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## Editor's Note

This summer, I read Leslie Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors*. By far, the most important term I inducted into my vocabulary as a result is "gender expression." That's what this zine is all about. I used to worry about how I didn't "get" femmes and super butches--there's really nothing to get, it's just how people are and how they express themselves. It's their style and their language, and if I just pay better attention, the lines of communication aren't as tangled as I imagined the were. In this issue, we cover the second round of birl interviews where girls express who, what, when, where, and how they are, especially in regards to their gender expression. I honestly believe that the more people I talk to about this, the more I realize how extensive the gender expression spectrum really is, and how fascinating and beautiful and terribly underrated it's been.

Thanks to all you contributors and readers who are inspiring me and allowing me this opportunity to compile your beautiful art, writing, and important information!

Thanks to all the beautiful, gorgeous, handsome, talented, intelligent, brave, interesting, unique, label-busting, amazing girls out there. Y'all are incredibly inspiring. And I mean all of you. Much appreciation to all birl-lovers, too! You're welcome in this birl's house any time.

Julie

[rockscissorspaper.org](http://rockscissorspaper.org)

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BirlZine! is a nonprofit compilation zine of personal writing, essays, poetry, photography, art, news, and resources for and by boyish girls (girls) who enjoy riding the gender wave and don't let their gender dictate how to look or act. A birl can be a straight tomboy, an FTM, or anyone in between. This is a safe space for girls to share our work and find relevant news and resources. Find out more info. at [www.birlzine.com](http://www.birlzine.com). Please share this issue with your friends and submit your own work!

## BirlZine!

Issue 4

2006

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All contents are the properties of their respective contributors.

## A Rant by Annie Aarons

I'm sorry, sir, I couldn't quite get that. Could you maybe speak up? Because in *my* experience, I've found that I have to **SHOUT** before anyone will listen. I guess **YOU** don't have that problem though. Abomination, you say? Well, I'm not exactly all riled up to agree with you, **SIR**. But I'm willing to keep an open mind and see if you'll convince me. But let me get some things out in the open first.

Abomination (n.) - That which is abominable; anything hateful, wicked, or shamefully vile; an object or state that excites disgust and hatred; a hateful or shameful vice; pollution.

What is it about me that you hate so much? I mean really, I'm not all that scary, what, exactly, could I do to **YOU**? You've got all the power, you're holding all the keys, and I'm **REALLY** not in any sort of position to take them from you. Am I all that terrifying? All five foot three inches of poetry writing me? Yes, I'm so wicked-

Wicked short... But I'm still curious, at 3:15am on a fine Wednesday in March of 1985, did your life suddenly take a turn for the worse? Or was it something other than my birth. Did your wife suddenly decide to leave you at 9:35am on September 7, 4 years ago? When **I** figured it out?

And oh what a morning it was, full of smooth cocoa-colored legs covered by naught but a miniskirt and a *low* cut V neck top that haunts my dreams even now. See, we're not **THAT** different after all, here's something we can both appreciate. Women. Only ... you seem to think I'm somehow ... less entitled to do this, because I am one. I know, I know,  
*Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.*  
Honestly, do you really believe that I'm thinking about doing the same things to you as I would with that cute girl with gorgeous eyes sitting there in the corner? Right...  
I don't lie with mankind as I do with women. I mean, I've tried it.  
Now **THAT** was an abomination. ::shudder::

But I'm still curious, what terrible thing in your life is my fault?  
Are the \$25 million spent on Viagra my doing?  
Does the 40% divorce rate occur because maybe one day I wanna get married?  
When I walk down the street holding hands with a cute girl, does that cause the 14% chance you have of dying of AIDS?  
Do my Ani CDs make your wife one of the four million beaten every year by their husbands?  
Is this really all **MY** fault?

Maybe we should look at **YOU**, **SIR**. Take a **REAL** good look. Is your wife happy? Are you even still together? How about your kids? I'm sure they're taking to hate as their doctrine **VERY** well, I'll bet you don't even let them believe in evolution. Because I'm sure **YOU** don't. But what do you see when you look in the mirror? Because when I look, I see me, and:

**I**, don't use hate as my first emotion. **I**, don't keep my mind shut to change. **I**, don't feel the need to prove my righteousness to **ANYBODY**. All I seek in **MY** life, is love. And you know what else? I've never had **ANYONE** "fake it."

Huh, maybe I'm glad you don't believe in evolution, because, with all due respect, **SIR**, I think **WE'RE** the next step. So get used to having us around.

# The Interviews: Part 2 of 2

BirlZine's interview issues give readers a sample of how many different kinds of birles there are. "Birles" is a new word in gender-related vocabulary, but it deserves attention. It's inclusive, the way it encompasses so many gender-fluid individuals instead of pigeonholes them into micro-labels like FTM or butch dyke, who can both be birles. There are so many different kinds of birles.

I didn't want all the interviews to look too similar, so I let respondents choose two of their questions from a list. Below are the questions I asked each birl:

1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now?
2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birles to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how do you contribute to it?
3. and 4. CHOOSE TWO OF THE FOLLOWING TO ANSWER:
  - When did you realize you were a birl/an alternate gender?
  - What's your favorite personal birl/identity story?
  - Why might some gender identities disagree with one another?
  - Did you have any role models, books, movies, etc., that helped you define your gender?
  - Do you have a local gender-supportive community, including friends and family?
5. Describe your favorite outfit.
6. Put together a set list for a birlly mixed CD for me!

I hope you enjoy their responses!

--Julie

## Skye

LJ handle: stichedupinside

What city/state are you in? Wilmington, DE

How old are you? 20

What's your sexual orientation and gender identity? Lesbian Female

1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical,

mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now? I think with everything I am the way I am today because of my childhood and growing up following my brother around. But another thing would be my physical features. I see myself as a female. Although I love to dress up as a boy and try to freak people out. I guess you can say I'd like to see peoples' aspects change, especially when it comes to what a female and a male is supposed to look like. I love my androgyny, and I embrace it with everything I have. But I will always truly see myself as a female.



2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birles to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how to you contribute to it?

It's important to have a community not only for the pictures, but to get a view of another person's life and how they deal with certain issues that you yourself are going thru or have been having questions dealing with gender, life issues. I feel its also important to connect with other people and enjoy the lives out there that are similar to your own. That sense of "we're not alone" comes to mind. I love to visit the Birles community of course for the Birles, but also to help other birles deal with some problems they are having. Granted I prolly haven't gone thru as much as most people have. I still like to give my two cents in where ever I can. This community that has been put together is simply amazing. I feel like I'm at home, I consider everyone on Birles to be apart of a little family. It's simply beautiful.

3/4. When did you realize you were a birl/an alternate gender?

Ever since I can remember I've always did boy type things. I'd be the first to pick up frogs, climb trees even pick up girls skirts when a boy dared me to. I played two hand touch football with my brother and his other boy friends. He was my only "friend" so I looked up to him. I followed my brother around, I did what he did, liked what he did. I thought it was normal and natural. I didn't think anything of looking at other girls like my brother did (he's two years older then I ). I guess I started to realize I was tomboyish when I refused to wear skirts, and play hopscotch with the other girls. I climbed on everything. Started beating guys up, and bullying girls around cause I didn't know how to interact with them except to just think how pretty they were. I think third grade was when I first started realizing I was somewhat "different" from the other girls. I love being a birl. I feel I grew up the right way.

5. Describe your favorite outfit.

My favorite outfit consists of my beat up jeans with my black leather belt and my nautical star belt buckle (which is a Zippo lighter too) and a white button down shirt and a thin black tie.

6. Put together a set list for a birly mixed CD for me!

Biff Naked, Cursive, Mae, Edgar, Placebo, Ayria, Dresden dolls, the faint, from first to last, horrorpops, lacuna coil, NIN, otep, poe, o-zone, the postal service, simple plan, the used, the start.



# Kayden Healy

LJ handle? Yes

What city/state are you in? Akron, Ohio

How old are you? 17

What's your sexual orientation and gender identity?

Lesbian/ exploring FTM



1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now?

When looking at the words male and female, for me they define such a rigid area of sex, while masculine and feminine define gender. "Sexually" speaking, I cannot see myself as either. I have found myself getting stomachaches from forms asking male, or female. I also get the rebel idea when it asks "sex" and leaves I blank space, I always want to put: Yes please. (Just to be a smart ass.) My gender is in the process of being discovered, while I am comfortable with who I am now, it has taken a long time to get to that plateau. I have come to the realization that I am still evolving and changing, because I am young. However, do not be mistaken, I do not let myself be influenced by people telling me who or what I should or should not be, unless they are telling me to be **WHAT MAKES ME COMFORTABLE**. I believe that the majority of gender is neither physical, mental and emotional (while they are important factors) it is your soul, and heart. They are the pure essence of which you are. It may be true that the soul has no gender, and maybe mine doesn't have a gender. However, sometimes I think that it is a masculine soul. To look at me, and not knowing who I am... many think I am a man, until I talk.

In all of my reading, talking to other FTM and MTF, and gender queers, I have found that none of it is easy. You do not need T or an operation to make you feel anymore manly or make you feel anymore like "you" It is all on the inside. However, you need to be able to look at yourself, and see the person you envision, and when the two genders don't match up, it makes it difficult. I feel that daily urge to hide my breasts and bind them, because they don't seem to fit on me. I think about the cost of T and the effects on my body daily. It is still a long journey I have to take, and one that I take willingly.

2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birls to have a community?

What do you get out of the community, and how do you contribute to it?

I think it's important to have this community because of the tremendous support that is offered to each other in times of need. Whether it's just knowing that there are TONS of other people like you out there, or you are having a rough time and need help and advice. What I get out of the community is a sense of unity, no one puts anyone down, and you are sure to find someone in this community that you share common interests with. That is one thing that I enjoy about this community, is that it is so diverse. I contribute to the Birl community, by posting pictures of things I do, offering advice and leaving comments, to all the wonderful Birls.

3. When did you realize you were a birl/an alternate gender?

I realized that I might be FTM, probably when I was about 5 years old or younger. I can't really place a specific event, but a series that I am sure many other people can relate with. When I was really young, my dad insisted on calling me "Butch," I refused to wear a dress and would sometimes get into physical fights with my mom about it, I would run around in boy's swimming trunks, and when I was in 5th grade I would go online to chatrooms and pretend that I was a boy. My mom eventually caught me, when one girl I was talking to e-mailed me and my mom saw it. It was never a wake up in the morning and be like "WOW, I'm transgender..." It has been something that has always been there.

4. Why might some gender identities disagree with one another?

I identify the most with FTM, however, there is such a stigmatism attach to it, a push a pull in the gay, lesbian and straight community. Because, it is becoming more common, and transgender people are finally breaking down boundaries of discrimination, (although they may not be huge) many are finally feeling

comfortable with coming “out” as transgender. Yet, there is always the fear of the backlash in both communities. People in both straight and gay communities, saying to transgender people “Who are you going to date?” The answer is as simple as the one posed to homosexuals, a long time ago, “I will date who I love.” Many Butches feel betrayed when their fellow “butch buddies” go on T. They think that it is something taboo, and will pass. This maybe true, but maybe not. Many lesbians fear that they will lose the whole “Butch” culture, I don’t believe that they will. There will always be “categories” for as long as we want to put them into sections. Some butches will cross the barrier into the transgender community, but will be afraid to identify with the word “transgender” because it is so discriminated against. It is almost like the word “Bisexual,” I know way too many lesbians that run in the other direction from dating bisexuals, because they see them as “questioning.” It is another phobia, another misunderstanding.

So, we need to support each other and realize that if we continue this fear and hatred between the genders, and sexual orientations, we are going to get nowhere. That if a person goes on Testosterone or Estrogen, they are not “selling out.” They are not trying to make their lives easier by going on T or E. Yes, their lives will be easier, because they may be happier with themselves if that is truly what they want. The years, it takes to go through the process, and the amount of money, the name changes, the struggles, are not easy. It is not easy to be gender queer either, and it is not easy to be gay and it is not easy to be lesbian, or straight or transgender. Growing up in this world today, there is so much focus on who is what. Phobias are everywhere, because people are so worried about losing their own identity in other peoples. These disagreements between genders are getting us nowhere; it is fighting a civil war, when really we have another battle to wage. The disagreements are misunderstandings. With these misunderstandings between genders and sexual orientation, we are being as bad as the republicans who are waging a crusade against our “sin.” It is ignorance, what we need is understanding, and time.

5. Describe your favorite outfit.

My favorite outfit, as of right now is: my Texas, a pair of baggy beat-up cargo shorts, and my hooded poncho from Mexico.

6. Put together a set list for a birly mixed CD for me!

Bitch and Animal- Drag King Bar  
(TAFKA Prince)- Pussy Control  
Bitch and Animal- Boy Girl Wonder  
Annie Lennox- Sweet Dreams  
Alix Olson- Gender Game  
Bitch and Animal- Best cock on the Block  
RuPaul - Supermodel (You better work)  
Ani Difranco- In or Out  
Bitch and Animal- Secret Candy  
Martina Topley Bird - Llya (from the  
L-Word Season 2 soundtrack... simply HOT.)  
Betty - L Word Theme (you can’t not love  
the “fucking” part in it!)  
Tupac - Changes  
Ani Difranco- Paradigm  
Sublime- Caress me down  
Ani Difranco- Evolve  
Tracy Chapman -Fast car  
The Killers- Somebody Told Me  
Melissa Ferrick- Freedom  
Ani Difranco- letter to a John  
Melissa Ferrick- Drive  
Bob Marley- War  
Indigo Girls- Galileo



# carly

LJ handle: grungerocker83

What city/state are you in? grand rapids, michigan

How old are you? 22

What's your sexual orientation and gender identity? lesbian, identity is up in the air. i don't fully feel like a girl, don't fully feel like a man. i'm in some sort of freakish gray area.

1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now? well, let's see, "birl" really sums it up for me. i believe gender is more complicated than people want to believe. there is not just man and woman. physically, we are assigned a sex. but mentally and emotionally, i'd like to believe we are just a little more complex. look around, we all have masculine and feminine traits, mannerisms etc...not based on sexuality alone. i know straight girls who like to sit around and play drinking games while belching the abc's. i know gay guys who like to do the same.

2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birls to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how to you contribute to it? this community could really change someone's life. it's like a little beacon of hope for some birl out there in the podunk woods. she used to think she was a monstrosity, and now she knows that there are thousands of others like her out there.

3. When did you realize you were a birl/an alternate gender? ever since i was about 3-years-old i knew something was up. i always wanted to be prince charming when my little friend, aubrey and i played sleeping beauty.

4. Why might some gender identities disagree with one another? well, i know some gender identities get angry at each other for dating someone of the "opposite" sex. like, a transgender female to male dating another bio male. and i can sort of see why. it feels almost like a betrayal. but then again, that's probably how straight people feel when one of their own "crosses over". it just proves that sexuality/sexual identity is full of gray areas. it's so hard to create labels.

5. Describe your favorite outfit.

i go through different phases. i just got out of my british school boy phase. now i'm more into looking hardcore. i often wear fingerless leather gloves, a sleeveless morrissey shirt, suspenders, levi's 518's and black mod boots.







6. Put together a set list for a birly mixed CD for me!  
the only ones – another girl, another planet  
julian cope – world, shut your mouth  
joy division – transmission  
the smiths – reel around the fountain  
the kinks – monica  
the la's – son of a gun  
new order – age of consent  
danzig – mother  
the cult – she sells sanctuary  
love and rockets – rain bird  
joy division – atmosphere  
blondie – heart of glass  
subhumans – society  
bauhaus – kick in the eye



# Jets

LJ handle: mollydubs

What city/state are you in? Catasauqua, PA

How old are you? 21

What's your sexual orientation and gender identity? Straight-identified pansexual/"straight," female

1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now?

I am straight, but I'm not. If you look up "pansexual" in the dictionary, it describes it as "exhibiting or implying many forms of sexual expression." That is me. I only date men now, but sometimes I express myself to them as a woman, and sometimes I express myself as a man. I am female. There is a boy and a gentleman inside of me (no, not like that—not now, at least), but I am always happy with my femaleness. I have frequently joked that I feel like I am a lot more queer than half the gay people I know. I also don't really like the term "heterosexual" because I really do believe that women are sensual and beautiful creatures, and I think that it is perfectly all right for me to acknowledge and express that attraction toward them. I just don't typically like them enough "that way" (whatever that means), or want to be with them romantically. So I am straight, but not hetero. Some people see these things in very black-and-white terms. They say, "You only have sex with men now, so you're just heterosexual," or, "You're attracted to women, and you've been sexual with them in the past, so you are bi." Sexuality is such a colorful thing. It moves beyond blacks, whites, and even greys. You cannot box it in that way. There are too many different shades and terms required in order to even begin to describe it adequately. I am sexually submissive, too, so the aforementioned definition of "pansexual" can also be applied to that. There are too many things going on during that kind of power play to describe easily. Deep down, I always consider myself "female," so I do think that it is somewhat tied to my physical being, but gender (not necessarily sex, although that, too, is debatable) is certainly an abstract and liquid concept that can also be tied to both your mental and emotional states. You might have a female body, and be aware and accepting of that, and be a boy in your mind. You might have a female body, and only "be" a boy when you are in a certain mood: Perhaps anger ties you to your inner male. Or maybe being horny does. I think it's about balance, for me; I am far too dualistic to be one gender or one sexual orientation all of the time. I am comfortable with myself now, and with being many things at once.

2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birls to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how to you contribute to it?

We need to know that we are "normal." No, we need to know that we can abolish that. Not the concept of "normal," but the need to apply it to ourselves, especially sexually. It is good for my self-esteem. Man, I hate that phrase. "Self-esteem" is such a petty, oversimplified idea. I only use it for lack of a better term—but it makes me feel good to know that there are actually people out there who find me attractive as me. I hope that I contribute the same support and positivity that I receive.

3. When did you realize you were a birl/an alternate gender?

When I was a kid, I occasionally fantasized about being a man and being intimate with another man. I didn't realize that this was "weird" at all at the time. These fantasies didn't occur to me again for a while. However, when I was a little bit older, I suddenly struck upon the notion that discriminating between genders is arguably the same as doing so by race. (I could go into how I feel about that now, but that's a whole other debate.) So,

when I was fourteen years old, I basically decided that I was bisexual. Looking back, I don't think that I ever really specifically lusted after any woman—it was more like a political stance. But it stuck so firmly that I never really questioned that aspect of it for years. Eventually, when I was around eighteen, I switched over to the term “pansexual,” because I didn't wish to imply that there were only two genders. (As you know, I still use that term, but I now use it for different reasons.) Around that time, I started learning about the surgeries available to transsexuals, and I was fascinated. Something clicked, and I remembered my childhood longings. I was drawn to transsexuals, and I often felt like a boy, so I thought that I might be transgendered. There always seemed to be an almost homoerotic element or undercurrent to my more sincere “heterosexual” relationships, which is still true. I didn't ask anyone to use different pronouns or anything, I simply toyed with the idea in my mind. I'm actually glad that I never directly “came out” about it, because I eventually outgrew it. “Outgrew” is the wrong word, though, because it sounds condescending, and I really did learn a lot about myself by asking these questions. I eventually just reached a very content position in regard to actually being female. I'm afraid that a lot of genderqueer people mistakenly believe that they have to be the “opposite” gender—they have to be one thing or the other. That saddens me. Don't try to follow the rules. There aren't any!

Anyway, I then went to college. Eventually, another straight girl got horny and drunk with me at a party, so we decided to try having sex. It was kind of boring. I kept thinking, *This would be so much better if one of us had a dick*. And I realized that I couldn't continue pretending to be fifty-fifty bi (splitting it down the middle like that is technically inaccurate, but remember, I was defining pansexuality as an equal attraction to all genders at the time) with that mindset. I like dick. I was embarrassed, because I felt like one of those Hot Topic “bi-curious” girls who only say things to make their boyfriends want them. So I felt dumb. But I learned then that I had to further explore myself, and become something far more revolutionary than gay, straight, or bi. I could fuck gay girls and still be straight. I could fuck gay guys, and not infringe upon their gayness. Just be yourself. I refer to myself as just “straight” in general company, because most people aren't interested in gender studies, and I don't always feel like discussing them, to be perfectly honest ... and most people assume that I'm gay anyway, because of my short hair and tomboy charm. Lesbians who think that I'm cute tell me, “You just haven't met the right girl yet.” But I have. She's me. But that's okay—I'm fine with whatever people want to think, and with what I know now to be true. I am complete. Just be. I'm me.

4. Did you have any role models, books, movies, etc., that helped you define your gender?

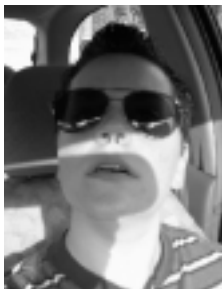
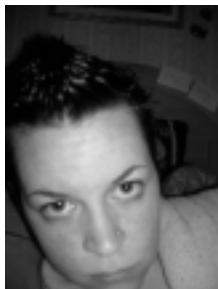
*Pomosexuals: Challenging Assumptions About Gender and Sexuality* by Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimel had a gigantic impact on me as a young person. *My Gender Workbook: How to Become a Real Man, a Real Woman, the Real You, or Something Else Entirely* by Kate Bornstein affected me as well. Why do they both have such long titles?? And as someone who has been affected by the psychiatric circuit, *The Last Time I Wore a Dress* by Daphne Scholinski was very interesting, too.

5. Describe your favorite outfit.

I don't have one. I'm not always girly or boyish, so it depends. I love cute strappy hippie dresses, and I love my tight jeans that show off my navel piercing. I like fun and unique jewelry, too.

6. Put together a set list for a birly mixed CD for me!

Wow, I really can't do that right now. My brain is too fried from the other questions! I'll just give you one song instead: “She Stood Up” by Sarah Dougher. Listen to the lyrics. Enjoy!



# Trish

LJ handle: queerxcore

What city/state are you in? Sunrise, FL

How old are you? 21

What's your sexual orientation and gender identity?

orientation -> i prefer to call myself as a queer girl; identity -> female



1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now? I consider myself to be a birl as of now, because right now I have been more comfortable dressing more comfortable style of clothing, as opposed to cute little dresses, skirts, etc. I am also going thru weird hair phases. I had it short last year almost like a boy's hair cut, but then grew it out long again, and now I'm about to cut it short again for the summer.

2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birles to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how do you contribute to it? I think it is good to have the birles community because it gives us a chance to connect with people who feel like they don't fit in with the others because of how they view their gender. I decided to join the community because I feel like the other people could help me to connect with people that I feel understand the difficulties I am having trying to figure out who I am and my place in this world, in my community that doesn't always agree how I like to express myself.

3. Do you have a local gender-supportive community, including friends and family?

Yes, actually in fact I like to try to chat with/im/keep in contact with as many gender-supportive/birles I can in different states, just to see what the general opinions of different communities are and the local acceptance factor.

4. Describe your favorite outfit. black with orange writing "Hottie" beanie hat, black tank top or black bra top/athletic type shirt, black baggy velvet drawstring pants, black and white converse all stars in high tops

5. Put together a set list for a birly mixed CD for me! i have no clue on this one. i tend to listen to many different styles of music.



019/1000 Ote Duner

Art by Ote Duner

## Lesbian Beauty, a Monologue by Adrienne Brodwell

I'm not femme okay? Let's get this straight. Does mascara make you femme? If I had long flowing hair would I be more of a womyn? If my tits were perkier would that mean that I personified femininity? I don't want to be that.

I don't want to be butch either. Butch implies that I in some way take on a stereotypically masculine role. I wear men's jeans because they come in a waist and length that doesn't change, not because I want to appear more masculine. I use men's deodorant, because it works better. I wear men's cologne because I like the smell better.

What do you want to call me, futch? Because I wear eyeliner, and flannel. Because I differ from your two poles, you feel a combination of the two would suit me. I am not some "breed" of lesbian. When you breed a lion and a tiger you get a liger. From my understanding it is "scientifically proven" that you cannot forcibly breed someone's identity. Would you take some time in your own mind to consider that I cannot fit into your boxes? There is no butch-femme continuum. On a scale from 1 to 10, I am not a five. This is not the Kinsey scale, not everything can be neatly categorized.



So speak of me, not for me, and let me define myself. "My friend Adrienne was wearing a skirt today," sounds so much more reasonable than "Adrienne is so femme." If you went to church once would you be "so religious," no you would have just gone to church.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that we as lesbians, dykes, or whatever our identity, define ourselves by so much more than our wardrobes and our haircuts. We don't necessarily define ourselves based upon heterosexual relationships. There is no need for a stereotypically masculine, and a stereotypically feminine person. We come in all shapes and sizes, all abilities and ethnicities, and our beauty is boundless.

So please look past the two categories society has given you to define my lesbian beauty. I am your friend Adrienne, and I AM.

## Mental Health and HIV by Max Siegel

Mental health is important not only to the quality of life for someone living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), but has also been linked to numerous physical health outcomes. Stress and psychiatric conditions have been shown to negatively impact the immune system and contribute to the progression of HIV (Kopnisky, Stoff, & Rausch, 2004), while self-reported satisfaction with one's life has been linked to long-term survival (Remien et al., 1992). Among people living with HIV, a healthy mind may be necessary for a healthy body. Yet, a high prevalence of traumatic experiences may put this population at increased risk for poor mental health.

Other studies have explored victimization experiences that characterize Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) across the gender identities of people living with HIV. Both trauma and HIV have been shown to be common among transgender people in comparison to non-transgender groups (Kenagy, 2005). When 182 transgender people were surveyed, more than half had been forced to have sex, 56.3% had experienced violence in their homes, 51.3% had been physically abused, and 26% had been denied medical care because they were transgender (Kenagy, 2005).

Regardless of the cause of PTSD in people living with HIV, its consequences are uniformly far-reaching. In another study, 88 inner-city low income African American HIV-infected women were shown to be more likely to report a victimization experience, possess higher levels of global psychological distress, and have greater depressive symptomatology in comparison to a similar group of HIV-uninfected women (Kimerling, Armistead, & Forehand, 1999). These HIV-infected victims were diagnosed at greater rates with AIDS-defining conditions than HIV-infected nonvictims (Kimerling, Armistead, & Forehand, 1999). Other studies have shown additional complications among victims living with HIV, such as poor adherence to Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy (HAART) (Brief, et al., 2004).

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Again

Stumble out at 5am,  
wanderin' to places I've already been,  
and I'm thinking 'bout you again. Yeah.  
Turn the corner, walk up the street,  
Stomping my feet to this same old beat,  
and, I'm missing you again.  
I fall back into the snow,  
there's nowhere left to go,  
and I, wanna be with you again.

I hate that you're so damn far away  
Don't wanna leave, but I can't stay  
I just want to hold you again, again, yeah.

I wanna get lost in your eyes,  
I wanna watch the sunrise,  
with you in my arms again.  
I wanna taste your sugar-sweet kiss,  
So many people that would kill for this,  
and I wish I could feel you again.  
Fall asleep with you next to me,  
holding you, hearing you breathe, and I  
wanna wake up to you again.

So perfect in this fucked up world  
I'm yours and you're my girl and  
I'll never meet anyone like you again.  
I don't wanna be with anyone but you again.  
I just wanna be with you again.  
I just wanna be with you again.

Poetry by Brittany Dunning

Change

I stare at you with hateful eyes,  
I don't know why I believed your lies.  
All you ever did was criticize.

After you, I am now somewhat less.  
I was never the one to impress,  
just a sucker for your caress.

I blink as the tears blur my vision.  
Stuck, brokenhearted, in this eternal prison.  
Still left bleeding from the incision.

You've done more damage than you can repair.  
You showed me that people don't really care.  
You taught me life really isn't fair.

All the hate and pain it contains.  
Torn skin leaves sheets with crimson stains.  
All the joy in the world cannot block out this pain.

Full of disappointment, false hope and fear.  
Lies and deceit, things you wish you didn't hear.  
No one seems to be sincere.

Can't seem to look at myself the same.  
My heart is shattered and full of shame.  
I am done playing this game.



## My Last Confession

As I sat on my bed, many thoughts in my head,  
I began to slowly reflect.  
I realized, you can kick scream and fight, but it  
won't make it right,  
we are all just victims of neglect.  
As I sat there to ponder, my mind started to wonder,  
Is the world really as cold as it seems?  
Then I began to notice, my eyes all out of focus,  
True happiness can only be found in dreams.  
My brain started confessing feelings so depressing  
That life is no more than a waste.  
This thought, though pessimistic, was quite realistic,  
Life is not worth the problems we face.  
Then it became quite clear that this thought was  
sincere,  
No longer could these feelings hide.  
I needed to depart, no more hope in my heart,  
my last note written was of suicide.

## Revolution

Suffer his sin  
The king must die  
The revolt within  
all of us lie  
Basking in blood  
No sign of peace  
Feet caked with mud  
End of life's lease  
Crimson stained hands  
Anger filled eyes  
Cuts filled with sand  
Head filled with lies  
Locked in this prison  
Pain poisoned heart  
Tears blur all vision  
As they rip you apart  
Suffer his sin  
The king must die  
The revolt within  
all of us lie

## Untitled

Set in my romantic heart,  
a love for one I cannot gain.  
Shot with cupid's golden dart,  
His poison running through my veins.  
The smile shining on your face  
sends a shiver down my spine.  
My heart, beating at a faster pace,  
longing so to make you mine.  
The hug I wish would never end,  
to hold you close and not let go.  
One of my most precious friends.  
You mean more to me than you'll ever know.

## If Only

If you could only see how I shake,  
how my knees become so weak,  
how fast my heart begins to beat,  
with every single word you speak.  
If you only noticed how I stutter,  
how forming sentences takes awhile,  
how rapid my breathing becomes  
everytime you show your smile.  
If you only noticed how I don't know what to say,  
how my words are always the same,  
how much more I wish I could do,  
but I'm too afraid of sounding lame.  
If only you could read my thoughts,  
and realize all of them are about you,  
how I want to tell you how I feel,  
but how I'm not sure what to do.  
If only I had a chance,  
how happy I would be.  
But there's no way someone like you  
would ever like someone like me.



Art by Calli Baroni

A poem by A.M.

I'm not sorry.  
Especially to **you** who shall remain without shame and name.  
Especially after the way **you** treated me.  
I don't want a person like **you** in my life.  
I don't need **you** as a friend.  
I don't want **you** as my enemy.  
**You** know that expression?  
With friends like you who needs enemies?  
That's what I feel when I think about **you**.  
Maybe first impressions are right.  
Maybe I should always follow that gut instinct when I think I meet a bad person.  
A bad person, like **you**.  
I can't believe I ever called **you** a friend.  
I will never make that mistake again.

I consider myself purged.

"For better or for worse" by Jaime

Footprints in the sand, the ocean's waves crashing lightly on the sandy beach. It's full of life, full of happiness. I come here to think. I come here to cleanse my mind, to start fresh. I come here with you. We sit on the clean blanket while our souls dance around. So free. We see the sunset. I can feel the cool night's breeze against my bare legs. But there are no worries, for I've got you at my side. You are my one and only true love.

Knowing that all my hopes and dreams can come true, knowing that all my faults are just tiny obstacles that we can conquer together. I look back and see two pairs of footprints in the sand. I look down to my side and see your hand in mine. It fits so perfect. I love how our bodies fit so right together. I love how our souls flutter around. As if they were brought together with fate. And now we will keep this fate alive forever, together.

We will look back and see the two pairs of footprints in the sand from years before, and we will look to the future and see an eternity of two pairs of footprints up the shoreline. For richer or for poorer, through thick and thin, forever as you both shall live. I do ... Do you? Do you want our souls together forever? Do you see our footprints together for eternity? Will you hold my hand when my hair is silver and my eyes aged. Will you still find beauty in my body that has been through uneven fights. Through the battles, the higher powers brought my way. Will you keep me for richer or poorer, through thick and thin, forever as we both shall live? I do ... Do you? There are footprints in the sand. The waves crashing lightly on the sandy beach.

Where I come to think of you, here, now, the present, and what is to come.

## Poem by Drew

It is in the essence of my being-  
in the nature of my craving mind  
that I finish this journey of words.

Like the winding road,  
leading from my sadistic mind  
I turn to everyone reading thus far-

This is about a boy.

His obligatory feelings  
lending him Godless-  
in the eyes of those he surrounds.

“HELL” they shout  
“UNNATURAL” they cry  
as they absolve their sins with the tonic of the Bible.

**BUT DO THEY REALIZE...**

Right before them,  
he’s down on his knees  
asking for sympathy from the God they say hates him.

He’s praying for the strength-  
the courage-  
the maturity

**TO JUST WALK AWAY...**

He will not stoop to their level...

God loves him-  
this boy knows the truth...  
even though their words make him weep beside his bed.

“WHY” he cries loudly  
“WHY am I being punished?”  
“Why am I compelled to go against nature?”



The boy stands...

Tears in eyes-  
persuing his cheeks  
to force his arms to bare his natural body.

What lies beneath?

This boy...

His naked truth reveals...

His bound breasts  
of biological torment...  
and their words that taunt.

Cutting him down  
with the Bible’s words,  
teasing him for they sense-

He’s not a boy...



Art by Calli Baroni

## poem III by Maya Rrrrr

You wouldn't understand

A born again queer, I was spending four months too many in L.A. busying myself with sports and spoken words jobs and acquaintances. Find out about the next queer event, go to a gay play, a lesbian movie.

(I didn't meet you anywhere like that.)  
so it must be my own fault for getting the hopes up.

I began to prepare to give you more of myself than I can afford in this day and age. So thank you for being straight, and I can take myself back now. But,

Tell me, little darling, is that what straight girls do nowadays?

Grab others' breasts, stretch out, putting the smooth of their necks in the teeth and tongue of other women, say, if I met a girl who liked me and I liked her, of course I would go for it, invite me in, accept dinner invitations, sure I will be your valentine.

Do straight girls these days invite gay girls for some naked sauna time, hot tubbing, steam, wet hair, shiny skin, pink and glowing on a rainy night after work, offer massages, let me in on this word up on the street, is that what straight girls do now?

Because I haven't been straight since Summer 2004, and must have fallen behind the times. Because in my good old days, naked time in steam sauna, dinner dates, one a week, were considered to be preludes to something else, a relationship perhaps of some sort, or at least a rejection based on personality flaws, not gender, not an oops I think I was just fucking around, cause I am straight, ten out of ten on the straight scale, not even bicurious, as stupid as that concept is, but yes you can touch me that way, giggle giggle, and will I beat you up if you try to kiss me? Oh, I don't know, giggle giggle.

you haven't been gay for very long, my friend points out, so why are you acting all bewildered, offended, even, this is all normal. Straight girls fuck with you, lesbians move on in after your first kiss, dykes are generally too cool for one another, so maybe what you need is a punk boi, at least they are honest about their intentions, from my experience, and did you think the homo world is any less fucked than the straight world? We are not the chosen people, I am sorry to say. Exes will go psycho on you, love betrays, stalkers appear from around corners of bars, any number of things, current prospects are never too high, be friends first, make sure she likes people with cunts if you have one, know them to the bone and still like them is your best bet, take six months, don't throw your heart down, chivalry code, first, to sit on as you unfold the picnic in the park.

Ain't I the fool?

After all that, after I had a chance or two to kiss you behind the curtain of steam, but you don't move towards me, giggle giggle nervous long eyelashes down down strand of hair sticking to your freckled shoulder, can't take my eyes off your left thigh, just the curve of it, so beautiful, and having the guts to do most things in this world, I don't now have them to kiss a straight girl, just pronounced.

And look I am not sad, not smoking till I puke, or die trying, I am just a little angry that I wanted to give you this poem, but you wouldn't understand, so why did I like you this much in the first place, enough to write this poem for you, just hoping that you might ...



Cu-n-t Down to Sighs Don't Matter by Julie Elefante

## Grey Walls by Kate

When the muscles in her eyelids eased and slowly opened, Lily was staring at the ceiling in her bathroom. She managed to glance around the room, at first remembering nothing. Gradually, she recalled small details of her surroundings and circumstances. The walls were grey and nondescript, and a mirror perched above the marble sink, which loomed above her like a plateau. She tilted her head to the right to see a bottle of pills- aspirin, probably- less than a foot away. Her hand worked its way over to the bottle, though she couldn't recollect thinking to do so, and she lifted it off the tiled floor. Empty. The pill bottle fell to the ground with a muffled clatter.

"I never understood you," she whispered with a sickly grin, directing her words at the empty bottle. She choked on her smile and turned her head to the ceiling. The light bulb shone violent and bright into her eyes, and she winced. Lily pretended the bulb was a star, and she found herself wishing on it with utter determination and hope.

"I wish we were brave; I wish we were strong and fearless... I wish we could fight." Sighing with disappointment, she put her hands on the harsh, cold tiles and pushed gently until she could lean her back against one of the bland bathroom walls. Her eyes traveled across the room once more, and she absorbed its contents; Lily sensed that it might be the last thing she would see. Frightened by this thought, she returned to memorizing details. The bathtub lay dormant and solid to her left; it was once a brilliant, sterile white, but there were filthy cracks on the outside of it, and the bottom edges were stained yellow and brown. *Corrupted*, Lily thought, *like everything else around me*. Brightly colored flowers decorated the shower curtain, and Lily found herself angry with and rather envious of the optimistic flowers.

"You don't know what it is to lose love, to lose your world," she unevenly whimpered to the flowers. They somehow seemed dimmer and less cheerful after that. Lily gagged again. She felt a heaving in her chest and clung to the rim of the ceramic toilet, dragging herself toward it. She leant over and vomited, tasting salt and something bitter: blood and stomach acid. Willingly collapsing on the tiles again, she noticed a creased piece of notebook paper lying across from her face. When she picked up the paper, it felt leaden, even burdensome. Then Lily realized there was a photo attached. Her vision blurred momentarily, but then she saw her face. Danielle.

"Oh, Danny... What happened? Why'd you run off like that? I've missed you... I've missed-" Lily threw her head into her fist as she coughed fiercely again. She vomited more blood and slowly averted her eyes from the blood in the toilet to her lover's picture. Then, she remembered it all. The phone call.

"Lily? Lily. We can't do this anymore. This has to stop. People are catching on, and I can't do it. I can't do it, baby, I'm sorry. They can't know about us. This is it. I love you."

Lily's eyes glazed over and she had hung up the phone gently and whispered,

"I love you, too, Danny." Her hand was still resting on the receiver when it rang again, vibrating almost viciously. Lily looked at her palm, white with deep lines running across like rivers. She thought the phone had rung so violently that it had made her bleed. There was no blood, and she disconnected the phone before stumbling like a drunken fool toward the grey walls of the bathroom. She closed the door behind her and climbed into the cracked and yellowing bathtub. She closed her eyes and remembered. Danielle. She had spent the night in ninth grade. That evening, Lily was taking a shower before they went to bed in their little-girl sleeping bags, separated on the living room floor. She'd heard a knock on the door and she yelled in response, "I'll be out in a minute." Despite this, she heard the door creak open and then closed again. Irritated and curious, Lily pushed the optimistic flower curtain to see who had walked into the bathroom. Danielle was standing there, a few teardrops stranded on her cheeks, though she didn't look upset. Lily turned the water off and reached for her towel, wrapping it around her body and stepping out of the shower gingerly.

"What's wrong? Are you-" before Lily finished, Danielle stepped forward and closer to her, a little taller but meeker, which made this step seem rather out of character. Lily was puzzled, with Danielle so close with such a



solemn but sincere \_ expression stretched across her face. Within seconds, Danielle’s lips were pressed against Lily’s, and Lily knew it then. She knew that there was a God, that he had created her to love and provide for someone. Danielle pulled her in closer and held onto her hips protectively, maybe fearfully, and she knew that Danielle felt love, too.

As Lily sat, coughing and choking in the tub, she remembered those nights at each other’s houses locked in the bathrooms and basements, at the school behind the curtain in the auditorium, in dark and secluded alleyways, and eventually in Danny’s bed. They weren’t together just for physical contact. They spent hours talking, driving in the countryside where no one could hear them, asking about each other, inquiring about their own identities, their perspectives of the world, their fears. Each night that they hid away together, they grew more and more certain that it was love, and more and more afraid that it was a secret that could not be hidden.

Lily smiled now to think of Danny’s promises.

“I’ll never abandon you. I’ll never leave you no matter how afraid I am. We’ll be in this together.” They had made it throughout high school and into college, after all. They were sophomores at the same university now, in college where they had been so sure they could tell the world about the two of them. Even still, Danielle had been concerned and they decided to keep it between them.

“Our little secret,” Danielle would whisper teasingly in Lily’s ear.

“Our little secret,” Lily murmured now, with her back against the side of the tub, pressing her fingers to her lips hoping it would repress the urge to vomit.

She tried to rid herself of the disoriented feeling that was drowning her just long enough to read the paper to which Danny’s picture was attached.

“To Danny- I felt God through your kiss, and He will know that we were not united in sin. The angels will sing our names and we will be seen for our purity. Our love is eternal.”

Lily set the paper down and laughed with relief for as long as she could muster without breaking into a series of coughing and heaving.

“Danny, Danny, Danny... will God forgive us this time?” With this, she rested her head on the yellowing tub and let her eyelids close gradually, savoring it. Before they closed, she saw the grey walls. They were still bland and dull, and she smiled, because she knew her life had been nothing like those bathroom walls.





Art by Calli Baroni

Mar99

Title: Random Thought

I identify myself as a straight, genderqueer teen. I was born as a girl, but I do not fully see myself as a girl. Even though I've told my parents that I like guys, they think I'm a lesbian because I want to wear boy's clothing and get my hair cut short. They say they've never met a straight girl who likes boy's clothing. But they haven't met any nonconformists face-to-face. Ironically, I'm not boyish at all. I hate sports, I know nothing about cars, and I'm not aggressive. I like dance music, drawing and reading, bright colors, and I am extremely shy and passive. I'm like a feminine gay boy. A flamer. I'm the envy of many. Of gays and lesbians, of transsexuals. I can get married and have no problems. I can receive all of those lovely benefits that straight people can receive. If I have a child, that child can have a secure future. Though society would be disgusted and threatened by my masculine dress, there would be nothing that they could do about it.

I hate society. It is so cold. People can't get married because of who they love. People who have been together for many years. People who love each other dearly. They can't get married. The bible says homosexuality is wrong, some people cry. Our government is not a theocracy, fool. The constitution says that marriage is between a man and a woman, others shout. If the constitution hadn't been changed, slavery would still be prevalent and women would not be able to vote. I wouldn't be typing this essay. I would be a slave. Would you like me to be a slave? I'm tired. So tired of this stupid society. They talk about equal rights for all, but gay people are excluded. Is that right? Does that sound sane? What would happen if gay people got married? Do you think that they would run rampant, destroying public property, spreading their "homosexual agenda," and molesting your children? I think not. I remember watching this show called "Dyke TV." They interviewed some of the children of gay and lesbian parents and what they said was both heart-warming and saddening: All people should be allowed to love who they love without being hated. It made me wonder how these kids, these young kids, were able to see outside the box. How were they able to say those intelligent words with such calm and ease, with such understanding?

I'm kind of a pessimist, so I don't believe gay marriage will ever occur. Why? Because society gets dumber everyday. Hell, they voted Bush president. But who am I to speak? Maybe it will occur. Black people were slaves for about 200 years, but now they are free. Maybe the same thing will happen to gay, lesbian, and transgendered people in the future. Maybe everyone will understand that it's okay to be who you are. They will demand equal rights for everyone, not just some people. Everyone will love each other and hug each other...wait. That's way too sugar-coated for my tastes. I guess I just want everyone to be treated equally, something all people deserve: gay, straight, black, white, short, tall, whatever.

## Resources, People, and Things to Learn About!

### **trans-academics.org**

Trans-Academics.org is a place where people of all genders can discuss gender theory, the trans community and its various identities, both as a part of the academic world and day-to-day life. This is a trans-friendly space and is open to people of all gender identities. Trans-Academics.org is especially interested in supporting people who are considering or currently are working with trans related topics via research, writing, teaching, and other academic ventures. It is our hope that people working on trans related topics will be able to connect with other people working within the field. Trans-Academics.org firmly believes that there should be a strong connection between academics and activism, as such this site supports: students of all levels, professors, activists groups including campus Queer and LGBTQI programs, as well as people who are involved in the gender variant community on a more personal basis.

### **My Favorite Words #s 10 and 11**

femme also fem: n. (1958) a lesbian who plays the female role in a homosexual relationship

butch: adj. (1941) very masculine in appearance or manner; playing the male role in a homosexual relationship

### **Visit the birIs community at**

[livejournal.com/~birls](http://livejournal.com/~birls)

Thanks to the community's moderators—EJ (~mcpuggington) and Nik (~boiface)—for all you do for the community.

### **Birl-Friendly LJ Communities**

What BirIs Wear

[livejournal.com/~birlstyle](http://livejournal.com/~birlstyle)

What BirIs Aren't Wearing Anything

[livejournal.com/~nekkidbirls](http://livejournal.com/~nekkidbirls)

Creative BirIs and Other Queers

[livejournal.com/~queerarts](http://livejournal.com/~queerarts)

### **The BirIs Group on MySpace.com**

[groups.myspace.com/birlgroup](http://groups.myspace.com/birlgroup).

### **Brazil city mulls transgender bathrooms**

Michael Astor, Associated Press, Thu Dec 15, 8:31 PM ET

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil — For most, it's a choice of the men's room or the women's. A Brazilian city is trying to give an option to those who don't fit easily into either category.

A bill passed by the Nova Iguacu city council Tuesday would require night clubs, shopping malls, movie theaters and large restaurants to provide a third type of bathroom for transgender people. Mayor Lindberg Farias will decide whether to make it a law.

Moreira, a 32-year-old policeman on leave from the force, said he got the idea when dozens of transgender people showed up for a local samba show.

He said the "alternative bathrooms" could also be used by men or women who didn't mind sharing space with transgender patrons.

Moreira said there are nearly 28,000 transgender residents in Nova Iguacu, a poor city of about 800,000 on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro.

Moreira said many transgender people are reluctant to go out because there's no bathroom for them. He denied that the cost of building a third bathroom would be a big problem for restaurant or club owners.

"It requires an initial investment, but after that, the establishment will end up making more money because it will have a larger public. And transvestites like to spend," he said.

The issue has divided gay groups. Some feared it could segregate gays, while others said it recognized a problem within the gay community.

"At first we were against the law, but after some discussion we decided we had to support it because it addresses a real problem for a segment of the gay community," said Eugenio Ibiapino dos Santos, a founder of the Pink Triangle Association, a gay group in Nova Iguacu. "We see it as a way to open a discussion about civil rights."

A study conducted by the Candido Mendes University in Rio de Janeiro found that 60 percent of Rio's gays had met some type of harassment, and 17 percent said they had experienced physical violence.