

Gargoyle

reproductive

justice issue 11





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hey zygotes, blastocysts, embryos, and fetuses,

this is the gargoyle's annual reproductive justice issue. it was the annual abortion issue until volume sixty six. the shift was to better encompass an intersectional approach to reproductive rights.

the gargoyle has long been a political space. one of our first themes (maybe our very first, who knows) was a special quebec issue in volume 18. considering the gargoyle's history, the abortion issue is relatively young. themes going back to the 80s included take back the night and an international women's day special issue. we included a page from our archives from these issues discussing reproductive rights.

the fight for reproductive justice has been going on for years, and must continue on for years.

just because abortion is now legal in canada does not mean it is accessible to all. in my hometown, there are multiple pregnancy centres, all all happy to appear that they provide in-clinic abortions. you'll see their ads on billboards and bus stops, stating "thinking about abortion? we can help." really? well, it turns out, the closest in-clinic abortion available is a two and a half hour drive away. these faux centres can certainly help you not get an abortion, but only as much as pizza places help you not get an abortion.

we appreciate all these contributors for trusting us with their articles this issue. you will find a variety of approaches to this theme, from the deeply personal, the analytical, the satirical, the political, among many other adjectives.

we hope you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed editing it.

oh, also, one big fuck you to the anti-abortion protesters on campus.

ella mac & gabriel yuan

referendum update:

100 of you said yes, 114 of you said no, and 52 of you abstained.

our referendum question had a little mishap. apparently, the elections coordinator put the question in the title of the ballot instead of the description. the title word count limit meant the question was cut in half. a very avant-garde approach to the ballot, we love it.

so, our guaranteed levy funding will remain a few thousands of dollars below our actual operational costs. some uclit members were decidedly not happy with the fireball article in the last issue, so we are not at all nervous about the next budget meeting. definitely no tension here. don't worry kids, uclit and garg love each other very much still, we are just... sleeping in different rooms now.

about us

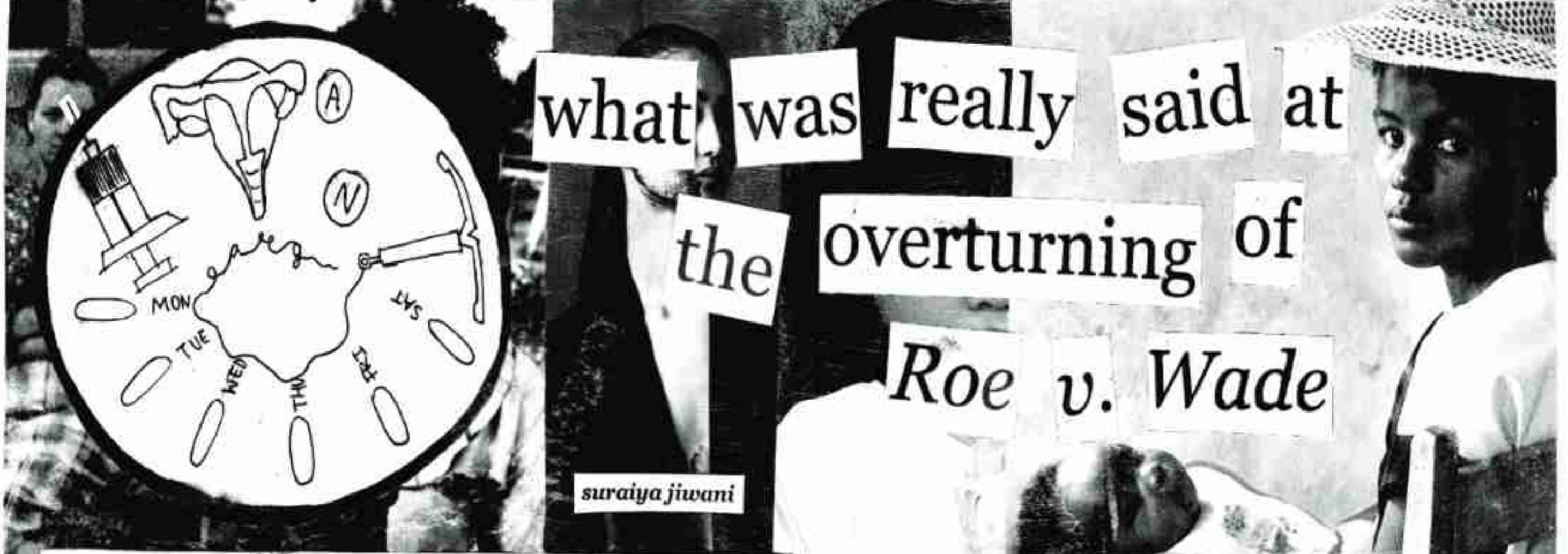
The Gargoyle is University College's greasiest, sexiest (and only bi-weekly) student paper. We are a paper that firmly believes in being angry at society and that it is our job to provide a platform for you to do so. We do not give print space to bigots or to anyone who seeks to legitimize the status quo and we do not feign neutrality on the things that matter to our community.

Production is bi-weekly in-person on Wednesdays in the UC Junior Common Room (JCR)

Our next production night is March 5th, 5 pm

Join our discord server and follow us on Instagram/in person! Links at www.ugargoyle.ca

Email us to join our mailing list at ugargoyle@gmail.com



what was really said at the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

No. 19-1392

THOMAS E. DOBBS, STATE HEALTH OFFICER OF
THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
ET AL., PETITIONERS v. JACKSON WOMEN'S
HEALTH ORGANIZATION, ET AL.

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF
APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

[June 24, 2022]

the opinion

on

a woman's
body

should not
be

in

the Court

the

Supreme Court

does not

care

for

women

's

health and safety

see ,
they
even
said it
themselves
:

a woman
will have to bear her rapist's child or a young girl her
father's—no matter if doing so will destroy her life.

are
you
still
proud

of
who
you
voted for
?



ces noínden

(or: cú chulainn at the planned parenthood)

cw: description of assault

over crags of moaning bodies he prevails;
a sunspot of red flowers at the mast of the battlefield,
ripe with wanting, his mane blusters illustriously
behind him, his grin toothy and mean, his body:
lean, unfucked, unpained by such sorts of adult
pangs which seize the other men by the belly.

but their pain only chastises, yours forewarns:
the child is not the first living thing inside you, it is
the man; shuddering, simpering, while your chin
thrashes from side to side, if this is happening,
you will not look at it; you will only disembark
yourself for a little while until the last grunt stops.

and he, glorious yet, bounds further: impervious of
heart and womb, a hero without fault or sex
cannot be penetrated into submission,

not like you can be, and so you sit with twiddling
thumbs in a room not far from cruachan,

and while he celebrates seventeen with a battle cry,

you do so with a desperate one, if this is happening,
you will not look at it.

over crags of untracked land he chases;
the sweet and sorry promise of death before
marriage is a lively comfort in the strange
places he calls home: he storms the palace
of wife, man, daughter, and in this network
of shared blood he sees nothing safe for
slaughter, he would like no such thing.

but there is no such choice for you, the
removal is quick, almost carelessly so;
the sunstruck windows carve half-moons
into your thighs through the rivulet hem
of your skirt: you were told to wear something
accessible,

like his kilt in shape but

shorter, and

he dies dignified and wound to a tree,
manifold of the honour he bled for, and
brimming like a too-warm ocean with the
integrity and love of life that

you abandoned that day on the rough
carpet floor with nobody looking for you
and nobody coming back.

elisa penha

the great never was

julian robertson

Unlike you, I had never wanted to be a mother. I cast dolls and princesses to the wayside. Unscratched knees and untouched insects be damned. You, however, always wanted us. Your first son was born blonde as daylight, but now his birth crown glints only after Jāpi. According to you, my first independent act was to open my eyes, a former and distant blue, and scope out the room. The intake of the eternal tourist. All of the faces: so much younger in all of our old memories and sandwiched between yellowing pockets of plastic. Later, I was searching for a long-buried childhood stuffed animal to shamefully smuggle cross country to university. This is where I found you, gleaming in red plaid and flashing a half set of milk teeth. Did you go back to class after this, or was it recess? Your Pound Puppies, your bicycle. Run, run, run. What's the password? *Airwolf*. Did you know that more than three decades later, I would be looking into you? You wanted us then (as you do now), but I could not help but think about The Great Never Was.

You kept your hair cropped short, or perhaps you let it grow out into a wild, unruly tangle of dark curls. Unladylike. Daffodils, tiger lilies, and lavender dried in the kitchen. You ate summer fruits raw without the bite back. Chocolate all to yourself. Stevie's glittering incantations bouncing from vinyl to sun mote to the twitchy whiskers of a sleeping cat. I like to think you wore our amber and spoke our tongue. You wore our mink and our bear. You ate pīrāgi, skābenes zupa, halva. I hope you never split a portion. Did you stay in London, or did you chase the electric panther? When you saw it in the streets, did it crackle and hum, or did it roar? It saw you on the balcony that night. Did you seek the coast? Trace the steady alpine peaks? Was it documented in film or ink? You became a paramedic, a musician, both and something else. In The Great Never Was, your spine agreed with your eumelanin in a shake and spit contract: to betray you, but only in tandem.

But in The Great Is, you elected to become a mother. You dragged the body of a dusty stranger from a smoking steel sculpture, a modern contortion which once sailed down the Long Death. Two years later, mine. Sopping wet and drenched in blood, leaking a slurry of codeine and prosecco and dexamethasomething from my mouth to the carpet. Face down in the dark. Fetal in the corner of spring. What a mess. And yet, you would choose this path again. Take the out and back route, fight the plates of shale in the scramble. What a blessing it is to choose which figs we devour, which grasses we grow. All these fertile lands and trowels on hip and in tow. You would grow this crop Again, and in The Again, After.

Prior to my birth, you dreamt of me as a boy. A misdiagnosis, you insisted. Unlike me, you knew better than to listen to what speaks to you in your sleep. When I came home at eighteen with a vial prescribed to a new name, you proposed it had been advanced notice. Our family is prone to that sort of thing, as you know. That Cassandra kiss. All of our women are plagued with fated visions, premonitions. Perhaps this is mine.



i will conceive you at 19. i will
love you at 20.

to my future daughter, you will not ruin my life

odette

cw: sexual assault

Stranger,
My dreams
Are often nightmares. Often with you in it.

You tell me to get off at Greenwood Station. You live next to a shawarma place. Take a left turn after the light on Danforth. You tell me to walk down Danforth, that you are wearing a green shirt. I tell you mine is purple. You make me vow once, twice, and again to not make eye contact, to not say a word to you. To inconspicuously follow behind you off the street, up the stairs, and into your apartment.

I'm face up on your couch looking up to you.
Your face is above mine, aligned with our eyes in contact

Both hands of yours are placed intentionally between both shoulders of mine.

You say: "Are you on birth control?"

"No."

"What would you do if you ever got pregnant...?"

"Oh, I'd definitely get an abortion, oh yeah, definitely."

"Oh yeah? I'm glad we're on the same page."

I'm on my hands and knees and you're behind me

You insist on fingering me instead because wearing a condom is just not your thing.

"Ok."

One finger of yours turns into two, two into three.

Until something larger slips in

I think you hoped that I wouldn't notice, that I wouldn't care

I think you, I don't know. I don't know at all what you were thinking.

You finish. I don't know where.

In my nightmares, I'm on my hands and knees

Begging for your inevitable presence.

I will see you maybe on a silver tray, with tools that will snap what will be your bones. Your developing arteries. Your extremities.

Maybe I will see you complete. Your extremities will be against mine. Maybe your face will look like my own

I'm begging

I don't know to who. I don't know how to

Get the words out

To my future daughter

Maybe

I will keep you

I will love you

I will be kind

Your presence will not change my mind

I don't think you will ruin my life. Oh yeah, definitely not.

Maybe a generational curse

Will be broken with love. Is this what you wanted?

My grandmother had her first child in her teens

My mother conceived me when she was 22

I will conceive you at 19. I will love you at 20

My mother says she was ready. I think she was not ready.

I think she was not noble

I think she was not kind.

Not reliable Not rigorous

Not rewarding

Not ready

I don't know if I look up to her

Will I look up to you?

SWI



Before you sneak me out of your apartment, you make an effort to clarify
that you may not see me again for awhile; that you are not a baller.

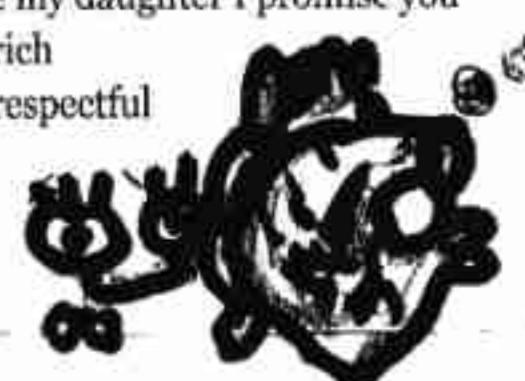
I asked what you meant.

"Like rich, yknow?"

Neither was my grandmother
My mother
Neither am I

When I have my daughter I promise you
You will be rich
You will be respectful

Reliable, Rigorous
Rewarding
You will be ready



I don't think you will ruin my life. Oh yeah, definitely not
Your inevitable presence will trigger the rebirth of your mother
Lay me on a silver tray with tools that can snap my bones,
my well developed arteries, my extremities

And instead
revise the curse in our lineage imbedded deep in me,
in you
What we could only dream of will forever be yours
To my future daughter,
You will be dignified

In my nightmares, I'm on my hands and knees
Begging for an answer.

A kind answer A noble answer A sweet answer
A right answer

Because something still feels wrong.

I think a dream is the rebirth of a nightmare
A nightmare reclaimed by love
I will dream again. Oh yeah, definitely
This time with you in it
I am ready. I promise I am my love
I can't wait to look up to you.

In your kitchen, I ask if you're Filipino because I think a Filipino man
is a respectful man. I think you are a sweet man

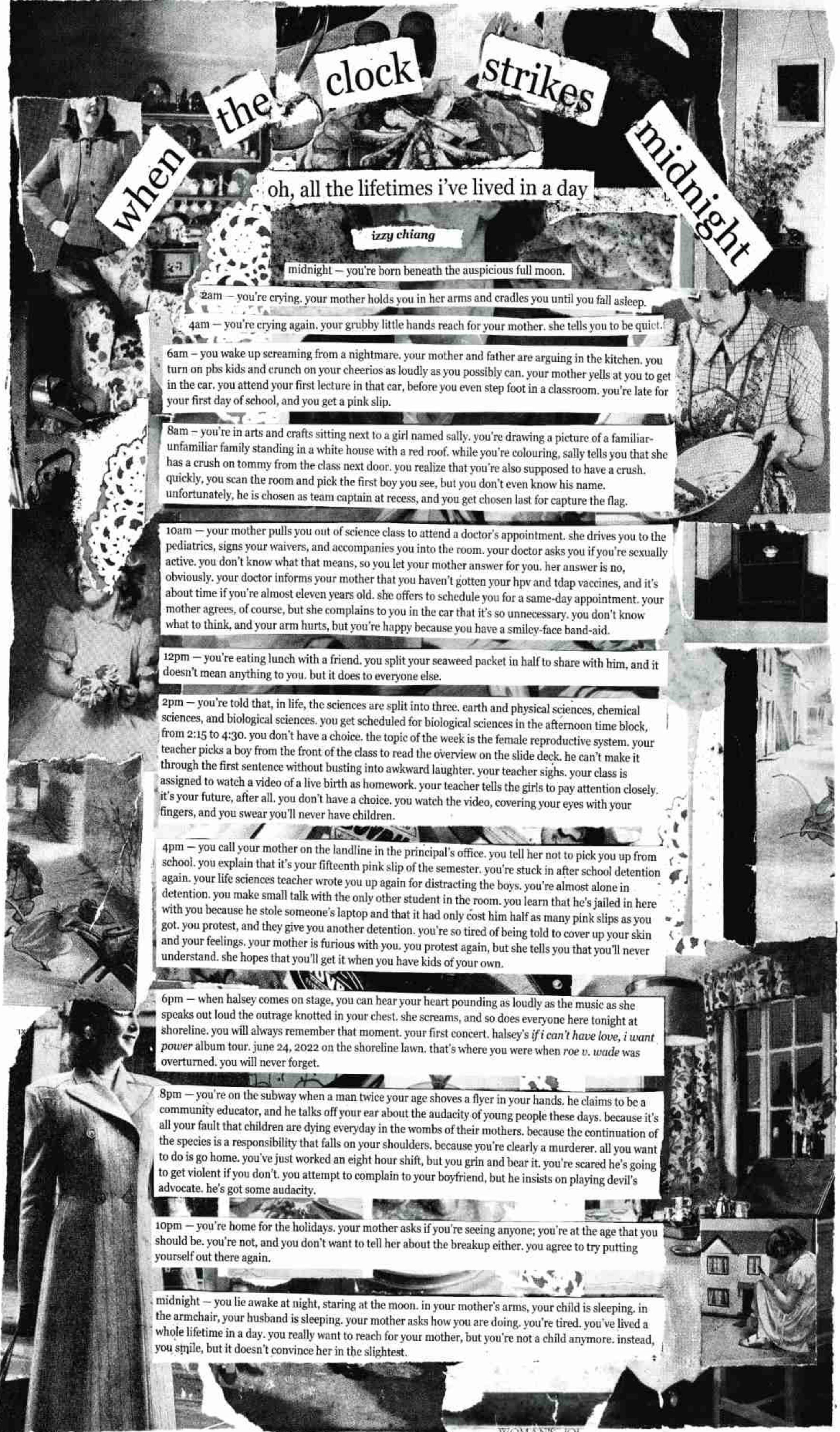
"How did you know?"

You pour me a glass of cold water and offer me cookies that you insist you will not finish
A Filipino man is a respectful man. A sweet man.

There is no way you did what I think you did
But you did.

A SWEET MAN

A GUY MAN



when the clock strikes midnight

oh, all the lifetimes i've lived in a day

izzy chiang

midnight — you're born beneath the auspicious full moon.

2am — you're crying, your mother holds you in her arms and cradles you until you fall asleep.

4am — you're crying again, your grubby little hands reach for your mother, she tells you to be quiet.

6am — you wake up screaming from a nightmare, your mother and father are arguing in the kitchen, you turn on pbs kids and crunch on your cheerios as loudly as you possibly can, your mother yells at you to get in the car, you attend your first lecture in that car, before you even step foot in a classroom, you're late for your first day of school, and you get a pink slip.

8am — you're in arts and crafts sitting next to a girl named sally, you're drawing a picture of a familiar-unfamiliar family standing in a white house with a red roof, while you're colouring, sally tells you that she has a crush on tommy from the class next door, you realize that you're also supposed to have a crush, quickly, you scan the room and pick the first boy you see, but you don't even know his name, unfortunately, he is chosen as team captain at recess, and you get chosen last for capture the flag.

10am — your mother pulls you out of science class to attend a doctor's appointment, she drives you to the pediatrics, signs your waivers, and accompanies you into the room, your doctor asks you if you're sexually active, you don't know what that means, so you let your mother answer for you, her answer is no, obviously, your doctor informs your mother that you haven't gotten your hpv and tdap vaccines, and it's about time if you're almost eleven years old, she offers to schedule you for a same-day appointment, your mother agrees, of course, but she complains to you in the car that it's so unnecessary, you don't know what to think, and your arm hurts, but you're happy because you have a smiley-face band-aid.

12pm — you're eating lunch with a friend, you split your seaweed packet in half to share with him, and it doesn't mean anything to you, but it does to everyone else.

2pm — you're told that, in life, the sciences are split into three, earth and physical sciences, chemical sciences, and biological sciences, you get scheduled for biological sciences in the afternoon time block, from 2:15 to 4:30, you don't have a choice, the topic of the week is the female reproductive system, your teacher picks a boy from the front of the class to read the overview on the slide deck, he can't make it through the first sentence without bursting into awkward laughter, your teacher sighs, your class is assigned to watch a video of a live birth as homework, your teacher tells the girls to pay attention closely, it's your future, after all, you don't have a choice, you watch the video, covering your eyes with your fingers, and you swear you'll never have children.

4pm — you call your mother on the landline in the principal's office, you tell her not to pick you up from school, you explain that it's your fifteenth pink slip of the semester, you're stuck in after school detention again, your life sciences teacher wrote you up again for distracting the boys, you're almost alone in detention, you make small talk with the only other student in the room, you learn that he's jailed in here with you because he stole someone's laptop and that it had only cost him half as many pink slips as you got, you protest, and they give you another detention, you're so tired of being told to cover up your skin and your feelings, your mother is furious with you, you protest again, but she tells you that you'll never understand, she hopes that you'll get it when you have kids of your own.

6pm — when halsey comes on stage, you can hear your heart pounding as loudly as the music as she speaks out loud the outrage knotted in your chest, she screams, and so does everyone here tonight at shoreline, you will always remember that moment, your first concert, halsey's *if i can't have love, i want* power album tour, june 24, 2022 on the shoreline lawn, that's where you were when *roe v. wade* was overturned, you will never forget.

8pm — you're on the subway when a man twice your age shoves a flyer in your hands, he claims to be a community educator, and he talks off your ear about the audacity of young people these days, because it's all your fault that children are dying everyday in the wombs of their mothers, because the continuation of the species is a responsibility that falls on your shoulders, because you're clearly a murderer, all you want to do is go home, you've just worked an eight hour shift, but you grin and bear it, you're scared he's going to get violent if you don't, you attempt to complain to your boyfriend, but he insists on playing devil's advocate, he's got some audacity.

10pm — you're home for the holidays, your mother asks if you're seeing anyone, you're at the age that you should be, you're not, and you don't want to tell her about the breakup either, you agree to try putting yourself out there again.

midnight — you lie awake at night, staring at the moon, in your mother's arms, your child is sleeping, in the armchair, your husband is sleeping, your mother asks how you are doing, you're tired, you've lived a whole lifetime in a day, you really want to reach for your mother, but you're not a child anymore, instead, you smile, but it doesn't convince her in the slightest.

to whom it may concern

aimee de gall

From the center of the world,
I've hatched anew.
Am I still significant, there?
There's something sprouting inside me,
Slithering from muscle to bone,
Stretching up to the sun.
Does it know my name?

But there's something turning inside me,
Swelling like a tumor,
Or a heart.

Since when were these legs made to be spread?
Now, I claw at my cratered skin till
It breaks and bleeds,
But nothing ever hits the ground.
I don't think we're one and the same anymore.

When the moon fills out,
My pores gape in the starshine,
And in each one sits a seed,
Like an offering.

I picture it primordial and passed down,
Boasting blankets of lichen like armor.
It's mine, and it's all of ours,
A proponent of the greater good.
Still, I could've sworn,
It uttered my name.

Am I only dreaming?

If I'm to be cracked open,
Find the exoskeleton I once was,
And carve this across my breast.
I only hope the world will know me,
And know my voice.
It has to be somewhere they'll look.

Jeanne d'Arc

marina papachristos

I'll never meet God, not as a Darwinian eight-year-old. But an endometriosis diagnosis snapped my crutches and forced me to crawl to the fallacy of a beautiful god — the fallacy of devotion.

Joan of Arc; the patron saint of my fucked-up womb.

Two years ago, she meant something very different. She sowed the seed. She was a saint to imitate selflessly in pursuit of a cause larger than myself, one to believe in, filled with hope.

But when my health dwindled, and my uterus ripened into a carcass, Joan began to represent an act of violence. A delayed endometriosis diagnosis was tearing me apart when all I wanted to do was rip every reproductive organ out in retaliation. Saintly and sinful sacrifice. A reflection, anticipating to be destined to an early fire.

To hold the pieces of who I once was in my hands, to thrash about to find the missing chunks: how do I accept rest when I was made for devotion? From what I've gathered, we are created to bear the insurmountable.

For that reason, Joan of Arc is not one particular idea. Instead, she is scattered across my life.

I find her in the front doorway to my home,
in the 5th-floor kitchenette of Sid Smith,
in the doctor's office,
in the flames.

When reduced to ashes, we don't look so different.

Where do you find her?

Atalanta dusts off her knees before stepping up to the altar. She carries fragrant oils, incense, fruit — fresh, first-plucked, color suffusing thick skins. The broadness of her shoulders curl in, as though being pulled along by fishing line, towards stone dripping bright red.

They say the gods are here to collapse the Other into the Us. Sometimes the Other is simply a lamb lost to time and circumstance: girls who refuse to leave childhood behind, men who cannot seem to let things go. Sometimes the Other was never from the ilk of the Us. Those are harder to reconcile, harder to chain down by the neck.

"Mistress of beasts," she begins, laying down the wealth of her body's toil, "shepherd of young girls, goddess of the in-between, hear my prayer."

The butch, however you find them, is forever childless. The butch in leather and chains does not come home to two little girls who call her "papa". The butch in slacks and knit does not buy his wife pregnancy cravings after work. That is not their role. The Us sees the butch as Daddy, as caretaker — but never as father.

The incense burns acrid and bitter from where Atalanta is on her knees. Artemis perches on the lamen stone, between the pomegranates and the bay leaf branches, curling her fingers through quivering smoke. Blood soaks into the white of her hunting tunic, drawing up her thighs like hungry riverbeds.

The butch, however you find them, is forever childless in the mind of the Us. Where does the butch, who dreams of a home with little clothes and colorful cups and tiny toothbrushes, lie? Does he stand awkwardly at the finish line of childhood, tripping over his laces? Or was he never one of Us in the first place?

Atalanta stares up at Artemis, pulling back the creased curtains of her tunic, bearing a torso covered in velveteen hair and bruising and thunder-strike scars — a plea, to do something, to make this be her will, to have it all be just so. *Do not let me be bare*, the butch says, *before I can do anything about it*.

The butch, however you find them, is not always the childless Other by choice. Time can run away from them on bowed legs — ticking time bombs trapped in cyst-studded ovaries, so many pearls trapped tight in soft follicles. Words hymned by the mouths of doctors, bottles held just out of reach because *it might be too late if you do it afterwards*. Always looking back from a future spent waiting, and waiting, and waiting — because the bomb does not stop the bottle from being necessary.

Artemis peers down at the display, eyes glazed with mercurial pity. Chaff-blond hair is pulled up in the style of a virgin, long and golden and untouched. She drops down, kneeling between the butch's open thighs, pressing bruise-warm hands to the skin, then through, spreading ovum and clear bile across chapped fingers.

The butch will pay five-hundred dollars a year for the rest of his life — small tithes to pay to temples in ten grey-brick floors, to sceptic incense and stirrup chairs. The goddess will stand by the butch — by the bloody altar, in the extraction room, at the finish line just two steps away. But tithes are not promises — they are only pleas. The chain is as tight as she wishes it to be.

All Atalanta feels is white hot pain, the cold flush of something that has gone wrong dripping down her legs. The goddess can rub the life out of each egg, if she wanted — massaging them till they pop like fresh roe, blood dripping down and down and down to the dirt. The butch looks up, spit and tears streaming down her face, but the face that stares back at her is unrecognizable.

The butch, before he was the butch, was a daughter. And they are not often *good daughters* — a good daughter would find a nice Christian man, wealthy and white, and she would bear all the children such a husband could ever want. And the goddess would take their hand, kiss the taut skin of the new bride, and bring her over the threshold of the wedding chamber with a smile on her beautiful, deathless face.

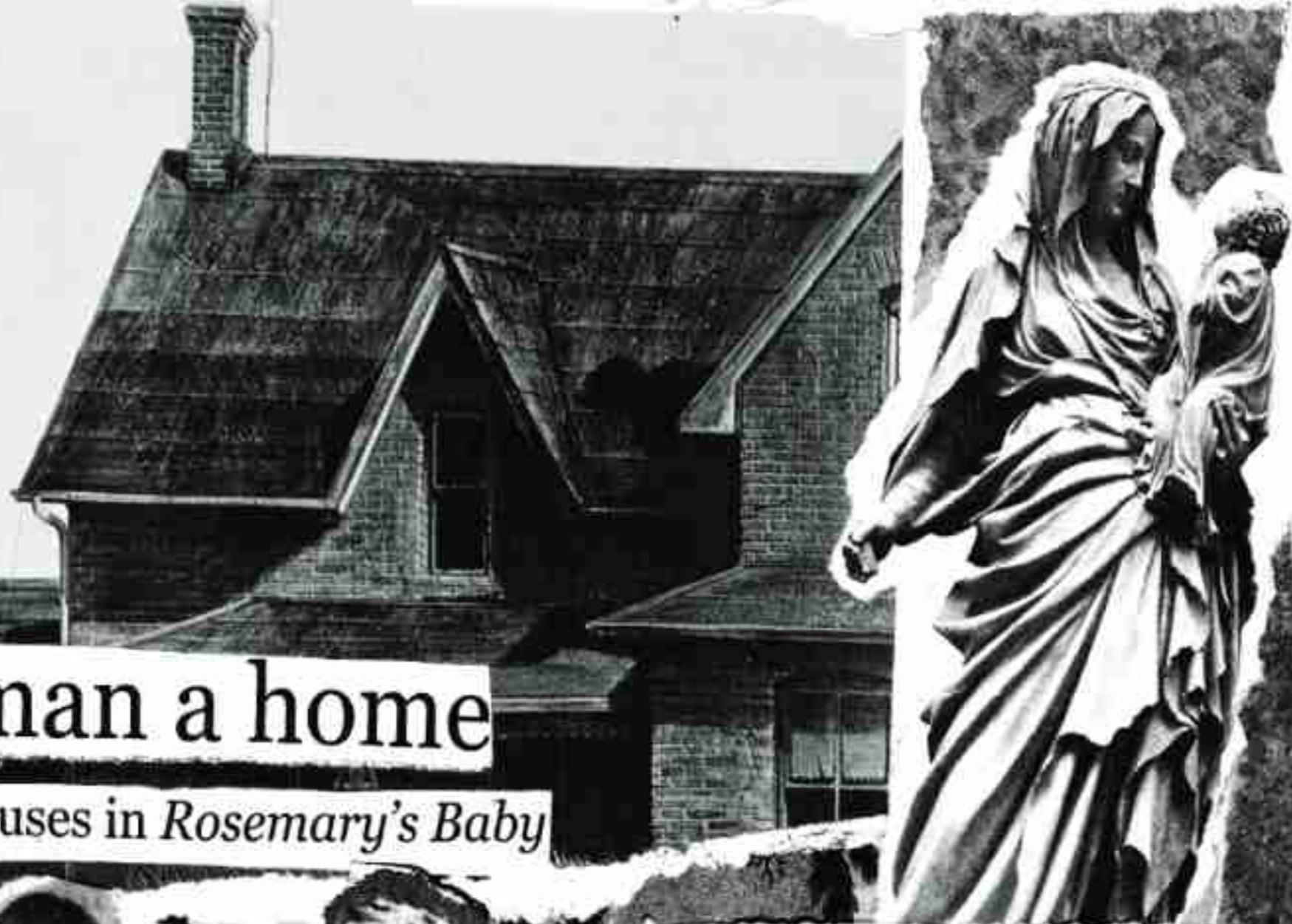
The goddess' hand is dripping with so many stars when she pulls away, slick with lake-clear dew that caresses the curve of her elbow. Atalanta feels her body move on its own — spine curled forward, hands around bruise-warm skin. There is no pulse when she pushes her fingers into Artemis' neck, only soft and unrelenting heat, slippery ligaments that jump around her fingers.

The butch does not forget that he was a daughter. He does not forget the future that was prophesied for him, nor the rage racing up his thighs at a future he did not ask, molotov wildfire that hoped everything would simply *burn*. The butch was not a good daughter — he will wonder, fatally, if he could try again. Manmade prophecies, as they say, are nothing in the face of a god's. The chain is as tight as she wishes it to be.

Artemis runs wet hands up Atalanta's arms, starting just below the jut of her shoulders and then following along the limbs, woven kudzu soaking up pale sun before the oak below it can. She smears Atalanta with herself, riverbed hungry, blood on her tunic soaking through to the skin underneath. Atalanta's fingers twitch open when the goddess effortlessly lifts one hand from her neck to her mouth, kissing the dry skin there.

The butch will smell of alcohol gel every morning before work, and his femme will be careful of his upper arms when she kisses him goodbye — even if she loves to touch them. The butch will stand on the subway, staring at a reflection that grows more familiar as the clock marches forward. The Us will see him, and they will think, *that is a good butch*. The butch will rub at a neck with no marks, pregnant with a bomb that can raze him from the inside no matter what he does.

Atalanta Wants A Child



the barren woman a home

the violation of bodies and houses in *Rosemary's Baby* and *mother!*

elizabeth nisenbaum

Hail Mary,
Full of Grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now,
and at the hour of our death.

Rosemary and Mother live in elegant, empty houses, and no one around them knows how to knock. They pretend at first — but before long strangers barge into rooms, uninvited and crude, greedy hands caressing antique heirlooms and protruding stomachs, breaking down antique doors for firewood and ripping out intestines to feast. Rosemary and Mother live with husbands who are tempted by the slightest taste of power, pride, and sin on their tongues, husbands whose mouths say love but whose bodies only give one thing. They pretend at first — but really, the only thing they truly know how to do is take.

Rosemary and Mother live in elegant, empty bodies, and no one around them knows how to knock.

Homes are at the center of Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and Darren Aronofsky's *mother!* (2017). Rosemary Woodhouse, a young newlywed to Guy, overturns a gilded, dark-trimmed, almost Gothic New York apartment into a sleek and modern wet dream, all fresh white paint and gingham trim and natural lighting. Mother, wife and muse to Him, builds their house from scratch — burned down to ashes, she puts her blood, sweat, and tears into rebuilding skylights, bracing sinks, and mixing paint. Rosemary's touch makes their apartment a shining bright haven in the shadows of The Bramford apartment building; Mother's heart literally beats within the walls of their isolated home. Rosemary and Mother rarely, if ever, leave the gilded cages of their own design. The houses are not just places — the women are the homes.

The Castavets, Rosemary and Guy's elderly neighbours, make their way into their apartment, much too friendly faces covering up sinister intentions. The propriety of the front door is a farce, and the linen closet in the hallway turns out to be connected to the Castavets' own home, allowing hell to seep through into apartment 7E. The illusory violation of her home, covered up with sugar-coated pills and manipulation, mirrors the violation of Rosemary's body, given to Satan

while she lies in a haze. It's only heightened by her husband's role in it; he is the one who deals with the devil, who trades his wife while keeping her in blissful, awful, ignorance. She dreamt the Satanic orgy, she imagined the Satanic rape, he tells her. It's his scratch marks down her back, his baby she's carrying, just sleep and it'll be over soon. A violation of her mind as much as her body, an infringement on her very sense of self and security.

The intrusion of Mother's home is explicitly aggressive, and once again, it's Him that invites evil in. It starts with Man, then Woman, who defile the space with sex; their Sons arrive then, staining the wooden floors with the blood of fratricide. Man and Woman give Him — an acclaimed poet now stagnant, an idle creator — a glimpse of obsessive adoration and he revels in it, encouraging their stay, opening the doors to the Youngest Son's funeral procession. By the time the crowd amasses, they're impossible to restrain: it takes no time at all for them to go from painting the walls to violently tearing the house apart, panel by panel. Mother is pulled one way and pushed in the other, greedy fingers shoved in her mouth, groping her chest and swollen stomach. Every new crack in the house's structure causes her vision to blur, her world to shake. She is beaten and kicked, slurred and spat at, the heart in the walls growing shrivelled and black. She is violated in every way possible, and her husband says they know not what they do, and forgive, forgive, forgive.

There is, of course, the issue of the baby itself. One the Son of Satan. One the Son of Him. Not Rosemary's son, nor Mother's boy. Their babies are the future: either of the destruction that the antichrist will bring, or of the hope that the blessed represents. Just like their bodies, their babies are not their own — the women are vessels, houses. We can see it in the way pregnancy completely devours Rosemary; she quite literally has her life sucked away from her, whittled down to skin and bones through a painful, distressing pregnancy so that the Antichrist can grow. We see it in the way Mother's pregnancy brings Him immediate inspiration — she is His muse reigned, her act of creation enabling His own, her selfhood rejected in favour of the potential one she carries. Their pregnancies strip them of individual identities, taking them over completely. And just as they labour, neighbours and wanderers breach their homes once more, taking residence outside their bedroom doors.

Rosemary and Mother are consumed by a motherhood imposed on them and then ripped away, leaving them with nothing but the afterbirth and wasted milk and the bare bones of a house. Rosemary is told her son was stillborn while he lays in a cradle a hallway away; Mother's baby is ripped from her hands and sent into a hungry crowd of worshippers who break his fragile bones. Rosemary finds her child and gasps in horror at his slit pupils. Mother sees her boy dismembered and half-eaten on an altar. Rosemary rocks the curtained cradle with a knife in hand. Mother burns the house down just to build it back up again and again.

Time and time again throughout their pregnancies Rosemary and Mother are denied choice, autonomy, and ownership, of their children, of themselves. The pregnancies and babies themselves may even be *wanted*, but the women exist only ever to be made puppets in their own lives, used to be discarded for goals as selfish as they are cruel. All decisions are made by husbands who reap none of the consequences that they sow. The horror of these films is that they're hardly even fictionalized — the violation, the physical toll, the identity erasure of pregnancy and motherhood are not exclusive to an imaginary 60s Satanic cult or a metaphorical religious sect. Particularly in the case of *Rosemary's Baby*, the making of the movie itself is a horror, exploitation reaching beyond the screen, a representation of violation by a predator himself.

Rosemary. Mother. Mother Mary. Your body for a higher purpose — your son proclaimed an equal trade. They took your body and your boy, took him from you, placed him in the bassinet and snapped his neck and hung him on the cross and said it would bring about a new age. A new life. A new world. And you are left, alone and bleeding, in your elegant, empty house.

Amen.



Get your comf on with our grippiest protection

Shark Week. A visit from Aunt Flo. On the rag. Crimson tide. Mother Nature's gift. Code red. That time of the month. Moon cycle. These are among the most recognizable euphemisms in the English language to refer to one's period. According to a 2016 survey conducted by Clue, a period tracking app, and the International Women's Health Coalition, there are over 5000 ways to euphemistically refer to menstruation globally. So many expressions exist because of the long standing stigma around talking about, and even having, periods. The period is a stage in the menstrual cycle and a healthy monthly process for most individuals with internal reproductive organs. However, an association of shame regarding menstruation bleeds into the media and impacts how menstrual products are advertised.

Menstrual product advertisements (MPAs) began appearing in print in the late 19th century, promoting reusable pads which were held up by suspenders. These ads never explicitly state what the product is for other than it's meant for an "intimate feminine problem" and often emphasises the need to be "discreet." Though we have progressed past the arcane shyness of having a period, MPAs continue to be restricted.

Regardless, early print advertising for menstrual products between the '20s and '40s promote pads as if they are a treatment for a medical issue, suggesting that periods are an illness. One of the first tampon ads was for a brand called Meds, alluding to the colloquial term for "medicine." Some brands, like Kotex, even designed their packaging to give the impression that the product inside is for medical purposes, such as the depiction of the Red Cross symbol which is commonly used to represent first aid, hospitals, and other medical services.

In the mid-20th century, colour print ads made a conscious effort to avoid using the colour red. In the '60s and '70s, the pretty young women depicted in MPAs are often seen wearing the colour white as it symbolises purity and femininity. Periods were often seen as "dirty" and "unhygienic" – the exaggerated use of white in MPAs correlated to what academic Ira Torresi describes as the "moral imperative of cleanliness" that was so often required of women.

Like white, blue is frequently used in print and TV commercials of the late '70s and '80s, while the colour red continues to be absent. MPAs of the late 20th century often depict models wearing blue or in front of blue backgrounds, like the ocean or saturated blue skies. Even diagrams and instructions for how a tampon is meant to be used were printed either on blue paper or using blue ink.

The dawn of the '90s introduced one of the strangest elements in MPAs that we continue to see today: using blue dye to represent absorbency of pads and tampons. The overly cheerful women in the ads would speak about the product's fantastic absorbency which keeps them "protected" – protected from what, we are never told – while a disembodied hand poured blue liquid from a beaker onto a pad. Soaking period products in vibrant blue dye was just another way to avoid viewer discomfort with accurate depictions of menstrual blood. It's also worth noting that the colour blue has connotations of cleanliness, similar to the purity of white. Blue is often associated with hospital masks and gloves as well as a variety of common household cleaners. This emphasis on cleanliness further stigmatises periods as dirty and, therefore, shameful.

cycle of shame

the history of menstrual product advertising
alexandra m. ramsey

★ Try the pad

Prior to 1972, TV commercials for menstrual products were banned; the word "period" wasn't even mentioned on any televised MPA until 1985 in a Tampax commercial, where a spandex-clad Courteney Cox announces to her audience that "feeling cleaner is more comfortable. It can actually change the way you feel about your period." Though not explicitly said, the messaging is obvious – periods are unhygienic, and while pads can help you hide your dirty secret, tampons can do you one better by also keeping you clean.

Three decades later, MPAs continue to face censorship, particularly on social media. In 2020, the Australian company Modibodi released a new ad for period underwear. The camera focuses on a person curled up and crying in bed, panning to bloodstained sheets in a washing machine, and then a bin filled with used menstrual products and lightly bloodied toilet paper, as a voice-over says, "We have been made to feel gross." The video was soon flagged and then banned by Facebook for violating the platform's advertising guidelines regarding "shocking, sensational, disrespectful, or excessively violent content." Facebook's knee-jerk reaction only emphasizes the messaging of the video: those of us with periods have been made to feel like this normal monthly process is something no one should ever witness or hear about.

Full-size protection. Only cuter.

While some companies are shifting to less ambiguous and more inclusive advertising, we remain influenced by the way the media has portrayed – or really, *not* portrayed – periods in the last century and a half. The erasure and negative association of periods in media push the idea that menstruating is

a dirty little secret.

excessively violent.

something to be protected from.

unhygienic.

a medical issue.

But periods are not something to be ashamed of – they're just a fact of life for many of us.

Bigger protection than you think.

Karen Horney

is inside my walls

You've probably heard of penis envy. Sigmund Freud, everyone's least favourite father of psychology, posited that one stage in the psychosexual development of young girls was the realisation that they did not possess a penis, and an inner turmoil resulting from this "deficiency." He believed that the phenomenon, along with causing feelings of inferiority and misplaced resentment of one's mother, culminated in a desire to have children. Karen Horney, a German psychoanalyst, famously criticized the theory—in her opinion, it betrayed a "masculine narcissism." She put forward a theory in response and called it "womb envy", which she explained as the mirroring jealousy of men concerning their inability to bear and nurse children. Her belief was that womb envy was stronger than penis envy due to the social expectation and ensuing desire of men to dominate others.

It's a funny term, and one which I have enjoyed employing, if only for the sake of aggravating people. I have never taken it particularly seriously. Unfortunately, since I began studying Classics at U of T, it feels as though the ghost of Karen Horney is manipulating my syllabi behind the scenes. Most creation myths or aetiological tales my professors assign seem to follow a consistent and troubling rule: a woman will pose a threat in some manner, and a man will assume the role of a creator at the cost of (and often through the use of) her body.

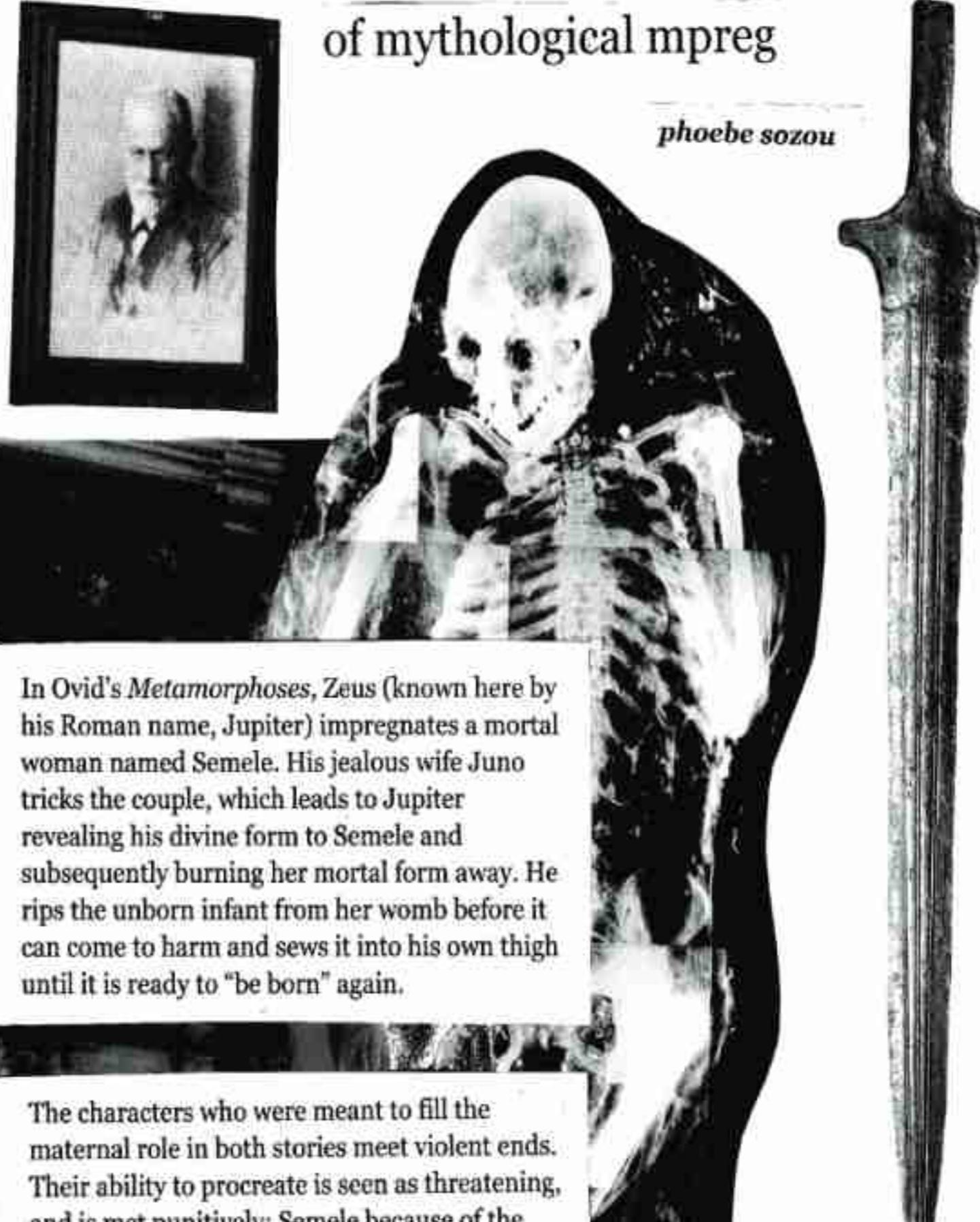
Zeus is infamous for committing adultery and fathering an obscene number of children. I have come across his progenies in every Classics course I've taken, in sources ranging from tragedies to ahistorical accounts of figures like Alexander the Great. In certain stories, the all-powerful king of the gods is granted the ability to bring forth life at the expense of a woman's body. This ability is counted among his others: disintegrating mortals by the sheer force of his true shape, felling divine and monstrous beings with his mighty thunderbolts, ruling over the sky and the Greek pantheon, changing his form, presiding over oaths, and overseeing hospitality (one of the most crucial values in ancient Greek society). He is the archetypal Father of Greek religion, with a capital F, and yet he has the unique power among masculine Greek gods to turn himself into a mother.

According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, Zeus consumes his first lover Metis, a nymph associated with wisdom and cunning, fearing the offspring she may one day create. It is written that, after first giving birth to a brilliant daughter, she will bear a son more powerful than him. Already pregnant when she is swallowed, Metis produces this first daughter (Athena) from inside of Zeus's body, whom he later "gives birth" to when she sprouts—fully formed and fully armed—from his forehead.

the sinister implications

of mythological mpreg

phoebe sozou



In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Zeus (known here by his Roman name, Jupiter) impregnates a mortal woman named Semele. His jealous wife Juno tricks the couple, which leads to Jupiter revealing his divine form to Semele and subsequently burning her mortal form away. He rips the unborn infant from her womb before it can come to harm and sews it into his own thigh until it is ready to "be born" again.

The characters who were meant to fill the maternal role in both stories meet violent ends. Their ability to procreate is seen as threatening, and is met punitively: Semele because of the child she bore, and Metis because of the potential to bear a child at all, and Semele because she was bearing a child at all. Their original bodies are destroyed, and their respective children live on.

In the Mesopotamian creation story, Tiamat, the mother of the gods, births and raises an army of monsters after her divine offspring kill her husband, Apsu. She and her monstrous children are defeated by the hero-god, Marduk, who mutilates her body and uses it to form the world. It is specifically mentioned that he uses the flesh of her belly to do so. In the Old Testament, Eve, the first woman, is crafted from the rib of Adam. When she eats the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge in Genesis 3, she is given the divine penalty of birthing pains. This happens again and again. I am not imagining it.

Women are told, implicitly and explicitly, in ancient myth and in their modern lives, that this organ in their bodies is all that they are good for. We grow up reading stories where creation is currency, where the ability to create life is viewed as powerful, sacred, or divinely bestowed in some manner, but where women are simultaneously denied that sacredness and the accolades associated with it. Why is creation only a miracle when it is done by men? Why does being a mother necessitate becoming a tragedy?

I don't know if there is a conclusive argument to be made about religious and literary texts spanning different time periods and places. I certainly can't make any scholarly statement about it here, and I can't say that I place a whole lot of faith in either Freud or Horney's theories, but I think that this is a pattern worth pointing to, and I believe that there is value in examining it. What I do know, and what I can say, is that I am angry.

I wanted to make a good flat but I just ~~can't~~ and the things I need, as to
be ~~sure~~ I'm not sure about any of my ideas, you see I'm not very creative
or clever, or ~~small~~ or
own voice, I have to
say (or ~~small~~)
Arrogance, Horror, and Creation
It's so stupid why it doesn't live up to
the way I gave up on ~~small~~ finding anything ~~good~~ and honest
Content Warnings: discussion of childbirth, miscarriage, self-hatred, mental health

There is some confusion over whether the name "Frankenstein" belongs to the Doctor or the monster. A well-read person will tell you that the doctor is called "Frankenstein," and the monster has no name. A smart person will tell you that the Doctor is the monster. An arrogant person will tell you that she is Frankenstein, both the monster and the Doctor, and proceed to write a very melodramatic analysis about how Mary Shelley's novel is actually about her own fear over being a bad artist and mother. These people are all annoying. Ignore them, and read the book yourself.

There is something really arrogant about being an artist. Believing that the things you make are worth existing. Shelley explores this arrogance through Dr. Frankenstein's belief that his own genius will allow him to break the natural cycle and create life, something only God can do. He is proven right, but immediately regrets this upon meeting his creation. Dr. Frankenstein is disgusted at his own hubris, and his self-hatred is the same hatred that he bears for his creature.

I lied when I said that only God can create life. Partially because I don't believe in God, and I'm just using Him as a placeholder, but mostly because there are approximately 4 billion humans on this planet that are truly capable of creating life. To be a woman, or anyone with a uterus, is to be a creator and an artist. I do not say this as a good thing; in fact, it horrifies me. How could I raise a child to love life when I have hated my own so much? Frankenstein's creature wants to love life, but he cannot because he is hated by everyone, and so he must hate life and seeks to destroy all beauty and love within it. I fear this instinct within myself: to destroy what I cannot have. I know that any child of mine would inherit my anxiety and depression and hopelessness, whether genetically or by my own faults in raising them.

If you don't want to read it, basically what you need to know is that, in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*, Doctor Victor Frankenstein creates life, only to be horrified by its ugliness, and abandons it to live a harsh and difficult life, ultimately leading it to *spoiler* seek revenge on Dr. Frankenstein by killing his fiance Elizabeth. Dr. Frankenstein creates his problem, and then makes it worse by being an asshole, leading to consequences for everyone he loves.

I have hated myself for as long as I can remember. I have truly loathed, despised, disgusted by everything I am, everything I do, and everything I make. And for as long as I have held this hatred, I have wanted to be an artist. A funny thing about hating yourself: everything you love becomes a weapon. I can't paint, or write, or draw, or act without hatred, and so it becomes the soul of everything I make, much like the bitter heart of Frankenstein's creature, poisoned by the Doctor. Of course, the things I make are not alive, so I am free to hate them as openly and deeply as I want without consequences. But when reading *Frankenstein*, I couldn't help but wonder if this hatred was fair to my creation. My paintings, plays, and characters, just like the creature, never asked to be created, and so no matter how lackluster and shallow and awful they are, what right do I have to hate them when I am the one responsible for bringing them into the world? The answer is that I have no right. Though I haven't decided yet if that means I have no right to hate them or no right to create them in the first place.

The world is a beautiful place which I love with all my heart, but I have been a burden on it. My creation contributes to its destruction, and my art does nothing to fix this. How could I create another life which will also be a burden? That's not fair to the world, but mostly it's not fair to a child who did not ask to inherit my guilt over the space I take up. Dr. Frankenstein's evil is not so much in that he created life, but in that he could not love that life unconditionally, as was his responsibility. I wonder if I could love my own child unconditionally, when I cannot even forgive a poem I write for existing.

It's a great story, and one that has stood the test of time, though often twisted unrecognizably in its many reincarnations. But those who know the original story must also know the equally iconic tale of its creator, Mary Shelley. Shelley has become a character in her own right, with tales of her strange romance with husband Percy Shelley and their odd group of friends. Her life stories feed into an almost mythic persona of a gothic heroine that very much aligns with the romantic

We're back to hubris because I am an artist, and so I will keep dragging my stupid, mangled ideas into the world whether they, or I, like it or not. I am Dr. Frankenstein, amazed at my own power to participate in the work of the universe. Maybe this arrogance is not inherent to artists, but to all of us humans. We destroy landscapes to make our cities, and we destroy lives to make our own better. To create is an act of arrogance. Creation requires us to take up space; who decides what space is worth taking?

The full title of the novel is *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*, with Prometheus being the Greek god of foresight, and is sometimes said to have created humanity and given them the sacred fire of Olympus. Prometheus knew that his fate was to be chained to a mountain and have his liver eaten every day by an eagle. He knew the consequences of creating, and yet he did it anyway. I know my faults, as a person and as a creator. And yet, I cannot help but think that maybe I could be different. Maybe creation changes you too. Maybe I could be a good mother someday.

I mean, is it really my body anyways?

the media, the male audience, and the acceptance of sexual violence

rys zhu



On Pornhub's front page, titles scream for attention: *STRETCHED AND FILLED* dance in capital letters, while the promise of a *creampie* enthralls the lusty viewers. *Whores* and *female officer rookie* spill from thumbnails in cheap costumes, spelling out degradation. They cajole the male gaze like sirens to parched sailors. *Lesbians* and *gay twinks* slap you in the face while the title *step-something* luridly lures you in with taboo. Even categories in 'popular with women' highlight the masculine pleasure of the harsh, squelchy speed of a hand jerking off.

A jump down this lawless, slick rabbit hole will baptize you in gross indecency hiding beneath the pseudonym of fetish. Rough sex greets your awaiting hand, and violence is almost an absolute. Males pursue the distorted *BDSM* tag, enticed by women bound, gagged, restrained, their control left entirely up to the impatient cameramen. I think about sexual exploitation as I watch the short previews, sickeningly suggesting a monetized *more* — associating the cries of pain with the breathy moans of pleasure. At least I should feel relieved knowing it's consensual. Of course it's consensual. Probably.

Maybe.

I am confronted with supposed *absolute pleasure*, but I cannot see myself anywhere within it. I refuse to imagine myself as a living fleshlight in a threesome for faceless off-camera males with protruding dicks, but the Hub™ threateningly thrusts it down my throat anyhow. The pornography worm burrows into my brain, telling me: "oh, yes! You want this, you're supposed to like this!", but I question its blind lust. Shouldn't *BDSM* include aftercare? Shouldn't the three dicks shoved in front of a woman's face and waiting hands necessitate an equally pleasurable experience for her, and a glass of honey-water on the bedside waiting to soothe her abused throat?

Yes, I think. But it doesn't.

Maybe I'm blind, then. Maybe the women in these videos are enjoying this, and being treated well. Hear how their voices sing, beckon, beg! For what? It's obvious, duh. Shouldn't I want that too, as a woman, to be violated and treated as an object in sex, every single time?



Why should I feel guilty indulging in the videos when the male audience feels entitled to objectify feminine bodies shaped like mine without remorse? I'm supposed to embrace the loss of control while they dominate women and prey upon the *amateur* tag, all in service of normalizing their lecherous enjoyment of 'female' as 'content'. These sexually-violent, exploitative videos continuously objectify and bring potential real-life harm to the women around them, but it's all fine — 'boys will be boys.'

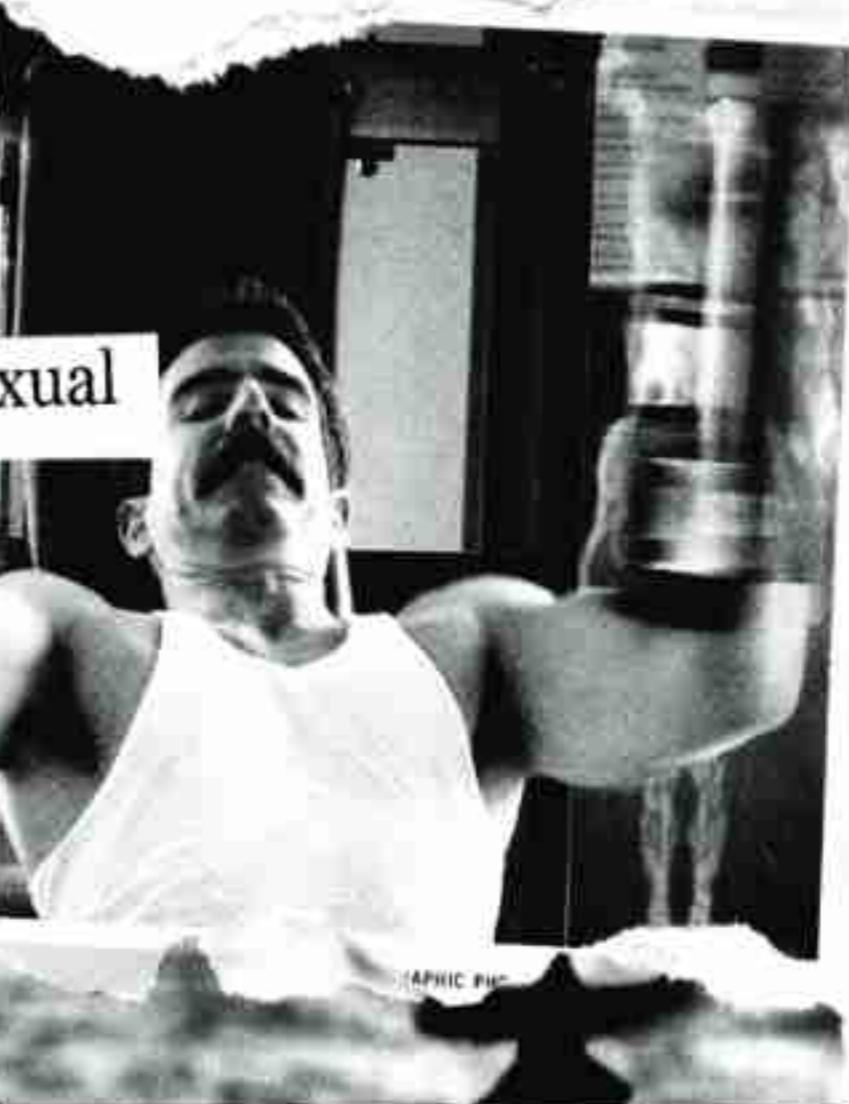
If you feel excluded, good! Porn is for men, anyways! Porn doesn't need a woke enby to comment on content that isn't made for them, fucking hell! These tags are for dacyphilic *alpha males* who slobber over fear-induced sex; who fantasize through Deepfake fucking their "step" daughters and mothers; who command AI to spit out unrealistically big-boobed women generated from stolen works and behold them with loveless eyes.

They're just AI! They're just representations of the female body, rendered on pop up ads as voluptuous, modifiable digital commodities. These are just *fantasies*, and that's why *hentai* remains 1st in the Hub's 2024 Year in Review, why 'cute femboy' rose by +19 ranks in Pornhub Gay category this year. Surely it doesn't say anything about us — about *them*.

Armoured bikinis abound, but God forbid fictional *men* like Belial from *Granblue Fantasy Versus* wear a summer speedo that barely covers his dick in a fighting game. That wouldn't be realistic! That would be so dumb. That would just be for *gooning* to. God forbid *Zenless Zone Zero* updates and accidentally obscures the butts of its female characters with a bug. The fans demand gratuitous ass shots while they light up combos (isn't that the point of getting the characters anyways)? These characters are won and bought with hard-earned money, you should be able to do as you please with them!

It's ridiculous to claim that they sexualize children in these games — because woah there, stop assuming a child-model is a child — yeah, everyone treats them like one and they all have high-pitched voices, but you're actually infantilizing them and assuming they shouldn't fight just because they're a child! Did you read the storyline? She's a reincarnation of a thousand-year goddess! She can summon another plane in her ultimate and deal insane, lore-accurate damage. B-b-besides, the game doesn't show the age of characters anyways!

What an odd thing to say.



It's okay that Ada Wong fights zombies and crazy cultists in a skin tight dress, thigh-height high-heeled boots with her bare arms and cleavage unsupported. It's sexy, and she's a professional. The people want to see her fight *naked*. They force her to stop, watch the enemies take a bite, and hear her *groan* because why not. Oh it's just an accident, my hand slipped off the controller, 'boys will be boys!' Groans will be moans and pain will be pleasure. It's okay.

I mean, she pretty much asked for it.

When Marina Abramović performed *Rhythm 0*, 72 items laid there at the ready. The tools were for the audience, awkwardly expecting to descend upon her still, clothed body. There was a loaded gun, an axe, and chains. Bread, perfume, honey, salt, bandage, soap, yarn, grapes, band aid, and a rosemary branch. She gave them the option, and they pounced, feasting upon her vulnerability, cutting her clothes, face, assaulting her intimate areas while she stood pliant. Sucking her pulsing blood from a cut slashed with a razor blade from her trembling throat. It was all part of the performance. In those monochrome pictures, memorialized, hung in museums, men mobbed her sitting figure like the essence of human deprivation in the face of innocence.

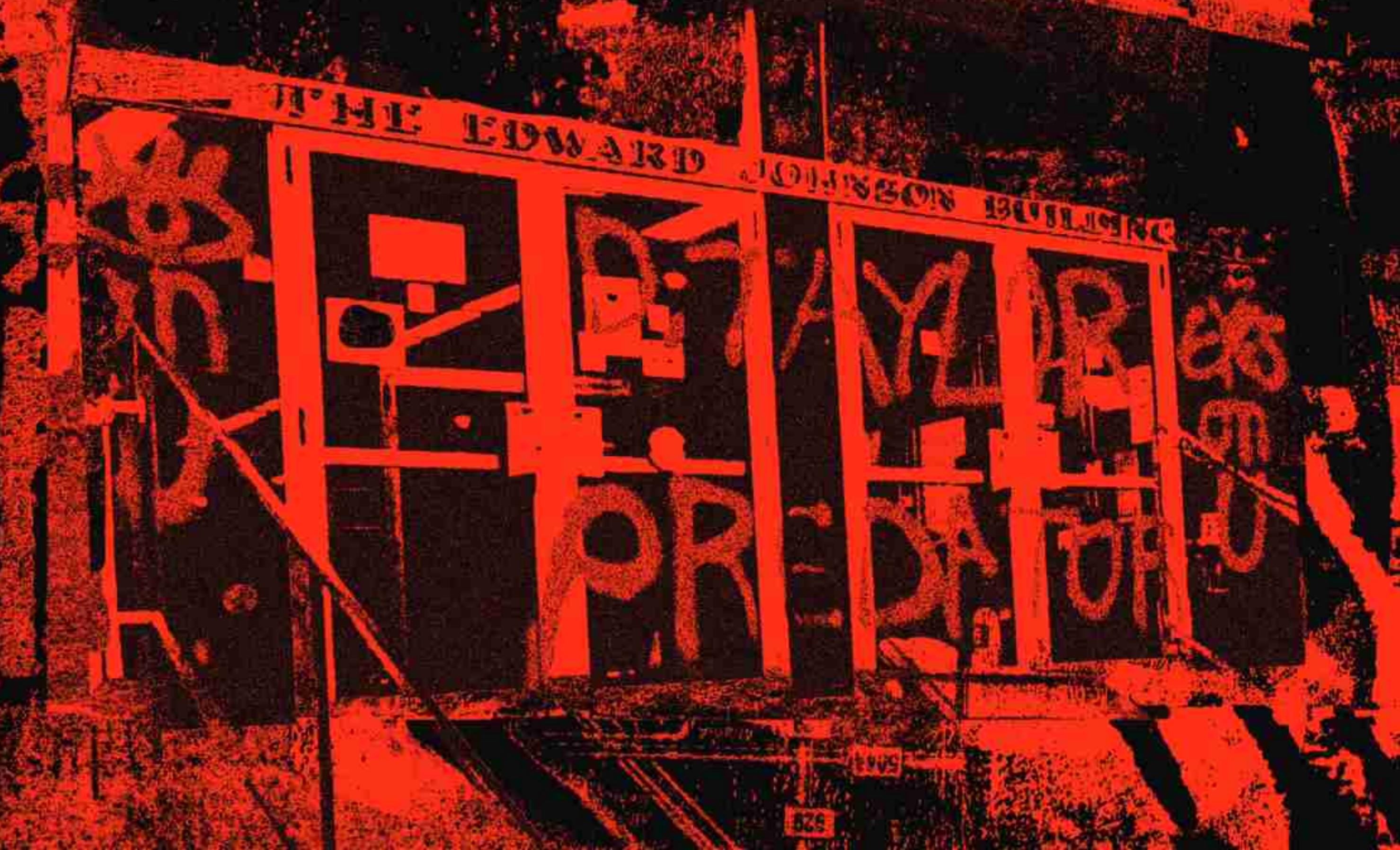
And in the end? In all of these pictures, videos, games, where women, girls, are presented to the salivating males on a platter, wearing smithereens of themselves cut from curated collections of 'fantasies', the men get away. Because technically, Abramović asked for it. Technically, these are only fictional representations of how males see the feminine body. The advancement of technology naturally leads to submissive acceptance of fictional scenarios that'll increasingly blend with reality.

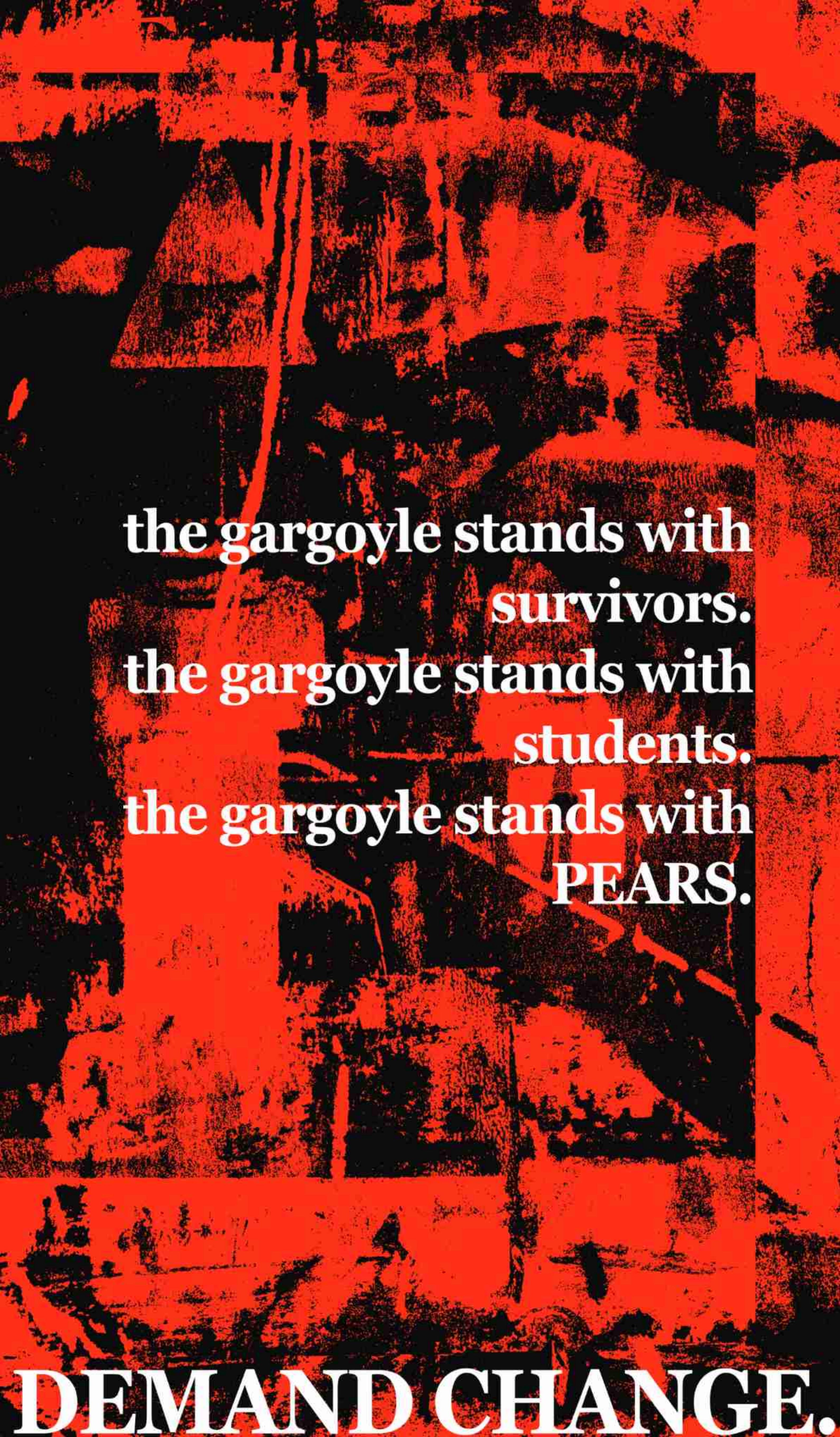
That will be their defense until the day they die.



DEMAND CHANGE.

as the graffiti washes away, u oft hopes we will forget the stains of their systematic protection of predators and punishment of survivors.





the gargoyle stands with
survivors.
the gargoyle stands with
students.
the gargoyle stands with
PEARS.

DEMAND CHANGE.

POLITICS

i want to have children! now is that such a crime?

on political abuse of children

mashiyat ahmed

Children are political. Parenting is political. In recent years, my stance on having children has evolved to reflect what I believe to be the political significance of parenting young minds. Sure, choosing to be a mother is a personal decision, but is it really? In recent years, I've been overwhelmed by doomerist arguments from shallow thinkers as to why having children is such a bad idea: expenses, the loss of freedom, the responsibility, and most of all, why have children when the world is ending from climate collapse and fascism?

A generation struggling under apathy?

There's a colossal generational divide among natalists and anti-natalists. For Gen Z, the inherent pessimism surrounding societal issues directly informs personal and emotional decision-making, whereas the economically privileged of the past could afford to demarcate the political from the personal. It seems to me that Gen Z have been raised as a generation of nihilists through unfulfilled promises of economic freedom, of increasing social atomization and the breakdown of traditional communities, and techno-fascists who hide purchased power to convince of their greatness.

No wonder Gen Z is such a nostalgic generation? We're endlessly blinded by the glow of the past — the years our parents shamelessly indulged in with their phone-free worlds and blissful ignorance of climate doom — to ever look to the future.

Much of mainstream sex education culture relies on the demonization of parenthood as a contraceptive method rather than genuinely equipping people with the financial and emotional decision-making skills to think through the absolutely consequential act of having kids. Too often, this covert conditioning coerces young people to make a choice between personal freedom and sacrificial honour, between happiness and stability or glorified misery.

But as a south asian woman, my hesitancy towards having children is more personal and painful. In a culture that views women's obedience — her ability to bite her tongue and swallow injustices — as a precedent for how good of a mother, daughter, or wife she is, birthing one's pain is inevitable. From my mother, I've learned — against my will — to tolerate my father's anger, rather than fight back.

IT'S THAT ASPECT
OF LABOUR AND
REPETITION WHICH
INTERESTS ME: THE
BODY FOR WORK AND
THE BODY FOR LOVE

The political abuse ... and significance of children

In my view, the right's political abuse of children hides behind pseudo-sincere concerns about the importance of family. For the right, the family is important, but only if it fits the heteronormative and patriarchal aesthetics of love. According to right-wing logic, queer love doesn't count because it doesn't produce children or the hailed stability of the nuclear family structure. And tell me why Elon and Trump are preaching about "traditional family values," yet both men have fathered children from multiple different women? But the nuclear family is an idea invented to justify treating children as propagandized tools for right-wing populist interests. We've seen authoritarian regimes exploit the parent-child relationship to crush dissent and teach obedience. Throughout Russia's war crimes and assaults on freedom, what's gone largely unmentioned in the public arena is the deliberate targeting of children through arbitrary arrests, searches, threats of family separation and removing parental rights — if families of children oppose Russian propaganda. The institutional ecosystem — the police, the courts, the government, and even schools — are incentivized to keep the power of children at bay.

Even among young men my age, conversations about family and the future hinge on the utility of children in continuing legacies and lineages, and "having purpose." My crush said that he'd never wanna adopt kids (rip) because what's the point if the "child isn't even yours?" Why get so territorial? Children are not extensions of our egos or unhealed traumas; they are not compliments to milestone success.

But on the other hand, the discourse about children among non-right-wingers equally disappoints me. Many liberals or left-leaning folks are driven to apathy by their anxiety about the state of the world. The power of children and parenthood as fundamental pillars of society is reduced, and sometimes reluctantly dismissed, as a nuisance, an impossibility. But the choice of having children and building a family can't be oversimplified to a political binary. Many factors such as urban vs rural divides, income levels, material and economic conditions, reproductive statuses, and other trends inform personal decision-making.

Moving towards a new conversation

Ideally, having children is fundamentally a personal choice that of course has political and policy dimensions. One can even argue children are not inherently political. But that doesn't mean children aren't exploited ideologically to further certain political causes, or to drive cultural discourse that objectifies them to be the cause of burden and misery; something that holds, especially women, back.

In Dani McClain's book *We Live for the We: The Political Power of Black Motherhood*, she explores the political realities of racialized women raising children, and how for them, the cooperative, pedagogical, and emotional spaces these women foster for their children are acts of political resistance against a society that doesn't honour the sanctity of childhood.

In her essay *As a Black Mother, My Parenting is Always Political*, McClain argues that racialized mothers and their children are political tools not because they are created to serve state interests, but because the act of raising confident, healthy, and free children is a threat to state interests itself. For McClain, children are political for Black mothers because "we've had to fight for our right to be mothers."

Children are powerful because they are our future. Weaponizing children for political goals or reducing them to insignificance justified by our unchecked collective anxiety is reckless.

100 refugee children
hundreds of thousands of child soldiers
Photo: Peter M.

patriarchal terrorism

araliya

sexual violence as a method of violent political control

ew: rape, torture, slavery, genocide, transphobic & misogynistic violence

"Fear," she said. "What are we so afraid of? Why do we let 'em tell us we're afraid? What is it *they're* afraid of?"

- Tehanu, Ursula K. Le Guin

Sexual violence is rarely about fulfilling a sexual appetite; it's about power. Proof of the perpetrator's power over the victim. An affirmation of dominance through non-negotiable, iron-clad violence. You don't matter, your life doesn't matter. Sexual violence, more than anything, is about subjugation and control through terror.

Why do people commit sexual violence (SV)? It is easy to dismiss this question as naive and lay the blame on "human nature." After all, why do people commit murder and theft? But this is an unsatisfying answer. Human nature may play a role in SV, but we know it is also affected by social conditions. SV, like everything else in society, exists within the complex interplay of constructed social systems. A person's risk of sexual violence is directly linked to the power they have (or don't have) in society. Those who are weaker and have less institutional backing are far more likely to be targets of SV. In general, whenever there is a dominance hierarchy in which one group is subjugated by another, SV is often an inevitability. Therefore, in Canada, if you are nonwhite (especially Black and/or Indigenous), queer, disabled, or poor, you are at a higher likelihood of being a victim of violent crime in general, particularly SV. Perhaps the most compelling evidence for the role power plays in SV is the relish with which powerful people inflict unimaginable cruelties on populations of people they consider less than them.

From 1932-1945, the Imperial Japanese government abducted hundreds of thousands of women and girls from their colonies and kept them in "comfort houses." These "comfort women" were raped and tortured daily, sometimes for years, before being killed. Soldiers often took delight in what they were doing, as the authors of *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* write: "Raping and kidnapping became so common that soldiers considered abusing Chinese women to be a sport — one of the few "rewards" of their harsh military life." The effect of the torture, as Norman Smith in a review of the aforementioned book notes, "...was to shatter and shame Chinese." The Imperial Japanese army viewed their victims as inferior and inhuman. To affirm this relation of dominance, they enacted horrific violence.

Power seeks to affirm itself wherever it can. Speaking only the language of pure force, it asserts its presence through raw violence. Power finds its purest expression in the violation of the most fundamental of all rights: the right over your own body and to your consent. Through the denial of consent, power affirms the absoluteness of its might and the totality of its victim's weakness. The body becomes both a physical and semiotic subject of terror.

Thus, a society characterized by imbalance in power results in a society characterized by the relations between oppressor and oppressed. The oppressor has power over the oppressed. This power, expressed through privileges the oppressor grants themselves and the indignities the oppressed are made to suffer, is often both cause and effect of the system of subjugation. For the oppressors to enjoy the benefits of this system, the oppressed must stay controlled. But a shackled soul yearns for freedom, and "the colonized man is an envious man," as Franz Fanon points out in *The Wretched of the Earth*: "And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, 'They want to take our place.'" Fear grows and churns the mind of the oppressor, spawning grotesque fantasies. Imprisoned by their own logic of power, the oppressor sees in the end of subjugation only suicide. Hyper-paranoid, the tiniest insubordination seems like fertile ground for revolt. Not knowing any other way, the oppressor responds to terror with terror.

We see this attitude in the Israeli government, which uses rape as a method of torture on Palestinian detainees, while constantly accusing Hamas of barbarity. In history, this dynamic is perhaps epitomized by the Haitian slave owner. Terrified of a slave revolt, slavers in Haiti would administer cruel, imaginative tortures on the people they enslaved. They believed the only way to prevent an uprising was to terrify the enslaved population through pure violence.

Terrorism, strictly speaking, refers to using violence against non-combatants to induce fear and achieve political goals. SV is used by oppressive regimes, both directly and indirectly, to silence people into submission. During the Guatemalan Civil War, the Guatemalan military, which was trained, funded and backed by the USA, carried out a genocide against the Maya peoples. Between 1960 and 1996, an estimated more than 160,000 Maya were killed through bombing campaigns, forced disappearances, and direct massacres. As part of the campaign of terror, thousands of women were kidnapped, raped, and tortured. While ostensibly for "finding information," the primary purpose of the torture was to terrify the population into submission. Sister Dianne Ortiz, a survivor, explains: "So often it is assumed that torture is conducted for the purpose of gaining information. It is much more often intended to threaten populations into silence and submission. What I was to endure was a message, a warning to others not to oppose, to remain silent and to yield to power without question."

To explore the full scope of SV, we must understand it within a patriarchal context. A patriarchy is a set of societal structures that categorizes humans — as they are born — into "man" and "woman" and creates sexual, social, cultural, political, and economic rules based on these categories.

Man and all associated with him are privileged. Woman and all deviants from the rules (i.e. queers) are oppressed. Just as an economy distributes resources, patriarchy distributes sex. Men are socialized into the system to believe in their right to women's bodies. Women are socialized to accept their plight and yield. Power imbalances entrenched, the oppressor-oppressed dynamic kicks into gear. The man starts, if subconsciously, to view any deviation from the norms as threats to their privilege; the denial of sex is the denial of his birthright. The "trans panic defence" — a legal defense where a heterosexual accused of a violent crime against a transgender person will claim they lost control when they found out the person they were about to sleep with was transgender — exemplifies this attitude. Each woman and queer killed and raped, beaten and spat on, forms a node in a network of terror. It transmits a clear message: submit or be punished. To keep the oppressed in line, a war of patriarchal terror must be waged on them.

What is most notable about this patriarchal terror, however, is the subtlety of its form. Trapped within the matrix of oppression, both oppressor and oppressed undergo a psychic transformation. Over time, the system seeps into the fabric of reality. What once appeared as the shadow of an extraterrestrial object now appears as natural as the shade of a tree. This is partly expressed in the contradiction within societal perception of SV.

While SV is ostensibly a taboo in our society, the institutional and social reactions to SV often reinforce conditions that cause it. SV is taboo not only for the perpetrator but also for the victim. Patriarchy exerts a subtle control by ostracizing not just the perpetrators of SV but everything to do with it. SV is a thing that happens outside of society, not within it. It is something that happens in dark alleyways where respectable (undeserving) people would not be found: so goes the reasoning. Therefore, while the figure of the serial killer has lurked in the nightmares of suburbanites for decades, and big men like Jeffrey Epstein, Harvey Weinstein, and Sean "Diddy" Combs, are ritualistically sacrificed on occasion to ease the collective conscience of society, the vast majority of SV is ignored by the "justice" system. In Canada, 6% of sexual assaults are reported to the police, and of that 6%, only 5% of reports lead to an accused person being sentenced. In this way, patriarchy overcomes the contradiction and conquers further: SV is both an unthinkable taboo and also totally normalized.

The bleakness is overwhelming. The powerful seem invincible, and we feel so small before them. But it is in this weakness we find our strength. Our liberation lies not in domination but cooperation. Not in control, but in trust. Our liberation lies beyond all the crude logics of power. Beyond kings, queens, dominance, control, hierarchies, states, capitalism. Beyond all of that.

"Beyond payment, retribution, redemption — beyond all the bargains and the balances, there is freedom."

- Ursula K. Le Guin

do we need to disprove fetal livelihood?

Melanin groups

i don't know whether life begins at conception. i'm also not sure that it matters.

ted e. emma dobrovnik

oocyte-stage cell

The question of whether life begins at conception dominates much of the dialogue surrounding abortion. Whether it's anti-choicers arguing that "it's a child not a choice," or pro-choicers claiming that an embryo isn't yet a baby, the personhood of the fetus is central to the discussion of abortion ethics. I'd argue that this question is besides the point. Of course, anti-choicers peddle this narrative, because it's provocative and emotionally persuasive. The life-at-conception argument also fails to account for the distinction between biological livelihood and legal personhood, exposing it to fair criticism from the pro-choice perspective.

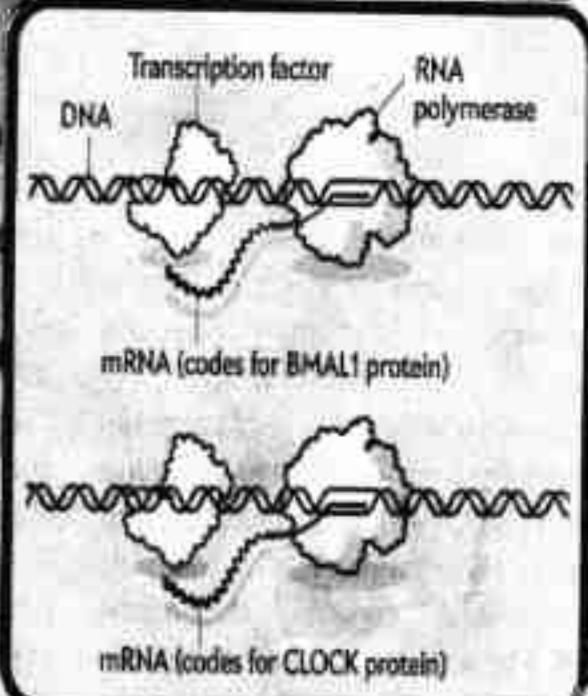
Still, it's worth considering what's lost when we focus on the fetal right-to-life. Even if we were to accept the premise that life begins at conception, this would hardly render abortion morally impermissible. When we deny life-at-conception in defending abortion, we risk implying that abortion is only justifiable if there's no loss of life. However, the principle of bodily autonomy entails that no one has the right to use someone else's body for survival, regardless of their status as embryo, fetus, or baby. Ultimately, the right to life is irrelevant when we consider other credible arguments.

So then why is fetal livelihood given so much attention? From the anti-choice side, its rhetorical appeal does a lot of heavy lifting. From the pro-choice side, its lack of integrity practically invites criticism. As an ethical question, the fetal right-to-life no doubt mobilizes people. Even so, life-at-conception collapses in on itself when placed in a scientific context. To say that it's easy to debunk would be an understatement. Both the argument's pathos and its logical fallibility is what has kept it at the forefront of the abortion discourse.

I don't think that the anti-choice movement's reasons for engaging with this are all that surprising. Anti-choicers are notorious for their manipulation of language and deployment of graphic imagery. They strategically use terms like infanticide and brandish posters with dismembered fetuses to strawman the pro-choice stance. We know that it's deliberately misleading, but it's also hugely effective. When you frame the abortion debate as being between "Team Baby Killers" and "Team Not-Baby Killers," you're presenting a false ultimatum.

There's no denying that the life-at-conception conundrum is the fuel by which the anti-choice movement operates. I understand the impulse to want to shut down this line of thinking. I mean, I've done it myself. I've belaboured the point in classrooms, on the street, and even in bars (yeah). A heartbeat is far from equivalent to legal personhood — a truism that bears repeating. We can put on our embryologist hats until we're blue in the face, but I wonder whether this is as productive as we've been led to believe. If our defense of abortion hinges on no one being harmed, we're losing sight of the larger argument. It's not that abortion is morally permissible because there's no technical loss of life. Abortion is morally permissible because no one has the right to use your body for anything that you don't consent to, not even survival. I'm not here to pinpoint when life begins or identify when a fetus becomes a baby. I'm not qualified to speak on that, nor do I have any interest in doing so.

My point is that if we claim to be promoting bodily autonomy, then why do we dedicate so much time to refuting fetal livelihood? The obvious answer is that we're attempting to soften pro-choice politics. To the average person, abortion is much easier to stomach if we can concede that there's no baby being killed, so to speak. Yet, unconditional abortion access means prioritizing the rights of pregnant people, no matter the status of their pregnancy. Some might find this approach to be severe, but I don't think we gain anything by rendering our message more palatable to our oppressors. I don't want to play nice with people who think I don't have a right to my own body. I don't want to forfeit my anger so that people will listen to me. I have no desire to make reproductive justice convenient when its reality is convenient for no one. The fact of the matter is that abortion can sometimes be uncomfortable: uncomfortable to talk about and even more uncomfortable to live with. However, just because something inspires discomfort doesn't mean that it's not a necessity. By rejecting the potentiality of fetal livelihood, we temporarily alleviate some of that discomfort. In doing so, we're also pushing pregnant people to the periphery. Despite our best intentions, entertaining life-at-conception is a trap. It undermines the very essence of what we're working towards: bodily autonomy at all costs.



WHY WOULD
A MAN BE
THERE?

HAIL SATAN

my body, my blood

the position of the satanic temple and the religious abortion ritual

jade parks

After the step backwards in reproductive autonomy, a step taken by the United States (US) Supreme Court in June 2022 when Roe v. Wade — the federal case granting the right to abortion — was overturned, one particular New Religious Movement stepped up as an advocate for religious and bodily autonomy. Despite the spectacle and scandals frequently associated with the group, The Satanic Temple has demonstrated that, in alignment with their fundamental tenets of bodily autonomy and belief in the best available scientific evidence, they are firmly behind a reproducer's right to choose.

Despite the occultist name, The Satanic Temple (TST) is a non-theistic New Religious Movement, recognized by the IRS and Federal Court System as a religious group. TST is largely known for their role as artful and effective political advocates for marginalized groups against the oppressive powers of dominant religio-political powers which threaten secularization. Their beliefs are largely inspired by enlightenment values from 18th century continental philosophical traditions, such as an emphasis on reason and individualism, which have been altered to fit their own modern values. This has allowed them to posit knowledge as their primary value, while also maintaining that bodily autonomy, empathy, and the attainment of justice are each also vital to living a good life according to TST.

The political movements perpetuated by TST are what they are best known for. Their activism prioritizes the confrontation of hate groups and they actively advocate for the maintenance of secularization and equal religious representation. Their project ultimately aims to juxtapose the oppressive religious and political forces which attempt to undermine autonomy, having as tenets which value, for example, (iii) the inviolability of one's own body, (v) the use of the best undistorted scientific fact, and (vii) that compassion, wisdom, and justice should prevail over all scripture or doctrine.

Despite America's claim about being secularized with a separation of church and state, their governing bodies have conflictively shown their prioritizations of particular right-wing Evangelical "values" throughout their legislature. This has been performed under the guise of enacting the first amendment right to freedom of religion for many of these right-wing political factions, when in reality it is simultaneously unreasonably and unjustly infringing on their neighbors 14th amendment right to liberty. TST has been an antithetical figure to this traditionalist evangelical political discourse and has used their position as a federally recognized religious organization to create religious exemptions from state anti-abortion laws violating the laws and beliefs of their members.

RAR, the Religious Abortion Ritual, is designed as a destructive ritual that protects members who are going through an abortion to rid themselves of shame or discomfort during the procedure. Due to the additional preemptive procedures violating the convictions of TST, the RAR exempts its participants from requirements such as waiting periods or mandatory sonogram viewings and allows them to receive on demand first-trimester abortions in states such as Florida, Kentucky, or Utah which have enacted the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

The RFRA essentially prohibits state interference that could substantially burden an individual's religious practices even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability. Right-wing groups have recently used the case of Burwell v. Hobby Lobby to maintain evangelicalist views. In a four out of five vote, the court decided that, due to religious convictions, the Hobby Lobby brand is not required to provide contraceptive care through their health insurance, going against the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act mandate, which instructs that large employers must offer affordable and comprehensive health insurance to full-time employees. With twenty-eight states having enacted this act within their legislation, combined with the legal recognition of TST, they have been able to utilize this act to prevent their members from having their religious practices infringed on by unnecessarily regulating access to abortions and the satanic ritual attached to them.

The main goal of the RAR is to curb any of the naturally uncomfortable or anxiety-inducing feelings associated with abortions as well as alleviating potential stressors that may be governmentally imposed. This is done to empower the patient based on the third and fifth tenets. It's *vital* to note that the purpose of this ritual is not to convince or coerce anyone into having the procedure, but is instead focused on affirming the decisions of the patient and preventing them from the unjust persecution that may come from their difficult decision.

The actual execution of the ritual spans the entire termination and is less structured by rigorous ritual expectations than it is based on the intention of the performer and what they are looking to gain from the ritual. There are slight deviations in the precise steps depending on whether it is a medical or surgical abortion, but both suggest that before the procedure the accurate science is reviewed and used as a means of reassurance. One begins by looking at their own reflection and reminding themselves of their personal responsibility to themselves, along with reading the third and fifth tenet out loud. After this point the medication to terminate the pregnancy or the surgery is taken, and the individual will look at their own reflection again and recite the personal affirmation: "By my body, my blood. By my will, it is done." At this point, the doubts of the procedure should be limited and an affirmation of one's own autonomy should conclude the ritual.

Whether or not the ritual is intended as a true means of self-affirmation for individuals undergoing the stress of an abortion, or if it is simply a political device to attain some semblance of bodily autonomy for individuals with uteruses, TST has proven themselves as a safe haven for religious reproductive rights. In addition to the ritual, the group has aided in taking lawsuits to the supreme court, curating a comprehensive guide to each state's abortion restrictions, and has done far more than many other religious groups to safeguard the bodily rights of their members.

objecthood

the line between being a person and being an object

averie collins

There is a moment, creeping or sudden, when you realise that your autonomy is treated as a privilege rather than a right. Maybe it happens in the doctor's office when your pain is dismissed. Maybe it happens when your choices are doubted or when the certainty of your own body is met with skepticism. Either way, it happens the second you understand, with unsettling certainty, that your body is not just yours, but a matter of possession, regulation and debate.

The difference between what makes one an object or a person is agency. A chair does not decide where it sits, but a person does. However, when it comes to reproductive autonomy, this distinction becomes blurry. A person is able to decide, until suddenly... they are not. Until suddenly, their choices are no longer their own, but instead hinge on the approval of others. The moment some external force determines what you may or may not do with your own body; that is the moment when one's personhood becomes conditional.

The shift is never abrupt, always subtle. It's the pharmacist raising their eyebrow before handing you the morning-after pill. It's the medical professional telling you that you'll regret it before denying you sterilisation. It's when your capacity to make decisions is inherently suspect. It's the notion that your reproductive autonomy is not really yours, but is something granted by those in power. Whether it's the state dictating abortion laws, religious institutions shaping moral standards, or one's personal relationships placing their claim over a body that is not theirs to control. Just as history has proven time and time again, when autonomy is granted instead of assumed, it becomes susceptible to revocation at any moment.

Objecthood sneaks up on you. It slithers through cultural expectations, language, and policy. The pregnant woman "carries" a child, like a vessel, reduced to their function rather than their freedom. The decision to continue a pregnancy is considered noble, while the decision to abort is framed as a heavy, immoral act. The individual carrying is secondary to the fetus. They are constantly scrutinised, instructed, and should they assert their autonomy, condemned. It's as if the body is borrowed for the pregnancy's duration, only to be returned, altered and exhausted, once its purpose has been fulfilled.

See the contrast in how different bodies are valued: a man requesting Viagra is never asked to justify or explain his decision, but a woman requesting birth control might face suspicion or limitations. For certain people, autonomy is assumed. For others, it is something they must continuously justify that they deserve.

Even something as undeniable as pain follows this same pattern. Research shows that women's pain is frequently taken less seriously than men's pain. And that those with uteruses are expected to tolerate incredibly invasive gynecologic procedures without anaesthesia, as if their pain is considered something acceptable.

Objects cannot feel. And even if they *do*, their pain is deemed as an irrelevant afterthought.

The difference between an object and a person is that a person is trusted with their own body, with their own decisions, and with their OWN future. The difference between an object and a person is that a person has complete ownership over their decisions without needing external approval, forgiveness or justification.

Returning to personhood from objecthood is not a simple task. It demands change. It demands the dismantling of a system that seeks to enforce surveillance, limitations and control. It demands the acknowledgement that autonomy is not something to be earned, but is a basic human right! The battle for reproductive rights, at its center, is the battle to ensure that no one is ever mistaken for an object, reduced to a vessel or viewed as a means to an end. Breaking down these systems demands not only legal reform, but also, a transformation in how society views equality and empowerment. This is not just a matter of legal rights, but of recognition and respect.

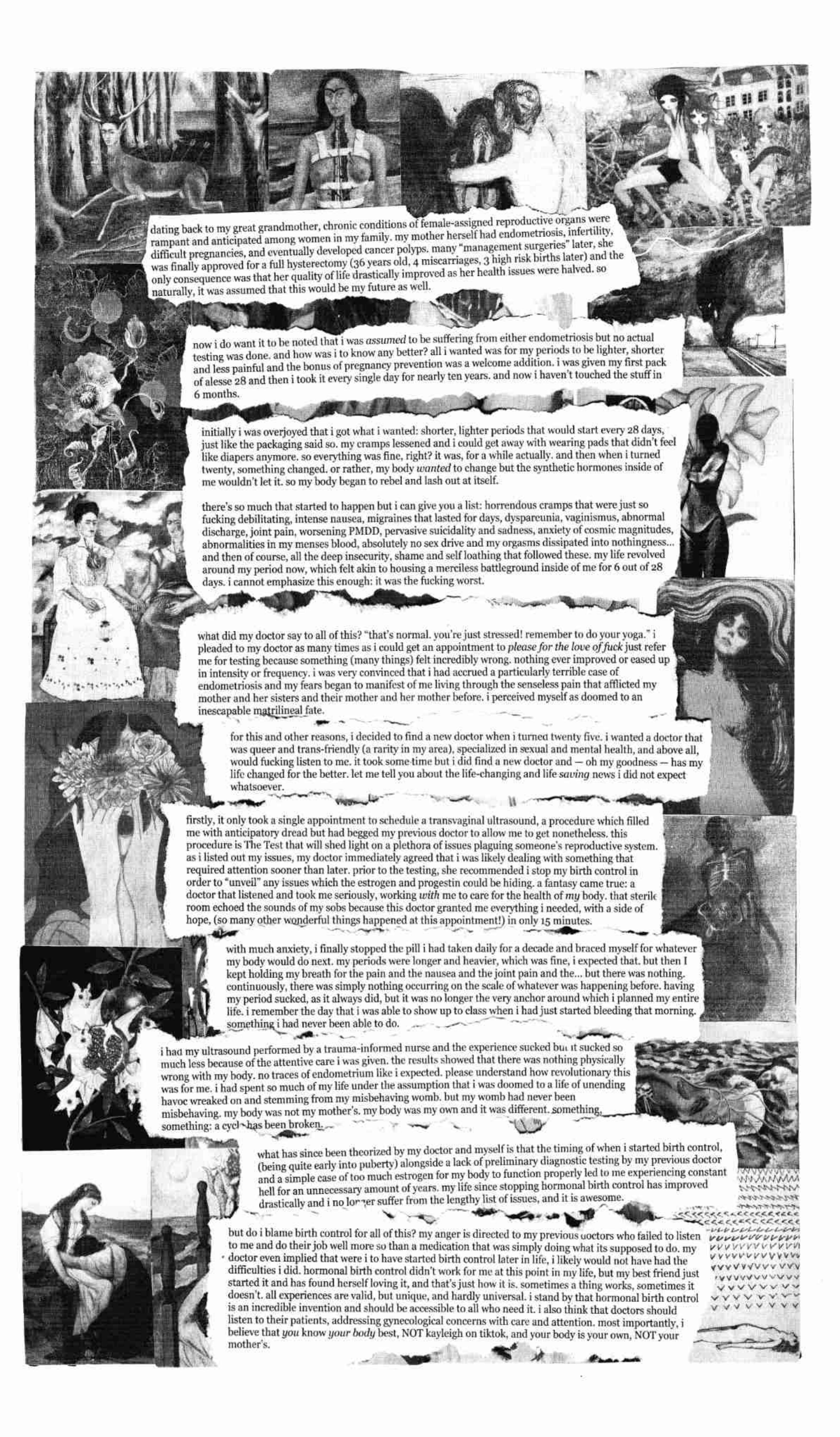
listen to your body or like, suffer forever, i guess.

with love, val

birth control is good and sometimes it isn't. nuance!

there is a lot of fearmongering and misinformation to be found floating on the internet (read: tiktok) about hormonal birth control. i am not here to scare you and i am definitely *not* going to tell you that hormonal birth control is a big and grand evil to evade with all your might. instead, i will remind you that the introduction of hormonal birth control allowed the sexual revolution of the 1960s to occur, giving women so much more autonomy than they had previously. hormonal birth control is a Good Thing that we are very lucky to have. is it perfect? no. is gynecology a clusterfuck of a medical field? yes. both of these can be true simultaneously. so was hormonal birth control good for me? yes, and also no.

i started birth control when i was a few weeks shy of seventeen at the urging of my physician and parents. this isn't as uncommon as you might think among immigrant communities that place heavy value on reputation, most of which rests upon the shoulders of daughters. my parents had caught wind that i was possibly sexually active and hearsay was enough to motivate them to eliminate potential for a teen pregnancy scandal. there were secondary reasons as well: my periods were a mess, and they made me a puddle of pain and tears every single month.



dating back to my great grandmother, chronic conditions of female-assigned reproductive organs were rampant and anticipated among women in my family. my mother herself had endometriosis, infertility, difficult pregnancies, and eventually developed cancer polyps. many "management surgeries" later, she was finally approved for a full hysterectomy (36 years old, 4 miscarriages, 3 high risk births later) and the only consequence was that her quality of life drastically improved as her health issues were halved. so naturally, it was assumed that this would be my future as well.

now i do want it to be noted that i was *assumed* to be suffering from either endometriosis but no actual testing was done. and how was i to know any better? all i wanted was for my periods to be lighter, shorter and less painful and the bonus of pregnancy prevention was a welcome addition. i was given my first pack of alesse 28 and then i took it every single day for nearly ten years. and now i haven't touched the stuff in 6 months.

initially i was overjoyed that i got what i wanted: shorter, lighter periods that would start every 28 days, just like the packaging said so. my cramps lessened and i could get away with wearing pads that didn't feel like diapers anymore. so everything was fine, right? it was, for a while actually. and then when i turned twenty, something changed. or rather, my body *wanted* to change but the synthetic hormones inside of me wouldn't let it. so my body began to rebel and lash out at itself.

there's so much that started to happen but i can give you a list: horrendous cramps that were just so fucking debilitating, intense nausea, migraines that lasted for days, dyspareunia, vaginismus, abnormal discharge, joint pain, worsening PMDD, pervasive suicidality and sadness, anxiety of cosmic magnitudes, abnormalities in my menses blood, absolutely no sex drive and my orgasms dissipated into nothingness... and then of course, all the deep insecurity, shame and self loathing that followed these. my life revolved around my period now, which felt akin to housing a merciless battleground inside of me for 6 out of 28 days. i cannot emphasize this enough: it was the fucking worst.

what did my doctor say to all of this? "that's normal, you're just stressed! remember to do your yoga." i pleaded to my doctor as many times as i could get an appointment to *please for the love of fuck* just refer me for testing because something (many things) felt incredibly wrong. nothing ever improved or eased up in intensity or frequency. i was very convinced that i had accrued a particularly terrible case of endometriosis and my fears began to manifest of me living through the senseless pain that afflicted my mother and her sisters and their mother and her mother before. i perceived myself as doomed to an inescapable matrilineal fate.

for this and other reasons, i decided to find a new doctor when i turned twenty five. i wanted a doctor that was queer and trans-friendly (a rarity in my area), specialized in sexual and mental health, and above all, would fucking listen to me. it took some time but i did find a new doctor and — oh my goodness — has my life changed for the better. let me tell you about the life-changing and life *saving* news i did not expect whatsoever.

firstly, it only took a single appointment to schedule a transvaginal ultrasound, a procedure which filled me with anticipatory dread but had begged my previous doctor to allow me to get nonetheless. this procedure is The Test that will shed light on a plethora of issues plaguing someone's reproductive system. as i listed out my issues, my doctor immediately agreed that i was likely dealing with something that required attention sooner than later. prior to the testing, she recommended i stop my birth control in order to "unveil" any issues which the estrogen and progestin could be hiding. a fantasy came true: a doctor that listened and took me seriously, working *with* me to care for the health of *my* body. that sterile room echoed the sounds of my sobs because this doctor granted me everything i needed, with a side of hope, (so many other wonderful things happened at this appointment!) in only 15 minutes.

with much anxiety, i finally stopped the pill i had taken daily for a decade and braced myself for whatever my body would do next. my periods were longer and heavier, which was fine, i expected that. but then i kept holding my breath for the pain and the nausea and the joint pain and the... but there was nothing. continuously, there was simply nothing occurring on the scale of whatever was happening before. having my period sucked, as it always did, but it was no longer the very anchor around which i planned my entire life. i remember the day that i was able to show up to class when i had just started bleeding that morning. something i had never been able to do.

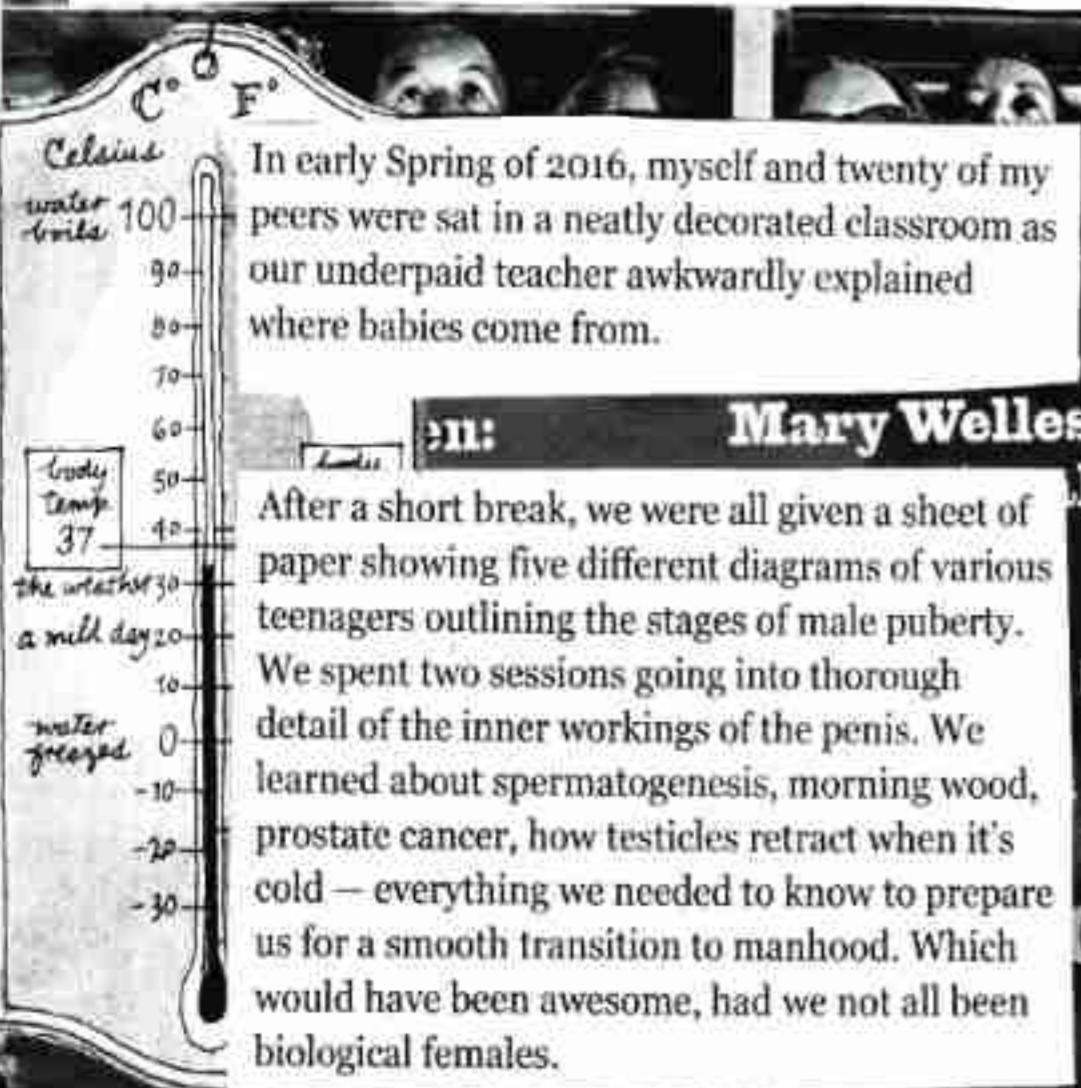
i had my ultrasound performed by a trauma-informed nurse and the experience sucked but it sucked so much less because of the attentive care i was given. the results showed that there was nothing physically wrong with my body. no traces of endometrium like i expected. please understand how revolutionary this was for me. i had spent so much of my life under the assumption that i was doomed to a life of unending havoc wreaked on and stemming from my misbehaving womb. but my womb had never been misbehaving. my body was not my mother's. my body was my own and it was different. something, something: a cycle has been broken.

what has since been theorized by my doctor and myself is that the timing of when i started birth control, (being quite early into puberty) alongside a lack of preliminary diagnostic testing by my previous doctor and a simple case of too much estrogen for my body to function properly led to me experiencing constant hell for an unnecessary amount of years. my life since stopping hormonal birth control has improved drastically and i no longer suffer from the lengthy list of issues, and it is awesome.

but do i blame birth control for all of this? my anger is directed to my previous doctors who failed to listen to me and do their job well more so than a medication that was simply doing what its supposed to do. my doctor even implied that were i to have started birth control later in life, i likely would not have had the difficulties i did. hormonal birth control didn't work for me at this point in my life, but my best friend just started it and has found herself loving it, and that's just how it is. sometimes a thing works, sometimes it doesn't. all experiences are valid, but unique, and hardly universal. i stand by that hormonal birth control is an incredible invention and should be accessible to all who need it. i also think that doctors should listen to their patients, addressing gynecological concerns with care and attention. most importantly, i believe that *you know your body best*, NOT kayleigh on tiktok, and your body is your own, NOT your mother's.

I Don't Understand Women

Gripes With Sex-Ed



In early Spring of 2016, myself and twenty of my peers were sat in a neatly decorated classroom as our underpaid teacher awkwardly explained where babies come from.

BY: Mary Wellesley:
After a short break, we were all given a sheet of paper showing five different diagrams of various teenagers outlining the stages of male puberty. We spent two sessions going into thorough detail of the inner workings of the penis. We learned about spermatogenesis, morning wood, prostate cancer, how testicles retract when it's cold — everything we needed to know to prepare us for a smooth transition to manhood. Which would have been awesome, had we not all been biological females.

Only after covering the ins and outs of male puberty could we hastily unpack the actual puberty myself and my classmates were facing. We were given a similar sheet showing five stages of development but with female anatomy — the stages sitting in perfect parallel with that of the male's which we had extensively familiarised ourselves with. We learned that our breasts would swell. How we'd grow hair on our bodies and bleed once a month. We covered it all in a similar fashion as we did the males' but looking back, there was a lot of key information that was withheld.

Almost all AFAB people in my life have in some way or another felt alienated and confused by their bodies. And looking back at our sexual education, it is no wonder why so many women ended up relying on Google and condescending medical practitioners to fill in the gaps left by sex-ed. We learned *why* changes occurred but we never learned how to actually handle them. We learned that tampons exist and how they're good for swimming, but we never learned how to use them. We learned how periods come once a month and how uterus contractions cause cramping but we didn't learn what to do when periods become irregular and so painful we cannot leave our beds. We didn't learn about common conditions such as PCOS or endometriosis, which would statistically affect at least two students in that room.

In fact, our sex education as a whole did not go beyond the five-stage timeline. We did not learn about the changes of a woman's body through and after pregnancy or perimenopause. I was sixteen when I learned that menopause was more than just "your period stops one day" but rather a decade of hot flashes, joint pain, and migraines. You think they would've slipped that little fact in there somewhere, but I guess they didn't want to spoil the surprise.

This issue stems from the precedence and focus on AMAB development in the sex-ed curriculum. Even in a sequestered female-only classroom, male bodies came first. Our introduction to puberty, and thus setting the reference point of what to expect for ourselves, was male puberty. The timeline examined is centered on the years relevant to AMAB reproductive life cycles. Anything that lies outside of this set reference point was approached with hesitancy if not omitted completely.

Even in diagrams, the female body never received the proper representation as was given to males. When looking at the penis, we would be shown detailed and varied medical drawings showing that it's a normal and natural organ — not something to be feared. The same was said about female organs of course, but in practice I cannot say that was the message delivered.

Imagine a uterus right now. I am willing to bet both of my kidneys that you're thinking of the bright pink upright triangle with the curling tubes with circular ovaries on the ends you'd find in a textbook. The real uterus looks nothing like this. It's smaller, dull, compact and curled into itself. When getting a diagram of the vulva, we saw contemporary line drawings with labels presented in total isolation from the rest of the body. I never recognized these drawings as a part of my body because they looked nothing like real organs. Where does that leave our real organs however? How are young AFAB students supposed to feel about their anatomy when they look nothing like the diagrams in class?

In its current state within the sexual education curriculum, AFAB development is not granted the complexity that it deserves, and a serious reform must be made to ensure maximum understanding and preparation for the next generation of AFAB individuals. I believe that in order for this to be achieved educators must separate female development from the timeline of the male's, provide resources for hygiene products and menstrual disorders and please, for the sake of all that is good, show real diagrams and drawings of female sex organs. It's uncomfortable to tell young students that unlike their male-bodied peers, they will go through far more at the expense of their sex, sure. Unlike male-bodied peers, they will have to track and monitor their menstrual cycles and face pregnancy (if they so choose) and have their bodies change until they are well into middle age. However, omitting this information will not stop these things from happening and I believe that they have a right to know about what is going on in their bodies.

As political tensions heighten, each day female bodies seem to go further into a state of lockdown. Now more than ever in our lives, we have to fight for autonomy over our reproductive rights as access to abortions and birth control grow increasingly endangered in the United States with Canada on its tail. Misinformation about conception, gestation, and abortion is at an all time high and it is manipulating voters to elect politicians who are actively working against them. How can we fight back if we ourselves are in the dark? In an age where ignorance is used against us, knowledge is resistance and the sooner individuals can learn about the inner workings of the human body, the more capable they are of recognizing oppression and fighting back against it. **Jena**



when two women love each other very much

in grade two, fresh out of recess and into rebellion, all my classmates said they didn't want kids. imagine, because being a mother would be hard. having a baby would be scary. adulthood is so far away and so uncool at nine-years-old. so no way. no children. i agreed. i said the same. but in the back of my mind, i had a feeling, a tugging rather than a nagging, that i would have a family.

i still feel the same way. motherhood has stayed in the back of my mind. my genes aren't really the best. but i love cooking and i don't mind cleaning. but i also want to have a full-time career. i think my disposition would be good for raising children; i was raised gently and i am gentle. sometimes too much, my girlfriend says. i have a soft-spot for children: i taught three-to-five-year-olds ballet and loved every second of it (save for when they peed in the middle of the studio), i annually judge high school writing competitions and root for each young author, i'm endeared by the parades of kindergarteners walking down College street.

i've collected these nebulous thoughts for most of my life, while the possibility of motherhood has always been very far away, they've formed into an unsharpened picture of my wife and i, two or three children, two cats that steal couch space, weekends full of junior sports tournaments and weekdays of giant pots of noodles, a house of four, five, languages and a rotating door for friends and family to have a place to stay when in asia. a daughter, or two. best friends. my girlfriend says she can't raise an eldest daughter but i don't think i would know how to talk to a son, i could figure it out. two children. best friends with my wife and i.

perhaps i lied. the idea is not so blurry. i worry it might be over-specific, even, because there is a tiny, minuscule footnote.

my girlfriend, common-law wife of almost four months, and i, are both cis women. no pregnancy scares, which is great. but, also, no pregnancy. no child from either of us, or both of us, not in the traditional way.

i'm aware there are other options. adoption is the most obvious. i search every few months for that far-reach of a suggestion, the one floating around the internet, of using bone marrow stem cells to fertilize an egg. i follow sapphic couples that have proceeded with ivf, reciprocal and not, and one of them (ari and yubin! @aribyncouple on tiktok) just had twins. so many couples have families and are happy. i watch them go for hospital check-ups, dress their children in matching clothes, and go on family vacations.

i know it's irrational. i know i can't fight nature. there are a hundred other complications as well; as of today all but one of our native countries won't recognize a marriage between two women. adoption can require a family to bring in a certain amount of money, be in a specific range, be permanent residents, etc. some relatives don't know i'm with a woman. there are bridges to cross.

i suppose i think it is grossly unfair. i happen to fall in love with a girl, and now i can't have biological children with my partner. but some other couples get to have both their chosen partners and biological families, and they don't have to give it a second thought.

i'm so jealous. i don't want children *right now*, but knowing that i can't ever have them biologically with my partner is what tears me up. there's no possibility.

at least, not yet. i cling to the fact i still have time, that i don't even want to have children yet. i push motherhood to the edges of my thoughts, i attempt and fail at flippancy, i distract myself by focusing on all the things i have to do before having kids. i'd have to be established in my field of work, i tell myself. i'd have to be closer to 30 years old. that's still in a decade. i want to travel. i want to watch my girlfriend grow into herself before becoming a mother.

and in that time, there'll be a breakthrough in medicine. there will be trials. another sapphic couple will prove that somehow, biological children between two cisgender women can happen. and i will be able to have a baby that's mine and hers. that's ours, genetically. a biological family of our own.

but time marches on. my middle sister is going to university this fall. my dad has more grey hair and is sillily self-conscious about it; he goes to the salon more to trim it biweekly. my sisters and i think he looks cool, no matter what. i want to be like him.

i didn't mean for the idea of my own family with my wife to get this vivid, this real. it is easy to daydream about it, to think of it as playing house. i ignore that this waiting, this wanting, might be all it could be. but i will turn 21 this year, and that decade to thirty is now just nine years away, and then it will be eight, seven, and then even less.

but i tell myself, nine years is still nine years. if i wait, surely, surely, right? aren't we on the edge of innovation, and obstetrics, and atypical familial makeup? if i wait a decade, if i delay a little bit, if, if, if. i wait and i pray. there's nothing else for me to do.

playing house

and i could have that too, but i've come to the conclusion that i don't care. i don't want an alternative method. i don't want a procedure. i know it's irrational, i know i won't get anywhere, being stubborn or upset or wanting something else won't do anything, but i don't care, i just want my children to have 50% of my dna and 50% hers. i want them to have her features and mine and i want them to be *ours*. i want it to be as easy as it is for cis het couples.

part of it is what the family represents. a family is the result of a home, and love, and work put into helping something grow. i want that. i want that for myself, and my wife, and i want us to do it the same way cis het people can. their families are comparatively convenient, a visible and overt show of partnership. *i trust you with my body, and my future, and my family. we are a team. a unit.*

part of it is that my own family is everything to me. we spend all our time in the living room together. my middle sister sits on the couch near the outlet with our dog at her feet. my youngest sister has a low desk near the window. her slowly-but-surely-growing plant sits with her. i'm stationed at the dinner table. we do our own things. our dad comes up the stairs and asks what we want for dinner. over homemade ramen, my sisters tell their jokes. i think they're the funniest. after dinner, we practice our languages and goad my dad into driving us to boba. it is a simple life. my two younger sisters are single-handedly the greatest thing that's ever happened in my life.

my dad is the greatest girl-dad to ever girl-dad. he had harder edges when i was younger, when he was a giant at almost 6-feet and i still needed a stool, but now he pets the dog like a basketball and orders the same boba as my youngest sister. he knows all the cavetown songs that my middle sister plays in the car. 70% of the time he wears graphic tees with food on them. he is the kindest person i know.

he would be a great granddad. and i would be a great mother. and so would my girlfriend. she is gentle, but has more backbone than me. she would know how to say no to our kids. i think i could get really good at being in a pta. my girlfriend says i'm a bit of a karen on the phone.

U C C

resources on and off campus

reproductive health

have safe sex!

xarnah

University and college students have sex. It's the fact of the matter. Vanilla or hardcore. You have sex once and you're aware that everyone around you could possibly be having sex or thinking about sex or wanting to have sex. Whether you're looking for primal, sexy, and steamy sex or you're looking for loving and gentle love *through* sex, this is the masterdoc for you. I have tried to compile as many resources as I could find about sexual health including information, helplines, and services for all you different types of people that have different types of sex, ranging from how to put on condoms to places where you can get an abortion. Practice safe sex!!!



this side of bliss

a very very short, practically nonexistent history of PEARS' funding

nora zolfaghari

In 2021, UofT was crowned as the university with the highest number of sugar babies in Canada. Despite this title, UofT has failed to support its students and ensure their safety within this industry, one that opens doors to potentially dangerous and vulnerable situations. This issue extends to those beyond the sugar baby industry as well: UofT notoriously ignores sexual harassment on its campus. Outside the Faculty of Music, students have to whistleblow with graffiti. UofT is so opposed to taking responsibility for their students' safety that they don't even acknowledge the existence of frats on campus, so when fake posters circulated accusing various UofT frats of sexual scandals, it wasn't unbelievable, nor that far from the truth. Rather than protecting its students, UofT prefers to protect their own image, sweeping anything that threatens it under its gaudy, antique rugs.

As stated on their website, the Prevention, Empowerment, Advocacy Response for Survivors (PEARS) Project is a "grassroots, trauma-informed coalition that provides support and resources to survivors of sexual violence across the University of Toronto." Despite the gap that PEARS fills in UofT's sexual harassment policies and support, the project is not funded by a UTSU levy, after their request for a levy of 97 cents – you heard me, 97 cents – was denied. 97 cents denied by UTSU, a levy that would go towards a better space for PEARS to provide higher quality care to the students who need it most. The VP Operations at the time, Samir Mechel, claimed in an interview with *the Varsity* that the levy was disapproved "because the union had concerns about how PEARS was going to address the insurance and liability associated with a new office." Further, he mentions "the UTSU had intended not to approve any more than two levy proposals, out of worry that if the union held too many referendums, voter fatigue would set in and cause all of them to fail."

PEARS was created as an extension of a similar program under Trinity College that became overwhelmed due to the sheer amount of requests for their services. While the UofT Sexual Education Centre (UTSEC) was approved for a levy increase to 75 cents, PEARS was largely ignored. While PEARS is the voice of the students, the UTSEC, along with UofT's Sexual Violence Prevention & Support (SVPS) Centre, are figureheads for the university to claim they have something going on. PEARS has no levy and minimal support, yet they posted on their Instagram about the Faculty of Music's graffiti, and continue to amplify student voices, while no one else did. Fatigue is no reason to deny students support.

Despite this, in January of this year, UofT announced that they would begin to implement new sexual violence policy reviews as a result of campaigning and advocating by PEARS – UTSEC and the SVPS Centre were not mentioned to have any part in these efforts. However, their efforts weren't the true reason behind these changes: these policy reviews are an extension of a bill mandating revision of sexual violence and harassment policies by post-secondary institutions every 3 years. But who knows if PEARS' advocacy would have been realized to any degree if this bill did not exist.

So, the new policies promise, well...nothing. But who's surprised? The Vice-Provost suggested organizing community consultations to receive feedback on how to improve their policies. However, PEARS has already made exact suggestions as to what changes should be made. As a result, PEARS themselves have no real hope that these policy changes will do anything at all, leaving them to support students where their own institution cannot.

Definitions are vague, responsibility is avoided, and at the end of the day, students are caught in the crossfire.

It's a tale as old as time: as far as UofT is concerned, the anti-abortion protesters are the only form of contraceptive and sexual health support they're more than happy to allow on their campus. When it comes to implementing actual efforts towards supporting students who have been victim to sexual harassment or violence, they delay implementation until they suddenly have neither the time nor the money to make any concrete changes. This is nothing new at UofT, but you would think that eventually, *one day*, students' safety would be just slightly more important than the fatigue of those voting and implementing policies.



from the archives

these gargoyle articles are from the take back the night issue in volume 32, 1987, and the international women's day supplement issue (done in collaboration with york university's the lexicon) in volume 34, 1990. together, these articles chronical canadian abortion activism during the late 1980s and early 1990s, preserving student voices on reproductive justice.

The Gargoyle, Thursday, October 8, 1987

7

Comment

Mass action planned to win abortion rights

by Jill Lawless

The struggle for a woman's right to an abortion is one of the most urgent and important issues for the women's movement today — as witnessed by the power of abortion as a rallying point for many of the forces of reaction in our society.

Across the country, women's, labour, and community groups have mobilised in opposition to a federal abortion law that is unjust (because the "only in a hospital, only if approved by a committee" rule denies women full reproductive freedom), discriminatory (because it is poor, rural, northern and immigrant women who are hit hardest, who can least negotiate the red tape and expense the system makes prerequisites of even trying to get an abortion), and dangerous (because it denies many — most — women access to safe abortions).

Recently there have been increasing attacks on access to abortion services across the country, from harassment of doctors in Newfoundland and anti-choice takeovers of clinic boards in Ste. Therese and Quebec City to continuous picketing of the Morgentaler and Scott clinics in Toronto. The very existence of the Toronto clinics is threatened by the

attacks of reactionary forces which would see them closed: among these, the provincial and federal governments.

Fighting against these attacks are groups like the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC). OCAC came together five years ago as a coalition of groups and individuals who recognised the need to set up an abortion clinic to challenge the law. Today OCAC fights for repeal of the federal abortion law and the establishment of free-standing clinics covered by medicare. It is dedicated to a mass-action perspective, mobilising people in the unions and the women's movement around the conviction that, in the words of one member, "the only way to change things is to make sure there are a lot of people in the streets."

On October 18 and 19, supporters of a woman's right to an abortion will take to the streets across English Canada and Quebec in an action called by the Quebec Coalition a l'avortement libre et gratuit and sponsored in Toronto by OCAC under the title: Marching for Women's Lives. In Toronto, they will be calling for the repeal of the federal abortion law, legalisation of free-standing clinics providing medically insured abortions, dropping of the charges

against Drs. Morgentaler, Scott and Smolling, and an end to harassment of clinic patients and staff. Marches will also take place in Vancouver, Edmonton, Quebec City and St. John's.

In Toronto the rally will take place at District Court, 361 University Ave. (at Dundas), Sunday, October 18, at 1 p.m., to be followed by a march to the Morgentaler clinic. Come out and

march for choice on abortion!

Jill Lawless is a third year UC student and a member of the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics.



The Gargoyle, Thursday, March 8, 1990

S6

International Women's Day Supplement

Fight to legalize abortion far from over

by Kate Manning

The struggle to keep abortion safe, legal and out of the Criminal Code is far from over in Canada.

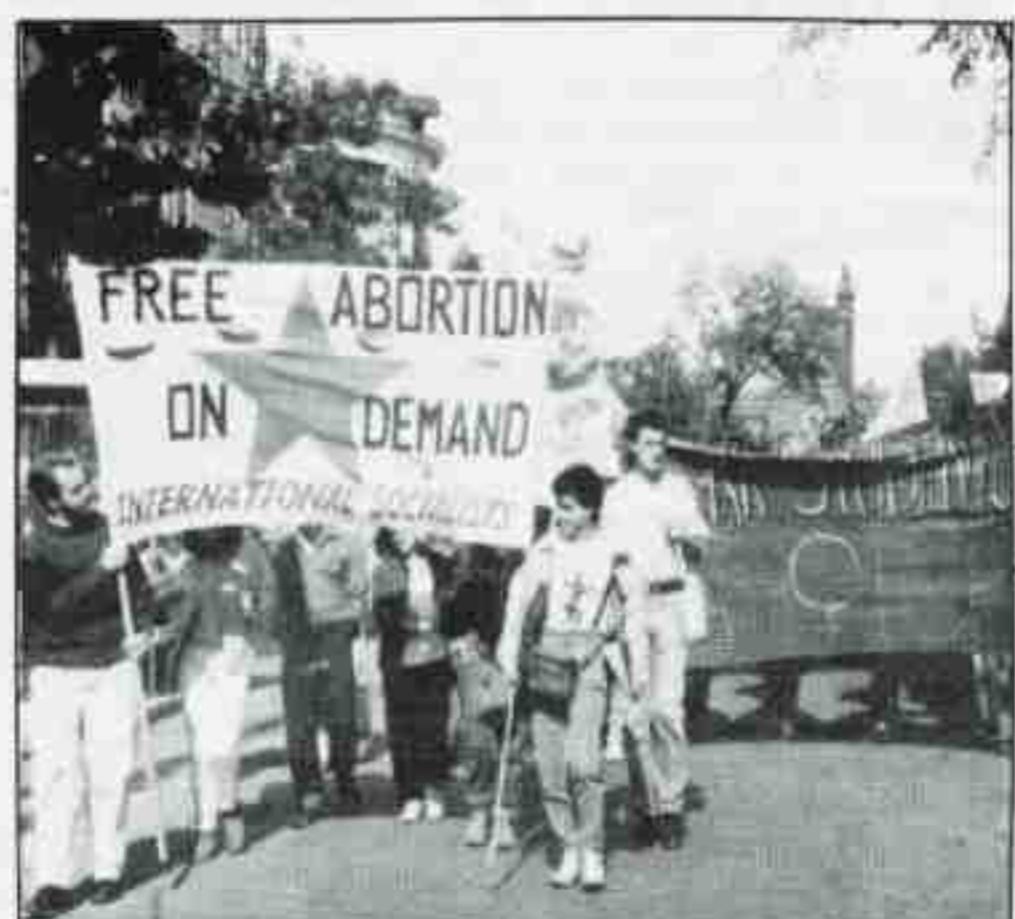
The Mulroney government's proposed legislation on abortion, which is now under study, would re-criminalize abortion after a long battle for women's choice in Canada. A doctor could go to jail for performing an abortion unless the pregnancy has been declared to endanger a woman's physical, mental, or psychological health. This would also open the way for men to try to get court sanctions preventing their partners from having an abortion.

Whether it is legal or not, women have always, and will continue to seek out abortions. Because the question of abortion is such an emotional one, the fight to legalize it has been raging for years.

In Canada, before 1969, abortion was only permitted in cases where a woman's health or life were in danger by continuing a pregnancy. This precedent was set by a Saskatchewan Supreme Court in 1909. In Britain, the case of *Rex vs. Bonne* also ruled abortion allowable if a woman's physical or mental health were endangered.

Because the law was not clear and jail terms were possible, most Canadian doctors refused to perform abortions. During most of this century and probably even earlier, backstreet abortionists thrived. Because of the unsafe conditions of these illegal abortions, hundreds of women died or became sterile.

Between 1900 and 1972, statistics show that 1,793 persons



Pro choice movement takes to the streets

were charged with "procuring or attempting to procure an abortion." Of these, 1,155 were convicted. Between 1958 and 1969, approximately 12 women per year died from illegal or self-induced abortions. And these are just the reported statistics.

A Liberal government amended the Canadian Criminal Code in 1969 to allow abortion under certain conditions. Abortions could only be performed if a woman's health or life were threatened by a pregnancy. This had to be decided by a committee of three doctors at an accredited hospital.

This law made access to abortion in Canada completely unequal. Women in small rural areas had almost no chance of

obtaining a legal abortion in their home towns. Instead, they were forced to travel to large urban centres or to go to the United States where abortion was legalized in 1973. Poor women had even less of a chance of obtaining an abortion because with lack of government funding it was too expensive.

The committees invaded the privacy of women seeking to end an unwanted pregnancy. This law sent more women to backstreet abortionists.

Dr. Henry Morgentaler began his historic crusade to legalize abortion in Canada in June of 1970. In that year, his Montreal clinic was raided and he was charged with conspiring to perform

an abortion.

Three years later, ten more charges were laid against him. The first of many jury acquittals came in November of that year in Montreal but a Quebec Appeal Court overturned this acquittal in April 1974. Dr. Morgentaler was sentenced to jail for 18 months, a sentence which the Supreme Court of Canada upheld.

In 1975, a jury acquitted Dr. Morgentaler of new charges. That same year, the federal government amended the Criminal Code to prevent an Appeal Court from overturning a jury's verdict.

Morgentaler was released on bail in January 1976 and a few months later in September, he was retried on the original charges. Once again, a jury acquitted him.

At this point, the Quebec government stopped prosecuting under the federal abortion law and clinics and hospitals have been performing safe, legal abortions there ever since.

Henry Morgentaler decided to take his battle outside of Quebec in 1983. In June of that year, his one month-old clinic in Winnipeg was raided and again he was charged with conspiring to perform an abortion.

In Toronto, Doctors Henry Morgentaler, Robert Scott and Leslie Smolling were charged following the opening of the Morgentaler Clinic in the summer of 1983.

When a Toronto jury found the three doctors not guilty in November 1984, it became obvious that no jury would ever convict on abortion charges. The abortion battle was now destined for the Supreme Court of Canada.

In October 1985, the Ontario Court of Appeal ordered a new trial on the grounds that the original trial had been improper. Dr. Morgentaler's lawyer, Morris Manning, had instructed the jury to ignore the law on the grounds that it was unconstitutional and unfair. This, along with other aspects of the trial, was deemed improper.

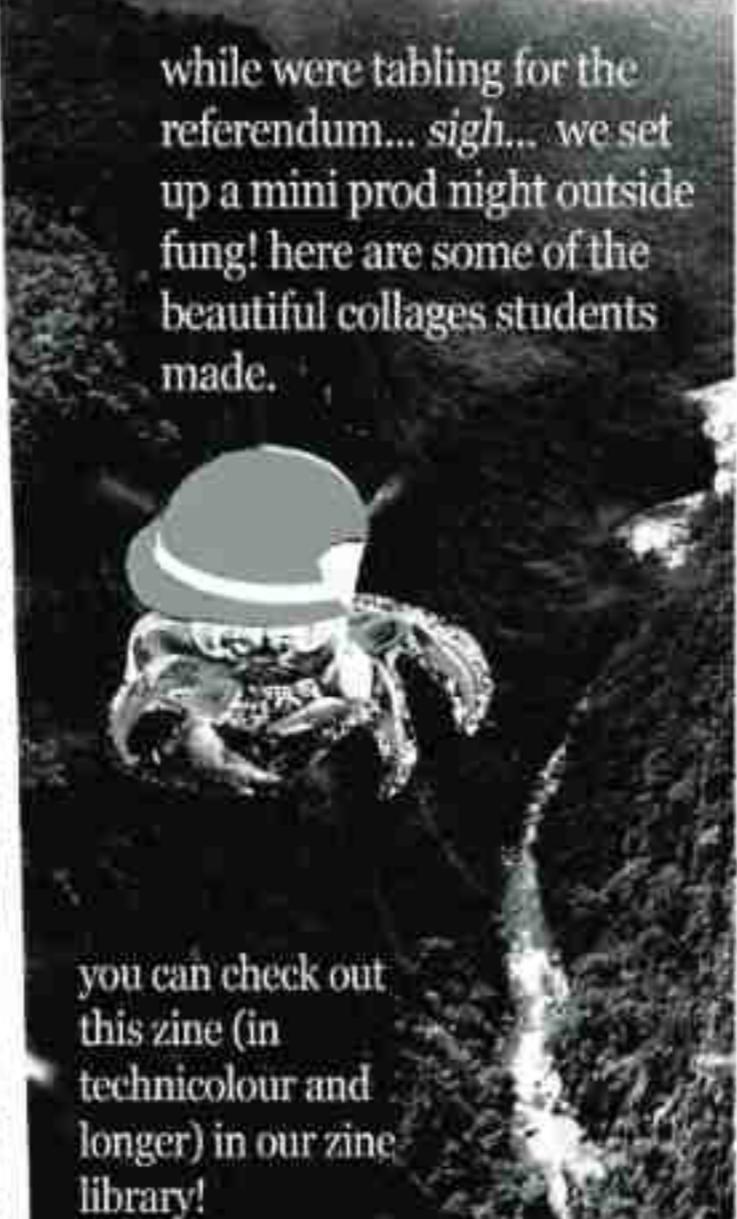
Manning argued the appeal of this decision in the Supreme Court of Canada in October of 1986. His argument was that the present abortion law violates a woman's constitutional rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Because of this, Manning argued, the law was unfair and should be wiped out.

On January 28, 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down Section 251 of the Criminal Code on the grounds that it violated a woman's right to "life, liberty and security of the person."

The decision was supported by five of the seven judges and sent a clear message to Ottawa that any new law could not infringe on a woman's rights.

In his decision, Chief Justice Brian Dickson said, "forcing a woman by threat of criminal sanction to carry a fetus to term unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations is a profound interference with a woman's body."

Since January 1988, Canada has been without an abortion law. This makes abortion simply a health matter to be decided by a woman and her doctor. But the fight is not over yet, as the present government's proposed legislation now shows.



The Most Successful New Line



WHAT IS BRAINSCRAMBLE?

★ a youth-run non-profit magazine
Getting to Platform queer & BIPOC
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★ based in Toronto & Berkeley

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sneak peek for our
APRIL ISSUE: **OUROBOROS**
featuring...
concretely elisabetapap
elisa penha & stella seifried
aloe mak
arianna kandi

excerpt from: THE TRIAL
[...]
SOMEBODY, SOMEWHERE, ALL ALONE: do
you know what happened next?
EVERYBODY, EVERYWHERE, ALTOGETHER:
always.
[...]

[...]
if the heroic, the human, and the *good* are
unavoidably transient by nature, then any fight
for their reemergence is a triumph. the story
endures despite the intrinsic pain of
continuance, and within it, so do people.
[...]

excerpt from: *jormungandr/midgard'*
[...]
you roll over and see a crow, it seems to be flying
in circles. you wipe your face getting up. you
look at his grave and think about how he almost
sent you into one.
[...]

[...]
in the winding story of us there are corridors:
pale and fleeting moments of light where your
suns align with the
orbit of my biting mouth.
[...]

excerpt from: *icarus*,
elisa penha & stella seifried
[...]
ashanti aubonni

[...]
in the way, you, icarus, are penned by thousands
of poets—i implore you—play with my eternal
turning of a page which might render me
infinite—
even for a moment—
[...]

excerpt from: *in the beginning*
phoebe sonou
[...]