

# Grater Expectations

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DISRUPTION



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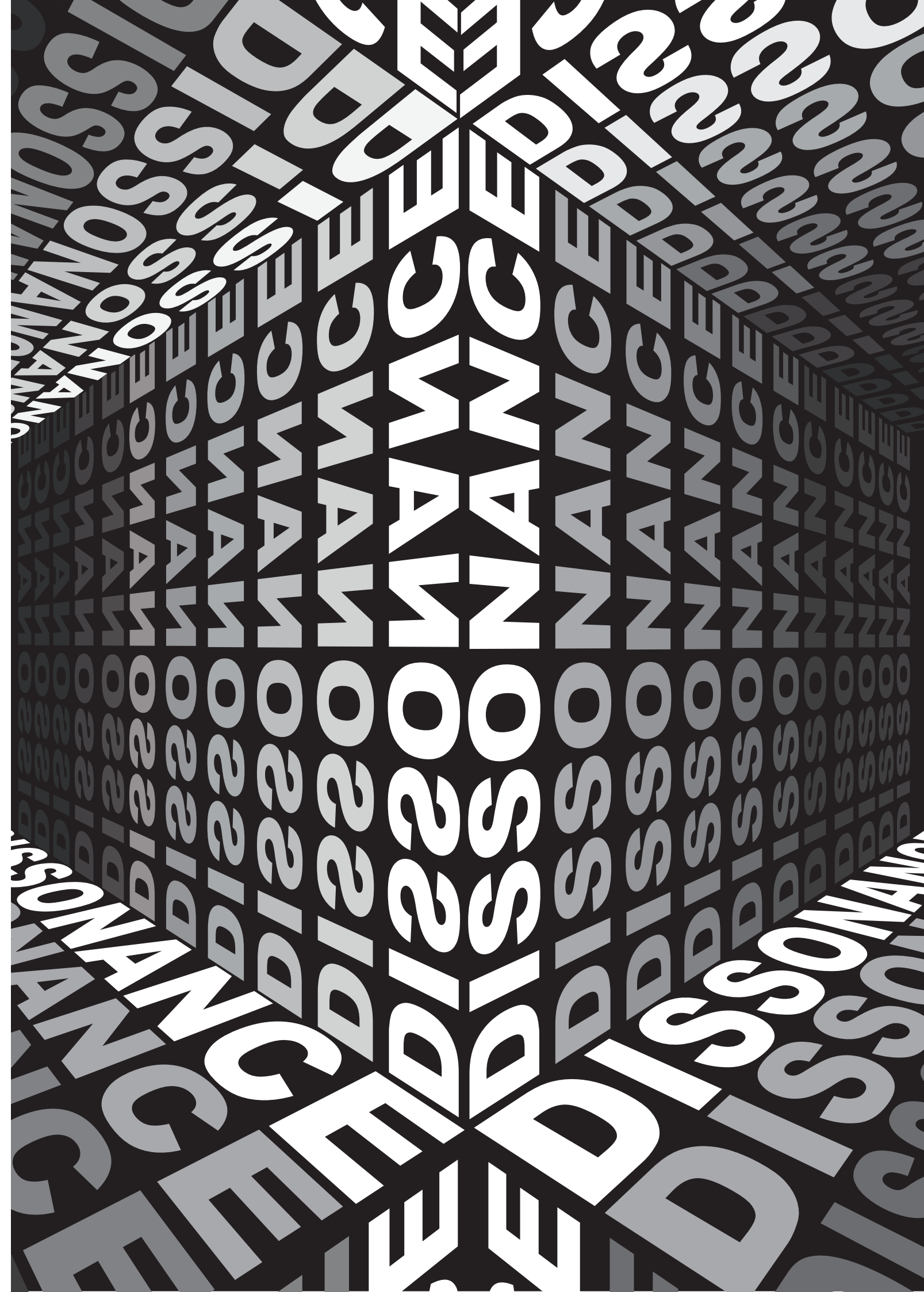
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# MySpace

by Anna Maria Papaoikonomou

Every time you're near me,  
I lose my bodily autonomy. I guess it's worth it,  
Since you can't think of a way to walk through  
Without grabbing my waist.

Feeling your clammy palms snatching my arm,  
A plethora of sickness as you aim to seize my neck  
Just so that you could whisper in my ear,  
Pretending it's too loud to speak,

I never let you,  
enter this space.

This space, it requires a distance,  
Something not too essential for you.  
Perhaps, you find me familiar,  
Just like you find yourself too.

I crave that distance,  
For my body to feel like my own.  
A circle to surround me from which your senses are away.  
A reform of the Land Registration Act 2002.

Maybe soon, I will be able to feel like this is my space.  
Maybe you will grab my waist again,  
In a frigid coffee-coloured bar,  
And maybe you want me to be physically disrupted,

But you won't be able to enter,  
As I will finally have learned  
How to make it

My own space.



# The Demonisation of Femininity in Televised Media

by Milla Waldron

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It's 2021, and it's about time we finally stop policing the ways in which women choose to express themselves. For example, in televised media, women are often vilified for expressions of hyperfemininity and restricted by the contemporary associations attributed to strength.

As a result, women are often unable to fully express themselves without being judged or criticised for how they are. Furthermore, negative views of femininity get consolidated through film and other media, strengthening the association between femininity and weakness, malice, stupidity, thus making it more difficult for women to be who they truly want to be.

This article will discuss the contemporary portrayals of femininity through the analysis of cinematic tropes and selected cultural texts.

## Femininity in Televised Media - The 'Strong Female Character'

The first point of focus will be the 'Strong Female Character', a woman who is heavily featured in some of today's popular films and television. The 'Strong Female Character' (SFC), unlike what the title suggests, does not accurately represent femininity or womanhood, including expressions of female strength. The SFC is someone who identifies as a woman and, unlike other women in the film or television series, is completely devoid of any characteristics that suggest that she is a woman other than her appearance. She is usually stronger and smarter than all the other characters in her sphere of life and encourages the audience to wonder why she faces any conflict as a result; she is impassive, stoic, independent and assertive and is never seen wearing any typically 'feminine' style clothing such as form-fitting dresses or skirts unless these garments are used in order to reinforce her sexuality and/or seduce men.

This woman, therefore, embodies traditionally 'masculine' characteristics and does not employ any feminine qualities such as gentleness, sensitivity or affection. Characters with these typically 'masculine' generalisations include Natasha Romanoff, Rey and Wonder Woman.

The problem with depicting women with more 'masculine' traits is that it reaffirms the association of weakness with generically 'feminine' traits. It also asserts that, in order to appear strong and be taken seriously, women must adopt these 'masculine' traits. Therefore, women who choose to express their emotional vulnerability and express themselves with typically 'feminine' fashion are not treated as significant, well-rounded personalities. Thus, in order to disrupt the narratives surrounding femininity in popular film and television, there must be an increase in the diversification of women's roles. These roles cannot be limited to the 'love interest', the 'SFC' or a mother.

## The Denunciation of Hyperfemininity - The 'Girly Girl'

A woman who is associated with hyperfemininity in society is commonly dubbed as 'the girly girl' in today's pop culture. Stereotypically, she is someone who loves the colour pink, is materialistic, loves clothes, makeup and jewellery, and she may also believe that her success is dependent on maintaining a romantic relationship with a man.

In contemporary media, because hyperfemininity comes along with a more 'submissive' or 'shallow' set of character traits, the response in the viewers is often to mock and ridicule it, connecting femininity to a lack of personality or autonomy. I will now focus on several pop culture examples of such a portrayal of 'girly girls', mostly from films and television.

### *"She's not like other girls!" - Jessica Stanley in Twilight (2008)*

One of the many ways in which femininity is vilified in contemporary society is through the creation of conflict between women, or the ongoing tension between the typical 'girly girl' and another girl who is tomboyish and famously 'not like other girls'. This concept is evident in the Twilight franchise through the character of Jessica Stanley, in Mean Girls through Cady Heron, and in Little Women through Amy March.

Jessica Stanley is the epitome of the 'girly girl' trope: she desperately desires a relationship with either Edward Cullen or Mike Newton, loves fashion and makeup, and is defined by her tendency to gossip. In both the book and the film series, she is constantly measured against Bella Swan, the protagonist of the series, whose awkwardness and love for literature, ultimately, causes the audience to view her as more original than the 'vain' and 'shallow' Jessica. In the series, Jessica is merely a prop used to hide Bella Swan's flaws - her lack of agency, depth and character motivations.

In the films, Jessica often fades into the background and her chatter is often ignored when the focus of the shot is centred on Bella Swan. Thus, Jessica becomes one of the ‘other typical girly girls’, one that many girls are taught to avoid becoming by being threatened to be pushed to the background and deemed ‘uninteresting’ if that’s how they choose to dress and behave.

### ***Vilification and Reduction - Amy March in Little Women and Regina George in Mean Girls (2004)***

Amy March, like Jessica Stanley, can also be associated with the ‘girly girl’ stereotype. Unlike Amy’s older sister Jo, she is a ‘perfect lady’, an artist, yearns for popularity and loves embellished fashion. Like Jessica Stanley in the Twilight franchise, she is used as a foil character. Across the many adaptations of Louisa May Alcott’s Little Women, it is often that Jo is the most glorified for being a ‘tomboy’ and striving to become a writer whereas Amy, Jo’s younger sister, is made to be shallow and one-dimensional due to her love of fineries and the desire to marry a man.

However, in Greta Gerwig’s 2019 rendition of Little Women, Amy is transformed. The film explains that her intentions behind focusing on fashion and securing a marriage is because she understands her position in society. She understands that it is she, out of all her sisters, who must secure financial support for her family through marriage, given that she cannot make her own money as a woman in her society. She is a realist and embraces femininity in order to achieve her goals. But even given this, the ‘feminine’ character of Amy doesn’t seem able or willing to stand on her own two feet without waiting for a man to ‘rescue’ her, unlike Jo who is tomboyish, decisive, and seems to know how to take matters in her own hands.

Similar to Amy, Regina George from Mean Girls is also depicted as the villain in her own universe. She is continuously associated with the colour pink, is incredibly materialistic, loves to gossip and is driven to stay at the top of the high school hierarchy. Whilst she acts immorally, by using others as a means to an end and by writing a ‘burn book’ with horrific comments about other members of the student body, her actions are never fully explained: she is just mean for the sake of being mean. Regina is reduced to a one-dimensional villain who is also depicted as hyperfeminine, being pointlessly mean in the typical ‘girly girl’ ways (e.g., through gossiping). Curiously, at the end of the film, when Regina starts participating in sports, she is portrayed as more of a ‘good’ character. Therefore, we may conclude that hyperfemininity is what ‘corrupted’ Regina George in the first place. If this is the case,

then Mean Girls consolidates the misogynistic idea that any tightly-knit group of women is the origin of conflict and unrest, sending the message that ‘traditional’ femininity (pretty clothes, color pink...) somehow makes people vile and dysfunctional.

Thus, through the characters of Regina and Amy, the vilification of femininity is evident. Furthermore, these two characters could be seen as lacking depth as their character motivations are limited to achieving romance with a man (Amy) or being mean just because (Regina).

### **Causing Disruption by Redefining Strength**

In sum, to disrupt the restrictive norms of gender in today’s society, we must stop vilifying various expressions of femininity. As shown through examples of women in film, femininity is completely absent in women who are considered ‘strong’ in Hollywood films. However, when female characters present as typically feminine, there is nothing left of the strength of Hollywood’s ‘strong female characters’; they are simply reduced to a womanly caricature of stereotypes and cliches.

In part, this is because in Western Society, strength is associated with traditionally masculine traits such as stoicism, impassiveness and assertiveness. Therefore, in order to promote sales of certain films, studios provide audiences with what they expect a generically strong person to be. This, however, creates a narrative for women which tells them that they will be devalued if they do not possess these ‘masculine and strong’ traits. Furthermore, society continues to associate strength and advantage with masculinity by vilifying hyperfemininity. This is shown through the characters of Regina George and Amy March.

To address the existing restrictive narratives of femininity, we must reimagine the current concept of strength to include feminine traits such as empathy, expressiveness and cooperativeness. Additionally, films must stop portraying female characters as exclusively ‘masculine’. Young women need to see other strong women on screen who are also into ‘feminine’ things (like pretty dresses and makeup). Women shouldn’t be considered or pictured as ‘less strong’ or capable simply because they choose to subscribe to what is considered typically feminine. It is also imperative that the vilification of feminine traits and groups of women be stopped because its continuation could hinder the development of young women, leaving them scared to express their femininity for the fear of being considered stupid, mean, or ‘basic’. We already have enough strong women in suits. For once, let there be a sensitive and emotional strong woman in a dress and stilettos!

Text me when you get home xx

22:05 ✓✓

## This Is Our Normal

by Pia Mehdwan

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Fear has a place in my heart. I can't tell you where it began, but I can describe the moment that I fear.

I'm walking home, down the road I walk every day. It's cold and the days are getting shorter. I feel good; there's a hop in my step and the coffee in my hand is warm.

*Agh, I wish I had worn a hat.*

*Shit, I forgot a scrunchie.*

*Crap, my phone isn't charged.*

*I'll be home in 10 minutes.* I continue walking.

My pace halts, my mind follows, screeching to a stop. You've blocked my path. Suddenly I'm no longer on my way home and 10 minutes have become infinite. There is a feeling bubbling in me, and as you speak to me, I freeze. You reach to grab me, and I jerk away.

*"Bitch, treating me like a fucking creep"*

For a not-creep, your words are too loud, your stature too menacing and your gaze too shrewd.

I calm myself. I smile. I reply like a robot. I'm pleasant.

But inside I'm quivering and crumpling; I'm remembering a newspaper article, I'm recalling an experience of a friend, I'm fearing a phantom that follows me every day.

I'm fearing what you've already gotten away with.

## Definitions

by Francesca Parrotta

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I read Judith Butler: definition implies that there is someone defining. No category comes from a void; there is always a creator. No category comes from a void, yet they're created intertwined with bones and blood and joy and sweat and I am lost.

I watch Abigail Thorn: the fact that something is artificial does not mean its consequences are not real. I am a firm believer that clothes are not gendered but if my fifteen-year-old brother went to school in my hometown wearing a skirt I would be scared. I try to reiterate that long hair is neither masculine nor feminine, yet I spend five minutes every morning in front of my mirror, tying and untying a knot that will be dishevelled by the end of the day anyway.

A philosopher once dreamt of an earth where there was no gender and I'd like to live there - but I don't know who I'd be there. I was going to write about subversion but the truth is I am tired.

I don't want to talk about gender. It would be nice to simply lay down on the grass and discuss, for example, Mantel's theorem. Or how many C4 subgraphs I can fit in a hypercube. Instead, one day I hate makeup and the other I fly on the wings of my eyeliner.

I don't want to think about gender. I like maths because almost all its rules can be changed, you just have to be creative enough. In contrast, real life feels frustrating. So for a while I try to stay out of all this.

But I fall into a paradox. To disrupt a rule I need to acknowledge it first, but if I don't acknowledge it the world would do it in my place. If I stay silent, someone else will take my voice.

There is no choice but to speak. With the reminder that each of my words has been shaped by a binary that's both relevant and arbitrary.

# In Memory of the Broken Wine Glass

by Chaney Manshu Diao



## Part I

Recalling the awkwardness of mopping the spills of the beer.

Bubbling

While

e-x-p-a-n-d-i-n-g

Its terrain

before

being

wiped out

Everything was so alive,  
Even the broken pieces of the wine glass.  
Rolling, as if painfully, struggling to death.  
Motionlessly,  
A whole is becoming a few uneven segments.

## Part II

On creation, disruption, rupture, love and queerness.

“It is much easier to destroy than to create”

A sentence, to  
our shared destiny  
towards  
A state of madness,  
of mind, sliding into  
disorder and chaos.

- According to entropy.

Yet

The repaired broken glass exists  
As an exemplary failure  
to the fallen nature of Man Kind.  
Where a new glass was given birth to.

Dance to the costly celebration of  
Human creativity:  
A vessel  
Containing ultimate body fluid, -idty.  
High in productivity,  
A hell, of the artificial new-borns.  
Baby (babe).  
Nouns, pronouns...  
Whatever you name it,  
As a wipeout of its own history.



# RESURRECTION



## “Silly Girl”

by Pia Mehdwan

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“Silly girl”  
It stabs  
Belittled and made small  
I never know my size  
I wonder how small I can become.

“Silly girl”  
A word is a joke  
But only when it comes from me.

“Silly girl”  
What could you understand?  
I sigh  
It’s like a chokehold  
My words never said for you.

“Silly gi-“  
Crushed in the palm of my hands  
Your words are particles of dust  
You can’t even finish your sentence!

“Silly...”  
I’ve stopped listening  
A buzzing fly zips my ear  
A tickling touch -- it never mattered



# “I’m Not Your Bitch”: Can We Ever Really Disrupt the Sexist Undertones of the English Language and Reclaim Misogynistic Insults?

by Ginny Kelly

A couple weeks ago I went to see Inhaler, an all-male indie rock band. I loved their music (and the attractive lead singer) enough for me to withstand the sprinkling of beer from overhead and jumping up to catch a glimpse of them on onstage as the three 6’5” men blocked my view. When “My King Will Be Kind” came on, I seemed to be one of the only ones shouting all the lyrics, until one line made me extremely uneasy. Everyone was shouting at the top of their lungs, “I fucking hate that bitch”. A group of middle-aged men behind me joked about how it was such a great line. The deeply misogynistic words reverberated around the predominantly male crowd, getting increasingly louder as the song went on. As I grew more uncomfortable, I tried to talk myself out of it. They didn’t *mean* it to be that aggressive or *that* misogynistic. It’s about a *specific* woman, not *every* woman. It’s about word play and musicality, so it’s *art* and that’s *fine*. It could be a fictionalised story; they are adopting personas for the *drama*. But, I couldn’t really convince myself so I just willed the song to end, not wanting to make a scene.

This made me uncomfortable not just because the misogyny of the term “bitch” – women being associated with female dogs - has existed since the 11th century with the Christian Great Chain of Being, but also due to the almost cult-like chanting of it by men. I began to wonder if I’d feel the same if it was an all-female band or all-female audience. Madonna, Doja Cat, Nicki Minaj and numerous other female artists use “bitch” and other sexually derogatory terms, such as “ho”, in their music. But does this nullify its misogynistic undertones?

It’s important to first examine where these feminised insults and slurs came from. Dating back to the Tudor era insults aimed at women almost always referred to female sexuality and femininity, while male insults remained mostly gender neutral or relating to their social status. It became commonplace to refer to women as “wenches” – both meaning a young woman or a sex worker – or as “whores” which also relates to sex work. “Quean”, relating to a badly-behaved woman, again, could be used to mean a prostitute. In effect, women are essentialised to their sexual and reproductive wombs;

they are the “two legged wombs” of Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. To be feminine or a woman, it seems, was not only deemed a socially inferior position, but the epitome of bad. To use this opportunity of your femaleness to gain financial independence, however, was even worse – primarily because it diverged from the patriarchy of pre-modern Christian marriage.

This sexualisation of women in swearing and insults continues today, perhaps in a more modern way. “Slut” or “hoe” is still used, replacing “quean”, “wench” or “whore”, to denote a morally loose, disloyal, sexually promiscuous woman in countless songs, primarily by male rap artists such as Jay Z, Kanye West, Chris Brown and Usher. Women in general are named “bitches” or “hoes”, and hence immediately linked to their sexual function for cis heterosexual men. The phrase “son of a bitch” is still used, mostly in American media, to insult a man, drawing upon both misogynistic and paternalistic ideas. The best way to insult a man nowadays seems to be to question his fulfillment of the masculine duty to protect and control women.

FUCK THAT BITCH  
FUCK THAT BITCH  
FUCK THAT BITCH



What strikes me most is that “bitch” is often used to refer to so-called “difficult women”. During her 2016 presidential campaign, Hilary Clinton was frequently called a “bitch” or “nasty woman” by Donald Trump. He could not intellectually counter her arguments so chose to discredit her by reducing her to something society both openly and implicitly disapproves of: women. Her speeches and ideas show she isn’t weak, submissive or complaining needlessly, so in this context “bitch” means a bad woman: a woman who is difficult, who isn’t obedient or quiet and who won’t take misogyny as a tasteless joke. Rather than choosing a gender-neutral insult for a bad person such as villain, charlatan, fake, arsehole or scoundrel (for the more genteel), he chose a gendered insult where the negative connotations stem from misogyny. He explicitly calls on his audience to dig-up their socialised hate for women.

We know that “bitch” and similar words are used to hurt women by throwing the historically negative attributions that belong to traditional femininity, such as sexual promiscuity, passivity, and weakness of mind, to name a few, at them. But, is there a way to turn this around? By disassociating these words from their misogyny and instead connecting “bitch” to female solidarity and power, can we change its meanings?

The LGBTQIA+ community has reclaimed the homophobic undertones of “queer” so a celebratory and inclusive identity can be created in the wake of such discrimination. With the gay community being enormously stigmatized as a result of press sensationalism and scaremongering in the late 1900s, “queer” was used perjoratively more than ever. Many charities supporting people living with AIDS and more generally protecting people from homophobic violence during the 1980s, hence chose to reclaim the word “queer”, such as Queer Action. That is not to say that homophobic slurs are not used today - there are a multitude of others that still cause the same offence - but “queer”, particularly among younger generations, is not usually one of them.

So, what about “bitch”? We as a society say it all the time to mean various things and varying degrees of offence. ‘I’m being such a basic bitch today’. ‘They were just bitching’. ‘He’s such a little bitch’. ‘I’m ready, bitches!’ Common usage of “bitch” as a non-offensive, mundane description may seem like the word has been reclaimed, but the negative, derogatory connotations haven’t disappeared. “Basic bitch” denotes behaviour that is common in a negative way because it is prevalent among women and hence intrinsically feminine. “Bitching” is gossiping in a nasty way, because that is a stereotype of women; they are the nags which the scold’s bridle (a medieval

torture device used to physically silence women who spoke too much) sought to fix. When “bitch” is applied to men, its synonymous with submission and weakness, again a stereotype linked to femininity; it criticises by emasculating him. The fact that men, and in some instances women as well, are still calling people “bitches” in the traditional sense, means that its negative understandings are still cemented into the societal psyche and the attempt of subversion when “bitch” is used in an alternate way, is limited.

“Bitch” has not entirely removed these misogynistic undertones like the term “queer” has; instead, it’s been moulded to fit the modern norms of patriarchy. Superficially, we seem to reclaim its meaning, but due to the duality of its usage, the misogynistic history “bitch” is so steeped in it merely becomes its present. This may be because unlike the “queer” movement, there has been no widescale, conscious effort for people to reject the negative, misogynistic meanings of “bitch”.

How do we deal with the term “bitch” then? There are perhaps two ways. First, we work harder to reclaim it, extract it completely from its negative meanings, linking it purely to the multitude of feminine success and use this newly found meaning so frequently, negative versions are pushed out of common usage. Second, we completely disrupt our language. We call misogynistic words out, refusing to use them or get called them. By understanding even the faint echoes of misogyny underpinning words means our language will no longer be riddled with casual sexism. Neither way is particularly easy, both perhaps promoting an ideal or utopia rather than a reality. This does not mean, however, that we cannot make active, personal decisions to choose words and use them in new contexts so that we do not perpetuate millennia-old misogyny. How are we supposed to fight gender discrimination and the work of the patriarchy if we speak in language that completely endorses it?

# Disruption of Colours

by Sermila Ispartaligil

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*Trigger Warning: discussion of assault, murder, and r\*pe*

You open your eyes. There are no blue babies, no pink babies. There are just babies. Just babies, born as *tabula rasas* to colour in whichever way they wish to. There are no girls out of schools, no girls losing an education in India because of [menstruation](#). There are no girls in [Nepal confined to cowsheds](#), shamed for having a period. There are no grandmothers doing all the [housework](#) as grandpas watch. No gods, no husbands, no wives, and no customs dictating how to live a life, how to dress, how to love, how to behave, how to think. There are no writers, scientists, or artists lost just because they were born as a female, as someone without a room of their own, as [the sister of Shakespeare](#), the sister of Newton, or the sister of Picasso. The shut doors that are opened selectively are replaced by gates open to all.

There are no statistics on gender inequality. The annual number of [femicides in Turkey](#) is zero, instead of 300. There are no headlines of politicians who dare to proclaim that “[women must not laugh in public](#).” There are no minds who can get close to imagining such words, even for an ironic dystopian novel. The annual number of hate crimes based on gender and sexual orientation in the US is zero, instead of the [high thousands](#). No one opens the news highlights to see the faces lost to hate. No one knows what rape is. No one knows what shame is. No one knows what virginity is. No one knows how scary it feels to walk alone on the street as a girl. They simply know the freedom to be. They know about what life is and what it can be.

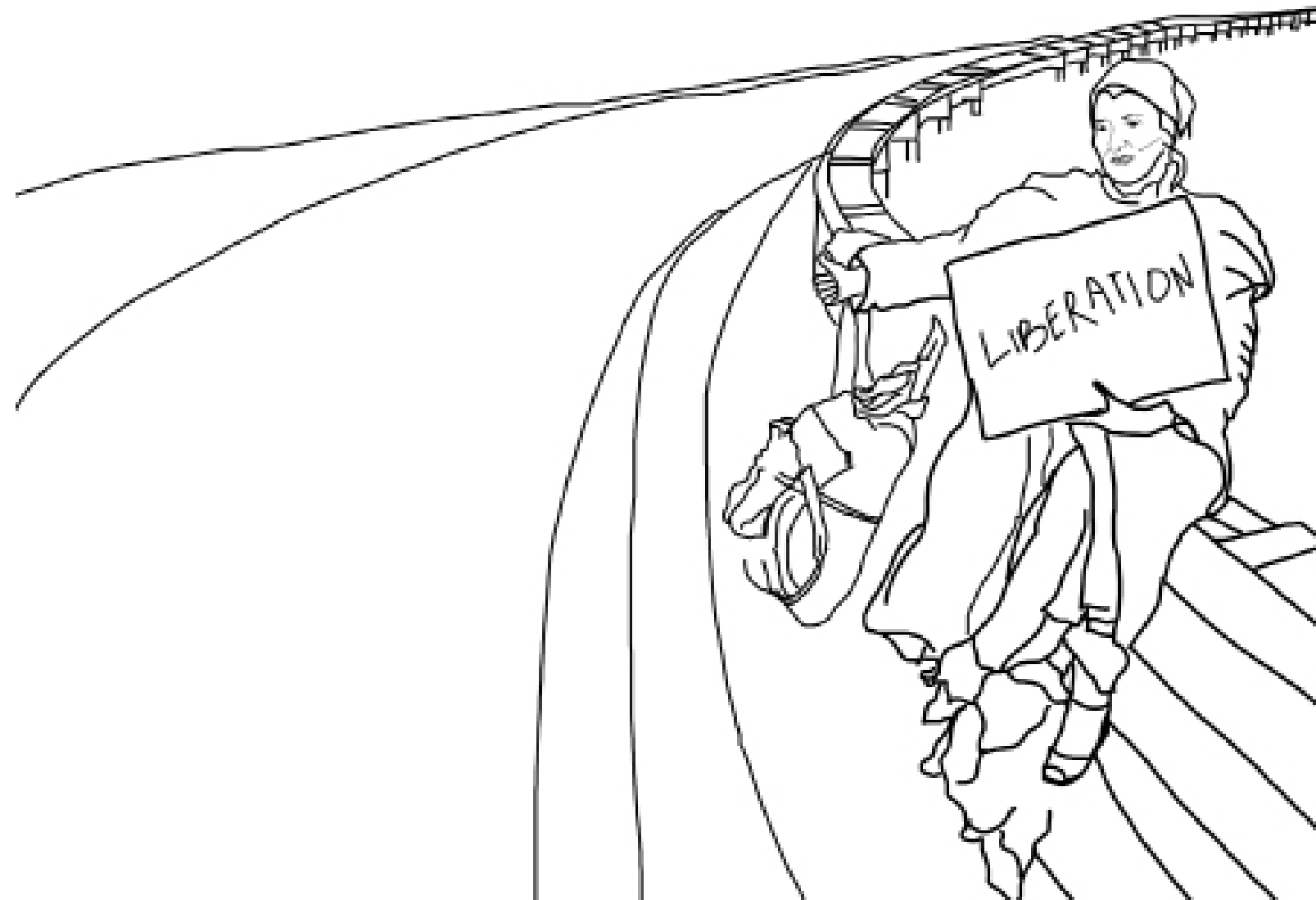
Murder is no longer a possible consequence of art. Marina Abramović’s performances no longer pose a [threat to her life](#). Her clothes do not get ripped off, her neck does not get cut with a razor blade, she is not assaulted, she is not almost killed with a gun. There is no longer any violence for art to expose.

[Pippa Bacca](#) is alive. She travels far and wide, never getting raped, never getting killed. Other Pippa Baccas feel safe too. They go wherever they wish to go, without even having to put on a wedding dress. A rainbow flag displayed on a work of art, in an exhibition of what used to be Turkey’s most inclusive and open-minded institute of

institute of higher education, can no longer [send students to jail](#).

When children ask their grandmothers what their favorite colour is, they get a response. Grandmothers do not look with surprised eyes because they have been asked that for the first time in their lives. They have a favorite colour, one they have not been assigned. One that they actually like, one that they can mix with other colours to create a new one if they wished to. They have a life other than the one confined between four walls.

People are people. What makes them who they are and what directs their lives is never a question of gender. It is a question of the colours they wish to paint the tabula rasa with. You close your eyes and open them again. It’s real. It’s not a faded dream, not a utopian painting, not a distant story. It’s a disruption of colours constantly made, for none is left to fade.





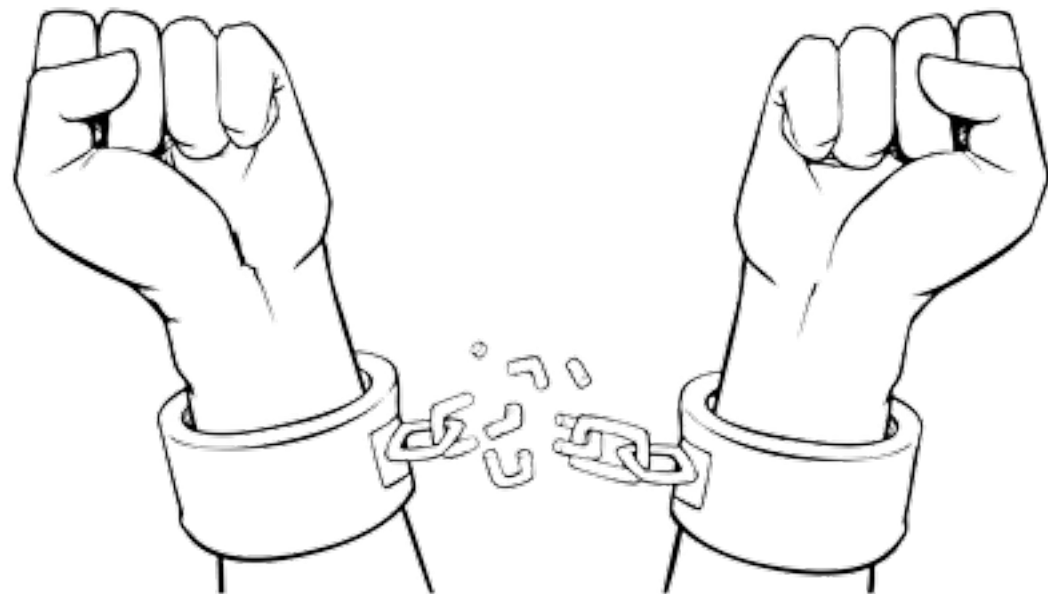
# Turning the Table

by Pia Mehdwan

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I am a girl, when did I become a woman?  
I am a woman, when did I become an idea?  
I am an idea, when did I become a muse?  
I am a muse, when did I become an expectation?  
I am an expectation, when did I become elusive?  
I am elusive, when did I become binding?  
I am binding, when did I become shackled?

I am a girl; I've become a woman.  
I am a woman, I have my own idea.  
I have my own idea, I am my own muse.  
I am my own muse, I set my own expectations.  
I set my own expectations, I choose to be elusive.  
I choose to be elusive, I choose what binds me.  
I choose what binds me, I break any shackles.



# Resolution Pending

by I.F.T.P

---

I seemed to have reached a conclusion,  
That I won't find one.  
And for now,  
That's okay.

What if the anger wasn't the problem?  
A thing to be solved,  
A fault in me,  
With me.

What if it's justified?  
The closest I'll get  
To the scent of justice,  
To holding it in my hands,  
Is this.

This sensation that ebbs and grows.

It's an ember to the fire  
A grain to the shore  
A drop to the gallon  
One step of a mile.

But it's of the same element,  
The same cadence,  
The same key.

# Allyship Amid The Spiking Crisis in London

by Stephanie Frank

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It's not enough  
(what would be)  
But it's something.  
It's alive and it kicks me in the stomach,  
It tells me that I'm worth the fight.

I don't want to live off  
Scraps of retribution  
A low-fat diet of just deserts  
But here we all are,  
Making it stretch,  
Making nothing count for everything.

I don't want anything unfounded.  
I want  
What you asked for,  
When you started this,  
I only want to give you what's yours.

They delivered the parcel to the wrong address  
And I've kept it for you all this time.

The imminent [needle-spiking endemic](#) has elicited a new wave of awareness regarding gender-based spiking in the U.K. Yet, this issue is [far from nascent](#). Every other person seems to know a horror story; while the words stay the same, the faces are continually recast, and the poisons, slipped into a glass, [a needle](#), or a patch, are evasive.

UCL's recently renewed '[Statement against Gender Based Violence](#)' acknowledges this threat, emphasising their concern regarding the recent reports of injection and drink spiking and the support services victims can seek. Yet this article, weaving conversations with an anonymous spiking victim, pseudonym Zara, and a social media activist, Chloe Pearce, indicates why UCL's action lacks promise. Awareness needs to be translated into change, disrupting the perpetration of stereotypes outlined in Figure 1 (below) to encompass a narrative shift that addresses the root causes of spiking attacks and encourages better allies. Let's begin.

Allyship, by definition, refers to the support of a social group from a member excluded from it. In recognition that both men and women can be spiked, this allyship is not affiliated by gender, but rather, aligns to preventative and solidarity action with those who have been spiked.

While the recent student-led '[Girls Night In](#)' campaign of boycotting bars and clubs evidences such unity, I believe this allyship has largely been performative. Not to undermine the importance of raising awareness of spiking, my trepidation for this moment is laced through its inevitable fall. One only needs to take a look at the Black Lives Matter protests to wary the transience of media trends. In the words of Zara: "there were some changes, but it still goes on", what makes spiking violence any different?

Although 'Girls Night In' encouraged London clubs to heighten their security measures, for example through increasing the number of on-site guards, there are a few reasons why allyship from clubs is intrinsically unreliable.

1. Spiking can happen from behind the bar. Increasing bar staff can help lift the haze of hustle concealing suspicious activity. However, nightclubs serve the pound, equating an

increase in the number of paid employees with blasphemy.

2. Club workers should be educated on how to spot spiking cases and improve consumer safety, however, it is ultimately down to the individual worker to implement this in practice.

3. Intensive security searching for abusive substances before entering clubs is time consuming and not always feasible. Encouraging this may inadvertently promote racially-based searches.

Therefore, more reliable allyship should be sought elsewhere.

Of course, [not all perpetrators are men](#) and not all men are perpetrators, but as the [majority of offenders are in fact male](#), they should represent a central social ally of the spiking crisis. Their solidarity is necessary not only during the incident, as any gender can call out activity that seems out of place, but before the trauma happens.

Chloe confirms, “I definitely think that men need to learn to be better allies”, arguing that spiking incidents represent an eruption, stirred by underlying misogynistic forces in society which are enforced and ignored by other men from a young age. Action combatting gender-based violence should aim to dismantle this, partially through “increase[ing] levels of education for men about the patriarchy and sexual assault so that they fully understand the problem”.

The fact that sexist and misogynistic conversations circulate male-dominated spheres indicates that it is ultimately down to all other men, not just perpetrators, to step up. Zara explains, “[men] should really call [other men] up on [their misogyny] because it can decrease what is happening if they’re actually confronted about it”, indicating how no act of sexual violence is isolated, but rather is embedded within wider social webs. Zara continues, “there should be more men who say what they believe rather than just following along”, giving rise to the notion of allyship through protesting against damaging behaviour, before the worst is realised.

Allyship, however, is not limited to men. Friends of any gender should be more aware of the subtle signs of spiking, as opposed to too much alcohol. There are equally [preventative measures](#) each person can take, such as buying caps over drinks, or utilising drug tests, to mitigate against the chance of being spiked.

However, both interviewees ultimately maintained, “I really don’t think it should be down to us [victims, to protect ourselves]” as this feeds a rhetoric of responsibility and consequentially of blame onto those who are violated, when in reality, it is never the victim’s fault if their drink is spiked.

While improved action from club venues is pertinent to help create safer night environments, the most reliable protection against spiking is rooted in broader structural social change from the ground up, helping to dismantle misogynistic views before they turn into attacks.

### Figure 1

#### How To Write A Spiking Article:

Make sure your victim is a woman, of course. Describe graphically the emotional and bodily scars from the violence, that isn’t any of our business, but seeks embolden an unhelpful rhetoric of vaginalising rape. It’s never the police’s fault, blaming the club is taboo. Rather, pour scorn over the unnamed perpetrator, swept up by the night. Use a cold, wistful tone to mourn the crime’s inevitable repeat. End by outlining all the preventative things women should do to; introduce ordinary men into the conversation, however, and your work won’t sell.



# Guidelines for Troubling Borders

by Francesca Parrotta

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Every day, rearrange reality  
Start with banalities  
for example  
switch smokey eyes with ties  
or vice versa  
or wear them together-  
however fits better

praise caterpillars instead of butterflies,  
standard beauty is overrated  
capitalistic plastic copy of a whitewashed ancient Greek statue  
-those were painted, did you know that?

actual beauty is under-noticed  
unpolished nails and faded acrylics  
on a pair of mismatched earrings

Have you noticed?  
politics pollutes your closet  
and climbs on your clothes,  
start small, but don't stop  
for example pair an outfit  
with the correct use of pronouns: --  
the mantle of a patriarchal language may seem thick  
-then puncture it  
with tiny little stings  
you can even cheat on grammar,  
if you wish  
(and please, use *bitch* only as a compliment)

yes, you should call things by their name,  
yet names are arbitrary  
ask: who established this?  
ask: on whose skin was it written?  
for what sea to drown what voice?  
ask: who gets to choose and who does not have a choice?

Start- or do not, rather, stop  
look: there are gaps in the borders  
so, if you want, jump!  
you could occupy all the corners,  
you could fabricate houses  
adorn their doorsteps with laurel  
put tiles on a ground once forbidden  
no, do not fall for the trap of tying your steps to a given rhythm  
reinvent moves and dare  
to make them your own

Most importantly, take care!  
While building a new life  
you may become a ghost  
for a system in love with rigid binaries  
Stay safe while traversing the paradox.  
It's temporary anyway  
it's only until your trouble has blossomed into a garden  
into another reality  
to be rearranged daily.

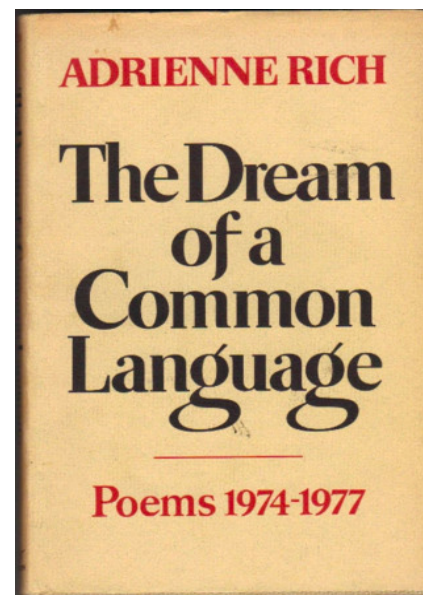
## Grater Recommendations

### from us to you!

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**TO READ:** *The Dream of a Common Language* by Adrienne Rich

*The Dream of a Common Language* is a poetry collection by an award-winning lesbian poet Adrienne Rich. This collection explores the definition and redefinition of femininity, the celebration of great discoveries made by women in various spheres of life, and lesbian love against the heteronormative world in which such love is rarely seen as valid or, to be frank, rarely seen. This collection is a manifesto encouraging unity between women while also not overlooking the trauma and hurt that queer women are forced to overcome to be able to love. It is a call to create a language in which we could all come and talk, and in which we could feel safe, seen, and heard.



**TO WATCH:** *We Are Lady Parts* (2021)

*We Are Lady Parts* is a British sitcom following the show's eponymous female, Muslim punk band through the perspective of meek PhD student, Amina Hussein, who is recruited to be their lead guitarist. Created, written, and directed by (UCL alumna!) Nida Manzoor, the show depicts modern Muslim women in their unfiltered, complicated, and relatable reality. *We Are Lady Parts* is both revolutionary and comforting in its representation of women's intersecting identities.

**TO FOLLOW:** Polyester Ziner ([@polyesterzine](#))

This London-based zine is all about using style, kitsch, trash, and experimental fashion to explore feminism, selfhood, and gender identity. Polyester Zine's visuals will almost certainly bring you back to your quirky sweet 16 (regardless of how sweet your sweet 16 actually was) but, you know, shared with a few wise, knowledgeable, and fiercely stylish women by your side. Check out online copies of this zine (link above!) to immerse yourself in experimental photography, humour, texts about bodily autonomy, great feminist comics, and visual celebration of women and women's bodies.

Hi guys, gals, and nonbinary pals,

The creation of this zine issue has been a journey full of cathartic talk, "oh yeah, that happened to me too", writing together, meeting like-minded individuals, and just feeling like there's a place for us to talk, think, and share. And laugh, of course – because you still gotta look for fun in a world of threatened bodily autonomy, spiking, gender stereotypes, policing of girls and women's self-expression, and the general lack of female representation.

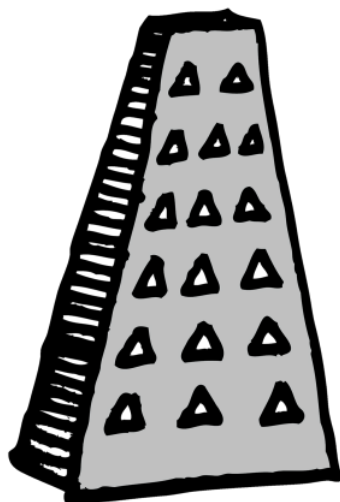
Because nothing is ever one-dimensional, we have split this issue of the zine into two thematic parts: Dissonance and Resurrection. This idea came about from the initial brainstorm about the meaning of the word disruption with the writers whose work we proudly included in the zine. Together, we realized that disruption can lead to both empowerment and disempowerment, and thus be both liberating ('resurrecting') and representing the very force behind a lack of safety, stability (creating 'dissonance').

To our readers and dear writers, we hope that the zine becomes your platform to relate to each other, experiment, express anger, pain, joy, and a million other emotions, and ultimately – talk.

Dialogue changes everything, and we must not be quiet.

Your not-so-cheesy editors,  
Abeer and Mel

*Grater Expectations* is an intersectional feminist  
zine under UCL's investigative magazine  
*The Cheese Grater*.



Through exposé, poetry, art, and more, *Grater Expectations* aims to inform, entertain, and satisfy your appetite for feminism.

Send in your submissions or any questions for  
the next issue:

[zine@cheesegratermagazine.org](mailto:zine@cheesegratermagazine.org)

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