



Beyond Binaries

THE ZINE

next generation

queer feminism

2020

Content note: This zine contains non-explicit sexual references as well as references to gender dysphoria.

Beyond Binaries

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INTRODUCTION

This zine was written in two countries, several cities, at zine workshops, over coffee, hastily typed on phones, carefully thought out in beds, discussed on skype and expanded in limitless virtual spaces. We love and support (like the double agents that many of us identify as) beyond borders, binaries and categories. And it hopefully shows.

The Beyond Binaries zine is an expression of our turmoils and musings, current thoughts, friendships, relationships and communities. It was created by a community that's always "in between", too complicated, too political, or not political enough.

We defy the idea that contemporary gender terminology is an implant from the west. We acknowledge that the broader queer and trans community is both a global phenomenon and that it has its own local cultural and historical contexts. Queering things up in Central/Eastern Europe comes from both a global discourse and from our very own queer history. We build upon the legacy of centuries of defiant individuals and decades of activists who came before us to create local queer communities, continuities, culture, theory, and art.

We understand that language is a generative and speculative tool that we can use to create worlds which have not yet come to be. Creating a zine in three different languages was an exploration of different options and limitations between the Czech, Slovenian and English languages. How do you create gender neutral expressions in Slavic languages? How do you gender English affirmatively? Each language presents different struggles and strategies, but we sought to subvert the notion that the anglo-centric approach is always more powerful and we strive to find queerness in our first languages.

So turn the page, step inside, and get lost in our own little pocket universe beyond binaries!



GENDER
ROLES?

I DON'T CARE
ABOUT THESE
TRASH

THE SOLIDARITY MANIFESTO

Everyone is bisexual and/or transgender enough regardless of your experiences and background. You count and you are a valued member of this community.

We are mindful not only of the "what" of our activism, but also the "how". The content of our work is just as important as how it makes people feel.

Our goal is to create communities that are healing, safe, loving and fun and that extend beyond organised activities into a network of genuine connection, friendship, and support.

For us, a "safe community" doesn't mean never addressing hard or negative topics, nor that there is never confrontation or disagreement. It means that we are mindful of how we engage with those things and with each other. We don't address anything just to be right or righteous, we do it to grow as a community and as individuals.

We treat each other with kindness, respect, and transparency.

All members of our community are important and valued, regardless of how respectable they appear. We welcome people who are confused, promiscuous, non-monogamous, and flamboyant just as warmly as those who fit societal expectations, because we see stereotypes as having subversive power, not as something to be ashamed of. We don't leave anyone behind.

We understand that joining an established group can be challenging and we make an effort to make newcomers in our community feel included and welcome.

Our community is not just for extroverts or for people who have an easy time participating in groups. We understand anxiety and shyness and do our best to welcome and accommodate everyone. We don't put people on the spot or pressure them to participate in any activity they don't want to.

We understand that LGBT+ vocabulary can seem confusing and intimidating and that not everyone is familiar with it. We assume that people in our community have good intentions and are doing their best. We treat mistakes and misunderstandings with empathy and patience. People have a right to make mistakes, learn, and grow without facing resentment, personal attacks, or the fear of losing their community.

We believe that being a kind and compassionate person is more important than knowing the politically correct terminology of the moment. We can never be perfect, but we can be kind.

We honour, explore, and create bisexual and transgender culture, politics, and history beyond the internet and American media.

We create an environment where people feel safe to be open and vulnerable.

We respect and value every body regardless of size, disability, and presentation.

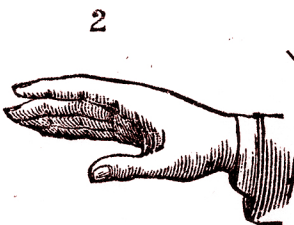
Humour is a powerful tool for tackling hard topics.

Language is our tool, not our end goal. The endless variety of ways we understand and define our genders and sexualities enriches us. Our community was never meant to be easy to understand, nor to swallow, and we embrace that. We don't let ourselves be limited by language, and we have fun with it.

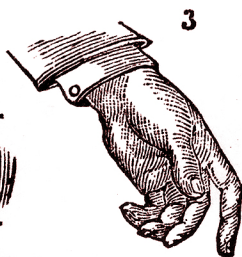
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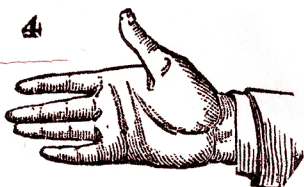
Cup



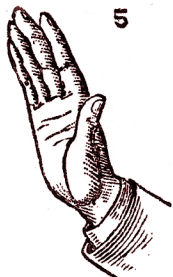
Caress



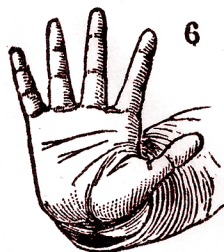
Poke



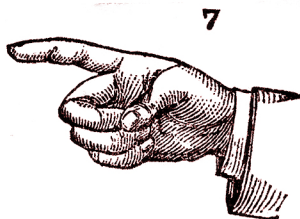
Fondle



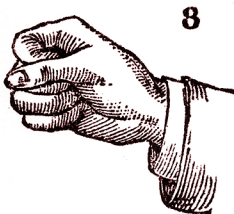
Slap



High five



Finger



Fist



Thank



* a bi femme who straps

REYNE de BATON*

LJUBA PRENNER

Ljuba Prenner (1906-1977) was a Slovenian writer and lawyer. He* was baptised as Amalija Marija Uršula, but started calling himself Ljuba in early childhood. In high school, he got a short, men's haircut and started wearing men's clothes. Because of his gender (presentation) he had to work a lot harder than his peers to pass and had to transfer high schools several times, all while supporting himself, but he persisted and moved to Ljubljana to study law after graduating high school in Belgrade. He earned a PhD in law in 1941, and started working with the National Liberation Front, saving Slovenian prisoners from Italian prisons and concentration camps based on a fake law he fabricated, until Germans caught him. He fought for justice his whole career and was very passionate about saving people from the death



sentence and staged trials. His progressive political views often clashed with authorities and he was banned from practising law for seven years, expelled from the Slovenian Writers' Society, banned from writing, and sentenced to a working camp for two years.

Despite the problems he encountered as a writer, he published many short stories, children's stories, and had two theatre plays and an opera libretto staged. He also went down in history as the author of the first proper Slovenian detective novel (allegedly written on a bet). He also wrote first person (using masculine grammatical gender) love poetry for his lover. He loved art and was friends with many important artists of the time.

Little is known about his romantic life. He lived with maths professor Slavica Rems, who also kept a lot of his unpublished manuscripts, and was later close with teacher Štefka Vrhnjak. They planned to grow old together, but Štefka died of cancer, a tragedy which broke Ljuba's heart. He met Štefka's niece Marija Mrzel Krenker and her family at the funeral and started spending a lot of time with them, eventually moving in and living with them as a family member. Jerca Mrzel, one of the daughters, says that the children saw Ljuba as a father figure and referred to him as "striček" (uncle).

He was known for facing prejudice with a good sense of humour. His legal assistant recounted a story of him entering the office on the first day of work in a new legal firm with a batch of *kremna rezina* cakes, announcing, "I'm Dr. Ljuba Prenner, neither a man nor a woman, and I brought you cakes to make that easier to swallow." ("*Jaz sem dr. Ljuba Prenner, ne moški ne ženska, tukaj imate torte in se posladkajte.*") There is only one known written account of him talking about his gender presentation in a letter, saying, "Wearing trousers makes living easier for me, I suffer in skirts, and God only knows why that is. I was afraid of being myself for years, but I am myself now, and people have finally stopped paying it any mind." He also famously responded to rumours and slander saying, "Anyone who talks behind my back is talking to my arse." ("*Kdor za mojimi hrbtom govori, se z mojo riljo pogovarja.*")

He died of cancer aged 71, nursed through his final months by the Mrzel family.

*This article uses he/him pronouns for Ljuba, because one of his step daughters confirmed that he referred to himself in masculine grammatical gender among friends, and allegedly also in private letters (but those have not yet been published). It is also possible that his chosen name was Ljubo (masculine) and not Ljuba (feminine), but as all sources that this author has found insist on calling him Ljuba (and most a woman) it remains unclear.





Be Your Own Monster

In a society where you are constantly othered, insisting on your humanity can feel like a losing battle.

When you are at the end of your rope make friends with your own Monster

ASSIGNING A GENDER EXPRESSION TO NONBINARY

What is androgyny? It can mean in between, or it can mean both. If a hairy man wears lipstick, he expresses himself with androgyny. If a small woman with soft features wears a suit and short hair, she is utilising androgyny. For some men and women, androgyny is a default state of being, even when wearing neutral clothing like jeans and a t-shirt, their features are so ambiguous that strangers aren't quite sure how to read their gender.

At birth, we are generally judged either male or female. But this assignment comes with more than just a gender marker - it comes with gender roles and expressions; femininity for females, masculinity for males. Throughout their lives, many women and men will defy their assigned roles and expressions. Some women will grow up to be butch lesbians, shaving their heads, wearing men's clothes, and exclusively dating women. Some men will grow up to be femme goddesses, wearing makeup and dresses, using feminine inflections in their speech. It is a well established fact that assigned gender expression does not equate to true personal gender expression. But to achieve alternative gender expressions, many must go through painful trials and tribulations, as society tends to discourage straying too far from assigned roles.

For the past few decades, nonbinary gender experiences have been gradually moving to the forefront of european queer culture. They don't fit as neatly into society as "man" and "woman" do, in fact most people aren't even aware that they exist. But we have been *creating*. We have been making room and space and language to help us understand and express these alternative gender options.

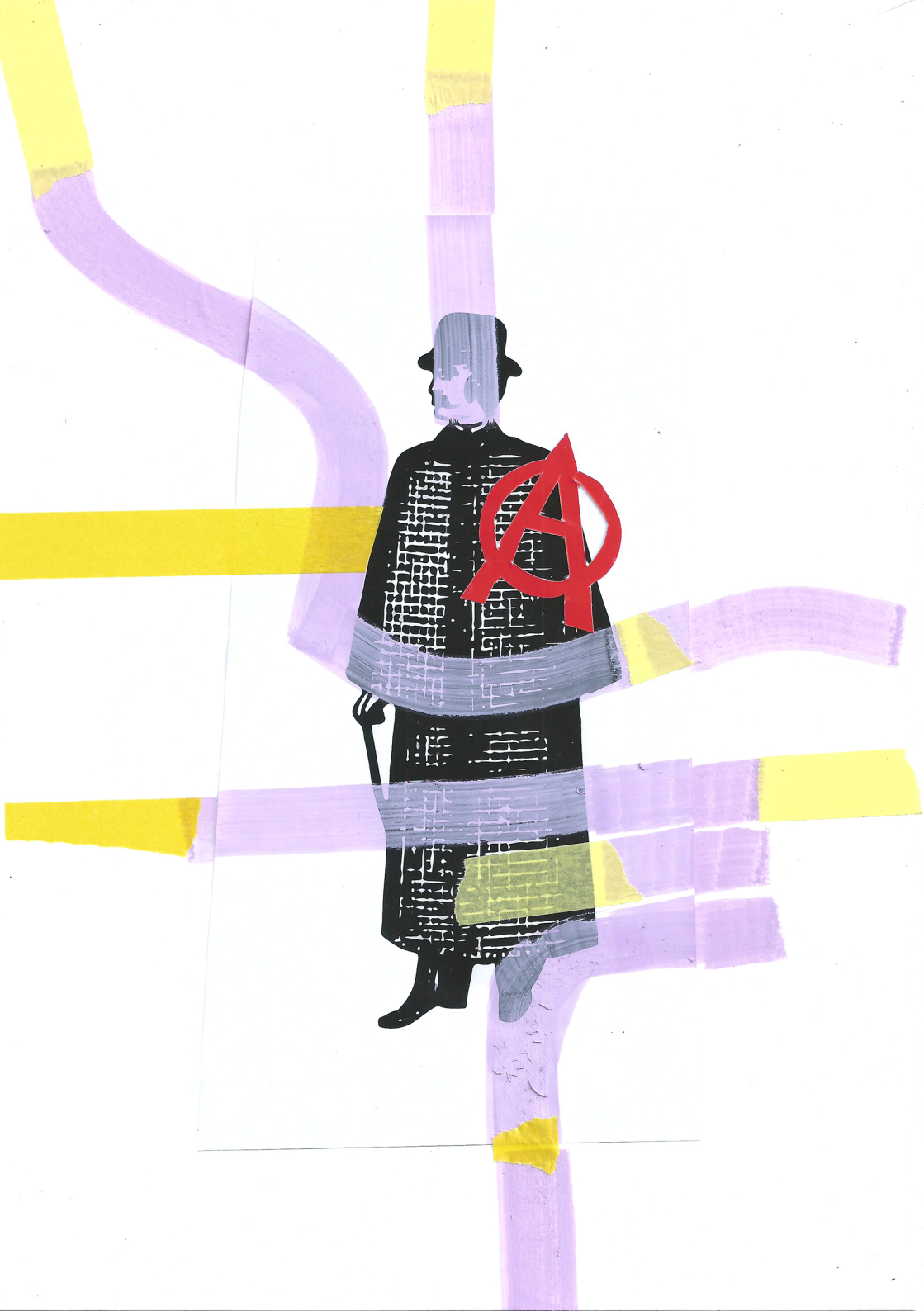
Naturally, as nonbinarism fills a space outside of (and sometimes

encompassing both) "man" and "woman", we tend to assign an androgynous gender expression to nonbinary people. Nonbinary people are expected to fill a space inbetween. We're expected to be confusing to strangers. Despite the fact that many nonbinary people want to explore femininity and masculinity on their own terms and express themselves in all sorts of different ways, we have developed cultural expectations for nonbinary people to conform to.

Even with this "queer" androgyny, there are conventional beauty standards. The "good" type of androgynous person is thin, not too tall, and preferably white. They can still model on instagram and collect a wide following outside of the nonbinary community. Nonbinary people who were assigned male at birth, and have physical features which indicate this, are not celebrated to the same degree as those with more ambiguous features.

If we see nonbinary as a third gender option within a trinary gender system, and we assign androgyny to nonbinary, then aren't we enforcing the pillars that are women's femininity and men's masculinity? These boundary lines which have already been crossed and dismantled by queer (and sometimes not so queer) men and women, are perhaps being upheld by those to whom androgyny is vital to nonbinary.

But what is the alternative? How can we avoid reinforcing these structures? We can defy norms - dismantle what it is to be gendered, to be feminine or masculine or both. We can break down what it is that genders clothing and redefine what makeup is used for. We are all confined by the traditional gender assignment system. If I had a hammer, I'd smash it.



BI TRANS POLYAMORY

Bisexuals are, according to research, more likely than any other sexual orientation to be polyamorous. However, being bi and/or trans means you're not limited to just dating people within your minority group which also means facing certain pitfalls which no one warns you about. How unfair! This is a short list of things we wish we had been told before we started exploring polyamory. We messed up and hereby pass our hard-earned learnings on so you can find new, more creative ways to mess up!

There are no tight guidelines, there are no complete, established or *proven* models. Many of us have experienced implicit violence of an assumption of gender roles or assumption or erasure of our sexuality in our relationships. This often stemmed from the idea that as people with more fluid genders and/or sexualities we are moldable and don't have a clear self actualisation, nor agency in how we want to be seen and experience ourselves and desires.

While the following advice will hopefully prove useful to polyamorous people, we hope they might also inspire or assist folks in monogamous relationships.

RED FLAGS

1. Your partner doesn't respect your gender.
e.g. "I'm not going to call you he/they in front of my gay friends so they don't think I'm bisexual, because we are in a gay relationship, I don't want to explain this transgender stuff to them."
2. Your partner doesn't respect your sexuality.
e.g. "You can sleep with other women, but I don't want you to see other men."
3. Your partner has a pattern of exclusively dating much younger people and people who are much less experienced. There may also be other power imbalances.
4. Your partner doesn't respect your boundaries and/or breaks your agreed upon deals liberally and deliberately, preferring their own immediate gratification.
e.g. "I know you said you would prefer for me to not pursue your best friend, but I really like them so I'm going to do it anyway."
5. Your partner says they're fine with you doing something, but then punishes you for it, for example, by giving you the silent treatment.
6. Bisexuals and trans people don't exist to spice up other people's relationships and sex lives and should not be treated as a fetish or disposable.
7. Your partner is expecting nonmonogamy, threesomes, etc., from you because you are bisexual. Your bisexuality does not dictate your sexual or romantic desires.
8. Your partner thinks you owe them sex just because you're in a relationship.
9. Your partner sees attraction to trans people as a kink, and does not treat trans people with equal respect.

GREEN FLAGS

1. Your partner takes the time and effort to communicate and own their feelings.
e.g. *"I'm very happy that you're seeing someone new, but I'm feeling a bit insecure, so I would appreciate affirmation before you go on a date with them."*
2. Your partner makes an effort to affirm your gender in ways that make you comfortable.
3. Your partner treats all of your other relationships with respect and importance regardless of your other partners' gender.
4. Your partner is supportive of your emotional integrity and doesn't push your boundaries on purpose.
5. All parties gracefully try to find a balance between freedom, cohesion and respecting everyone's (mutual) commitments.
6. Lack of gendered expectations in the relationship(s) and intimate life.
7. Treating everyone (primary, secondary partners, casual sex partners, etc.) with care, respect and openness. Remaining transparent about priorities and personal commitments. A secondary partners' time is not less valuable than the primary and they shouldn't always be expected to accommodate the couple.



PHOTO BY VERITY RITCHIE



gender is over

BECOMING AND BE-CUMMING

Writing Possibilities of Existence for Trans Bodies in Times of Collapse

Ana Teo Ala-Ruona is a Finnish nonbinary artist who works with writing, speculative fictions, (future) bodies and performance, and usually includes collective processes in their work. They have recently returned from performing their newest work 'toxinosexofuturecumming's' in Los Angeles, USA.

Hi Teo, I would like you to introduce yourself and your practice(s). How do you position yourself amid multiplicities of different discourses?

I'm a Helsinki-based performance artist working at the moment mostly with speculative fiction and embodied writing practices, and I create performances based on those practices. At the moment I'm especially interested in speech, especially speaking queer speculative fiction, as a form of body-building. At the moment... I guess I use SF (speculative fiction) as a form of practicing transitioning and as a way of looking for future-bodies I want to move towards. And as a part of my work I also facilitate spaces for other nonbinary, trans and queer people to write bodies, realities and worlds for themselves.

I know you work with SF, particularly queer SF. Where do you draw that from?

I usually open up my position by claiming that I have not received an academic education in writing fiction, but it's not anything that I'd like to give too much focus to. What I mean is that I don't think people have to go through a specific education to consider themselves writers, although some people who have gone through it might feel differently and might feel a certain ownership around those terms (such as SF), which I understand. I just think it is largely about the actual practice, about doing. I also consume speculative fiction a lot. At the moment, especially SF by queer and trans authors. I'm a person who has been writing their whole life, and it is a place of dealing with realities and therein I place a legitimacy of my practice.

So I use SF not as a genre – for example, horror or science fiction – but more as a term... something serving as a thinking tool towards the moment of the act of writing, to help people articulate and write worlds and characters they'd like to live as, or live within, for a moment. So then the act of writing works as a parallel reality. I am interested in how writing those characters and inhabiting them therein creates and modifies your own bodily experience, the actual physical body.



© A. T. Ala-Ruona, 'toxinofuturesexocummings' by Nova Kaspia

There are many people and writers I am thinking with at the moment. One is obviously **Donna Haraway** and Donna's take on the term SF (especially her book *Staying with the Trouble*). I am also reading a beautiful book called *Meanwhile Elsewhere*, an anthology of trans speculative fiction. I've also been thinking a lot with **Hélène Cixous**. She has really nice ways of thinking about the moment of writing, and her texts have been super influential on my work. But unfortunately her writings are problematic, as they have some gender essentialism in them. She talks about two genders, which is obviously a problem, and makes it hard for me to read her anymore that much. I'd also like to name **Audre Lorde's** *Poetry Is Not Luxury*, which has had an impact on my ways of thinking too. Based on that text I started incorporating specific writing practices in 2016. There's also a book about SF by **Angelika Bammer**, called *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s*, which I've been reading. And then there are of course many other lovely artists and writers such as one of my idols, a Finnish artist **Camille Auer**, who's breaking up linguistic binaries in language. And also I've recently been reading **micha cárdenas's** texts.

How would you describe your practice as a practice of embodiment, and how would you describe its materiality and processuality. What does body have to do with it?

Sometimes I like to use **Hakim Bey's** idea of temporary autonomous zone (TAZ) in my work. I consider TAZ from a perspective of self-definition, autonomy and self-care. I like to think of the moment of writing as a little island, an oasis within the happenings of the world. For example if I am in a lecture room with a cis, white, hetero male lecturer saying something uncomfortable, and if I can't access in that moment other tools of protest or leave the space, I write myself a space on my laptop right there - a kinder place to be, if you will, a place elsewhere, away from that situation.

So when I facilitate a workshop, I usually start with a proposal; 'write for 30 minutes about (or inside) a world... a world in which you'd like to live or be in.' And sometimes that invitation in and of itself is enough to produce immensely amazing texts by participants. It seems simple, but it's also difficult for many marginalised people to imagine a world in which our ways of being/living/existing are not questioned. Especially if you are not a cisgender person. But it is also affirmative to practice this type of imagination.

Lately I have been writing characters with other people. We script them and after that we share them and then continue writing, not about the character, but as the character, often, for example, in the first person, including some things you might want to experience in the character's body.

I also like to write from bodily sensations. In this practice you start writing about a sensation in your body, maybe a specific body part of yours, and then little by little you start 'growing' new things, stuff on your body, which builds up to a creation of a character derived from your body as either an expanded or a detached form of your own body.

For me personally these practices have served as a way of dealing with my own gender and my experience of my body and articulating some wishes of how I'd like my body to become. It is a practice of my personal transitioning, and I hope it could offer a similar space for others. It also does not have to be necessarily a transitioning body; it could maybe help a body to deal with pain or trauma or other issues.

Aren't we all transitioning bodies in a sense? Aren't all our bodies aging and morphing, as is the world we inhabit?

Sure, in a way, but of course transition for a trans body is a whole different thing than any given change for a cisgender body. And yes, we can write a limitless queerness through speculative fiction if we want to! [laughs] It effects our experience, and we can travel places. For example, **Ursula K. LeGuin** is great in this (travelling to alternative realities through writing). Although it might sound glorifying to say that writing can take you to different worlds, if you really give it a chance, I truly believe it can do things for you.

But I know that reading and writing is still a privilege and not everyone can access that. But maybe there can be other ways of accessing it beyond typing or handwriting a text. Maybe storytelling could be also used. And surely that, too, is a privileged practice still requiring resources such as time and space.

What are your preferred materials and ways of writing? What are your favourite body positions and places to write?

Noone has ever asked me that. For a very long time I preferred to use journals and diaries. There is something very beautiful about the trio of a body, a pencil or a pen and paper. I consider these together as a collective that creates a site of writing. When you write with a pen and a hand, your mind is probably already ahead. Sometimes if in my head I write myself a dog, for example, and the dog is yellow, before my hand reaches the point of writing those words, the dog might turn blue. There is a certain rhythmical clumsiness in that writing style/apparatus. Recently I have started typing with a computer without any editing. It produces a lot of writing, sometimes with long uninteresting segments in between.

As for a position, if I use pen and paper, I prefer laying on my stomach. I am right-handed, so usually my right hand would be the writing hand and my head would be turned the other way, with my body, including my head, fully lying on the ground turned the other way so I do not see what I am writing. This is my favourite writing position. I sometimes fall asleep like this. The position frees me from too much thinking. If I write on a computer, I like sitting with my computer in my bed with it on my lap. Not an ergonomic position, I guess! [laughs] Table and chair is really not for me.

If we move towards the performativity of a body, how do you utilise the texts and bring them to a performance?

There have been three to four performances so far based on this type of writing and two of them were collective. It worked as a choir: at the end of a workshop I led, participants could recorded parts of those texts and then they were played on top of each other as a part of an exhibition. It was – well – maybe not cacophonous - but polyphonic for sure. People could get closer towards a particular speaker to better understand what they were saying or they could immerse in the mixture of worlds and words and utterances.

A similar practice was used in another work where a big speech choir included eleven people on stage. Most of them had been taking part in a writing workshop. Some were outsiders and worked with others' texts. The piece lasted about an hour. They spoke out speculative worlds, some in unison, some atop of each other, so the audience heard it only as glimpses of a landscape passing by.

My latest piece was a solo. I won't share much details because I'd like potential audiences to be able to enjoy it afresh, as a surprise. But it's a speech performance. I speak as three fictional genderless or multi-gendered characters who are also lovers of another genderless or multi-gendered X character. It is a polyamorous situation between those characters, and I speak through all of them. I wrote those characters over a long period of time, maybe half a year. Two of them are more fictional than the others, distant in the future time, in their evolution. One of them is more a character I can imagine myself being at the moment.



© A.T. Ala-Ruona

Does your body dictate the text or does the text dictate the body? How would you describe the (power) dynamics between them? Or should we get over the formulation of 'dictating'?

Yes, I think it is more a symbiotic moment. I don't like the idea of benefiting or curing something or finding the truth. It is a game, a play... and it's all about pleasure. It's funny, I've not mentioned pleasure in this interview yet. But it's the most important part in my work, maybe because for me, queer pleasure often seems hidden or oppressed, obfuscated. If you're writing, for example, I feel blue slime on my thighs and it's warm and lovely, or whatever, I mean, if you're simply writing masturbatory material, for example, which I often do and encourage others to do, it's hard to pinpoint where the pleasure starts. Is it the writing? Is it your body? The body/ies of others you're having sex with? I think it would be really problematic to use the idea of dictatorship. Surely in some powerplay dynamics, there might be an initiator of the excitement, but I don't honestly think there is a hierarchy between the writer's body and what is being written, between the surroundings and memories. Everything affects you – politics, weather, have you slept enough...?

In your latest work 'toxinosexofuturecumings' you work with toxicities. What do you define and perceive as toxic, what do you understand to be toxicities, where do you place toxicities? And in language, what language and discourses do you find toxic?

So Mary Maggic said something along the lines that toxicities are human-made materials making harm in the bodies of the Earth.

My take on toxicities is that many of the discourses around toxicities are toxic, because they are queerphobic, transphobic and homophobic, gender-essentialist and have violent ways of understanding 'the natural'. Many of the ways environmental toxicities and ecological disasters, and their impacts on bodies, as framed in popular discourses, are unfriendly to queer people.

There is a lot of discussion (and bemoaning) about how environmental toxicities are queering up bodies and gender, affecting the reproductive system of bodies, etc. *Giovanna Di Chiro* asks in her text *Polluted Politics? Confronting Toxic Discourse, Sex Panic, and Eco-normativity*, 'There is a good reason for alarm, but where should the critical attention lie?'

The fear that there are more transgender people because of environmental toxicities is absurd. What's the scary thing about that, would that really be such a bad thing? Would that really be the main problem in environmental toxicities? What about cancer and other kinds of diseases, and the bodies that are most affected? What about race and class and the way bodies get impacted without a choice?

In 'toxinosexofuturecumings', I am reclaiming my own body that has been chemically and ideologically thoroughly affected, even as a white privileged western body, I am by far not the most affected. But as a body that is nonbinary and trans, I claim the ownership of my body and the changes happening in it. Changes and experiences that may appear due to environmental toxicities and changes, or may not. Maybe they appear due to other things. But I want to experience pleasure in this body, and have fun in and through it.

The toxic discourse, toxic words and language is increasing in the public space. The discourse around gender, race, ability, disability, at the moment, seems still very toxic, and I hope my work can help to decrease that toxicity. I think maybe there is also a nice way to allow not knowing, not having finite answers. But if we continue speaking about environmental toxicities with a toxic language, it's certainly not going to help.

Interviewed by Tereza Silon



genderqueer fetish

DO WOMEN EVER FEEL LIKE A FETISH?

DO MEN EVER FEEL LIKE A FETISH?

I DO

I AM TRANSEXUAL, GENDERQUEER,

I LIVE SO FAR OUTSIDE OF WHAT IS NORMAL

IF MAN AND WOMAN ARE FETISH THEY ARE THE MOST

SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE FETISHES

THEY ARE ADVERTISED ON BILLBOARDS AND IN MAGAZINES

AND ON TELEVISION

I AM THE DIRTY SECRET IN YOUR BROWSER HISTORY

SO MANY PEOPLE WANT TO FUCK ME

BUT NO ONE WANTS TO TALK ABOUT IT

MAYBE THAT'S WHAT A FETISH IS.

BUT SOMETIMES IT'S COOL TO WANT

TO FUCK A FREAK LIKE ME

HIPSTERS CAN TELL THEIR FRIENDS

THEY FUCKED A TRANNY

THEY ARE SPECIAL BECAUSE THEY SEE MY SOUL

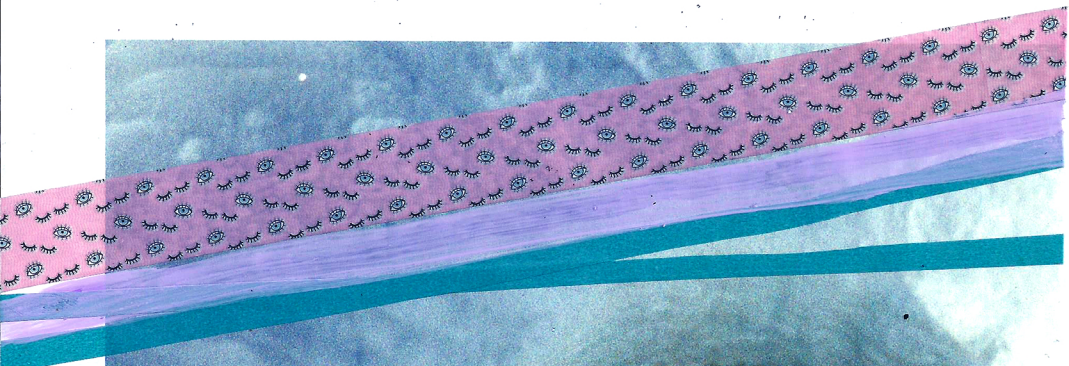
AND NOT THE HIDEOUS MONSTROSITY THAT IS MY BODY

SOMEHOW I'M SUPPOSED TO FIND THAT FLATTERING

GLAD TO BE WORN AS A FASHION ACCESSORY

I DO LIKE FASHION

WHERE ARE YOU WHERE ARE YOU AGAIN IN YOUR HEAD WHERE TELL ME WHERE WERE



IN MY HIDING PLACE
I WATCHED THE WORLD
AND WAITED FOR THE RIGHT TIME

THE REVOLUTION IS NOW
THE REVOLUTION IS ME

Zero is Infinity

The English word "both" is the rare remnant of the dual case. When people say they're attracted to "both genders" they're using the dual case of the word "all". Never in history has there been an intentional exclusion when referring to "both" genders. Bisexual has always meant all genders.

On the other hand, non-binary, a more recent invention, has always been intended to mean "none of the above". Non-binary rejects traditional systems of gender all together. To be non-binary is to be both outside and beyond gender. So while bisexual refers to all, non-binary refers to none. Zero = infinity. It really doesn't add up; that's why I like it so much. People try to tell me that there are rules to what non-binary is and what bisexual is. They're really missing the point there. I'm a rule breaker, an outlaw, a criminal, and the more people try to impose rules on the anarchy that is my life, the more likely I am to break them. Don't try and tell me who I can date, and don't try and tell me to be androgynous. You were raised to enforce the rules. Is that who you want to be?

Handwritten notes:
Kous: S
Justice date
in photo of Justice
above = 0
0 = ∞
1 = ∞

AFTER MY COMING OUT

Magdalena Šipka

The day after my unintended coming out
I am the cover face of a tabloid
and an American nun
asks me 'please tell me your stories'

Fourteen days after my horrific coming out
I am headed to the Open Festival
And lost in the Bludnik park
Whispers seep through my old friends' lips

A month after my dark coming out
I snort an enchanted line in London
and for the first time I see
The sky revealed above the clouds

Half a year after my exploited coming out
I re-tell my story for the first time and
see for the last time the face of my journal's boss

Seven months after my isolating coming out
I love resurrected buildings
with a roof shielding from all the hurt
I sleep in a squat

Eight months after my tragical coming out
I watch a package of pills dissolve
On a balcony, rain instead of death
So I pop antidepressants

A year after my ridiculous coming out
amid tender mountains
I live the same romantic utopia
My arms overflow with golden hypericum

One and half years after my coming out
In the magic of Christmas lights
I kiss my first lesbian lover
And the priest curses me to stay silent forevermore

Twenty months after my coming out
I know I am – quite simply - a human



OFF TO
PLANT THE
SEEDS OF
BISEXUALITY

Transitioning Bisexually

Bisexuals sometimes transition. In the same way that I once transitioned socially from male to female, I've had to transition now and then "bisexually". Once upon a time, I was a guy with a girlfriend. Although I knew that wasn't quite the role I wanted to play in life, it was definitely in contrast to later being a guy with a boyfriend. Walking down the street with my girlfriend was easy, in some ways, although I knew it reinforced this dysphoric concept of me as cis straight man. No one harassed us. We could kiss without thinking about who was watching. But when I kissed my boyfriend in public, my dysphoria slightly alleviated by leaving the territory of "straight cis man",
I was frightened.

Taking my girlfriend home to meet the parents wasn't a big deal. Nothing could make my mother happier than me finding someone I could impregnate. But while she wasn't homophobic per se, there was tension at the idea that I might "end up" with a guy. I wasn't so much encouraged to bring him home.

I'm rarely seen as bisexual; I'm either gay or straight. Now, having traded out my gender, holding hands with my girlfriend in public means I'm seen as a lesbian. But even when I was single, people saw me as gay or straight. In the workplace, I had to be careful what I said, which ex I spoke about, who I found attractive, because this would dictate whether I was a gay person or a straight person in that environment. Once you've been established as gay, it doesn't matter that your dating history is diverse - people assume you were just confused when you dated so-and-so.

Transitioning gender was a choice, to some degree. But having to wasn't. I didn't have any interest in having a gender to begin with, but people kept giving it to me. If I didn't shave my body, if I didn't wear a bra, I could easily be gendered as a man without my consent. I didn't like that. And there was never any inbetween. I tried for the inbetween, I really did. It's a nice ideal, but, as with bisexuality, not a realistic one. People chose for me. So I learned all the right stuff and I changed my gender presentation until people gendered me as a woman instead of a man. I liked that better.

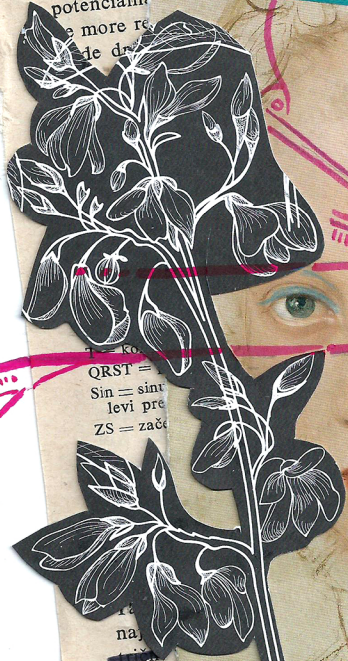
While I transitioned my gender just the once, I transition my sexual orientation all the time. It's not about what I wear, it's about the words I say and the hands I hold. I don't much like these binary options. I wish people could see that I'm more than all this gender nonsense. I wish they could see the freedom and fun and love that make up my real life, rather than what they insist on projecting onto me. Their loss.

popolnega srčnega
ekstrasistolah (ES).
Eke ne razodeva,
alvanom

Vzra
potencialna
e more re
de dr

ORST =
Sin = sin
levi pre
ZS = zač

nici. M
desne
v kriv
preka
mer se razvije električni potencial,
zgoraj v srčni bazi pozitivni pol pa
te potencialne raz



You.

MIROSLAVA KONEČNÁ

you, whose mind's wondering directionlessly
and like a thunderstorm wanting to burst into an infinity
you, who do not see an exit beyond loneliness
are hasting with a short step.

.
exhausted

.
injured
by a war, whose ammunition's words
and speers of the war_sharp hateful gaze.

.
you love the games of Prague's alleys.
you,
a civilized child
a child of the millenium
a child of a new age.
painfully belonging, communing without communion,
a wanderer above an ocean of mists,
or through a stormy ocean.
you want to scream and hand-swing a broken bottle
threaten with death the whole world
just because you hate its shape
you awake and homeless
even within the district of your own mind.

you want to gather and redistribute
but you were not gifted,
you were not enabled,
you were not inspired.

powder-dry
under all the other's moist.
without the option to clench thirst with your own ideas
you see and admire
and gasp for breath.

and know
your jealousy's not a blessing,
it's not pure,
and shouldn't be allowed.

-
you've learnt to leave your form
and to become
a shared consciousness.
at least for a break of a moment
to bend the reality
and not be you.

you've learnt to suppress
the voices of a kinship.
the tension that
would force you
to not remain silent.

fearful eyes meeting any good news.
and rage welcomes the bad ones.

after a while you've adopted the face.
given onto you by others.
and I.

I worry for you in your desperate desire
to not be

I shout at you, into you.

.
child!
I see you in your size, your whole scale of
selves
and I despise your sheepish self-sedation!

.
you frown upon my vision_
you tear my vision of yours_

but after all
didn't you - too
- want to trust
your worthiness.

GENDER IN SLAVIC LANGUAGES

Slavic languages are significantly more gendered than English, which is why a simple discussion about pronouns or an attempt to copy non-Slavic languages is not enough to solve androcentrism and binarism in languages where verbs, nouns and adjectives also have a grammatical gender.

Feminist and LGBT communities have been trying to find ways to overcome that, and there has been a surge of new suggestions in recent years. The following are some of the proposed solutions for Slovenian grammatical gender.

UNDERSCORE

How it works: Both feminine and masculine suffixes are used in a word, with an underscore between them symbolically opening up space for other genders. This approach was borrowed from German and is currently the most widely used strategy for creating gender neutral language in Slovenian. Sadly, it only works in written language, and can make complex texts hard to read.

Example: Ta teden bomo na trans srečanju izdelovale_i stripe. Vabljenje_il

FEMININE GRAMMATICAL GENDER AS NEUTRAL

How it works: Instead of masculine grammatical gender, which is currently used as neutral in most contexts, we simply use feminine when talking about mixed-gender groups, using generic *you* and when gender is unknown or irrelevant. This works for both written and spoken language as well as for electronic readers for visually impaired people, but may be considered less inclusive.

Example: Drage poslušalke, upamo, da ste uživale v nocojšnjem programu.

NEUTER GRAMMATICAL GENDER AS NEUTRAL

How it works: Neuter is the third grammatical gender besides masculine and feminine. It's a gender neutral option that already exists in the language and is used daily. However, most nouns don't have a neuter version which would have to be invented.

Example: Sestrin otrok, moj nečko, je zlato dete, ki mi je izdelalo rojstnodnevno voščilnico.

DOTS (·)

How it works: The symbol · is used between the root and the feminine ending of the word. The three dots represent the root of the word, "and", "or" and "neither" (masculine and/or/nor/feminine). This approach was borrowed from Croatian and is much easier to read and much more natural, however the symbol doesn't exist on keyboards and has to be copied every time or have a shortcut created for it manually.

Example: Raziskoval·ke so odkril·e, da biseksual·ke predstavljamo največji delež LGBT skupnosti.

MIXING GRAMMATICAL GENDERS

How it works: Within a text, both masculine and feminine grammatical genders are used as neutral, usually one in each sentence, followed by a sentence in the other grammatical gender. This works for both written and spoken language but might be confusing for the speaker who has to keep track of swapping genders and using them evenly.

Example: Včeraj smo šle v center na kavo. V Pritličju smo srečali tvojo sestro.

LINGUISTIC GYMNASTICS

How it works: Grammatical gender can sometimes be avoided with careful rephrasing or reworking of sentences. This is often easier to read than graphic symbols inserted into words and can also go unnoticed in environments where you don't want to draw attention to (unconventional) gender in language, but can be quite limiting (eg. mostly can't be done in past and future tenses).

Examples: "Drago občinstvo!" instead of "Drage gledalke in gledalci!"

All of these strategies come with advantages and disadvantages and work differently for different purposes. Are we trying to not gender a specific person or are we trying to subvert masculine as the norm in Slovenian? Are we making a phone call, posting on our collective's facebook page or writing a PhD thesis?

We should also keep in mind that none of the above solutions are perfect and that this isn't their intention. We live in an era of rapidly changing gender norms which is also reflected in the way we view and use language. However, the most optimal approach won't be created overnight and will probably only be revealed with long term use - only practice will show what works and what sticks around and what doesn't. And that's okay! It means we don't have to feel pressure to immediately find the best solutions and can maintain a curious and playful approach to language.

Chill notes:

**BEING MONOGAMOUS
DOES NOT ERASE YOUR SEXUALITY**



**BEING ASEXUAL OR AROMANTIC
WHILE CREATING CLOSE BONDS
AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH PEOPLE
OF DIFFERENT GENDERS STILL
DOES NOT EXCLUDE YOU
FROM BI COMMUNITY**



TOYEN

Toyen (1902-1980) was an esteemed Czech surrealist artist with ties to Parisian surrealist circles and a pioneer of artificialism.

Although terms such as trans man, trans masculine and nonbinary have been used in a reference to Toyen, we do not know exactly what Toyen's gender identity was. Some have attempted to erase his apparently complex experience of gender. Recently a memorial plaque was revealed for the "First Dame of Czech surrealism" in Krásova street in Žižkov where Toyen lived, and while the gesture of honouring his artistic work seems crucial, the erasure of gender diversity in history and art history is disappointing, potentially shutting off a portal to a queer art lineage in Czechia.



Toyen wore both traditionally more feminine and masculine clothing in various contexts. Unlike the case of another prolific surrealist photographer Claude Cahun, who explicitly stated a preference of neutral grammatical gender when being addressed, we only know of Toyen's use of masculine grammatical gender in Czech, and therefore this essay will use he/him pronouns. Toyen's friend, the Nobel Prize winning poet Seifert, allegedly came up with the mononymous title which Toyen used everywhere (except in the case of signing legal documents, official letters, etc.). Seifert remembers the poetic way Toyen once said goodbye when leaving a group of friends after an evening out:

"Farewell. I am just a sad [male] painter."

Toyen disliked his given surname, Čermínová (which is gendered feminine and possessive in Czech) and refused to acknowledge ties to his biological family, though he briefly lived with his sister sometime before moving to Krásova street, where he was hiding Jewish artist Jindřich Heisler once the Nuremberg Laws were instated. There are some comments that strongly suggest Toyen was also bisexual. Toyen broke rules between highbrow and lowbrow art and signed work deemed pornographic with his artistic pseudonym. Some of the work depicted lesbianism, a fairly invisible theme at the time. Toyen travelled to Paris and to Berlin, where he expressed an interest in queer women's sexuality.

Toyen was known to have certain links with feminism (although he did not directly participate with any of the contemporary existing groups in Prague) and foremost with anarchism. This may be another reason he disliked familial ties, gender roles, oppressive apparatuses and another reason for his sympathy for other oppressed groups, an expression of his anarchic queering and breaking of the boxes, not only politically, but also individually and socially.

His work is mostly categorised and studied with women artists. Some readings suggest that dark imagery from one period of his artistic career, such as dead birds, effaced figures in dresses, figures with their back to us, empty corsets and women's gloves, fragmented or dismembered bodies and genitals point not only to the isolation of the war period, but also to the isolation of disidentification with his gender assigned at birth and gender roles in social contexts. However, while it's possible it might be an expression of dysphoric experiences, as we understand it now, it is (as any reading of imagery) a speculative one. His collaboration with and connection to other prevalently male artists and his camaraderie with them point to the fact that Toyen was not only disconnected through his gender expression to broader social concepts, but that - on the contrary - it connected him in a collegial manner with other creators of the artistic "boys' club" within the surrealist circles, clearly manifested by the mutual influence the works of Toyen and (especially) Štýrský show. Toyen illustrated Štýrský's *Erotic Revue 1930-33*, M. de Sade's *Justine* and worked with other surrealist artists in Devětsil surrealist group. In his Parisian years from the late 1940s, he was known to foster friendships with Andre Breton, who was also known to be quite homophobic and sexist and was disliked for that by artistic peers such as open-minded bisexual Leonor Fini. He was known to intellectually deeply respect Claude Cahun and Toyen, two figures who decidedly did not fall into hegemonic genders and gender roles of the times and who refused to self-identify with femininity.

Besides this, the figures are also connected to the dislike of the fascist regimes of Europe. Where Toyen risked everything by sheltering Jewish poet Jindřich Heisler, Claude Cahun and their partner Marcel Moore created a fierce and well-plotted two-person resistance cell to Nazi occupation of Jersey Island, collaborating with Czechoslovak slave workers. Claude and Marcel lived and were caught there just before the end of the war. Time in prison worsened both of the partners' health and they attempted suicide, but survived, despite the fact that the experience took a huge toll on Claude's already fragile health. According to Chaddwick's study centering women of surrealism (and those surrealists who defied and challenged their gender at assigned birth), surrealist women (and people occupying non-hegemonic, nonbinary queer genders such as Cahun) seemed to be much more explicitly on the forefront of political resistance.

At the beginning of the Communist coup after surviving the shock of the Second World War, Toyen moved to Paris in 1947/48. He died in Paris in 1980.

THE ART OF LOVING

with Czech Artist, Mother and Pedagogue Darina Alster

'I want people to know that this is what a mother also can look like. But this is also how a bisexual person lives and looks like, and that bisexual parents exist, and that some of them might have other partners, too.'

Darina Alster, a bisexual artist, is reviewing the influence, not only of her coming out, but also that which pregnancy, birthing experiences and motherhood have had on her and her own rebirth. Not just personally speaking, but also in terms of her career and artistic focus. She admits that motherhood, working with familial dynamics, care work, and interdependence have been making her transition from a strong solitary artist working around topics such as goddess figures and admitted sexuality in monadic religions into an even stronger, cross-pollinating, collective-process oriented artist engaging in collaborative projects such as *Theatrum Mundi* or the group *Mothers Artlovers*, which she co-founded with Kateřina Olivová, dedicated to artistic and activist sharing and foremost solidarity support by and for artists who are also mothers and/or caring persons. She's more recently been creating interactive installations such as *Tarot Lab* in the *GASK Gallery*, which presents the visitors with the possibility of an encounter.

Darina, my first question is your self-identification in terms of sexuality and gender. What do the terms you use mean for you individually?

In terms of gender, I see myself as "both", I think I could easily use "they" maybe, but I do not insist on this. And also as a mother/parent I am deeply engaged with topics that - especially in the Czech Republic - are still connected to an idea of "womanhood". I do not mind entertaining and admitting also to this part of myself, and I like my womanhood, it's also a part of my experience. It took me a while to get to this acceptance, but more about that maybe later. In my youth I was socially often seen as a man and my gender was read outside of norms. I did not fit in.

I don't think that the human soul knows limits, neither do I conflate gender, sex and sexuality. The body is a limitation and/or a specificity, but it does not end there.

15 years ago, as a society, we did not have a clue, and if someone wasn't aligned with the (gender) norms and stereotypes, it was presented as a problem. For example, my deep voice was seen as unusual 15 years ago and was presented as a negative thing. It was a little complex of mine until I was 25 and understood better the spectre of sexuality, including but not limited to my personal attraction to and desire for women. Until then I kind of felt sad about me being othered, also sexually. For example, I also attracted men, maybe they wanted to make love to me or engage with me sexually, but they did not see me as a potential partner. Later I met my match. My husband Lukas is also bisexual, so he seemed to understand me better. We had these agreements since the start and now we have two children. We've been together and in love for about eight years.

Paradoxically, the more queer discourse permeates our everyday life, I feel more and more like outing myself, sadly not only because I feel safer, but also because I often feel “not queer enough”, of my queer identity being straightwashed and/or erased. I want people to know that this is also what a mother looks like. And that this is also a possibility of how a bisexual person acts in the world. And that there are bisexual parents also, who might have other lovers, you know. I am saying it foremost because locally there are still so many stereotypes about it!

How and with whose help did you come out? Or what helped you? Was there one period of time you consider your “coming out period”? Was there one coming out or was there more of them? What is your narrative?

It was exactly in year 2007, and it was relatively demanding. An interview came out in *Umělec* magazine (*The Artist Magazine*). The interview was foremost focusing on my art and identity. At that time I had a relationship with a man and a woman, a sort of love triangle. Sexually, I was very fulfilled, but it took me a while to admit it to myself, because from the outside, even in artistic circles people saw it as a sensation. They seemed to either think it was dirty and made me filthy or they wanted to immediately go to bed with me. These were the two main reactions. It seemed that people did not understand that my sexuality is not the anchor of my identity and that they could maybe talk to me and just enjoy that type of engagement, you know. [laughs] There were many reactions to this article. Positive ones and negative ones too. Some people were writing to me claiming I was psychologically sick. I missed having a community at that time. I knew people in the local gay community, but it was too one-sided and the lesbian community did not seem to adopt me; I did not feel welcomed, although I liked them. But it wasn't my community, I did not fit in.

Earlier you mentioned the transparency you have had around your preferences and identities with your partner since the beginning of your relationship, but how do you include your children in your transparency? Do you include them, are they exposed to it? And how old are they?

Laura, sitting here on my lap right now, is three years old, Sofie is six. There are different categories I'd put the information we go through together in. They are taught and know by now that diversity exists. They know that people can be together even if they are of the same sex and/or gender, they know that different people express their gender and their identity differently. Then I teach my children about boundaries and consent. Children are very open, so sometimes I have to explain to them different contexts and situations. I think we talk about it in a healthy way. In this category I also teach them what goes public and which activities are their private business.

One of the things I find important in terms of transparency in front of my children is also that other people we are meeting have a healthy relationship to the fact Lukas and I have children and our children as such, so it does not have to be some sort of 'top secret' for either side. Yes, we are both parents *and* human adults. Expressing emotions and attraction to others also belongs to being a human. I believe that my children are exposed to things other children of

healthy parents would be exposed to, but it is possibly strengthened by the fact that I am very relational as a person. If they are outside with their dad and there is another woman out there with them and dad, they should feel safe and assured that I know about it and am comfortable with it. Otherwise it seems unfair to me.



Photograph of the artist and her child by Marie Zandálková, concept by the artist

Do you consider your family to be traditional in some sense? And who do you count as your family? How do the structures of your kin support each other and what is a challenge?

I think that the biggest challenge and enemy of a relationship and/or family is the idea of the “normal family” and what we should and shouldn’t consider a norm. That destroys people and their connections. The same goes for a strict idea about what counts as parenthood. I know too many mothers that have collapsed under the burden of trying to get everything about mothering perfectly right. And it’s nonsense since children learn the most by mirroring. It’s not enough to tell them I am okay, they need to see it and feel that I can also rest and ask for space and that I too operate on a scale of emotions and can happen to be sad. That it is healthy and a part of being a human, too. The same goes for when they observe their father. This way they feel much more likely empowered to distinguish what is true and real for them and they learn to be autonomous.

My family is traditional in the sense that I wish to stay and bring up our children with Lukas. In this sense we copy the structure of a nuclear family. Maybe the unit could grow if someone joined us, if that felt organic. But on the other hand, my close friends seem to be since forever already a part of my family. Though I had to learn, sometimes through a disappointment, that not everyone has the same expectations of relationships as I do. I had to learn the fact that my friends have different needs and expectations of friendships does not mean they reject me. Sometimes it is a bit difficult to review all that we know about relationships.

You seem to often mention the unfairness and violence towards feminized bodies in public spaces and also against reproductive bodies with wombs, by the latter I mean socially and politically regulated bodies that are physically able to conceive and carry and birth children. But you also often talk about sexuality. Tell me, do you feel like feminized bodies and/or birthing bodies, including your own have limits when it comes to their own expression and activity in the public eye, especially considering their desire and desirability? I am thinking now mostly, but not exclusively, about it in the romantic and sexual sense. Do you feel like you can explore and express your romantic and sexual desires fully without repercussions?

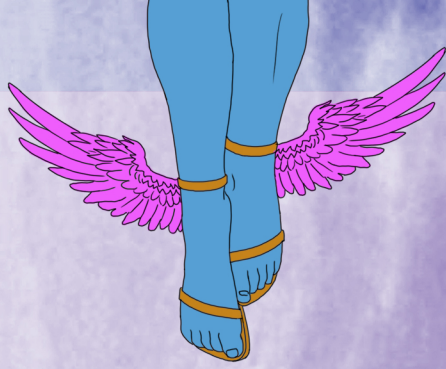
For me, children brought more immediacy and playfulness into my life. I feel more free than when I was single and childless. Children are also - in a sense - an examination of a suitability of my new potential partners. Like - will they manage? And having children taught me to be more transparent and in some sense also childlike. Especially when it comes to emotions. But as I am an adult, people around me must also have a chance to understand my motivations. And that is about connections and taking care and responsibility. We (I) don't want to be hurting anyone, right? I have never cared too much to fit a stereotype and often have been bending especially those regarding gender and sexuality consciously and willfully, so I've never seemed to struggle in this sense. But the real limitations are practical ones, time limitations - who will get to go out and with whom while the other person is looking after the kid. The same goes for work. It is a question of priorities and desires, a question of working as a team (with your partner/s).

When it comes to limits juxtaposed on me by societal expectations, I seem to get by. When one (and by one I mean I) behaves respectfully and has an ethical codex of sorts, I feel like I can question the false authorities and institutions. You have some respect towards others as well as some self-respect, that is normal. But what is the social norm and whether the norm is what is truly normal. . . I don't know. It is important to understand the context in which we live, to understand what is happening and to ask the question "why?" Family and solidarity is important to me, but we can question, agree or disagree on what we personally want it to look like and how we want it to function.

Is there something I haven't asked and you'd like me to ask you? Is there anything you'd like to add?

I will just add one thing. It might sound too "woo-woo", but there we go. I think that people born on the brink of the millennium (and shortly before the new millennium) were born here so many times that maybe it is difficult to imagine oneself as either only a man or a woman and to identify with only one of these experiences. The body is a tool and can morph into more than these two shapes and forms. I teach a young generation at AVU (the Academy of Fine Arts) and I see them thinking differently to my generation. I find it inspiring. I feel pretty good among them. I see how many of them live the community life and find collective affiliations I had been previously dreaming about.





TRANS*PARENT

Q T
Y

