

About the author



Ahmad Hasson is a fourth year PhD researcher at University of Sussex Law School. Ahmad's interest lies in gender and sexuality studies concerning South East Asia. Ahmed's research is on the Swara practices of Pashtun women in Pakistan. Ahmad is a prolific columnist in a number of notable dailies in Pakistan.

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The Transness Of Intimacies And Desires: Can You Love Me Like This Now?

- By Raghavi & Ragi

"They say nothing lasts forever but they're just scared it will last longer than they can love it"

— Ocean Vuong, **On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous**

From the click-clack opening sound of tiffin boxes during a recess spent alone in first grade, to the bubbles bursting in the shower as we try to scrub ourselves out of our skin – we don't realize how lonely we are till we start craving the closure whose possibility was erased before it could be interpreted.

Our existence juxtaposes to reveal a silhouette of voids when forcefully confronted with flirtations by those closest to us. Our isolation feeds off the whispers of classmates gushing about first loves, first touches, first kisses.

Our longing follows the journey of a peachy crush bruised by a breakup, patched up by a band-aid, then split open as an indefinite parting of ways. Our friends make promises to never trust anyone in search of love again, while we hold the shards of trust that were broken before it could form. There's common ground in everything we longed for but forever seem to lack. Sylvia framed it for all of us: "Am I living half alive?"

The conversation around sexuality and intimacy within the queer community rarely transcends beyond homonormativity. Gender nonconformity and transness are reduced through the chiasm of medicalization. Transgender and intersex folks are restricted to their identities, bodies, and appearances and every form of academic and artistic discussion or expression does the same.



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We reluctantly enter adolescence which is made unbearable without the language to self-determine who we are. It's like trying to decipher the traces of words to put together in the fragment of a phrase, knowing that the wholesomeness of it will reach you as an aftertaste. It's how we grapple with what's left of Sappho through the mathematics of redacted words. We try to trace our ancestors, hoping to build our stolen pasts out of remnants left behind.

"Your absence has gone through me / Like thread through a needle. / Everything I do is stitched with its color." W.S. Merwin writes in Separation.

For some of us, our bodies become recurring nightmares, stripped from access to puberty blockers that create the possibility to preserve our autonomy. The imposition of a cis-heteronormative cage polices how our attraction and identity intertwine and disentangle from each other through different dances of existence and acceptance.

"Who do I love or desire?" opens a floodgate of hounding questions.

"How do I desire myself or do I love my undesired self?" the mirror reflects an ill-fitting body

"Where should I go this time?" the restroom offers no relief.

Our bodies become controversies before they materialize. Our skin becomes a scratch card as a euphemism for the language of erasure: we understand ourselves through who we aren't, never who we can become in love.

The world spins to send us off in a dizzy hypnotized by loneliness. There's no window to crack, only four walls closing in – desire, undesire, dilemma, and vulnerability.

"I watched life and wanted to be part of it but found it painfully difficult," Anais Nin writes.

We use the facade of our faces to plaster smiles that are always on the verge of peeling off from the edges. We're always quick to fix it, coaxing layer upon layer. But it inevitably becomes too heavy to hold, and we struggle to derive more strength before it comes crashing down.

"Why hold on to just one life till it is filthy and threadbare?" a translation of Rumi reads.



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Unwrapping the much-awaited gift of language is synonymous with performing a striptease that treats you to hollowness. Our sexuality and gender identity refuse to reconcile, and embracing our transness means embracing the tightening grip of dysphoria. As the naivety departs, loneliness becomes thicker.

The so-called reclamation power through terminology becomes another coping mechanism rooted in powerlessness. The thirst to gain control comes from dehydrated remnants that can't be restored. The mundanity of routines and rituals, the daily oxymorons of reaching for power while being dismissed by it — how far can intimacy go before we lose it?

Loneliness blows two hits: the lack of intimacy and the absence of companionship. Both have a distinct taste but inflict the same wound: we fit into some form of desirability but remain undesirable for purpose — a conflict between the truth we come to realize and the confusion created by how we're perceived.

"What does it mean to be lonely? How do we love, if we are not intimately engaged with other human beings? How do we connect with other people if we don't find speaking particularly easy? Is sex a cure for loneliness, and if it is, what happens if our body or sexuality is considered deviant or damaged if we are ill or unblessed with beauty? and is technology helping you with these things? does it draw us closer together, or trap us behind screens?" Olivia Lang writes.

The concept of intimacy deceives itself through the denial of desire: there is nothing more sterilized than the singularity of forcing our attraction through the gender essentialism spiritualized by cis-normative heteropatriarchy. There is nothing more sterilized than using cishet as a catchphrase because exhaustion supersedes any attempt to breathe life into the multitudes we are capable of loving through.

The search for intimacy leads to apps where we are gatekept by signboards that clearly read "no trans or sissy". The desire makes us do the undesirable.

The road to intimacy is fraught with objectification, sexualization, and fetishization. We fill our cracks with love that doesn't ask for more. We are almost enough without needing to worry about how I can't offer more. The everydayness anxiety of one moment, feels the gnaw of unraveling, as it attempts to weave itself into the next.



"There were people I wanted so much before I had them that the entire experience of having them was grief for my old hunger," Sarah Manguso writes in 300 Arguments.

As trans folks, we have the ability to make pleasure and dysphoria dance together – an act that snowballs into dissociation. We are not even the disposables that Vqueeram asked to fall in love with, we are just a checkbox on the list of fantasies.

For those of us who survive despite killing ourselves, we feed off the remnants of guilt garnished by narratives of medicalization. We can't exist till the next surgery, and any taste of euphoria is marked by the greed for craving more.

We don't know how to weave the term sexuality into our lives. The closest we can come to understand it is through Susan Sontag's textualization of Taste in Notes on 'Camp':

"Taste has no system and no proofs. But there is something like a logic of taste: the consistent sensibility which underlies and gives rise to a certain taste. A sensibility is almost, but not quite, ineffable. Any sensibility which can be crammed into the mould of a system, or handled with the rough tools of proof, is no longer a sensibility at all. It has hardened into an idea..."

We are ineffably in love with everybody but afraid of the aftertaste: to be crammed into the mould of a system that hardens us into a fetishized idea. Not twink enough for cisgender gay men. Too flamboyant for cis-het women. Cis-het men calculate their sexuality before it's too late.

The nonbinary platoncity of existing relationships is too precious to risk for love, let alone the seeming sparsity of other gender nonconformists. We need to find each other to survive the violence that we internalize towards ourselves, and love isn't worth the risk of the loss that's already always the architect of our lives.

"Who will love you?" is among the first concerns of those who love me, when they really mean: "How will I love you like this now?"

About the authors



Ragi Gupta (they/them) is the Head of Special Projects at Pixstory. Their work explores gender, media and mental health through poetry and collaborative storytelling. Connect with them on Twitter @RagiGupta_



Raghavi is Final year student at Campus Law Centre, University of Delhi. They take pride in having 361 books and aspire to be a lawyer by day and drag queen by night. Dance is their weakness followed by good food, music, theatre, books and people, in no particular order.

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