



DYKE



Issue no. 14



QT



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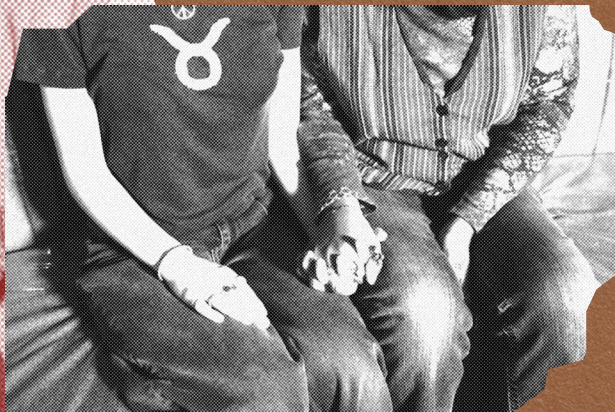
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Hey Cuites,

This issue is for the Dykes. We asked artists to consider the history and meaning of the word and how they fit into that history. What we got back was a wide range of differing perspectives on Dyke. We saw quickly that the word does not mean the same thing to anyone. Everyone's relationship with their Dyke-ness is different. It is individual. But, it is also communal. To be a Dyke is to fit within a larger community of people who have redefined their sexual and gender identities outside of cis straight womanhood.

Being a Dyke is about who you are, who you fuck, and who you are in community with.



In that vein, we are so grateful to be in community with you. This artistic space that we continually build together was always meant to be a place that Dykes can create, share and exist in safety. Dykes have always been the backbone of queer organizing and artmaking, but they are often left in the margins. We have always and will always make Dykes our centre. We are made by and for Dykes and we're not afraid to say that.

Lastly, we want to thank you for your trust. Sharing and engaging with art so rooted in your identity is vulnerable. We do not take that vulnerability lightly. It's our distinct honour to bring together all of your stories here. You've made it possible for us to weave a diverse tapestry of what it means to be a Dyke. In this issue, you'll get to feel the joy and love and fearlessness that comes with being a Dyke.

This one's for the Dykes. They all are.

**With love,
The QT Editors**

Hard and Dykey

When straight women hit on me, I feel nothing.

I resent their overlying entitlement to my gratitude for the opportunity to allow them to participate in misogynistic objectification against my body, often to the point of unwanted sexual advances and frequently straight up assault. Mysogyny from a woman isn't girlypop or fun and your general lack of individuality and fashion sense makes you profoundly unhot.

I'm a dyke, fuck off.

And in that vein, being a dyke is about fucking. It's about being completely secure in my desire to fuck and be fucked by dykes. Not in a nice way. I like penetration and sticking my fingers in other Dyke's holes. I want to fuck. That's the whole point of being gay. I get to fuck dykes. There's nothing inherently predacious or untoward about that. Confrontational sure, but dykes are confrontational by nature.



We confront and spit in the face of expectations of docile womanhood and whether a leather vested masc with a chest tattoo or a bubblegum barbie pink femme, it's about making fun of every construction that's ever been put on a woman because of the way being a dyke inherently breaks gender. It breaks it. A woman who gets off by fucking women flies in the face of anything that's ever been associated with woman.

It's mean, it's hilarious. In a word, cunt.

My dykiness is deeply self-referential, aspirational, and rooted in a practiced desire for self actualization through liberation from anything even remotely resembling an appeal to men. And in that liberation an embodied freedom to pursue my other life's desire, other dykes.

And that makes me feel something.

- Anonymous

Soft and sapphic

The air is hazy with her perfume
The purple velvet sofa soft beneath us
In the corner of the room with
Not a single eye on us except
Hers on mine, mine on hers
The light is dim and falls softly
On her hair, her face, her lips,
The gentle curve of her collarbone
She's so stunning in this light
I wonder why she's sat with me
She whispers softly in my ear
Tickling my neck with her breath
'You're so beautiful
Do you know what I mean?'
And I giggle because I am too shy
To tell her I think she's beautiful too

I slowly move my hand toward hers
And our fingers intertwine
Clasped tightly in a cosy embrace
Her hand is so soft and warm in mine
She gently pulls me in a bit and
I can see the freckles on her nose
Count the eyelashes on her eyes
This close she's even prettier
And as she puts her arm at the
Small of my back
I feel a sizzling shudder run softly
From her fingertips to somewhere
In between my thighs
Her skin softly pressed against mine
And as she leans in I close my eyes
Her soft lips caress mine
Like two clouds kissing the horizon
I melt into her, into the sofa,
Into the quiet corner of this party
And I softly exhale into her
Soft voice, soft hands, soft skin, soft lips

- Anonymous

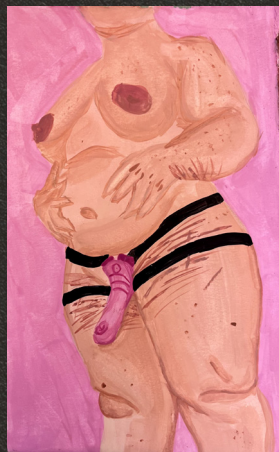
the bride the bride

there will be a wedding today in that little pink church by the
riverside.
i hear a piano melody while walking down the streets, and i
swear someone is following me!
click! clack!
white heels behind me leave a trace of glitter, of hair, and pieces
of heart tissues.
wedding bells ring while i kiss the bride behind that old, musty
bridge.
down the street, two sinners walk into the little pink church by
the riverside.
there will be a wedding today!

yael tobón

yael tobón is a Mexican writer and poet concerned
with feminism, nostalgia, social justice and
her cultural background. They are enrolled
in the Honours English and Creative Writing
program at Concordia University with a minor in
Interdisciplinary Studies in Sexuality. You can
find them at a cute local coffee shop or mindfully
scrolling through Pinterest.

STRAP!



The Duality The Duality of Dykes of Dykes

they say that every human is connected
by six degrees of separation
but with dykes we're inclined
to subtract by two or three
and swallow entire alphabets instead

the sapphic separation
means we practice molding our mouths
to one an(Other)
majoring in the art form of gorilla glue
and E6000—theories of cartesian separation
they said

do you remember the time
we carved our bodies out
in your parent's basement—
licking each other into oblivion
scalpel stitches after anesthesia—
pressed our flat chests so close together
I swear your stitches st(uttered) into my stitches
the wave pool couldn't tell who was who

Lifeguards peered past their plastic thrones
whistles echo in our hollow ears
"Dykes must stand six feet apart!"
but our synapses like sap couldn't know
the meaning

When Dykes Fall in Love, They Scrape Their Knees

your pain is not my pain
is my pain

the wolf spider in the sink—
dry—
the fake moon on the ceiling.

Do you remember the nights
we'd stare at the moon
and say she was our girlfriend?

I remember
broken coffee pots
then yellow red leather leaves

your pain is not my pain
is my pain

is not my pain is my pain
when dykes fall in love they scrape their (your) pain
is not my pain
is my pain.

knees.

Salem B Holden

Like their gender, Salem B Holden can be found everywhere and nowhere, probably hugging some tree in the woods, talking to spiders and praising them on their beautiful webs, or foraging mushrooms. They've completed three chapbooks: *How to They/them*, *Life in the Body*, and *Rebirth* and have been published in *Babyteeth*, *The Insurgence*, *Many Nice Donkeys*, and *Lions Online*. Their collages and poems have been featured in *SOS Art Cincinnati's* Pride Celebration and have won the R.M. Miller Fiction award twice for their Young Adult novel.



girlhood revisited in my college bathroom

warm breath sticks to the back of my neck
as soft fingers pinch my earlobe between their kiss,
pads kneading the malleable flesh,
stretching skin taut to reveal her sunken mark.
she presses blunt metal to the ghost of an entrance
- grown over like a secret garden -
& hitches her breath as she aligns the earring.
it's easier from the back, i remind her.
she presses into me, pin pushing against cable knit tissue.
when she withdraws with a sigh, defeated, i draw her hand
back the pocket of heat behind my cheek.
you won't hurt me.



golden shovel for carmilla

i move through your walls like a question - what if
- sink into the velvet shadows of your room & count your
breaths like sheep. i echo them back to you over breakfast. my dear
you are a study of life & i am your acolyte. you revealed my heart
lounging on the garden bench. our tender time together is
devoured by the hunger swelling under my teeth & i picture you wounded
your sleep-drenched sighs no longer sate my appetite. you can be my
forever if you let me be your something wild
let me slice you open, core you, swallow your heart
like an appleseed. bury it in my gut, i will nurse it until it bleeds
through and we can share in the fruit. bring me back to life with
your body and i will pour mine into yours.

Rowan O'Brien

Rowan O'brien is a queer writer and filmmaker currently residing in tkaronto with their grandmother and grumpy tortoiseshell cat. they have written for Rebelle Zine, IN Magazine, and HerCampus, and their short film CRUSHED has received over 1.5 million views on youtube.

Instagram: @rowanohbee

the first cut & everything after that

for Mic

bird-thumbed cowboy king,
bad habit of losing keys
good habit of knowing exactly
when Steve needs to piss.

poetry in both giver
and receiver you were born
with the moon in your fist,
nailed it skyward for the rest of us.

in the despite, you exist.
you do it so well – odds stacked,
come out legs swinging:
pirouette, chest flat, heels intact
handsome in the hum that runs
from you to everything
touched in turn.

a toast to being the worst;
reach gay hand to gay hand,
hold the weight of everything
in the pointes of our toes

sharpness nipping against queer skin
it's not about where the knife went in;
it's how we cradle the wound
when it's gone.

Morgan Tessier

Morgan Tessier (she/her) is a poet based in Tkaronto. Never one to waste an emotion, her focus derives from an incessant need to feel everything at once. Self-reflection, new-found queerness, and a fascination with the human experience colour her work. You can find her @morgantessier or @mo_etry on Instagram.

Mighty Blues

My body will not bear fruit
My body does not bleed
It's just gaps. I'm perforated
and I can never leave

My body: a pyrrhic victory
My body opens like it should
The point is moot, I know that,
still I'd change it if I Could

I am thankful as can be!
I am the prettiest machine!
Woman is made of metal scraps
that I build as my fingers scream

*

my head in a cage
my head is a platter
on the underside it says
BREAK IN LIEU OF RAPTURE

Cate Adler

Cate Adler is a writer in Toronto, ON. This is (WOULD BE) their first published work.

My year as a Dyke

I learnt to love all the things about myself,
But by then I was a different person.
The vessel for my soul no longer bears her resemblance
She is so different from the one who wanted to hate;
Her body, her hair, her voice, her sexuality.
Despite her curves growing into her womanhood,
Having to dye her hair to match her roots after all the bleaching,
From whispering false “I love you’s” to men to shouting the
deepest confessions of my soul to a
woman,
That word I once thought ugly
To be a dyke,
A word somehow more palatable to digest,
Or even worse;
To call myself a lesbian.
I guise myself a fruity woman, and I ripped off that lambswool
to reveal that wolf I once feared,
Now I can proudly howl my love for women so violently it
reaches the moon,
I fought so hard to love the vessel I am only for it to change.



But a tree can lose its leaves and remain the same tree,
A buck can molt its horns and still be that same buck,
A house is still the same even if the wallpaper’s changed.
I love me for me,
And even though I shed all the skin of what once was,
I know I can love my soul so fully,
So despite learning to love even if those things have changed,
My love can change too.

Mary Poirier

Mary Poirier is a Filipina, queer, and deaf/hard-of-hearing author from Hamilton, Ontario. She is currently working on her debut novel. Her writing is inspired by her unique interactions with the world and her identity. She is an aesthetician during the day and a writer by night. Mary graduated from Seneca College with an Advanced Diploma in Fashion Arts and is ready to explore a new form of creativity and design through literature.

Dyke

Through the Ages

“Dyke” is not a new word. Not by any means. Lesbians and queer women have been using the term to describe themselves for longer than our Editorial staff has been alive. We’re acutely aware that by using “dyke” to identify ourselves situates us amongst a long, rich lineage of dykes that came before us. There is no story to tell without their input. With that in mind, we interviewed some of the older queer women who have helped shape our organization about the past, present and future of Dykes. Their identities have been kept anonymous for their privacy.

What words do you use to describe yourself and your identity? How have they changed over time?

CUTIE A: I’d say Bi, but I hate that title. I mean, look, when I was young, Dyke was totally the word I used. Because I was out, proud, right away. I liked the L Word, I was totally a lesbian. But, then I moved to London and met this guy. And it fucked everything up for me. It was hard. Within a few months of meeting him, we went to Pride and it was the worst experience for me. I saw my friends and I would’ve given my right arm to be back with my friends. It was like coming home for Christmas, I wanted to be there with them. But from then on, the D word just felt too harsh for me. It was Lesbian. Then Gay. And now, I just don’t even say anything. I feel like I’m too old for “fluid.” I don’t really like labels. Labels can change at any time.

CUTIE B: They have changed overtime. I would say the first word that slides out easily is “straight with a twist” but I’m marrying a woman so I don’t really know. But if I had to pick a box, I’d probably use Bi. But, I don’t know. The box part is the hard part for me. I’m just me and I just am who I am, with who I am. But it’s a hard identity because it wasn’t always accepted. Like, if people saw you as gay back then, they weren’t accepting of you going back in the closet or changing your mind.

Tell me about your personal experience with the word Dyke? What has it meant to be given the label, or to take it on?

CUTIE A: Let’s go back to 19 year old me. She was fucking fun. It was the early 90s. I met this girl over the phone. She said when she was in Toronto she liked to go to The Rose. And I was like, “What’s that?” and she said it was a women’s bar and she liked to go because she liked girls. She was married to a man. She got married because she was in this little town. It was the natural thing to do. But, she was sick. It was complicated but the minute she spoke her truth, she started to heal. She had chronic fatigue but then she spoke her truth and she was on the mend, it went away. She moved to Toronto, to be with her sister-in-law, who was in a gay relationship. Talk about lesbian drama, right? We dated long distance and then we came together and dated in real life. That was so much fun. She’s a court officer and she was hanging these two other lesbians who were court officers and I started dating one of them. Then, I was introduced to The Rose. I earned a PhD in lesbianism. This girl was like “let’s get a drink on a Tuesday night”. It was game over. She was confident and charismatic. Women would throw themselves at her. This woman would come home with numbers in her cigarette pack. She broke up relationships and I had a right hand seat. I fell for her. I was more in love with her than she was with me. I knew she was emotionally unavailable so when we did start dating, it freaked her out. I was new to the scene. I was so out, so proud. I was invincible. I was fearless. I broke up with this guy to date that first girl. I was so fearless that I told him about it, not fearing the consequences. And he went to my dad’s house and told my dad. My father looked at him and said “You come to my house to tell me something I already know? Get the fuck out.” My dad didn’t know, of course. I mean, she was spending weekends at my house and we were out all the time but we always said it was just friends. So, when he came to my dad with it it was like just confirming it. My dad asked me about it and, I’m way too proud, I was like this is just, my moment to be out. And from then on it was permission to just be. I was going to The Rose, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday night. Me and my girl, we’d go together and we’d go home together but, everything in between was for fun. I’d go around on my own and then we’d go home together. That was how I got my Master’s in lesbianism. But, the PhD is another story.

CUTIE B: When you say that word, I smile. I think of the year 2001. I just graduated from university and moved back to Toronto and I had short hair and I had more gay friends than straight friends. I would have to come out as being straight. I went to Pride for the first time. And everything would be printed in *Now*. It was printed and handed out for free. They'd give you an entire itinerary for Pride. I remember going to Rainbow Tai Chi at the 519 and wanting to just learn about this world. I had a bit of it at Queen's, I was in the left wing side of Queens which wasn't very left. I came to Toronto and all my friends were going to Pride. Sunday was the parade but Saturday was the Dyke march and I went with friends. And we danced and marched all day. I had never been exposed to that many lesbians in a space. There were some in tutus and some in no tops and it was the first time I saw Dykes on Bikes. I had never seen that many types of women and queer women it was like going to the buffet. I don't know that I have ever been to a Dyke March since but I've never had that much energy. The streets were just packed and people were dancing and hanging out of windows. When I think of that word I think of that level of energy and diversity. And then I think of the films we used to watch. In the late 90s and early 2000s you had to go to film houses and find films. I remember movies like *Better Than Chocolate*. It was a really artsy lesbian movie, they painted in chocolate. It was hot. I remember *If These Walls Could Talk 2*, it was a remake of the original. But it had Ellen DeGeneres and Sharon Stone and Chloe Sevigny and they were doing all these vignettes of queer women over time. They had a motocyclist who had bound breasts and wore like a motorcycle jacket. And two older women living together and living this life and one got sick and was in the hospital and the other had no access. It was just so groundbreaking at the time. I just remember watching it and watching it and watching it. There was more. There was real queer cinema. I remember going to the inside out festival. Anne Marie Macdonald made a bunch of films, I definitely had a crush on her. It was just this really artsy time of exploring being queer. It was all within years of Ellen coming out and the floodgates had opened and exploring the new avenues of queer identity. When I hear that word I think of those things and I think of my young self getting exposed to it and being curious and excited. And having so many options. There wasn't one identity or one picture. There were all these options and pictures. There was all this energy and vibrancy.

To you, what does it mean to be a Dyke?

CUTIE A: It was liberating. It was really powerful because I got to be something that I couldn't really be. Now, there's certain parts of it and I'm more aware of the world and how it's changed. But, I was around older lesbians and I wanted to thank them. Because you know the shit that they went through. It was pride. It was identity.

CUTIE B: I don't really know. I just know that I am with a person I really love who is a lesbian. She is kind of an elder lesbian. And I got to learn all these things from her. She's kind of my first exposure. And all of my teachers who were gay who I've become friends with since. And I think of sportiness and camaraderie and just, fun. I don't know that we have that now but that's what I think of when I think about it. I think of belonging to something.

What was it like coming into your own as a queer person/Dyke? How did you find your people? How did you find yourself?

CUTIE A: Oh my god it was fun. It was such a good time. Imagine going to a bar that's all girls. The drinks were affordable. The music was okay. Everybody was fruitier at the end of the night. People didn't care. It was so much fun. It was electricity at The Rose. Then another bar opened up and there were lots of events popping up. You'd see some of the same people but not always. Pride was fun because the out of towners would come in. In terms of knowing I liked girls, I knew in Grade 6. This guy had this *Parade* magazine of Samantha Fox that I took and was supposed to give back but I didn't. My parents found it between my mattresses. But they just didn't ask me about it. I didn't even think about it because I was a loser from grade 9 to grade 12. Then, I started going to The Rose and down Church Street and I'd pick up the *Pink Pages* and read it every week. I fucking loved the *Pink Pages*. And *Now*, which was a bit much. It had all the monthly dances. *Pink Pages* would print all the upcoming events. Whether it was a book reading or an event or a retail outlet or whatever.

What is something you wish young Dykes knew? About our shared history, about the future, about how things have changed, anything.

CUTIE A: How hard it was for other people to come out. In my lifetime, it was hard. And the guts that it took for women back then to open up a bar. I had the chance to hang out with the Parachute Club. She was a Torontonion singer, she was Italian. And she came out. I was at a party and she was explaining how hard it was for her parents to understand. I couldn't even imagine what she went through and how hard it was for her and her friends. She wasn't the most feminine looking so she would be a target. Still, it was important to go out and be with her friends and be who she wanted to be. It was all worth it. When you look around the bar you see older lesbians you might think they're out of touch with their short haircuts and old clothes. But, looking back now, they paved the way. Look back is the thing I would say. Think about how it was 50 years or 60 years ago. Just look back.

What do you see/hope/dream for future Dykes?

CUTIE A: That more people try to understand and meet them where they're at. Some people just get an image in their head of two women together. But there's a deeper relationship there. If they could, beyond pretend, beyond tolerate, but try to meet them where they're at. So they can continue living and trying to change the world and encouraging people to come out. I'm kind of living my dream now. I'm getting married. I'm changing my world. It's taken me a while, at 50 years old I think I'm finally out and I'm going to stay out.

CUTIE B: Financial freedom. I know with women, we make less anyway. And when you're in a relationship with two women. You're kind of stuck making less. I hope for a future where young Dykes don't have to worry about that kind of inequality. I want them to feel the freedom of having what they need.

- Anonymous

To Be A Dyke

As I walk through the historic cobblestone streets in the heart of Amsterdam for the very first time, a sense of familiarity washes over me. My family roots exist in this city and their stories are already woven so deeply within me.

On the day I arrived, the word "Dyke" was thrown into conversation so effortlessly. I was caught off guard and felt truly uncomfortable at first, before I realized that the "dikes" being referred to are actually an intricate system that keeps the land from flooding.

When I hear "that word"...

Dyke.

Am I nervous because it's a slur I shouldn't be using?

Am I nervous because my childhood told me it was a sin?

Am I nervous because the truth is that I am one?

On my third day, I took a trip to see the village where my Pake and Beppe grew up. On our drive we crossed a 32 kilometer long dike called The Afsluitdijk. This dike has connected the provinces of North Holland and Friesland since 1932 and runs directly through the sea. In this long stretch of land, the dike works against the turbulent North Sea.

Dykes are steadfast structures.

Dykes reclaim and protect.

If the canals could talk, they would whisper that the dike is more than a physical barrier: it is a symbol of resilience.

Dykes shape the Holland landscape.

Right there in my heritage, my own story is unfolding.

So what does it look like to reclaim the word “dyke”? To take a word that was once a weapon and wear it proudly?

I won't walk in the pride parade again, but I sure as hell will walk in the Dyke March.

As I step into the street for the Toronto Dyke March with thousands of others, there is a sense of unity that transcends words. I feel a rhythm beneath my feet, ready to march forward with a community desiring to reclaim the word “dyke” and lift its oppressive history. Capitalist signs loom over the streets, attempting to brand and commercialize our very existence. Yet, in the midst of this vibrant space, I find myself drawn to the quiet rebellion. A deliberate choice to diverge from the mainstream Pride Parade.

The Dyke March is a movement. The Dyke March is an unapologetic celebration of queer identity. The Dyke March is unburdened by corporate sponsorships and rainbow capitalism. The Dyke March is a declaration of existence for those who have often been pushed to the sidelines. The Dyke March is not a parade. It is taking up space. It is an assertion of our right to be seen and heard. We are not here for the glitter or the flashy floats. We are here to walk our truth. The Dyke March is where we get to make our own statements on hand-crafted signs.

There's an irony in here somewhere about using an Amazon box to make a sign that says “Dyke's Rule.” Forgetting to paint the other side, we write in marker: “Gay On This Side Too.” The city becomes our gallery, each person carrying their own personal canvas.

As the sun dips below the horizon and casts a warm glow over the city, I find solace in the unity of our diverse community. Friendships are formed as we move through the city collectively. There is a moment of relief where we are able to shed the weight of societal expectations. I feel alive in the richness of my identity.

I am reminded that being a dyke is not just a label. It is a celebration of my resilience, a reclamation of space and a commitment to living authentically. While dikes hold back the water, I hold back nothing. I embrace the fullness of my existence. I carry the legacy of those who came before me: the ones who shattered norms and paved the way for our future.

- Anonymous

About



Queer Toronto Literary Magazine is a non-profit dedicated to elevating and celebrating queer voices in Canada.

QT was started in response to the criminal shortage of Canadian queer literary magazines. There are so many LGBTQ2SIA+ artists out there! And in times of crisis, maintaining community and connection is vital.

QT brings together our collective projects to create that sense of shared space. QT celebrates the art queer individuals make for ourselves and for each other. We accept epistles, fiction, creative nonfiction, book reviews, personal essays, reflections, memoirs, as well as artwork, drawings, comics, photographs, collages, and other visual media.

www.qtmag.ca

[@qtlitmag](https://www.instagram.com/qtlitmag)

Thank you to all the volunteers at QT, without whom the organization would not exist.

Thank You

Madeline Fiore
Photographer & Graphic Designer
IG: @madelinerosefiore

Vanida Lim
Magazine Design & Art Direction
Graphic Designer & Digital Nomad
www.vanidalim.com
IG: @VanidaLim

Adèle Nichol
Flipbook Illustration
Multidisciplinary Artist & Wanderer
IG: @adelefrancisnichols

