

Hummingbird Drama

Year Three

July 2022 - June 2023

Gregory M. Nero

Community In Self

Moonlighting in the Clam Beds

Gregory Nero

Abstract—Working on asking for what I want.

Index Terms—ravenous, resentment, relief

COMPARTMENTS

The cavern of my mind is exploding. A submarine is built of compartments. So are those bubble sheets used for packing up precious items. A safety protocol. I wish my mind was built of little compartments.

I. OVERHEARD IN LUCE

And he was a flower farmer. Russian guy. Real tall. And boy, he grew some fantastic flowers. Beautiful flowers. Nice enough to make ya cry. All kinds, too. Daisies, tulips, roses, the whole lot. He farmed until his back gave out and his hands turned to vines and his feet turned to roots. Sometimes I'll go back to his farm and just walk around, nice and slow. I can't help but be absolutely certain that the land knew him. The dirt and the little stream back behind the shed and the wind, too: they all knew him and they miss him dearly.

Death is a Dying Industry

Gregory Nero

Abstract—beginning to feel the weight of time spent and unspent. undoing myself in an elaborate way, taking myself apart, failing to start, failing to end, succeeding in a reinvention, hating the feeling, loving the process.

Index Terms—small, small, small cups of coffee

ROBIN EGG BLUE

outside of the funeral home, a cracked-open robin egg. death here and death there. ants everywhere. why did i choose to remember this? oh, well, it's here now. someone must have staged this scene. and robin eggs are blue. and the sky is blue. and death paints with a palette of blue.

watching the man seal the tomb
smokeless fire
packing my suit
electric percolator
sleeping on the couch with the doggo
some scenes and more, i want to hoard them ...

this month i was a firefly. on and off, on and off. i went to catch fireflies on the hill. gaze: floating, ready to focus. but they are absent from me. and they are over there. and there it is: i'm here and there, again and again. and when i'm here, i'm there, and that empty-handed feeling gets a little bit easier to explain. i'll catch myself in a little glass jar eventually, if i'm clever enough.

Cerberus' Third Head is Asleep

Gregory Nero

Abstract—**GENDER!**

Index Terms—gender?

There's a spider outside of my bedroom window. The web stretches all the way across the pane on the other side and when I come home at night to close my blinds the spider is busy with spider things. And I take off my socks and think about how afraid of spiders I am. And behind the curtain the spider is busy with spider things and I flop onto my bed and look at my plants. And September came and went and I was busy with things and so was the spider and so we mutually decided to just let each other be.

MEXICO

ember moon, sleeping on the beach, cigars and stars

The Creature Role

Gregory Nero

Abstract—Mmmm perfection is *not* sustainable.

Index Terms—bees, in, my, head

FRONT BOTTOMS

Linebacker hearts in the moshpit tonight.
Sacrificed my cigs (yellow spirits) to elbows and sweat.
Budweiser (crushed) in my back pocket.

MAGIC 8 BALL GENDER

and well i guess to me, gender is like looking inside of myself and shaking a magic 8 ball. and after i'm done shaking it around, the die inside keeps on flipping and turning and i never get a clear answer for any of my questions. so it's defined by this intentional ambiguity. it's always moving. which is like, strangely comforting. but also unsettling ? i think, maybe , that once i *think* i've figured it out that means i've *actually* gotten very far away from an answer.

HONEY (PACKET)

i just found a metaphor in this honey packet. minutes have gone by and i've been fixated on this air bubble. squeezing the packet this way and that. always, my mind is on the bubble. but what's the bubble? just emptiness. a lack of substance. a distraction. and so i *have* to ask myself: what is the honey in my life, and what are the bubbles?

I. MORE SPIDER CONVERSATIONS

A.

I'm becoming less afraid of you, friend. you come back to the same place every night. so do i. i guess we do have something in common. but where do you go during the day?

B.

hello: good-night
goodbye: good-morning

C.

i'm going to play the banjo for you now

The Holy-Spirit is Non-Binary

Gregory Nero

Abstract—In the mornings as I'm leaving my house I always look at my neighbor's flag to see which way the Wind is blowing: sometimes fate is tangible like that. The Wind is important to me for two main reasons: firstly, because I always bike to school and the direction of the Wind significantly impacts my commute, and secondly, because I am interested in how the Wind moves from day to day. The Seasons change very subtly in the Desert and the Wind is a messenger for these secret plans that the Seasons agree upon. And the head-wind (even the slightest head-wind) is a sign to be more steady and a tail-wind is a sign to be more reckless. And sometimes the flag is hanging limp and the Wind isn't blowing. This is my favorite. And the Desert is quiet from all directions. And I'm on my bike, quietly, steadily, recklessly: all at once.

Index Terms—midnight, already?

SELF-LOVE (BEING OVERWHELMED BY LAUNDRY BUT STILL DOING IT)

I've been thinking a lot about self-love and what that actually, tangibly means. I think it means doing my laundry even if I'm tired or taking a break during the day to eat or making time to clean my bedroom and water my plants. I ask myself, when considering an action, "would I do this for somebody I loved?" and the answer is almost always *yes, of course*. And so I get up and do this thing for myself because I am worthy of my own unconditional love.

I.

Night time (the time when things are dark) and listening to a very distorted piano sonata in the parking lot of the laundromat (bluetooth radio). I never went into the laundromat (went to get bubble tea instead). But I stared at the street-lights (the things that are bright) and believed the day was almost, almost over.

II.

And I felt that immense, heavy, profound feeling again.
Gigantic hands and toothpicks, the bright light of an alarm
clock.

I was sick in my parents' bed.
I swelled up inside and my body became a balloon ready to
burst.

This feeling is a rare butterfly and I need to capture it.
Then, the fear.

"I'm safe, I'm safe, I'm safe right now."

Cold bricks on my back.

Reading in the yellow light of every early evening alone.

III. ORDER

- One chicken pupusa
- One beef pupusa
- One chicken tamale
- Horchata
- 3 pupusa plate combo
- 3x Loroco
- Pastelito (x5)

IV. IS IDENTITY SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO FIGHT FOR?

V. CONSIDERING TRADITIONS (MARKET THOUGHTS)

What is sacred to me? Sitting by the wash at the Sunday market, a new kind of Church, sacred (in a tangible way), eating food with my legs hanging down along the wall, throwing small rocks down the steep walls of the wash, and the curious, respectful ants. A place to think. The bird behind me sounds like a steel lion licking the metal bones of a railroad track.

VI. LIGHT IS NON-BINARY

Wave-particle duality. (write more about this later, keep thinking about it)

VII. SPECIAL MOMENT

Banjo and flute. Saguaro skeleton. Death is sacred. Moon, spider. Singing. Dreaming.

Being Perceived (The Joy, The Horror)

Gregory Nero

Abstract—I am my mother’s son.

Index Terms—home, Home

I. THE BREATHSEERS

The Breathseers are the vigilant and mysterious spirits of the Cold Air.

A Breathseer watches.

It is easier to see things in the Cold Air.

When plumes of white-grey mist come from our mouths, whether in gossip or song or in a simple sigh, the Breathseers study the shape of the plume.

In the Cold Air, you can’t hide from the Breathseers.

In the Warm Air, they go Home because Breath is harder to See in the Warm Air.

The Breathseers rely on the Cold Air to facilitate their practice of studying the Breath.

Some legends say that they bottle up the Breath and store them like Dreams, since Breath is Dream made tangible. Other say that Breathseers suck up the dispersed Breath from the air as a life sustaining force. I’m skeptical of these claims.

What do the Breathseers learn from our Warmth?

I want to fill the Cold Air with kindness for them. And the Wind conspires to carry my intentions away for them.

BEING BACK HOME ONE MORE TIME

Picking blackberries. Free Giant Eagle cookies from the back counter. Getting up the driveway. Saratoga. Video games. Strip district. Baboom’s tree. Walking to the reservoir.

But I’m ready to leave. I’ve outgrown this place and so have we. There’s more things to see and learn and explore. It’s time for the next steps.

GUTBUCKET

I’m icky guts and slime and puss, puking and messy and horribly ill with ooze. Dumped into that orange Home Depot bucket beneath the eaves on the side of the house. Filled to the brim with cold concrete that refuses to harden, until it does. And I’ll abandon it (myself) there. But there is no form. There is no shape. There is nothing tangible anymore and I’m lost beneath the eaves on the side of the house in that orange Home Depot bucket. What I’m saying here is that I’m sick of the shape of things sometimes. I don’t want to associate *this* with *that* but I’m doomed to because I’m a creature. I’m wondering about how my mind and my body and the world I live in relate to one another. Whirlpools of questions and goo and more questions. I’m a bucket of guts, genderless, formless. But form is enforced, mandatory, and in the winter the liquid freezes and takes shape in that orange Home Depot bucket beneath the eaves on the side of the house. I’m constantly freezing and thawing, formed and formless, in that orange Home Depot bucket beneath the eaves on the side of the house.

OPENING THE CURTAINS TO SIT (NEARLY) NAKED IN THE SUNLIGHT IN MY LIVING ROOM

The cellar of my mind castle is cold today. Underwear and skin that stretches over bones and a spine, alive with the feeling of warmth from somewhere very far away. Tailbone on dirty carpet. It’s been hours since I’ve said anything to myself. If aimless was an afternoon, it would be this one.

II.

I randomly remembered how my pap used to take all of his pills all at once. His old worn hand would cup more than half a dozen shapes and colors, and in a swift motion he would toss them all back into his mouth and rinse them down with water. I’ve never been good with pills, so this was something I really admired and didn’t fully understand. But now I wonder what all of those pills were for. The act of taking the pills was somehow more mysterious than the reason for taking them.

Gregory Nero

Abstract—Thinking a lot about Death this year. This month. I'm fragile, after all, and my bones and my organs are lonely. And its been too long since I've been painfully lonely but it's good for my organs. And my brain is chicken noodle soup, carrots and onions and bone juice. And the Moon is an organ in the sky and She beats, and the tides beat, even on the loneliest shores. And my Heart is an organ and She beats and my blood beats through my veins like the tides.

Index Terms—i, d, e, n, t, i, t, y

COLLAPSE (HAPPY NEW YEAR)

There's a cavity in my chest and it actually echos. This isn't a metaphor but I guess it could be. When my lung collapsed, the new space of air resonated and each *beat beat, beat beat, beat beat* was thunder, pure thundering flesh and bone. And I *know* that it was this new pocket of unwanted air that caused the booming because it only thumped when I was done exhaling, and my lungs sagged and the gap was large enough to resonate. And when I breathed in, *re-inflate, growth, the gap is gone* the sound stopped and I was silent again. Not like, *I was silent again* but I was silent again, physically.

LIMINAL SPACE

Throwing coats onto the bed when we had guests over.

CONTINUED EFFORTS

I think it's really stupid. Honestly, very silly. That last night, I had a dream that you wrote me a letter. I think it's hilarious, really. Because, you know, I talk about you in the past tense now. And I'm starting to think that it's about time that I keep you there. It's all so silly, after all, how I go on and on without you. And so now I must go on, and on, and on, without you. Just like before, but this time without looking back.

I. PHD DISSERTATION DEFENSE TOPIC: **LIGHT IS NON-BINARY**

A. *Abstract*

In this defense, I will explore the concept of particle/wave duality as a metaphor for gender identity and expression. Light is one of the most beautiful of all natural phenomena. The behavior and fundamental nature of light can be described in either the particle or wave model. Scientists typically use whichever model is convenient for describing certain phenomena. Einstein showed us the power of the particle model when describing the photoelectric effect, and Young showed how light can be described adequately as a wave with the double slit experiment. So, it is apparent that light can be BOTH a particle and a wave. In my experience, this is a beautiful metaphor for gender identity and expression. Something, or someone, need not be one thing or the other and can very easily exist in the

regime between the two, or, without either. Though, despite everyone's agreement that light (an entity) can have multiple forms of expression and identity (particle/wave) there is still confusion about how a person (a complex, thinking entity with a mind that participates in a complicated societal structure) can exist without conforming to a gender-binary (man/woman). When light is *observed* it is categorized. It's convenient for *description* but it does not need to endure a category in the absence of observation. Identity is at the root of the psyche, which can manifest itself in many ways, but does not need to be categorized except for the convenience of description.

II. CARRIAGE RETURN!

Okay, okay *okaayyyyyy*. Yes. Feeling some feelings recently. And of course, most of these feelings have to do with my journey with identity, gender, perception, etc... all the good, sweet-but-sticky stuff that clings onto me. Like one of those exercise machines and adds resistance the more you push, I'm certainly *feeling the push*. And I'm SWEATING. I'll tell ya. Sweat. Ing. I'd call it a crisis but that feels too dramatic.

A. *insecure rant (a prelude)*

So, I shared an Instagram post recently which included the above passage about a metaphor I've been thinking about between light and gender. And, half jokingly, I included that this was my PhD dissertation defense topic. This: Light is Non-binary. And it's not really a joke, nay, it's quite serious how much I think about this, but what was once lighthearted has now been weighing on my mind. Some people took this seriously, which I think is fantastic, because I think I'd really enjoy the chance to write a dissertation about this. And, I don't mind people thinking that this is what I actually study. Though, I feel bad about being misleading. It wasn't my intention to mislead people, but alas. The solace here is that nobody is really hurt by this slightly misleading title. And in the case where people did take it seriously: that's great. I'm happy to exist in their minds as someone who is studying gender and light. I didn't wake up that morning with the intention of sharing a technical metaphor about my experiences with gender to a large internet community, but hey. It happened and now I'm here. What has been really empowering, though, is that people *actually* took it seriously. And it has really motivated me to keep going with it. The only danger I see is that metaphors and analogies can only go *so far*. And sometimes, if you force reality into a metaphor for convenience, it becomes your reality. But by treading carefully, I think I can make it happen. There's just so much to unpack that it's both exciting and intimidating. I did include a small addendum at the end of the post to clarify that this *wasn't* my actual dissertation because I felt bad about misleading people. But maybe I could have done without that. And maybe that's just me being insecure. Do I really care about what people think I'm doing or not doing?

B. (*and the rest*)

I've been thinking more about what it means to be a man or a woman. And the more I think about the gender binary the more I inevitably reinforce it. This is a paradox to me still. If I say to myself "Am I a man?" or "Am I a woman?" what does that mean? I feel like I'm trying on different hats but none of them fit quite right. Life as a man or life as a woman are two totally valid and awesome paths, and it's not my objective to destroy the gender binary as it currently is because it's not my place to tell people how to live their lives. If someone is very happy being a man, that's fantastic. And if someone finds purpose and love and community by being a woman, that's also great. The fact of the matter is that we live in a gender-binary society. But, BUT, what does that mean for me? If I don't feel like a man *or* a woman, where does that put me? I've been thinking more about the *why* behind it all. I've been forced to, sort of. It's a pretty common response to telling people that I'm non-binary. *But why?* they might ask. But I've learned that this is mostly a totally unproductive question. Identity should be its own justification. Though, I understand that if people are confused they want answers they can understand. And so I've been propelled into taking a nautical dive into my own psyche to try to find answers to something that should need no justification beyond a simple the answer of: *because I am.*

I do want to be cautious of myself, though. I read a very interesting snippet recently that was discussing how people, especially people from privileged demographics, accept certain identities in order to feel oppressed to garner sympathy for themselves. That by taking on an identity that has a potential victim-status, they can justify their privilege. I think this is a very, very interesting perspective, and I wanted to do some introspection to see if this was my reason for journeying down the path of being non-binary. What I've settled on is no, and here's why. Simply: I decided to start identifying as being non-binary because it felt beautiful. Because *I* felt beautiful in that identity. I didn't see it as a victim-identity, I saw it as a place I could thrive as a human. Though, it has had some social/personal consequences that have been challenging to deal with, but this was simply a byproduct of my initial decisions and I've grown so much from those instances. If I bleed from thorns on the trail I chose to tread, I will still walk that trail. I didn't embark down that path for the thorns, I set off for the beauty that I knew it held. (for the beauty that I knew *I* held.)

What does it mean to be masculine or feminine? And is being non-binary just a composite of those two? Why can't you just be a man that likes to do "feminine things?" (going to start collecting questions)

If I *had* to pick, I would say that my spirit is more feminine than masculine, whatever that means. I considered: what is strength? And femininity came to mind. The feminine spirit is one that I feel like I can see and learn from and look up to. And then I considered: what is masculinity? And despite being a boy (or, a man) for most of my life I couldn't really come up with a solid idea of what it means to be a man. And then I start unravelling the traits from the genders and things fall

into this soup and we get back to the conundrum of gender all over again. So, instead of melting into this dissociative soup of a hypothetical genderless society (which doesn't exist that I know of) I thought that maybe I'd start to learn from others about what it means to be a man or a woman. [todo: write about conversation with Mom.]

Then there's the topic of perception and how my identity is shaped by the way others perceive me. I think that the intersection of community and gender identity is a profound one. We are social creatures. I don't think that I'm immune to the things that happen around me, for better or for worse. Identity is a precious, personal phenomenon. But, isn't the Ocean still swayed by the Moon? What I'm trying to say here is that I don't think identity can exist in a vacuum. This is kind of ironic, because a large portion of my contemplation about gender happened when I was in isolation during the pandemic. And in that isolation I discovered that I had a non-binary identity and it felt pretty great. But then, the re-emergence back into society required me to start asking the questions like *well, now what does this mean for how I want to be seen?* Because validation can be a powerful force for good. Was validation from others something I needed/wanted? After all, I had already landed on something that felt really right for *me*, what did I care what others thought? Did I care what pronouns people used for me?

I want my identity to come through in the person I am and in the things that I do and say and not in the way I ask people to refer to me as. Sure, yes, absolutely I really enjoy the validation of being recognized as the identity that I hold close to my heart. But what I've experienced is that in many cases, *most people really don't care about which gender you identify as.* Like, it's just not that important to them. And, what's more often the case, many people simply aren't familiar with the concept of a non-binary identity. So, oftentimes I'm just a "really considerate, sweet, slightly effeminate dude" to most people, which is fine by me. I don't think it's in my agenda at this point in my life to go around being a non-binary vigilante. I just want to spread love and feel loved.

Gender isn't something to sit and think about for hours on end for most people. This is simultaneously a huge relief and bit of a bummer. It's a relief because indifference is better than hostility, and a bummer because, well ... I guess validation *would* be nice. And to know that people see you as the person you are would be cool. But alas! It isn't that way and I don't see it ever being that way, so inward we go.

!!

(returning ,, re-heating the soup ... DING!)
So, returning to what I am starting to acknowledge as "non-binary theory" to answer the unanswerable question of *why*. Because identity can be a powerful force for good, right? Yes, yes yes. So, extending the self into society and being met with the joys and the consequences. So, I think that the gender binary is a reductionist's agenda. And one of the manifestations of my non-binary identity is to always ask: how does the prevailing binary agenda affect the way I live my life and the way others are living their lives? But, it's not really

my business how others are living their lives, truth be told.
And so it's more of a personal mission.
(more, later)

Letting Things Down Gently

Gregory Nero

Abstract—When I clean myself, I do so violently.

Index Terms—vulnerability, hermit

I.

A million things, rounding down. Floating point exhaustion.

II.

I like to play chess in other peoples' bathrooms. Some are better than others. For example, if I sit down to play a rapid game on the toilet seat, some of the cheaper plastic toilet seats will cave a little. So, I scootch my butt up to the very edge where the lid meets the bowl and that works just fine. And I escape, just for a little bit. Then, win or lose, I flush the toilet to make it sound like I'm finished, wash my hands, then back into the world I go.

Community in Self

Gregory Nero

Abstract—I'm goopy mush. Goopy, sticky mushy mush. Drooling doldrums, oozing with pink and yellow and blue and orange and every shade of 4:00am. Plucked from a branch, juiced and pressed until I'm raw and ruined from my own hands. I'm sweet. Fuck, I'm sweet. And I'm bitter. FUCK. I'm bitter. And ripe and spoiled all at once. Spoil me. I want to rot and be all icky and disgusting and messy and messy and messy and I want to be really, really messy for once. My hands are dripping with sugar and I'm wiping them on my legs. I'm naked and exposed to the air, rotten in the places that I've cut into. And I'm going to love everything about me, rotten or ripe.

Index Terms—profound joy, profound sadness

EXPLORATIONS OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

Studying the kind and peaceful masculine spirit this month, following transmasculine idols as inspiration for re-inventing what it means to be a man. Dismantling the inherently flawed and transphobic "men are bad" rhetoric. This doesn't mean ignoring the abuse wrought by men throughout the ages. I suggest the interpretation/rephrasing: men aren't bad, though, there are people who are bad who are also men. This separates the abuser from the identity. But we can't ignore: Being a man in this society usually means automatically inheriting a position of power and privilege. The choice of what a man does with such a power and privilege is what separates good from bad. And toxic masculinity, then, would be men who have succumbed to the preconceived notion of "man" and spiraled into a self-inflated ego fueled by an entitled view of the world they live in.

Another question: how much should I rebel against the gender binary and how much should I acknowledge it for what it is and conform to it? Ideally, (in my perfect made-up world) there would be no gender and no gender roles. There would simply be people, personalities. The essence of someone is what would define them, and that alone. Though, I think it might be naive to try and do away with something so firmly rooted in society. Cold iron is stubborn. Aside from isolating yourself in a community that shares your ideals and philosophies on gender it would be very difficult to do away with the gender binary. It's unavoidable, in a way. And, people find comfort in it, so I'd hesitate to completely get rid of it once and for all for the preservation of those who find peace and happiness in it. The fact of the matter is that we live in a gender binary society, and to ignore that means adopting a counter-intuitive philosophy that will inevitably spiral inward onto itself. (What would a genderless society look like?) But, there is paradise in perspective. I can navigate the world as a genderless entity (a happy little genderless spirit that is simultaneously a man and a woman and neither, all at once) and see the world exactly as I want to. And that's paradise, here in my mind.

The masculine spirit is strong and reassuring and grounding. And so is the feminine spirit. And so I want to ask: what makes something masculine and something feminine? And, do these classifications inevitably reinforce the gender binary? I believe it comes back to *asking* whoever you are talking to what it means to them. I can't define what it means to be masculine or feminine past what I believe to be masculine or feminine. To try and mold a definition for one or the other leads us right back into the problem with strict binary assignments. There's a fluidity built into these definitions that *mustn't* remain frozen.

So what does masculinity mean for me? I think it might mean seeing things exactly as they are and, if something is amiss, doing something about it: without hesitation, in a straightforward and steadfast way. It means building community, and centering that community around kindness with plenty of room to grow. It means being sweet and tender and gentle with yourself and with others. It means being grounded in the now and seeing the future by defining a clear path, even if that path is through rough terrain. It means knowing when to be gentle and kind and compassionate and when to be feral. It means defending the people you love and spreading love freely without expecting anything in return. It means being brave for others and being brave for yourself. And more, and more, and more.

And what does femininity mean for me? I think it might mean seeing things exactly as they are and, if something is amiss, doing something about it: without hesitation, in a straightforward and steadfast way. It means building community, and centering that community around kindness with plenty of room to grow. It means being sweet and tender and gentle with yourself and with others. It means being grounded in the now and seeing the future by defining a clear path, even if that path is through rough terrain. It means knowing when to be gentle and kind and compassionate and when to be feral. It means defending the people you love and spreading love freely without expecting anything in return. It means being brave for others and being brave for yourself. And more, and more, and more.

I. BROKEN ZIPPERS

It's just a coincidence (well, let's say, it must be a coincidence) but I recently broke the zipper off of two garments of mine. Now, this is spectacular (just like all coincidences) (screaming now: SPECTACULAR) that I managed to break two zippers in one month. And I'm zipping everything up in a brand new way. And some things are meant to come undone, over and over again.

II. TAROT SPREAD

The Earth tastes like barley tea and rust and I'm in love with that.

I'm learning how to thaw after being frozen.
 Patiently, I listen to the Wind outside.
 And with eyes open, then closed, then closed *tightly*, I dream
 of being out there in it.
 And then it's in my heart and it spreads into my arms and
 my fingers and suddenly I am a whirlwind of breath and life.

III. MEMORY FROM THEN

I remember when I was little, and then more grown up, but
 still young. Well, when I was younger, there used to be this
 space next to my bed: a little rectangular opening of carpet
 between the bed and the wall. And there was this vent that
 occasionally pumped out hot air. And I'd take my blankie
 and curl up next to the vent and cover myself underneath my
 blankie with the vent. And this was safety.

IV. STOPPING, STARING, STARING

I'm just a camera. I'm a camera, with a brain. I have a brain,
 and I'm a camera. And when I see things I'll tilt my head and
 squint, a gimbal of flesh and bones. And I spin around and
 get dizzy and then I'm a dizzy camera. And when I look up
 at the sky I see everything that my camera eyes see and my
 camera brain processes and my camera mind interprets.

V. IMPOSTER SYNDROME

If I'm a fraud, I want to be exposed. Over, and over, and
 over again. I'm not embarrassed about not knowing things
 anymore.

VI. DYSPHORIC DREAMS

I had a dream that I had a really thick beard. And in the
 mirror I saw myself and I think I panicked. And I shaved a
 small bit away and saw my jaw: skin, freed. And then I woke
 up. See, fundamentally, gender isn't something that you can
see. But how do I affirm the way I feel externally? This is a
 lesson in self-love I think. *I am me*. And I am my own identity.

VII. SECRET: C306

I can reserve study rooms at the main library at the univer-
 sity, and there's a long list of private rooms available to reserve
 for zoning in and zoning out. Anyways, by absolute chance, I
 came across a really nice room that isn't on the reservation list
 for some reason. Making it simultaneously infinitely reservable
 and unreservable at the same time. The really huge thing about
 this room is that it has a window. Most of these rooms don't
 have windows, so this is a luxury. And this is my secret.

How to Sext on Tumblr: A Guide

Gregory Nero

Abstract—Queer on the concrete. I'm seeing magic for the first time, wrapped in the Moon and eating not-a-croissant. I'm a witness to and a participant in the beauty of queer magic. Today, the Sky conspired with the color blue to bring the curtain of Night across the heavens gently, and everyone held audience while the troupers spun an old story in a brilliant new way.

Index Terms—love, love, love, euphoria, fear, fear, fear

I.

Today, unfortunately, I'm absolutely ruined.

II.

I find myself being afraid of not knowing things sometimes. As a PhD student, sometimes I feel like I'm expected to know all the answers. However, I've found that life as a PhD student is learning how to be comfortable with being reminded (often, daily) that I have so much to learn. Some days this is empowering, some days this is terrifying. I'm learning to be better at saying "no, I don't know the answer to that" and not feeling shame for it. And my favorite addition: "... but we can learn it."

III.

Lessons in embracing imperfection, and how imperfection is a universal constant. Love, research, progress: toiled this and that way with beautiful, beautiful imperfection and fuck it: i'm in love.

IV.

I'm in the midst of something spectacular (I just know it). The lining of my mouth is shredded, wet confetti skin. Three dollars in quarters for the pool table: I put them in left, right, left, right. And break away, smooth pavement and springtime.

V. THIRD PLACES

The Slab is my favorite third place here in Tucson. Physically, it's stuck between here and there and fits perfectly into this little nook where nothing and everything could go wrong or right. Plus, the trains coming and going are the ultimate reminder of places in-between. My other favorite third place is the back row of seats in the separate theater at the Loft during the latest showings when nobody else is there. Lots of peace there. Emotionally, and less-pleasantly, my other third place is when I'm hanging out with others but I don't feel like I'm participating in anything and have been trapped into the role of an observer. In this state i feel pretty hopelessly sandwiched between the anxiety of staying and the anxiety of leaving. Finally, a third place I've come to treasure: sometimes (often) when I'm at a party and I'm feeling overwhelmed I go play online chess in the bathroom as a way to regroup with myself.

THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THE PAST IS BRAVELY INTO THE FUTURE

Gregory Nero

Abstract—Trying to figure out what to do with my hands and arms at concerts.

Index Terms—three, meals, a, day

I.

It was early May and I sat on the bench waiting for the tram, completely captured by thoughts of sex. My back subtly arched against the warm metal seat and my tightly closed knees made the frame of an "A" with my feet below them. It was nearly night and the sun was begging to set. When had I last felt this horny? And why now? I fiddled with the plastic takeout bag that carried my unfinished dinner. A few others hovered around the station, waiting for the next tram back into town. It was unbearable: I couldn't focus on anything, and the leftover heat from my takeout and the residual warmth from the sun-heated metal bench screamed hot, heavy sex. What could have possibly come over me? It wasn't unusual for me to daydream about sex. On the contrary: I'd often fantasize about love-making during the day. But this wild feeling I had now was different. What set this off in me? It had been a pretty normal, pleasant afternoon. I got an early dinner at one of my favorite local taco spots, did some reading, and watched the lizards sit out in the sun. But now, sitting on this bench, this feeling I had was something else entirely. Why?

Then I remembered: it was such a subtle, wildly subtle, incident but it had the effect of setting off in me something untamed running. There had been a cyclist that rode by the station earlier, heading toward the bridge just east of here. They were building momentum from being stopped at the light nearby, and they stood up over the seat as they peddled to get back up to speed. And if I thought I knew what sex was before this moment, I must have been wrong. *Dead wrong.* Yes, surely this must have been what set me on this track. Their hair flowed out from behind them, excited by a westward headwind, and their forearms flexed as they gripped the bars to head up the slight incline toward the bridge. Their hips kept the same cadence as their legs, and when they finished getting back up to speed they sat up and adjusted their waistband and guided their hair behind both ears. And I must have been holding my breath as I watched them ride away because I could still feel that intensity captured in my lungs and my chest and my throat and my neck.

I slumped into the seat, released by my realization. More people had gathered now that the tram was nearly at the station. A stranger next to me gave me a concerned look and I realized now that I had a thin layer of sweat on my forehead and that my bottom lip was trapped between my teeth. I gave

them a nervous smile and readjusted my posture, wiping the sweat away with the back of my arm. I opened my book to read while I waited, but my eyes couldn't focus. Eventually the tram arrived and I languidly walked on and picked the seat furthest back. And the sun had finally set, so reality was a hazy combination of my own reflection and the world outside. And so was I.

Standing Still

Gregory Nero

Abstract—Reading Murakami in the corndog shop. Casually flipping pages between sips of lemonade and deep fried meat and cheese. When did I stop being a boy? The dining area reminds me of a hospital waiting room, unfortunately. I stopped showering for a week, maybe more than a week. I can't remember. I wanted to know what I smell like. Pheromonally, you know? Sweat and open glands and skin. It's a way of being intimate with myself. They make corndogs with cheese cores: you could get a mozzarella stick corndog. The young man killed the Commendatore, and there was lots of blood. Lots and lots of blood, everywhere. The other night I was falling asleep at the bar's patio table. Really, very tired. Somebody with me was a wasp expert. The tragedy of that situation was that I am extremely curious about wasps. I have so many questions about wasps. But I was falling asleep at the table, probably not drinking a Budweiser. So I didn't learn about wasps that night. I couldn't finish the corndogs. I was a little bit too ambitious, it appears. But I deserve to be decadent sometimes. At Sunday school we learned about how to crucify people properly. The trick is to pound the nails just *below* the hands in between the wrist bones. There will be blood, lots of blood. Lots and lots of blood, everywhere. If you fail to do this properly then the person's weight will rip the nails right through their hands and they'll fall. The hands are fragile, see. You want to nail them just *below* the hands, in between the wrist bones. I closed my book, threw out my trash, and left the corndog shop.

Index Terms—making, soup, at, 10pm

SETTING THINGS OUT IN THE DAYLIGHT

Anger as a form of self respect.