

I am so tired of queer writing and queer theory that seems to be stuck in a style where radicalism has become synonymous with who or how you're fucking. I see new authors, rehash the content that was done by those living through the AIDS crisis with nothing new or insightful to add or offer. A hardness, laced in "edgy" sexual exploits, has been taken to mean radical. Wherein a sex act is deemed inherently politically radical, while ignoring the material politics of class. I'm so bored and so tired of seeing these types of books be published, over and over again, a cavalcade of entertaining and sexy vignettes that titillate while saying nothing. I stood on a picket line, for better working conditions and more secure contracts, that would benefit the lives of the precarious queer workers, of which I am one, while those that write about radical queerness at their little desks, could barely be bothered to turn up to a picket line in support of their colleagues. There is nothing radical about fisting when queer people are (*still*) in precarious housing. We have erased the concept of class in relation to queerness and the middle-class queers have become the voices of an ecology, prioritising their own careers over the struggles of others. They use working-class queers as case studies, or praise their work long after they are dead, but refuse to engage with the class struggles which would improve their lives infinitely over liberal identity politics. Hate crime legislation, enforced by a carceral and policing system that engages in violence against our community, will not solve the housing or wage crises that engulf the lives of so many queer people. And yet, here I am, reading another book about being a horny, stoner, jaded, asshole.

Just because we fuck the same people, fuck the same way, doesn't mean I have anything in common with your experience.

In another piece of writing I wrote "lying on my back as he came inside me, I wondered if my mother would be proud of me. I'm not sure when the thought first passes through my head -if it happens that night or another night when the midnight pints have me feeling a bit more pensive- but for some reason I'm thinking about inheritance," what did we gain, what did we lose? What passes between us, through our shared history and our words; words that pass down from generation to generation, cumulative knowledge about who we are and where we came from. Where did you go? I'm wondering if inheritance ever goes in the opposite direction and, if it does, what happens when that person is no longer there? How can we learn from the dead and how do the dead learn from us? We've been carrying these bodies on our backs for so long, didn't Heather Love say something like that? I think my mum is proud of me.

In *Cruising Utopia*, Jose Esteban Munoz sets out his ideas on what queer utopia might consist of, starting off by stating:

Utopias let us imagine a space outside of heteronormativity. It permits us to conceptualise new worlds and realities that are not irrevocably constrained by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and institutionalised state homophobia. More important, utopia offers us a critique of the present, of what is, by casting a picture of what can and perhaps will be (p.35).

Utopia as a world-making exercise, an exercise in imagining a space that sits outside of the constrictive and oppressive structures that we live under currently. If we take these structures to be built around heteronormativity (which itself is intrinsically linked to capitalist-heteropatriarchy), it

requires quite a feat of imagination in order to begin our process of world-making. As such, Munoz sets out what he defines as world-making:

I see world-making here as functioning and coming into play through the performance of queer utopian memory, that is, a utopia that understands its time as reaching beyond some nostalgic past that perhaps never was or some future whose arrival is continuously belated – a utopia in the present (p.37).

What might a utopia in the present, one that, as Munoz says, understands its time as reaching beyond a nostalgic past or an ever-delayed future (a future where to be queer is to be free of oppression), what might that look like? How do we reach that present together, hand-in-hand?

I'm sitting in the living room of a boy I've just been on a date with. It's about 3am, though I haven't checked my phone in a while. We started drinking at 7pm and, at first, I wasn't sure if I even fancied him. We had been chatting for about a month, but our timelines just couldn't match up for a date until tonight. I considered having two pints and then making an excuse about being up early for work so I could make an exit. But in the orange fuzz of the old man pub, lager loosening lips, he starts to warm up. He's funny, really funny. He makes me laugh and it's been a long time since a boy made me laugh. He's super cute too. We leave to go for food and bump into someone he knows, who is also on a date in the same restaurant. I drop cutlery and spill rice on myself. A blob of sauce lands on his shirt. We head to another pub, this time our proximity is closer. Our knees brush up against each other under the table; denim on denim. Our upper bodies bend towards each other, our breaths on our noses. "My last train is in half an hour, I should drink up." "Or..." Now here we are, in his living room. It's the best part of a date, when they talk you through their things; where they got them, who gave them that book, why did they buy that vinyl. I'm looking through his shelves and I see the pink risographic stacks. Butt Magazine. I'd never seen one in real life. He picks one up and we talk about it. I didn't know anything about it other than its mythical reputation. It looks nice on a bookshelf. I watch him talk, excitedly and slurring occasionally, he's so bright. I smile as he flicks through the pages, my attention on the pages of his face, turning over with enthusiasm and words. I like this one.

The Fiction of Autobiography by Michaela Maftei points to the disunity of subject and writing and argues that works of autobiography and memoir are constructed narratives, that while based on past events, can never be "true" in the purest of senses. Instead, Maftei encourages us to be "seduced" by the messiness in stories about ourselves, the gaps in the recounting of narratives as sites of production, not omission. Part of constructing those narratives is in the detail of the other; we do not live our lives separately from other people and so our own stories are ultimately dependent on others. In the construction of identity, this is central: especially for queer people. With great difficulty and pain, queer people have had to construct this sense of collective self with large omissions in the shape of our people lost to AIDS. From these gaps, we have mourned them, but we have also been seduced by them, making our own sites, sites of production. We have constructed our narratives, we have built something.

I must confess that I didn't always take you into consideration when writing this, sorry speaking this. I know that you will listen to these words, in your home, hopefully through headphones, all of these sounds bringing my words with more weight. I should have thought about you more in this exercise especially since this exercise will only be complete in the act of listening. Of course this work exists as

an audio file, somewhere, but the act of listening, engaging with it, activates what it is trying to do. By now you might have a sense of what it is I am trying to do, but even if you don't I am glad you're here.

My mum and I sit at my dining table in the living room. I say my dining table but it actually came with the flat. It's a giant circle, it's circumference almost the size of the hexagonal arrangement of windows that skirts the perimeter of the table. I've asked her here to talk about gran, it's for my book, to learn more about her. Well, specifically, to learn more about my gran before I was around. She died when I was about fifteen, and I never got to come out to her. As my mum and I talk, in between mouthfuls of dinner, we start to talk about the relationship between my gran and my granda, who divorced when I was pretty young. After my granda died, my mum had a conversation with my gran that went something like "you know, if it hadn't been for having the four of you, I would've left him ages ago. He always loved me more than I loved him." I think that got to him. I think it was probably why their marriage was so stormy. When he couldn't get the love he wanted from her they argued, they fought, and eventually they split up. I never knew this until now. Maybe I inherited it from them. Maybe we inherit patterns and behaviour we were never even witness to. I always thought I was more like my gran, maybe I was wrong.

Being in love with me was not some favour that you did me. It might be hard to love me but it was harder to love you, of that I can assure you. At least I admitted it to myself. What did you do? You turned yourself cold, you pushed me away so that you didn't have to admit that what you had for me were deep feelings and those feelings risked hurting you. Those feelings might have hurt you but I thought you knew me better than that. I must have been wrong because you said "I should have just said I didn't want a relationship with you," yeah you should have but then you wouldn't act the way you do or say the things you say. People who don't want relationships, who don't feel the simmer of love, do not do those things or say those words. You thought you were doing me a favour, or doing yourself one, the only thing sure is the mess you made and left for me to clean up. I hope you hurt for as long as I did. I hope you still do; do me that favour.

Nostalgia? I'm sick. I am haunted by the days. Past bedtime I lie awake, staring at the projector screen that is my inner eyelids. Click; why didn't you love me. Click; that was a good day on the beach. Click; Dottie West, A Lesson in Leavin'. Click; I wonder what it would have been like there, in 1979. Clickclickclickclickclickclickclick. It's a supercut and the rush from it is making my stomach flip, seasickness on land, on bed. Why can't I sleep? I just want to sleep.

I've been looking at pictures of the San Francisco sky lit a burning orange. It doesn't look real compared to the dull grey of the sky in Glasgow. On Twitter, 'Bladerunner 2049' is trending and people are noting that the desert scene, with the deep marmalade sky and the peach-like haze of smoke, was said to be too unrealistic when it came out. And now the San Francisco sky is 'Bladerunner 2049.' We're twenty-nine years too late. Then you start to scroll. It's not just San Francisco it's the whole of Los Angeles, counties from all over the state reporting similar events. The very sky has been torched by wildfires. A colour that deep was never supposed to spell doom but eight people have lost their lives. The large multinationals and politicians have allowed this to happen, they have presided over the death of our planet and yet we aren't taking to the streets and overthrowing them. It seems as though people aren't angry enough. What are we supposed to do? All the courage in the world cannot alter fact. We don't have a choice: be courageous.

I cannot tell you what it will look like tomorrow. I cannot tell you what it looked like then. I'm prone to the sensational and I get homesick for things I never had. Instead, I think about now. I think about the street I walk, or the chair I sit in. I think about what I will eat that day, what work I have to do. I'm not sure I have the imagination for world-making, too fatigued by others I have become. But I know that my present, my now, is wrapped up in this, wrapped up in you. Although we may never meet I extend the offer to you, one of solidarity, and I ask that you lend me your imagination. What does your present look like? Is it much like mine? It will be one of tomorrow so perhaps you have already made utopia, more likely, our work isn't done yet.

[This poem/lines of this poem to disrupt and interject different parts of the lecture].

Hot tears in hands beer on beards
Bury me in your
"Hi, oh god I can't look at you"
Train ride won't hurry up and my stomach feels dizzy
"Why are you-"
"If I don't I-"
Cross the floor under the big clock
Old Hairdresser's
You were a cunt
I'm not fine
I've been fine
Take my hand and hold it close to yours asking for forgiveness
I can't look at you.
Hold each other's face in our hands and
Bump, step, bump, sway
You look good.
Wake up in the middle of the night and reach out to see if you're still there
Too much cinnamon
Not this time

Move: Our hands and Bump, step, bump, sway and "You look good." Sway "You look good." Wake forgiveness I feel worse about this than when he died. "I can't look at you." Can't look at you. Hold each other's face in Hot tears, kissed lips taste like salt in hands, there's beer on beards. Bury me in your – at the Hairdresser's "You were a cunt." I'm not fine, I've been fine up in the middle of the night and reach out to I don't I-

“ Cross the floor under the big clock Old “Hi, oh god I can't look at you” Train ride won't take my hand and hold it close to yours asking for hurry up and my stomach feels dizzy “Why are you-“ “If. “Why are you-“ “If.