his studio, all those lonely days and nights he spent working away obsessively.

He had loved her, even before she drew her first breath. He had even placed a golden ring on her rigid finger. She could spend her life – this gift, this miracle – as his wife, as his muse.

“You go ahead,” she told him, smiling. “I’m right behind.”

That afternoon was the last time she saw the artist. She still thinks of him sometimes, wondering if he has found a new muse. She feels no guilt about lying to him or leaving him.

She is her own muse now.



# Heirlooms (Below)

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## Chamindhi Abeywarna

*Statement*

### **Heirlooms As Resistance**

My grandmother was the most perfect person. Soft spoken, gentle. I am yet to meet a lay person with the same knowledge of native herbs; an oasis that nurtured everything around her, plants, animals, people. When she passed, she left me a small collection of very precious jewellery, heirlooms that were passed on by her mother to her. One of my most clear memories- sitting with her on her bed, and pinning her jewellery onto my tiny clothes. In the patriarchal South Asian cultures, jewellery that is passed from grandmothers and mothers to their daughters is an act of resistance. They offer some sense of financial security and independence to the girl child.

The grief of losing my grandmother was two-fold. One was being physically distant from her love and care as a child. The second, was when I was much older, and losing that perfect, divine-like image of her in retrospect. I grieved when I understood that she too was a victim to the patriarchal family structures that bound her into what she was- a care-giver. I cannot but think of what she could have achieved if she were afforded the same opportunities as was given to me. Although I have never needed these heirlooms as security or financial freedom, they serve as a cord that connects me to a placenta of memories and strength I can draw from.

*Bio*

Chamindhi Abeywarna is a designer and illustrator with a fascination for visual storytelling. With a background in textiles that grew her love for colour and texture, she moved into illustration work and has published picture books with Room to Read in Sri Lanka and Pratham Books India. Curious about human-animal relationships and women in care work, she is reading for postgraduate studies in Gender and Women's studies. She finds peace in unrushed embroidery and shares her time and love with her three rescue dogs in a small home in the south of Sri Lanka.





# To Dolores

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## Loren I. Sandoval Arteaga

Esta es una historia de  
contradicciones,  
de imperfección,  
de comunidad,  
de movimiento,  
de dolor,  
de resistencia,  
de revolución,  
de amor,  
de madres e hijos.

Cuando tenía seis años,  
regresé de la escuela enojada  
porque un niño me escupió.  
Me dijiste, a la siguiente,  
dale una cachetada”.  
“Pero que tal si me pega  
más fuerte”, respondí.  
“No hay niño más fuerte  
que tú, mijita,” dijiste.  
Te creí.

Hay verdades de las que no has  
hablado  
pero he visto florecer en tu piel.  
Y en la mía.

Sin tener un mapa,  
nos llevaste de la mano  
por cielo, mar y tierra  
haciendo nuestro camino.

El día que descubrí  
que eras un ser humano,  
mi corazón lloró.

El día que descubrí  
que soy como tu,  
respiré un poco mejor.

This is a story of contradictions,  
of imperfection,  
of community,  
of movement,  
of pain,  
of resistance,  
of revolution,  
of love,  
of mothers and hijos.

When I was six years old,  
I came back home from school  
angry  
because a boy spat on me.  
You told me, “next time,  
slap him”.  
“But what if he hits  
me back harder,” I replied.  
“There is no boy stronger  
than you, *mijita*,” you said.  
I believed you.

There are unspoken truths  
that I have seen blooming on your  
skin.  
And in mine.

Without a map  
you took us by the hand  
through sky, sea, and land,  
making our own way.

The day I discovered  
you were a human being,  
my heart cried.

The day I discovered  
that I am like you,  
I breathed a little better.

Sé que siempre has querido  
una mesa de madera  
en la que quepamos todxs  
pero siempre has pensado  
que hay otras cosas  
más importantes.

Mi deseo es que la vida nos alcance  
para reconciliar nuestras  
contradicciones.  
Que el tiempo nos permita  
reconocer  
y sanar nuestros dolores.  
Que nuestros corazones se sientan  
acogidos  
a pesar de la distancia.  
Y que llegue el día en el que  
estemos  
en paz con nuestro movimiento  
imperfecto.

I know you've always wanted  
a wooden table  
where we can all fit.  
But you have always thought  
that there are other  
more important things.

My hope is that life is long  
enough  
to reconcile our contradictions.  
That time allows us to recognize  
and heal our *dolores*.  
That our hearts feel sheltered  
despite the distance.  
And that the day comes when  
we feel  
at peace with our imperfect  
movements.

# To Dolores (Above)

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## Loren I. Sandoval Arteaga

### *Statement*

Thinking back on my journey as a feminist, I recognize my mother as the first person to introduce me to feminism. Although as a young mother, she did not identify as a feminist, by reflecting on her childrearing and mothering practices it quickly becomes evident that many of the feminist values and practices that guide me today are the result of my relationship with my mother. In this way, I set out to explore several questions: How does my relationship with my mother influence my feminist activism, scholarly work, and resistance practices? How is that relationship affected by other female family members such as my maternal grandmother and my sisters? Is motherhood, which historically has been considered as experiences and roles reserved for the private sphere, relevant to feminist activism, resistance, and social transformation? Although these questions emerged from a personal interest in tracing back the origins and evolution of my feminist identity, the topic also concerns wider feminist scholarship. Particularly, I believe that critical and creative engagement with motherhood has the potential to open new channels for feminist knowledge, resistance, disruption, and revolution. To explore these questions, I implemented a methodological approach that combined autoethnography with art-based methods, particularly poetry.

### *Bio*

Loren I. Sandoval Arteaga (she/her) is currently pursuing an Erasmus Mundus Masters in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of York in the UK and the Central European University in Austria. She is currently doing research on the collective ideology and narratives of motherhood in northeastern Mexico and how mothers reproduce, resist, or divert in every day mothering practices.

# The Bear's Breeches (Below)

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Marit Niederhausen

## *Statement*

This is a simple print, honest. It's based on a photograph of myself, what I might call an anti-nude: purposefully unposed, unattractive. As a teenager, I felt like I was not allowed to be feminine, later I started searching for approval of my body through others. For this print, I forced myself to see my body honestly, all hair and bones. Not beautiful, not ugly, not necessarily feminine either, just there. It was not in the plan to include my crotch, and it is scary, but that is where the process lead me. This authenticity is juxtaposed with the acanthus flower, also called bear's breeches, which symbolizes artifice and the fine arts. In my studies, I have engaged much with feminist artists and the precarious position the female body holds in art. Making it a subject carries the legacy of its sexual objectification, of narcissism, essentialism, and the charge of objectifying yourself: This print is me asking if my body can ever speak just for itself, just material.

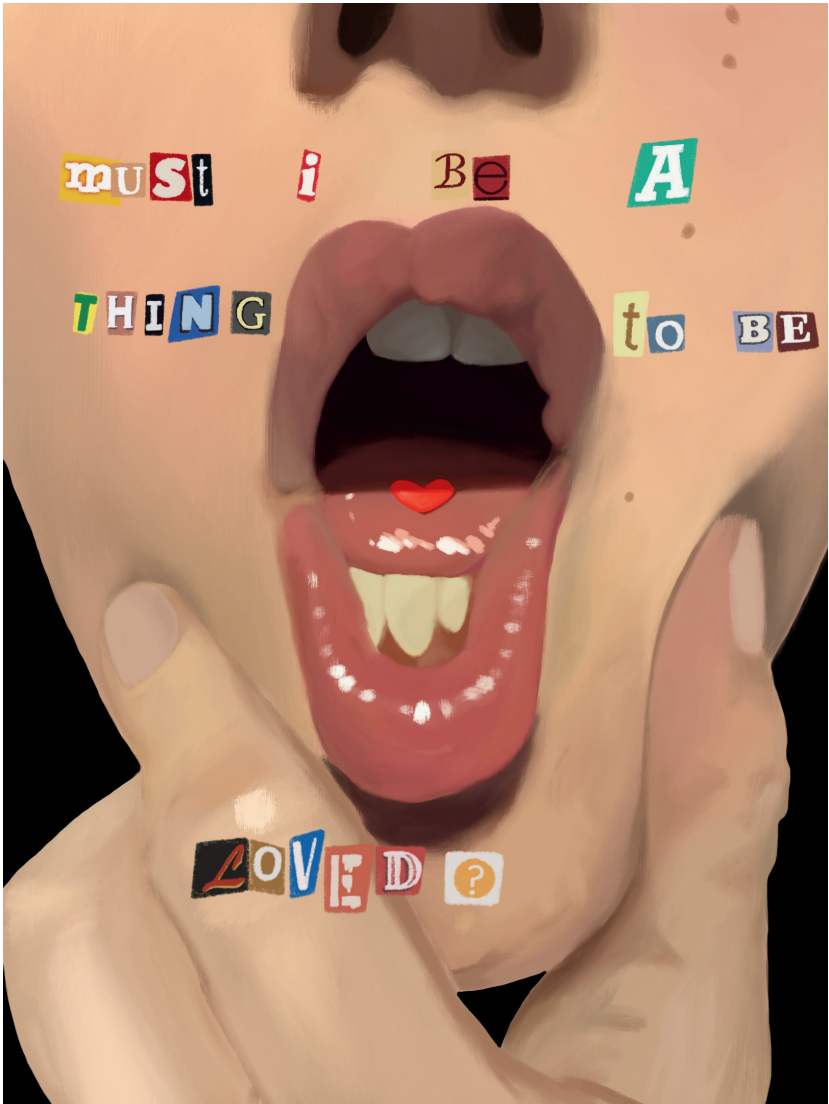
The lino-cutting process is very tactile, it feels like an extension of my body, pressed with my weight, it is haptic and visceral. This print isn't just depicting my body, it is made through it.

## *Bio*

My name is Marit Niederhausen and I am currently completing a BA in History of Art at the University of York. Being creative is my way of connecting to the world around me, printmaking is my newest medium, I have been working with it since January 2023. I also make zines and write short stories and poetry. Themes in my work change a lot, depending on what's on my mind. Working with the body as a subject comes from academic feminism and personal experience.







# Must I Be A Thing To Be Loved (Above)

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Emma Albach

## *Statement*

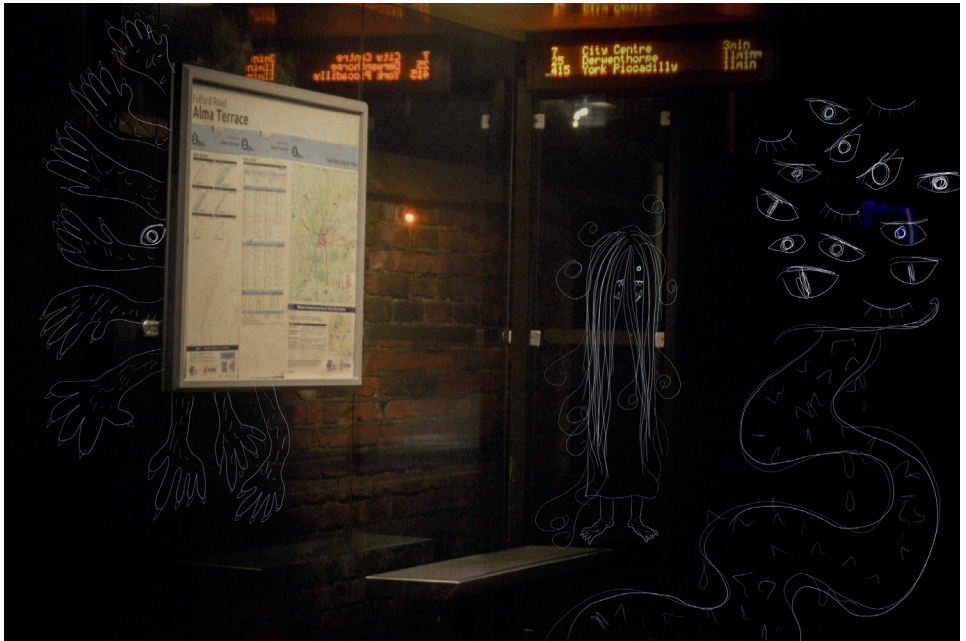
If we understand that there is inherent and pervasive inequality between men and women, how does this impact heterosexual relationships? What does it mean, as a woman, to be loved by a man? I wanted to explore this dynamic as an internal struggle femme folx people face. The idea that the socialization we as femme folx people receive is perhaps, intrinsically sexual, becomes a role for us to play out. To be a sexual 'thing' for the consumption of others - to exist and to present oneself on the whims of others. However, when this comes into conflict when we try to reconcile this with our humanity.

To be loved is to be changed, but must we change ourselves in order to be loved?

## *Bio*

Hi, I'm Emma. I'm a second-year student at the University of York. I've always been passionate about women's issues. I've recently tried to draw on my understanding of these issues as a way to inform my art. I'm interested in how these issues intersect with our everyday lives; how they dictate everything from our individual actions to our culture as a whole. I hope you enjoy it!





# Monsters Beh(in)d Me (Above)

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Camille De Ocampo

## *Statement*

My name is Camille and I'm a second-year GEMMA (University of York) student from the Philippines. I am a writer and creative manager whose life revolves around the joys and quirks of film, photography, and video games. I advocate for seeking creative alternatives to re-examine our location in the world and re-imagine our positions away from current norms of thinking and existing modes of life. In 2021, I moved to the UK along with my dreams and fears. MONSTERS BEH(in)D ME was the fruition of my emotional processing about my 'safety' as a Filipina more than 6000 miles away from home.

## *Bio*

It seemed like confusion at first—this energy behind me, trailing every move I made. Back in the Philippines, I gained a habit of secretly taking photos to see who could be following me when I walk alone at night. It was a strategy I learned to not alarm a possible aggressor of being caught out and to give me time to call for help. It was also commonly advised by authorities as a way of presenting evidence had delinquency or crime taken place.

However, this time, as winter night dawned early in York, there was actually no one behind me. What was this feeling? Was it a figment of my imagination? Was it not real?

MONSTERS BEH(in)D ME is a series of photos that resulted from my creative research. Using my film camera, I walked alone around my city for five consecutive nights and took photos of what was behind me every time my body felt frightening sensations. In collaboration with families and friends, monsters were etched in every photo to visualise my fears in each context. What transpired from this process is a realisation of the violence of my internalised fears.

# élegie

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*Chelsea Wallis*

My sister was raped last night.  
We don't talk much.

The message I sent her said  
I knew she must be really scared right now

That I was thinking of her. A white heart.  
The symbols felt small on my screen

They feel small right now in my hands  
Flimsy imperfect vessels to try to reach

Across three oceans. I can sense something  
dark and cold inside me that hasn't been there before.

It's not anger exactly, I don't think it's fear either  
More like the feeling of wet fabric stuck against you

Too long, something that just shouldn't be there  
Makes your skin crawl, tugs your mouth sideways.

We don't have the kind of relationship where I can just ask her  
if this is how she is feeling too. But I wish I could. I wish I could say

This feeling isn't hers. It doesn't belong here, inside me or inside her.  
The clinical glare of a forensic medical examination won't make it go  
away.

Neither will a court case or trial by public opinion. There is no neat and  
tidy  
answer because prosecution only makes you a victim a hundred times  
over again.

None of these is going to make it stop hurting. They don't cancel anything  
out.  
The feeling that haunts my stomach is still there, might always be there

But perhaps diluted by joy, frustration, loyalty, antipathy and the million other feelings that make a family.

We don't talk much  
but I hope she knows  
love still grows there

.....

(she replies 23:01:  
thanku + pink heart)

#### *Statement*

This poem represents the fractured process of meaning-making in response to an experience of trauma and dislocation. It was conceived as a means of catharsis while dealing with an acutely visceral shock and the vulnerability that this produces. In form, it visually represents the emotional journey from denial into anger and eventually towards hesitant acceptance, with its couplets growing and shrinking like a wave crashing into the shore before receding. I hope that the poem stands for the gradual and imperfect process of healing from vicarious violence, and for my own attempt to regain faith in sisterhood, both literal and metaphoric.

#### *Bio*

Chelsea is completing a PhD in English at the University of Sydney. Her work explores how epistolary networks of female friendship enabled nineteenth-century women writers to claim literary identity and intellectual subjectivity. Chelsea also works in the field of human rights law, completing a doctorate at Oxford.

# Light Magic (Below)

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*Cristina Arrivillaga*

## *Statement*

Feminism is as beautiful and empowering, as it is difficult and painful. The reality that women face around the world is sometimes too much to handle. There are big fights, and there are small ones that we all carry within ourselves day by day. The one thing that helps me go through it is the friends that feminism has brought into my life. Sorority has made me feel less lonely, and has got me through the toughest of times. This illustration is based on a random night out that turned into a support group for a friend who is just ending an abusive relationship. We all shared our own experiences with abuse, whether it was sexual, physical, emotional, and /or psychological. It is incredible that in the darkest of battles, we still find love and comfort in our friends that have sadly gone through similar things and have survived. We all heal together, passing our light to those who feel lost in darkness. Feminism is sometimes a big protest or fight, and sometimes is just being there for our friends who need it. We find power in knowing we are not alone. Sorority will get us through when we feel we can't.

## *Bio*

I was born in 1993 in Guatemala, an incredibly sexist, homophobic, violent and racist country. I grew up into a teenager full of insecurities, fears, and rejection towards myself. After ending an abusive relationship during the pandemic, I discovered feminism and started my way into loving myself, which included accepting my body, bisexuality, and leaving behind the misogynist and patriarchal vision that had accompanied me all my life. La Creatura has allowed me to connect with my inner child, who always felt trapped and unheard. I now illustrate my struggles and my accomplishments through colorful, diverse, strong, and feminist creatures that I would have loved to see when I was little.





LA CREATURA

## Meet the team behind this year's issue of *Cultivate*:

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**Daisy McManaman** is a big Dolly Parton fan, and last year made the pilgrimage out to Dolly's theme park, Dollywood.

**Sanna Eriksson** is a recovering administrator who's not quite been able to let go & therefore has led on putting in processes for *Cultivate*

**Lizzie Merrill** has three dogs to whom she is lovingly devoted and dedicates her efforts in this issue: Boz, Mink and Bread-boy.

Lifting weights while listening to metal is **Maddy French's** happy place and she has competed in female bodybuilding.

**Alice Parkington** does sudoku puzzles for at least half an hour a day, her average time to solve a difficult puzzle is under eleven minutes

**Marieke Wierenga** completed a gap year in animal care and is an expert in brushing the teeth of chimpanzees.

**Rhuan Barcellos** has been a Twihard since his teenage years, a.k.a. a slightly obsessive fan of the Twilight books and movies. Nowadays, it is the only heterosexual romance he still bears watching.

**Kate Keeble** loves to hike and completed the Camino de Santiago in 26 days.

**Alice Wilson** looks fun, but is always in bed by 9pm.

**Yanrui Cui** is a fan of Harry Potter and jigsaws. She is proud of completing a 1000-piece Hogwarts jigsaw puzzle.

