

The Stories I Tell, Myself

By MB Austin

When did you first know you were ___? That's always a fun getting-to-know-you question, especially if the person asking fills in the blank with a *lesbian*. Which they often do, because I've been happily, matter-of-factly married to a woman for so long. (Of course, no one who mistakes me for straight thinks to ask this question, but that is a topic for another day.)

Regardless of what label gets dropped into the inquiry, the answer is "just the facts, ma'am." It goes something like this: *Well, around fourth grade, I realized I had crushes on some of my school friends: girls and boys. Also around that time, I saw a big-screen movie with the predictable romantic climax where the (predictably male) hero kisses the (predictably female) love interest, and I realized very clearly that I did not know which character I would rather be in that scene.*

My feelings were real, I was certain, but they were different, because all the other girls only ever talked about the boys they crushed on. I didn't have a name for what that meant about me, and I didn't know anyone I felt comfortable asking. As an avid reader, I knew there were words I could use, and that I would find them in the pages of the stories about other people who shared this one trait with me. Eventually.

MB, continues on page 16



Full comic on page 17!

Stories

Compiled by Robyn Ochs

Carla Imperial

Me: (strummin' my guitar)

She: *There ain't nothin' sexier than a lesbian playing guitar.*

Me: (without skipping a beat) What about a bisexual playing guitar?

She: (pause) *Oh!*

Me: Just sayin'.

She: (stares at me in silence)

Me: Just an fyi. And Megan too. We both identify as bi.

She: (more silence)

Me: Yup, we've been in a monogamous relationship together for 23 years, but our identities haven't changed.

She: (eyebrows raise)

Me: In case you're wondering.

She: (slowly nods)

Me: All right then. What was that song I was playing...

Carla is a Filipino-American writer, musician, chef, woodworker, world traveler...and at the center of it all, a very blessed wife and mom.



Rachel Maggiani

When I came out to my mom, I started with "I don't want this to be a big deal, but I'm bisexual." She asked me how long I'd known, and then she asked me if butternut squash counts as a carb.

Rachel is a bisexual millennial from Boston, working in politics and pushing for minorities, including those from the LGBT+ community, to run for office!

Stories, continues on page 5

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Editor's Note

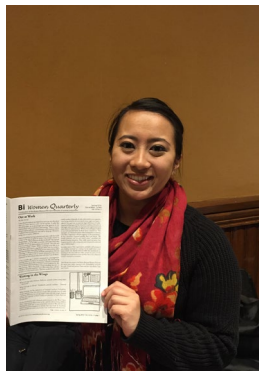
This issue is devoted to Coming Out Stories. I have identified as bi for more than 40 years (also, more recently, as pansexual and queer). I can attest that coming out is not something done once and, once done, complete. Rather, it is a complex and multifaceted process. We come out to ourselves, and we come out to others. Sometimes it is necessary to come out multiple times to the same person before the information "sets." On this theme, we present poetry and prose by numerous writers; a painting by Jo-Anne Carlson; and a comic by Why Not Both Co. In our Around the World column, María de las Mercedes Rodríguez Puzo discusses media silence about bisexuality in Cuba. Soudeh Rad describes a recent research study on bisexuality in France. We also offer our usual staples: Advice from A Rose Bi and our Fall Calendar.

It is notable that this may be our most international issue. Contributors this time hail from Canada, Cuba, US/Egypt, France/Iran, New Zealand, Switzerland, the UK, Venezuela/US, and the US.

To our knowledge, *Bi Women Quarterly* is the only bi women's publication in the world, and it is a lifeline for some. We are a grassroots, all-volunteer publication. Please help us out by spreading the word about our existence, by supporting us financially (if you can), and by sending in your own writing and/or artwork. If you have suggestions for future themes, please let us know. We want to hear from you.

Robyn and LB

Another fan reads BWQ. Send a picture of yourself reading BWQ to biwomeneditor@gmail.com. Be creative!



Upcoming in *Bi Women Quarterly*

Call for writing Winter 2018 issue

What I Want

Have you ever taken a moment to reflect on what you want – what you really want? We're seeking bi+ women's visions for the future, big or small. Please share your hopes, aspirations, and dreams through opinion pieces, poetry, fiction, personal stories, or artwork. *DUE BY November 1.*

Call for writing Spring 2018 issue

Chosen Family

Chosen families are groups of people who deliberately choose to play significant roles in each other's lives. Who makes up your chosen family? How did you come to find each other? What does your chosen family mean to you and your bi+ identity? *DUE BY February 1.*

Submission guidelines are online at biwomenboston.org.

Send your submissions and suggestions for future topics to biwomeneditor@gmail.com

Note: If you do not want your full name published, or wish to use a pseudonym, just let us know.

BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Want to host one of our monthly brunches, be the woman who coordinates the brunches, or help out with our website (we use WordPress)? Or, if you're a student, consider an internship. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Robyn (biwomeneditor@gmail.com).

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay and transgender people within the larger society.

Around the World

Media Silence About Bisexual Women in Cuba:

By María de las Mercedes Rodríguez Puzo

In 2008, Cuba celebrated its First National Day Against Homophobia, which launched the theme of sexual diversity into mass media.

Since then, the Cuban press has published articles, reports, and interviews on discrimination and exclusion based on sexual orientation, although only on specific dates such as May 17th (International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia), December 1st (World AIDS Day), and December 10th (World Day of Human Rights). Testimonies by gay men, lesbians, and transgender people and opinions of recognized activists frequent these publications.

Several telenovelas have touched on male homosexuality, like *La cara oculta de la luna* (*The Hidden Face of the Moon*) and *Latidos compartidos* (*Shared Beats*). The cinema has added moving films about transgender people such as *Vestido denovia* (*Wedding Dress*), *Fátima o el parque de la fraternidad* (*Fatima or the Fraternity Park*), and *Viva* (*Live*). Male bisexuality related to prostitution or transactional sex has also been featured in films like *Chamaco* (*Guy*), *Verde Verde* (*Green Green*), and *La Partida* (*The Last Match*).

Recently, television broadcast the miniseries *Breaking the Silence*, in which a pair of lesbians appeared, and one of the women was killed at the end. If we continue searching, we find the documentary *Mujeres entre el cielo y la tierra* (*Women between heaven and earth*), which reflects the conflicts that today face eight homosexual women, recognized cultural icons. Likewise, interviews with organizers and activists of the Cuban Network of Lesbian and Bisexual Women have been published in different formats, although all the interviews focus on daily life and lesbian conflicts.

In theory, “sexual diversity,” an official arm of the Cuban media includes lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people; in practice, bisexual women are doomed to silence and invisibility. An exploratory review – carried out in February 2017 – shows that they are completely excluded from the media. Not a single representation of visibly bisexual women was found.

Perhaps there is concern for backlash due to the sexist and macho prejudices of some media professionals, or perhaps the media has insufficient training and motivation to develop investigative journalism and opinion pieces on the



problems and realities of bisexual women. This absence of bisexual women in the media also influences policy, which does not address LGBT issues as prioritized topics.

In general, mass media reproduce dominant social thought. Through their messages, they construct a symbolic universe, create and claim public meanings that individuals appropriate, reproduce and use in their lives. How these media understand the masculine and the feminine, then, leads to the transmission, construction, re-signification, appropriation, and rejection of salient messages (Moya, 2009).

Is it then possible that the opinions and representations of bisexual women don't actually reflect the characteristics, needs, interests, and structures of actual bisexual women?

Even though he focuses on male bisexuality, prestigious researcher Ramón Rivero Pino gives us a valuable clue:

Homosexuality, both male and female, still produces in our society great alarm and continues to be a subject that blushes most people. The subject is treated with euphemisms or simply not treated; when it is addressed, most of the time it is done because of prejudice and exclusion. If we analyze this type of sexual orientation from the perspective of gender and sex relations, we can affirm, without doubt, that toward these people, society

María, continues on next page

María, continued from previous page

manifests itself through rejection and segregation. (Rivero Pino, 2014)

To face the media silence that exists today in Cuba about bisexual women, the first thing we need is the full awareness of who these women are and what they are actually saying. We need to examine the meaning of the words inclusion, equity, and respect, as well as if one freely and democratically chooses a sexual orientation. We need to take a critical look to foster fuller communication beyond patriarchal heteronormative power and understand that bisexual women deserve to be recognized in and outside of the media.

María is a Cuban journalist and editor of the Caminando blog. This article is part of her research toward a Master's degree in Community Cultural Development.

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Evolving Understandings

By Priscilla Lee

When I was 28:

"Bay, I'm a little worried. It has been 5 years since you brought a boyfriend home. I'm worried you won't have enough experience to choose well when it comes time to marry."

"Mom, I know I haven't brought a man home, but I have brought other people home, and you should know that though I haven't introduced you to anyone, I have been dating and having relationships and not only with men."

And at 42:

"Mom, I want you to know that I got appointed as a GLBT commissioner in Cambridge."

"Does that mean you will never marry a man?"

"It means I will work on policies that improve the life experiences of GLBT people in Cambridge. I'm bisexual and have had both boyfriends and girlfriends. If I fall in love with someone and want to get married in Massachusetts, it will be legal no matter who that person is."

And at 46:

"Mom, I met someone, my special person."

"Is it a woman or a man?"

"Her name is Marlene, and you will love her."

"I was hoping it would be a man."

"I know, but you will love Marlene"

"But if you are with Marlene, won't you want to have a boyfriend too?"

"Mom, when you got married, did you still want to have a boyfriend too?"

Priscilla is a mom, wife, daughter, and friend; a learner, teacher, and community activist.



Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato

I was 11. I said: “Mom and Dad, I’m bisexual, like Phillip and Barbara.” (Those were two friends of theirs, both bi. Knowing them was the reason why I knew the word and what it meant, and I realized that it described me.)

Mom and Dad: “Okay.”

Yes, I was lucky.

Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato is a dance/fitness teacher and part time nursing home chaplain living in New York City with her wife and two cats.



Virginia R.

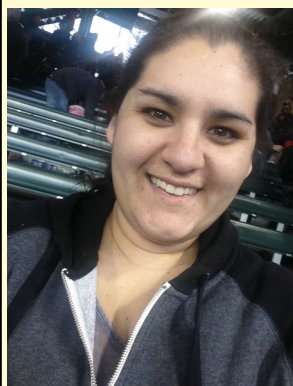
In 1991, I told my college roommate that I had something to tell her. Then, I was too nervous to speak, so I wrote the words, “I’m bi” on a slip of paper. I handed it to my roommate, who was sitting next to me on the dorm room bed.

She visibly started, looked at me in shock, and asked, “Since when?”

Taken aback by the odd question, I said, “Ummm... since forever.”

I don’t remember what happened next, but there was some laughter, and very quickly, everything was fine.

Virginia came out in college, and after marrying first a woman, then a man, is very happily single and living in New York City.



Stephanie Rodriguez

I told my 80-something-year-old grandmother something along the lines of “I like guys and girls.” She said, “You what?! You left the door open and the devil came in.”

Stephanie is a 27-year-old bi-identified woman living (mostly) in harmony with her trans partner.

Robin Renée

I was at a favorite bar having a drink with an old friend. I said something that indicated that I am bi, thinking he had known for years. He said, “I thought you were a lesbian.” I said, “No, I’m bi.” Almost immediately, he told me that he and his wife had separated, and that he was so lonely...”

Robin is a recording artist, freelance writer, and entrepreneur. www.rob-inrenee.com



Robyn Ochs

This happened at the Post Office service counter:

“Hello. I’d like to send this book via media mail.”

“Sure, no problem. Is it a good book?”

“I’d like to think so – I’m one of its editors!”

“What’s it about?”

“It’s about bisexual men.” (I said this in the most matter-of-fact voice I could muster, despite my anxiety at how he might respond.)

“Oh. Do you trash us?”

“No, in fact it’s bisexual men speaking in their own voices and it’s quite beautiful.”

(He smiles.) “What’s it called?”

“It’s called *Recognize: The Voices of Bisexual Men*.”

Robyn is editor of Bi Women Quarterly.

Coming Out

By Kate Jameson

As a bisexual teenager, I am currently out to three people, all of whom are among my closest friends. My friend Ezri, who is straight and has never questioned her sexuality, was so understanding when I began to question mine. I never felt under any pressure to pretend to be someone I was not. She never had a bad reaction when I rambled about how much I loved Jared Padalecki or talked about my all-consuming crush on Sophie Turner. She just smiled and didn't bat an eyelid, as though my crushes were simply to be expected. She never asked me questions about it until I was comfortable.

One day she asked me:

"Are you bi or pan?"

The question stumped me for a second, as I was caught a little off guard as we were walking up a hill, but there was a smile in her eyes that made me think: this is okay.

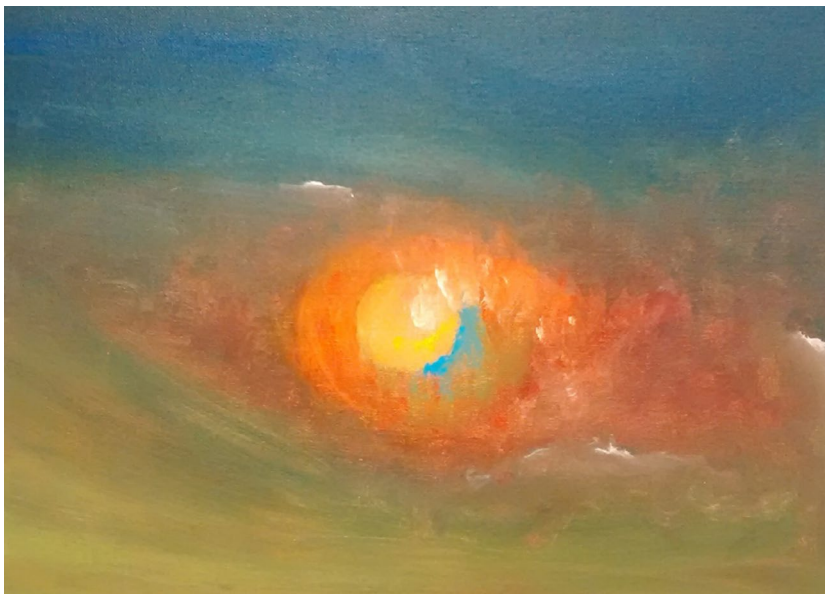
I replied, "Bisexual," and she smiled. That was that. We just continued our walk and our conversation about our new physics homework.

To have that kind of support as I began to think about coming out to a wider audience meant more than anything in the world to me. Before we ever talked about my sexuality, I knew I was free to talk about boy crushes and girl crushes in front of her—something I didn't feel comfortable talking about around anyone.

Neither of us remember the origin of this term of endearment, but she calls me "bisexual pancake." I like to hear the word "bisexual" used when she describes me because even though I'm mostly in the closet, I'm not ashamed of my sexuality. I'm just not ready to come out to more people yet, and that's okay.

Coming out can be a scary prospect but because I have her as a friend, the seemingly monumental task of telling my parents feels a bit less daunting. Thank you, Ezri!

Kate is a British student and an aspiring poet and writer who is hoping to form a Gay-Straight Alliance at her school next year when she turns 16.



Eye 6. Acrylic piece by Jo-Anne Carlson.

Jo-Anne Carlson is a writer, artist, and musician. She loves hearing from friends, so feel free to drop her a line at josexpressions@yahoo.com.

They Said, I Said

By Judith



The following conversation took place in the Netherlands. Students in primary school (age 4-12 years old) follow a curriculum, and one of the goals is to learn how to be respectful of sexuality and diversity in the Netherlands. For instance, when students are around seven years old we tell the children that it is all right to fall in love, and the gender of the person they fall in love with doesn't matter. (More on this—in Dutch—at <http://tule.slo.nl/OrientatieOpJezelfEnWereld/F-L38.html>.)

It's up to the teacher to determine how they teach about respect for sexuality and diversity. The story that follows takes place in a small village school, and the teacher is quite open with the students about all kinds of subjects. This teacher has more than 16 years of experience and is a very skilled teacher. This openness is a feature of the whole school. With 13 years of teaching experience and being an excellent teacher, I was invited to study to become a principal and—to make a long story short—here I am, a principal since last January at a primary school for all genders and with teachers openly discussing all kinds of subjects with their students.

Here's what happened: A group of eleven-year-old students, their teachers, and I were eating together at school for a special occasion: the night where these students would perform a musical for their families. It was a big night and the energy was electric. During dinner, a few boys were telling the teachers and me something about a movie in which breasts were shown, and the teacher told them that she wasn't attracted to women. I asked the boys to continue their story because my attractions aren't about gender. They just didn't seem to notice.

The actual conversation went like this:

Students: "Could we please watch this movie?"

Me: "Why are you so excited?"

Teacher: "They showed a bit of breast."

Me: "Now I can understand your excitement."

Students (grinning): "Yes! Can we watch?"

Teacher (joking a bit): "No, it's not age-appropriate for you, and I didn't expect... you were so silent," (she smiles widely)

"and you know, guys. ... I'm not attracted to breasts. So, no watching..."

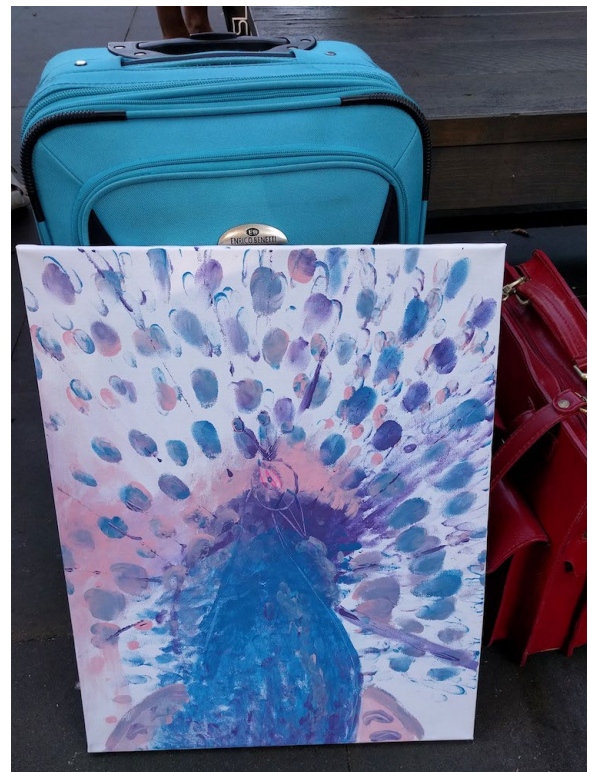
Me: "I've never cared about gender in my attractions, so tell me more, what did you see?"

The boys started to laugh and described the exact scene (I saw nothing wrong there in that scene at all!).

There was no response to what I'd just said.

It was a small coming out conversation, with me as a role model to students. Probably no one noticed even, because the conversation just went on. I am quite curious about the impact of those small conversations, which can make a big difference. Are those conversations possible where you live?

A school principal, Judith teaches lessons on sexuality to 15-year-olds.



The picture is called "be proud." Judith made this just after the EuroBiCon in Amsterdam (July 2016).

My Coming Out Journey

By Pekky Marquez Divya

It is amazing how hard it still is to talk about it after three years of coming out and with a president who does not support us.

I remember being attracted to women as early as five or six years old. I noticed women's bodies and had crushes on actresses, cartoon characters, and even female classmates, even though I was not able to articulate my feelings. (I was a kid, for God's sake!) I had simultaneous crushes on male classmates, male cartoon characters, and male celebrities, but because of heteronormativity I was more able to identify them as crushes. Compulsory heterosexuality aside, the feelings I had for men and women were similar.

However, I grew up in Venezuela in the 1980s and 1990s. I was already experiencing bullying, as people who are different do. (In this case, my salient difference was my autistic traits, but that would go to another page.) I had to lie to myself to survive. Also, I sought solace in the Catholic Church, which deemed desire for genders similar to my own a sin. You can imagine the difficulties I went through at the time. But even if we take religion out, gossip about two best friends being "lesbians" (which might or might not have been true), or rumors about celebrities in Venezuela (which again, might or might not be true) was done with such malicious intent that staying in the closet was the better option. And bisexuality also was seen as a stepping stone.

The first time I saw an article about bisexuality was in a *Newsweek* magazine my mother brought from a trip to the U.S., in the mid- to late-90's. I was still in Venezuela and my English was still too limited for complex articles, so I could not read the whole thing. However, I saw people I liked in that article as examples of bisexuality: Billie Holiday, Michael Stipe, and Sandra Bernhard among them.

I remember very clearly at 15 having an intense crush on a girl at my Catholic group. This disturbed me no end, not only because she had a boyfriend, but also because I was in a group that emphasized same-gender desire as a sin. I fought it and did not accept it, and found relief that I was still capable in crushing on boys. It was awkward because it was too obvious and at the same time I had to hide it so much. But before that I had a genuine crush on a guy who broke my heart. When we kissed, I felt tingly. I had crushes exclusively on men for a while after that.

In late 2000, with enough English and alone, I rediscovered Morrissey and his queer lyrics, and that opened in me something I had long repressed. Inspired by this, I created a character based on me, but inspired by him, and wrote a novel. Of course, without having a community of people who were like me as a reference, it was easy to fall into stereotypes, so I bought books for research (but also to understand myself). This did not bode well with my family, who at the time, did not know better. My mother questioned why was I buying books that had nothing to do with "us" (in Latin American culture, families tend to be an extension of our own identity and this is especially true with mothers), and my sister told me that even though she supported my novel she did not believe in bisexuality, and she accused me of "wanting to be bisexual."

I went to another university in 2001 in another city with a bigger international community and some LGBTQ groups. Even though I met two bisexual students, I had to negotiate what part of my identity would gain me more friends. I had to choose between the overwhelmingly white and monosexual LGBT group or the overwhelmingly straight international community. Knowing that I would fit in by virtue of being an international student and that in some of the cultures same-gender desire was frowned upon, I chose to repress my attraction to women and focus on men. Contributing to this were three factors: *Sex and the City's* episode disdaining bisexuality; groups implying that if I was a good bisexual feminist, I should prefer women or else I would fuel the patriarchy; and that sneaky

Pekky, continues on page 10



The Groundhog Day of Coming Out



By NekoFirefoxy

No matter if you're an LGBTQ+ person yourself, a relative or friend to one, or just an ally, "coming out" is a familiar topic for all of us. Most of us who identify any other way than straight have to come out several times in our lives to different people – families, friends, colleagues, partners etc., but it is quite safe to assume that at a certain point in your life, it will come to an end. There is a certain group of people who would disagree as they end up coming out over and over, and over again. I'm one of these people, and I'm bisexual.

Coming out feels a bit like the movie "Groundhog Day," the one where Bill Murray's character relives the same day over and over again. Only now I'm reliving different types of coming outs which aren't like the initial coming out. Mostly I come out "again" because I have to clarify for someone, to sort out a misconception about who I am. I also have to sort out several false assumptions about bisexuality itself. It becomes terribly tiring.

So, here are the different types of coming out I've done:

1. My initial coming out as bisexual at the age of 20 (at first to my peer group)

This one never really happened the way it's supposed to happen. It was sort of taken away from me. I met my first girlfriend in a club, and it hit me like a lightning bolt. We were making out in the club, and apparently my peer group saw it. When I finally let the cat out of the bag, I only got: "Oh darling, we already know. We were there." That was sort of a let down because initially I was so happy about having heard my sexual calling, and then it felt like I was the last to know, but they were happy for me and fine with it. I had a better "opportunity" to come out to some more of my friends, and no one outright rejected me, then. Sadly, the rejection and disrespect came later in small doses and unfortunately killed some friendships as well.

2. My coming out to my family in the same year

I know that probably most people come out to their families first, but since the bond to mine isn't that close, I didn't feel the need to disclose my sexual orientation to them upfront. I ended up telling them on Christmas Eve. While my dad was cleaning up the kitchen, I sat in the living room with my mother and other family members. She looked at me and asked upfront if I'm a lesbian. Needless to say I was baffled at first. I had to

ask her why, and she told me that I had been single for a longer period and that all my former boyfriends had slightly feminine facial features. But since she had put the elephant in the middle of the room, I thought I could jump on it and take a ride. I told her that I'm not a lesbian but that I identify as bisexual. She looked at me and said something along the line that being bisexual wouldn't be significant. I should decide "one team to play for." I interjected that her stance on bisexuality is bullshit because I made a decision and that she wouldn't force people to decide between liking fruits or vegetables for the rest of their lives. She suddenly changed the subject, and we never really spoke about it again, with the exception that, when we met on outings, she would ask if I was dating a certain woman. That was easy to stop when I told her that I'm not interested in having sex and/or a romantic relationship with every woman I meet just because I'm bisexual and that if she wanted to treat it fairly, she'd have to ask me the same thing when it comes to my meeting different men.

3. Coming out when being in a same-sex relationship

Since I don't see any benefit in closeting my sexual identity as a bisexual woman depending on with whom I'm in a relationship, I often have to disclose my bisexuality when I meet friends of my same-sex partner. This is especially problematic when my partner identifies as a lesbian. Sadly I often experienced a certain backlash when "coming out" as bisexual in a "lesbian environment." Behind my back or even straight to my face, I've heard I'm only confused, going through a phase, or simply not one of them. Still, this has never stopped me from being open about being bisexual.

4. Coming out when being in a different-sex relationship

Currently, I'm in a different-sex relationship with a man who is also bisexual. We're both open about our bisexuality even though he had closeted and falsely labeled himself as gay for many years to find more acceptance in the LGBTQ+ world. It was then necessary for him to come out again as bisexual when we became a couple. That was a double-edged sword.

Neko Firefoxy, *continues next page*

and prevalent notion that “all women are bisexual,” (or variations like “it is normal for straight women to enjoy lesbian porn/have f/f fantasies, etc.”)

The repression lasted until 2009. I hit rock bottom, and my depression turned severe. It damaged a potential relationship with a guy, and it strained my relationship with my family. I started sleeping with women, and it took me a while to accept that I was enjoying sex with women as much as I enjoyed sex with men. Then, I met this wonderful lady who lived a few buildings down from me and who showed me that I was capable of loving women as well. But because my depression was severe, I decided to pull the plug on that relationship. I didn't want another relationship damaged by depression. I dated a few men afterwards, but this time, I was out to them.

Forced to move to Chicago a few years later, and starting with a clean slate, I took a long hard look at myself. Morrissey and Maria Bello coming out around the same time, made me make the final decision. I was also approaching 35. I decided to seek a bisexual community and embrace my bisexuality. I am so glad that the bisexual community in Chicago has been welcoming and diverse. It is thanks to them that I am able to stay out.

So yes, this is how my journey towards embracing my bisexuality took place.

Pekky is a Venezuelan asylee who has called the United States home for 19 years, and a social worker currently writing a novel series with bisexual characters, as well as a blog.

An earlier version of this essay appears at writtenbyym.wordpress.com.

However, the others accused us of just using our “straight privilege,” as our mostly binary-coded world sees the following: a man and a woman, aka a straight couple. We're then seen as a straight couple no matter if we're in straight or queer spaces.

Although it's proven useful to me, it also saddens me that I have to use a “coming out” to defend myself. But what is the alternative? To silently accept the wrong perception? If I were forced to choose between those options, I'd always opt for “The Groundhog Day of Coming Outs” because visibility is what we need to break binary stereotypes, and closeting oneself has never been a privilege, isn't a privilege, and will never be one!

NekoFirefoxy, 37 years old, currently lives with her partner in Zurich, Switzerland, where she works as a back-office administrator. She identifies as bisexual and has never made a secret of it.



July brunch at Kara's in New Hampshire. This was BBWN's first New Hampshire brunch!

Two Flavours

By *Monica Meneghetti*

Some days start with whiskers. Some mornings, I roll over to find Sheldon's upper lip still hiding beneath mustache, his eyebrows sending out feelers to my fingertip, his grey eyes, his amused cheek. Often, I rouse to a belt buckle's clink and the jangle of keys dangling from a carabiner on his belt loop. I smell coffee and shoe-shine as he spiffs his steel-toes for work. Some afternoons, our companionship shifts as lips give way to tongues, and words to sounds of pleasure. My body welcomes his body in, and we vanish into trust. Emerge, laughing.

Other mornings, Laura's salty juice jolts me awake instead of coffee. Or I wake with my finger sheathed in her, dowsing essence, and her pleasure is my alarm. Other times, I find the crushed petals of her lips clinging to my hip and her impossible silk spinning down, capturing the pillow. Some nights, my heart pounds me awake. I hear the voice of the Gay and Lesbian Association's helpline attendant replaying in my head: "You're probably a lesbian, afraid to come out." To drown it out, I chant the names of men who made me

wet just by standing close to me and men who broke my heart. I even review my list of childhood crushes.

Night after night, I consider leaving Sheldon, not because I want to, but because people act like I'm supposed to. The thought of losing him stabs me. I will learn to clutch that pain as an amulet against biphobia. I will stab myself like that at least once a night, for months before I understand.



A long-time BWQ subscriber, Monica's "out" memoir What the Mouth Wants (Caitlin Press) was released this spring. Learn more at <https://monicameneghetti.wordpress.com>.

The Salt

By *Mary Rawson*

"Speaking of bisexuality (which we weren't), that's how I identify.

Please pass the salt."

The salt stands rigid on the mahogany table, in its green and yellow capsule, unable to believe she has finally come out with it.

The salt has seen it all, watched her tears fall, as she sat at the table alone, the only witness to her nightly whisperings 'What's wrong with me?'

I kissed Leo, I kissed Kate, what on earth will become my fate?'

It is lifted and passed to her, the now weeping girl.

'I will always love you, whomever you love,'

says the mother and the salt feels her tears fall on its green and yellow capsule and knows now the lonely vigil it has kept with the girl is over.

It will wait until late when the girl making popcorn will use it, the salt, to service her celebration.

Mary, a New Zealander, enjoys writing stories and poems about bisexuality and has a novel published called All of Us, which has bisexual main characters.

Coming Out as Bisexual

By D'Arcy L. J. White

The first time I came out as bisexual to my family it didn't take
It's not that they were embarrassed or ashamed
it was simply overlooked
almost forgotten
My sisters and I talked about who were the prettiest most bang-able (not that they would)
actresses
and I hung a few posters of girl crushes on my bedroom walls
and proceeded to bring home a parade of male one-night stands that must have made it
seem like just a phase
Until I roomed in grad school with a punky younger female friend and my mother announced one night that it
seemed to her "someone had made up their mind"
I puzzled, and ranted, and raged over that one for quite some time
Until she later let it be known she'd "discovered my porn stash"



Like what the actual fuck?

Who *really* goes through some else's bedside table?!
And since when did that make me "gay"?
Was it the vintage 1980s queer mags full of naked men and women
getting it on orgy style? the books on male and female genitalia? the *Bisexual Women's Erotica* anthology? the book on
threesomes? the ubiquitous hetero-normative 50 Shades? or the kinky Anne Rice *Sleeping Beauty* trilogy that "gave me
away"?

Maybe it was because, at the time, I didn't feel the need or see the value of community
I wasn't reading queer fiction
I didn't have queer friends
(well, except for that one friend from high school who came out first
as bisexual, but later confused me and broke my heart when he announced he was gay – and who subsequently erased
my sexuality
like dry erase off a white board rendering me invisible in a way that both confused and hurt me again)

But at a time when my sister spent a small fortune buying up all the DVDs (it was the 90s) I spent my meagre dollars
on maybe a dozen films – nearly all of them treasured for their queer content:
Gia; *Bound*; *Brokeback Mountain*; *Doom Generation*; *Y Tu Mama Tambiën*; *But I'm a Cheerleader*; and *Velvet Goldmine*
They may not have been great examples
they nearly all followed the "kill your gays" trope, with terrible sad, violent ends
but they were all this queer sheltered kid had to look to for evidence of queer love and sex

I wasn't trying to hide anything

that happened slowly, over time
with too many long silences when I came out to friends I thought would care more
as I got older and became afraid of losing my job
slowly I learned (taught myself?) that being bi was one more thing to be ashamed of
right up there with being 40-something, fat, and vegan
embarrassed and afraid to be myself
afraid to express my experiences, joys, compassion, and ability to love

D'Arcy, *continues on next*

D'Arcy, continued from previous page

This time I think it might actually take
I use the word bisexual – a lot
I've marched in the Pride parade with the Toronto Bisexual Network
I post Bi pride & Bi awareness articles all over social media
I'm seeking out dates of any and all genders
(not to prove anything to anyone, but simply because I want to)
I'm reading queer lit, and celebrating music by queer musicians
I knit in Bi pride colours
and hung a bi pride flag on my bedroom door
community has become increasingly important to me
and self-expression

I no longer care what other people think
I'm seeking out what makes me happy



D'Arcy L.J. White is an out and proud solo poly bisexual from Toronto, Ontario, Canada – an arts worker by day, and a bi pride warrior always.

You Can Have It Both Ways

By Jane Barnes

Oh yes you can you see a crowd of good-looking folks some women looking fierce some men who look cozy what is the likelihood you'll fall in love at this

stylish party you look over at this woman who's applying dark red lipstick then you see a man stroking his well-trimmed dark beard

which one can use "circuitous" in a sentence which is better in bed you wish it were easier to tell you settle for banter with both your heart

slamming in your chest the ice in your seltzer melting and the woman looks you over the man sweetly hugs a trans pal then smiles at you



Jane, of NYC, who is finishing a novel with bi and lesbian heroines, has published her poetry in 70 magazines including Sojourner, Harvard Magazine, River Styx, and The Massachusetts Review.

BLACK/BI/BODY/BODYPOSITIVE/BLISS

**BlackBisexualWetDream- Super Freak aka Pleasure in the Plus Size Body*

By Misia Denéa

I often wonder about black women and pre-columbian desirability
Before I was brought the shores of delicate European Beauty Standards
I slip into the abyss of epic memory when I lay my eyes on
moist obsidian, ebony, chocolate skin.
I yearn for the answer to Mr. Rogers
'Am I black or white? Am I straight or gay?' The Controversy
The abundance of Toxic white male pornography leaves me feeling empty.
My images, my body, my pleasure is not my own...it's invisible.
I'd rather un-learn that my body belongs to Massa, the plantation concubine who bred more enslaved chattel.

Zapp!!!

Let me travel to beyond the african women who wet nursed european babies (and often neglected her own)
Let me see the heaviness and the suppleness of her breasts
I want to see her joy (in a mini skirt and see-through mid-drift top), inside the field hollers...the ring shout,
second linin', her samba, her salsa, rhythmic twerk and dance hall.
more bounce to the ounce
(Shake it mama.... I like to watch them bounce)
Movin' her body into a frenzy, pure elation...Rock. Steady. Baby

I'd then travel downtown to see Ms. Brown for brown shuga.
Hopefully mister good foot is there too. He let me know:
"People standin',
standin', in a trance.
Sister out in the backyard
Doin' the outside dance.

Mama, come here quick,
bring me that lickin' stick."

I'll take mr. isley's cue..
If it's my thang and I can do what I wanna do...
Mr. Big Stuff can fill me up ... I can take it
Tell me something good (tell me that you LIKE it) Mr. Big Stuff
Give It to Me Baby
I'll make a Cameo in your play party... trust me "It's like candy"
I love that sweet sticky thing,
I'd leave honey everywhere
Sometimes he'd wonder if I care
who sees me when I do my thing
I've got such a sting"
I'm not from Ohio...but I'm a player too...
I'm Kool too, I can get down on itquite nice
Dazz !!!!
"We both are here to have the fun
So let it whip
So let it whip, let's whip it baby"



Misia is a body positive wellness consultant and is the owner and founder of Hatha Holistic Integrative Wellness. She is an award-winning performance artist and recently made her screen debut at San Francisco's Queer Woman of Color Media Arts Project with her film, Bi/Black/BodyPositive/Bliss.

The Symphony

By R.K. Kandil

Darkness. I had been floating in the void for a while now. Sort of a calm state of flailing, if you could imagine such a thing. I knew that I was free falling, yet couldn't help but wonder if gravity would work on me at all. Did I have a body, a center of mass for said gravity to work on? Who knows? But I got used to it. The not knowing. It may have been cold and dark—at least I imagined it was so—but it was familiar. It was the societal status quo, and it was my daily state of affairs. That is until I waltzed into the Middle Sexualities Caucus at Camp Pride, facilitated by Robyn Ochs. Camp Pride is a leadership program for LGBTQ+ and ally college students from schools across the United States...and a rather unknown part in my geographical void.

Walk. Chair. Drag chair into position. Sit. Lean back. Draw attentive smile on face. Hear nothing...wait... wait wait wait

"I thought I was a Lesbian, but..."

"I think the term 'fluidity' suits me..."

"Pansexual' is my label of choice, because I define it as..."

"'Bisexual' feels like a worn comfortable pair of old shoes..."

"I have to remind my friends that I'm bisexual, not gay..."

"It kinda hurts my feelings at this point..."

"I mean I'm not even binary, being attracted to a different gender than my own...what am I?"

"Dealing with being Trans and also being bisexual is waaaaay too much to deal with..."

"The bullshit is endless..."

"Queer all the way..."

"I'm bisexual and I'm not attracted to you... because you're fugly, inside and out"

"Why the fuck do they think the world revolves around the cisgender male penis?!"

It was music. No, not just that. It was a whole symphony. Everyone had a different timbre, a different feel against my inexperienced ears. I would expect a horn and a

violin to clash, yet throwing in the viola, the triangle, cymbals, bass drum (if Beethoven can add the last three just for the 4th movement in his 9th symphony, so can I),

and some trumpets for good measure made something more than the sum of its parts. It was a Bi+ symphony. Me, who spent so much time thinking that my heart was beating into a void, found myself joined with a cacophony of other hearts. All unique, and more beautiful for it. I knew if I had an EKG handy, it would have produced a delightful piece of art. God knows if I did, I would have snuck into the Sistine Chapel and plastered it right over the Creation of Adam.

And to my lovely Trans/Non-Binary/Gender-nonconforming siblings:

I have many attributes that qualify me as a second-rate person in many people's eyes, a cheap knock-off version of a human. Egyptian. Muslim. Bisexual. Woman. Wait for it...of colour. But one thing that never bleeped on my radar-of-oppression is gender. I'm cisgender. And it's a privilege. To my trans/non-binary/gender nonconforming siblings, no matter your sexual orientation (or lack thereof), if people with hatred in their souls, and ignorance consuming their minds and hearts come for you: they'll have to get through us first. If my voice shakes, or my body trembles from the sheer injustice that I witness inflicted upon you, know that my spirit is as steady and unmoving as an oak tree. And that my heart is beating in sync with yours. You are a part of my symphony, with your own unique timber and texture. You belong. Full stop.

R.K. is a recent grad who's currently working in the digital strategy field in D.C. and daydreams about building her own computer (which has been prenatally christened as Matilda).



Meeting of the Middle Sexualities Caucus

Photo by Robyn Ochs

By high school I was aware that gay men existed, because the couple who owned a shop together in town were matter-of-factly not *just* business partners. I had no such empirical evidence of female couples, but I knew they must exist—somewhere. At this point, I wanted to be part of a couple; and guys were readily available. I dated, dipped my toe into sex (no, not literally), and added to my own story. But in my internal narrative, I never changed my identity to straight—I was just exploring what I could with limited options.

College opened those options up, bringing me stories (fiction and non-fiction) of other bi people, and with them words to describe myself. However, with the first social group that didn't assume I was straight also came the first assumptions that I must be a lesbian. Thus began the first in a long series of comings out as bi and of confronting a perplexing array of stereotypes and misconceptions. Some were honestly uninformed and easy to correct, others openly hostile and entrenched in prejudice. That *when did you first know* question could be delivered as a warm invitation to share my individual, personal journey or as a skeptical challenge, an implicit refutation of my knowledge of myself.

The very last time I came out as a single adult was at my wedding, in my vows. The story I was trying to tell my wife, in front of our friends and family, was the one I tell myself. *I have loved others; I could love others; but yours is the unique and precious love I cannot live without.* If I'd taken out the gender references, it would be the same story all marriage vows boil down to.

As a married person, my romantic history and potentiality loses its relevance to most other people. Granted, my wife and I both fess up to our rare “married, not dead” moments of gob-smacked admiration for other individuals. But I almost never find myself facing the questions single people do, about who I am open to dating/ what I'm looking for romantically/ whether I have ‘a type,’ etc. The introvert in me is delighted that inquiring minds turn their attention elsewhere now.

The activist in me, however, prickles whenever I'm mislabeled. It's not the labels themselves that trouble me. There's nothing inherently bad about being lesbian or straight, Christian, or Jewish, (to name just the four most common misassumptions made about me, in order of frequency). They don't fit my story though, and if I accept them without comment then I re-write

my own story and obscure the truth of me in the process.

Now that I am publishing fiction with (not so predictable) female heroes who fall in love with (hopefully equally fascinating) women, my life experience as a bi woman married to a woman shows up in two ways. First, I create main characters whom I love and respect and to whom I hope my readers can relate. Some self-identify as bi, some as queer, some as lesbian; and they fall in love with one another because each is *that one right person* for the other. And because I have the capacity to feel attraction to and imagine myself in a relationship with a person who lives outside the gender binary, there will in future be more characters who are non-binary, transgender, and genderqueer (hopefully equally nuanced). It is a weird sort of literary coming out, drawing on my own experience to create the story of someone who never lived off the page, but who feels like she could.

The second type of coming out is more direct. Because complete strangers want to know something personal about the writer behind the words, I have to peel off a few layers of introversion and tell them relevant parts of my own story. On panels, interviews and my website, the first layer mirrors what you get when I meet someone new in person: what I do, where I live, who I live with (“just the facts, ma'am”). The second layer starts to answer the *how do you* and *why do you*, and *when did you know* kind of questions. That's where you'll learn the stories I tell myself, about myself.

MB Austin lives with her wife in Seattle, an excellent town for coffee-fueled writers who don't need too much sun. Learn more at www.mbaustin.me.



Acceptance

By Why Not Both Co



Transcript: 10 panel comic. First panel: Girl and her friend talking. Long-haired girl (Nina) says, "Jaz, you've been acting strangely all day. Is everything okay?" Her nervous-looking friend (Jaz) replies, "There's something I want to tell you. Second panel: We see the girls are sitting on a park bench. Nina says, "All right, what is it?" Jaz says, "I-I can't say it! Just... look up today's holidays." Third panel: Nina scrolls through her phone. "Okay," she says, "It's 'You Go Girl' day. So... manicures?" Jaz says, "No, not that one." Fourth panel: "Well," Nina says, "It's also 'National Sausage Pizza' day." Jaz looks more nervous and says, "No, not that one." Fifth panel: Nina scrolls through her phone, saying "Hmmm..." Sixth panel: Nina looks up in realization at Jaz. Seventh panel: Nina has a firm expression as she walks towards Jaz, dropping her phone on the bench. "Sorry, I..." Jaz stutters, "I-I've just been too scared to tell anyone--" Eighth panel: Nina hugs Jaz. Jaz looks shocked. Ninth panel: Jaz hugs Nina back, tears of happiness down her cheek. Tenth and final panel: We see the phone, which reads "October 11th, National Coming Out Day". "Pizza to celebrate?" Nina says, offscreen. "Yes! I was too nervous to eat today," Jaz responds. "Wow," Nina says, teasingly, "You go, girl, hahaha." "Shut up!" Jaz says, laughing too. The End

Why Not Both Co is a bisexual duo consisting of AV and Amanda Wells who create queer webcomics. Follow them on Tumblr, Facebook, and Instagram

Research Corner

This column is under the capable supervision of Renate Baumgartner and Soudeh Rad. Renate, in Vienna, Austria, is currently conducting research on bisexual women and their experiences of discrimination. She holds a Ph.D. in natural sciences, is a bi+ activist, and offers workshops for bisexual empowerment. Soudeh is an Iranian gender equality activist based in France and cofounder of Dojensgara.org, a website about bisexuality in Persian. Some columns will be written by Renate, some by Soudeh – and some by both. If there is research on bisexuality that you would like to bring to their attention, write to them c/o biwomeneditor@gmail.com.

Perceptions of Bisexuality in France

By Soudeh Rad

In celebration of the International Day for Bi Visibility on September 23, 2012, four nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) launched the first questionnaire on bisexuality in France. Even though France is famous for its liberal sexual culture, this is the first French research on bisexuality. Act Up Paris, Bi'Cause, Le MAG Jeunes LGBT (an LGBT youth magazine), and SOS Homophobie (SOS Homophobia) decided to launch the survey to learn about perceptions of bisexuality, bisexual people, and their behavior.

During the three months of data collection, 6,107 individuals responded to this nine-question survey. As there was concern that an online survey promoted by an LGBT website would bias the results, questionnaires were also disseminated on the streets of Besancon, Marseille, Montpellier, Nantes, Paris, and Strasbourg.

The respondents' sexual orientations were 32% gay (men), 25% straight, 14% lesbian, 25% bisexual, and 4% not listed. For gender, respondents were 54% men, 43% women, and 3% not listed. Most of the respondents (66%) were between 18 and 34 years old. While the respondents are not representative of the overall French population, this study was a pilot study and still provides intriguing initial insights.

One of the questions asked participants to provide their perceptions of bisexuality, and 85% of respondents indicated that it was a sexual orientation like any other, with 15% describing it as a passing phase, a deviance, something that doesn't exist, and similar responses.

The percentage of male respondents designating that bisexuality "does not exist" (14%) was twice as high as the number of female respondents answering the same (7%).

Next, the researchers asked participants if they knew someone who is bisexual. Of those who responded to this question, 75% said they did know at least one bisexual person, mostly as friends. While this number is quite high, only 12% of the respondents knew one or more bisexual people as a family member and only 13% knew they had a bisexual work colleague. A little less than half (46%) of respondents knew at least one bisexual celebrity and 38% could name one. Responses included Angelina Jolie and

Lady Gaga, while few French celebrities were mentioned. This lack of French celebrity representation and lack of bisexual visibility in families and workplaces may be supporting bisexual stereotypes.

Social Circle	Number knowing	%
Friends	3472	76%
Sexual or Emotional relations	2059	45%
People I Know	1748	38%
School Environment	1263	28%
Professional	614	13%
Family	538	12%

In 2014, SOS Homophobie received 230 reports of LGBT discrimination by family members and 189 reports of LGBT discrimination by work colleagues, and these environmental factors may be keeping French bisexuals from coming out to their families or in their workplaces.

The researchers also asked respondents if they would have sexual or romantic relationships with bisexuals, and the majority of respondents indicated that they would not.

	Would you have sexual relations with a bisexual person?	Would you fall in love with a bisexual person?	Are you ready to engage in a relationship with a bisexual person?
No	78%	71%	61%
Yes	10%	10%	18%
Maybe	12%	19%	21%
TOTAL	100 %	100 %	100 %

The researchers further analyzed this data by sexual orientation of the respondent. Straight respondents were most likely to avoid sexual and romantic relationships with bisexual people, which may lead bisexual people to hide their identities from their straight partners.

Research, continues on next page

You Never Know

By Robyn Ochs

A Tuesday morning. I'm heading home from a speaking engagement in Wisconsin. One of those amazing ones that make me certain I really am making a difference and that leave me feeling hopeful for the world because I've met so many inspirational people. So I'm feeling good. Tired, but really good.

The flight is overbooked so at the airport they ask for volunteers to give up seats. Two of us offer, and an hour later the flight leaves without us and we each have vouchers for \$700 in our pockets and five hours of extra travel time. Calculating the hourly benefit, we grin at each other and conclude that we just got a very good deal.

This starts out in the typical direction of conversations strangers have in the airport: "What brought you to Wisconsin? Is this home, or are you here for business?" I take a good look at him. He's a middle-aged white man in business casual with nice shoes and a good haircut. He has Samsonite

luggage and a nice smile. I calculate my own emotional resiliency (HIGH today), and think, "Oh, what the hell – go for it." I take a deep breath, step over that tug of anxiety because I'm uncertain what will happen next, and tell him that I was in town for a couple of speaking engagements. He asks what my topic is. And I reply, "My topic was identity and sexuality. I'm an LGBTQ speaker." Then I wait.



Here's where it's a bit nerve wracking. Is he going to smile and say, "That's interesting!"? Or is he going to act like I just threw up on his lap, and uncomfortably and awkwardly back away and terminate the conversation.

I wait.

He smiles.

I exhale.

Then he says, "My daughter is president of the LGBTQ group at her college."

The conversation begins.

We talk for four hours. We share a snack and then a meal. We send a Facebook message to his daughter at school who responds, "Oh, yes, I know her. I've heard her speak twice before. We were trying to bring her to speak earlier this fall, but it didn't work out." We laugh, we tell each other stories about our lives and our families and our work. Then we hug and part ways, he to New York and me to Boston.

The point being: you never know. You really don't. Ever. Know.

Robyn is editor of the Bi Women Quarterly and earns her living as a speaker.

Research, continued from previous page

Responses when respondents were asked if they would have a relationship with a bisexual person				
		Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual
No	25%	9%	7%	1%
Yes	53%	77%	83%	97%
Maybe	22%	14%	10%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

While most respondents recognized bisexuality as a sexual orientation, stereotypes continue to stigmatize bisexuals in French society. This is evidenced by the high numbers of respondents who accepted bisexual stereotypes and indicated they would not have sexual or romantic relationships with bisexual people.

For more information, you can download the French full report published in 2015 [here](#), and the two-page leaflet [here](#).

The Bi Bookshelf

By Sarah E. Rowley

Book News and Awards

In January 2017, out bisexual author **Roxane Gay** pulled her forthcoming book *How to Be Heard* from major US publisher Simon & Schuster, in protest of the company's decision to publish white supremacist Milo Yiannopoulos. Best known for his racist, sexist online campaign against black comedienne Leslie Jones, Yiannopoulos, an out gay man, has argued for the banning of women from the internet, the recreational murder of fat people, and made many anti-transgender and anti-Muslim statements. Gay's decision inspired other S&S authors to follow her and independent bookstores to pledge not to sell the book. S&S ultimately canceled Yiannopoulos's contract in February, after videos in which he promoted pedophilia resurfaced on the internet. Gay has since found another publisher for *How to Be Heard*.

The Body's Alphabet, a poetry collection by *Bi Women Quarterly* contributor **Ann Tweedy**, won the 5th annual Bisexual Book Award for Poetry earlier this summer! The book was also nominated for the Bisexual Nonfiction category of the 29th Annual Lambda Literary Awards. The latter prize went to **Ana Castillo's** *Black Dove: Mama, Mi'jo, and Me*, the Chicana author's memoir about her mother, sexuality, experiences with biphobia in feminist circles, and her beloved son's incarceration. And our very own **Tiggy Upland** won Bi Writer of the Year at the Bi Book Awards for *Advice from a Wild Deuce: The Best of Ask Tiggy*.

This year's Lammys also brought attention to some fiction about bi women:

Alexis M. Smith won the Bisexual Fiction Award for *Marrow Island*, an exquisitely written novel (previously featured in this column) about the reunion of two bisexual women in a disaster-ravaged Washington State. The other contenders were:

- *Beautiful Gravity* by Martin Hyatt, a Southern gothic novel

- *Mouth to Mouth* by **Abigail Child**, a poetry collection focusing on romantic and sexual relationships with women and men
- *When Watched* by **Leopoldine Core**, a short story collection set in New York City by the 2015 Whiting Award winner, featuring sex workers and artists, trans lovers and siblings

This year, the Lesbian Fiction category featured at least two novels centered on women who do not label themselves but explicitly have relationships with both women and men as adults: *Another Brooklyn* by **Jacqueline Woodson**, and *They May Not Mean To, But They Do*, by **Cathleen Schine** (both previously featured here). The ultimate winner was **Nicole Dennis-Benn's** *Here Comes the Sun* (also previously featured), a novel about a Jamaican lesbian and her family.

The inaugural winner of the Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Fiction is **Deepak Unnikrishnan's** *Temporary People*. This brilliant magical-realist novel-in-stories about guest workers in the United Arab Emirates brings home the humanity of the South Asian immigrants who power the Persian Gulf's economy. The book is frank about the reality of male bisexuality in these cultures and the costs of society refusing to acknowledge it.

Likewise, **Mackenzi Lee** has won the New England Book Award for Young Adult Literature for her second novel, the *Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue*, which features a male bisexual lead. Henry Montague, a lovable English lord's son, travels around 18th century Europe with his sister and best friend on a series of madcap adventures that force him to confront his many privileges. The book has gotten rave reviews for its fast-paced plot, well-developed characters, and deep sense of fun.

Finally, and belatedly, the 2014 Philip K. Dick Award for Distinguished Science Fiction went to **Meg Elison's** *The Book of the Unnamed Midwife*. It follows a middle-aged bisexual midwife who survives a plague that wipes out most of humanity and leaves childbirth fatal. Dressing as a man to survive, she wanders the dystopian western US and eventually finds a queer-positive community.



New Fiction Featuring Bisexual Women

- *Exit West*, the fourth novel from immensely talented Pakistani author **Mohsin Hamid**, has garnered well-deserved acclaim for its beautiful writing and hopeful and generous take on the global migration crisis. The story follows Saeed and Nadia, a couple who flees their politically disintegrating city, through a series of magical doors to new nations. Nadia, the female lead, comes out as bisexual over the course of the story. Highly recommended!
- British author **Zadie Smith**'s acclaimed novel *Swing Time* traces the unnamed narrator's relationships with three difficult women: her mother, a Black Caribbean working-class woman who becomes a successful politician; her childhood friend Tracey; and her pop star boss. Though she never uses the word, the narrator's mother appears to be bisexual.
- Out bisexual writer **C.B. Lee** has published the first in a trilogy about young queer superheroes. *Not Your Sidekick* centers on Jess Tran, a bi teen of Chinese and Vietnamese descent who also happens to be the powerless daughter of two superpowered parents. Jess's friend, a superpowered black transman, is the hero of the upcoming sequel, *Not Your Villain*.
- *A Good Idea* by **Christina Moracho** centers on Finley, a bisexual girl who returns to her small hometown in Maine seeking revenge for the death of her childhood best friend. Reviews praise the fast-paced mystery plot and realistic and complex characters.
- *How to Make a Wish* by **Ashley Herring Blake** centers on Grace, a teen piano prodigy with a narcissistic and unstable alcoholic mother, who falls in love with another girl. Reviews note that Grace is confident in her bisexuality, and that the book affirms bi orientations instead of dismissing them.
- Lesbian author of multiracial heritage **Nina LaCour** has published her fifth young adult novel. *We Are Okay* is a quiet and introspective tale about Marin, a grieving college student, who reunites with Mabel, her former best friend and lover, and tries to make sense of a family tragedy. The book is deeply respectful of Mabel's bisexuality.

Bisexual Biography and Memoir

- **Linda Heywood**'s new biography, *Njinga of Angola: Africa's Warrior Queen*, brings to life the fierce and wily seventeenth-century ruler who opposed Portuguese colonialism. Often compared to Elizabeth Tudor and Catherine the Great for her political and military talents, Njinga survived assassination attempts, outmaneuvered male competitors, and flouted gender norms, taking both male and female lovers.
- Not content with the activism described above, **Roxane Gay** has also published a memoir, the extraordinary *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body*. While Gay briefly discusses her attempts to convince herself she was a lesbian rather than bi, her focus is on her relationship with her body, and how that has been indelibly shaped by being gang-raped as a young teen and our society's deep hatred of fatness. Highly recommended!
- Out bisexual author **Melissa Febos**, known for *Whip Smart*, a memoir about her four years working as professional dominatrix in New York City, has just published a collection of autobiographical essays. The new book, *Abandon Me*, explores her complicated family history, Native American heritage, heroin addiction, and longtime relationship with an abusive woman.
- **Laura Jane Grace**, founder of the punk rock band Against Me!, has published a memoir, *Tranny: Confessions of Punk Rock's Most Infamous Anarchist Sellout*. Grace has spoken publicly about how her sexuality became more fluid after she transitioned to female in 2012.
- **Ariel Levy**, the out bisexual author of *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, has published a memoir, *The Rules Do Not Apply*, which explores relationships with her wife and a male partner, as well as the aftermath of a miscarriage. Readers highly praise her writing, but some complain that Levy does not respect her male partner's trans identity, or recognize his behavior as abusive.

Sarah is co-editor of the 42-country anthology *Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World*.



Advice From A. Rose Bi



An avid BWQ reader herself, A. Rose Bi proudly identifies as a bisexual woman. She currently lives in New England with her lazy spirit animal, a Siberian cat named after CJ Cregg.

In addition to being an out bi woman, A. has a degree in Cognitive Science, has completed trainings for LGBTQ+ and sexual assault survivor advocacy, and has experience answering calls for an anonymous LGBTQ+ help line. She is passionate about feminism, the bi+ community, LGBTQ+ and female representation in the media, and helping others.

A. Rose Bi's column relies on questions from readers like you! You can send any questions you might have or suspect other readers may have to the author directly at askbwq@gmail.com or by posting on the Bi Women's Quarterly facebook group. All questions are anonymous, nothing is off-limits, and anything related to upcoming issue topics is extra-encouraged!

Dear A. Rose Bi,

I'm a bi woman and I'm dating someone who presents as a man, but identifies as non-binary. When we spend time with my family, for convenience's sake, we act and present as a cis/het couple, but that's not who we are. I love my family and I think they'll be supportive, but I can't be sure. How do I decide when to tell them? Do I even need to tell them?

Thanks,

Tired of Passing

Dear Tired of Passing,

I think this is something that so many people in the bi+ (and nonbinary) community can relate to on some level. When we date other-gendered partners, people assume we're straight and when we date same-gendered partners, people assume we're lesbians. *Shakes fist at the heavens*

Whether to come out to your family about your own identity as a bi woman is a decision only you can make. However, when you add disclosing your partner's gender identity as well, it becomes a decision for the two of you. Since we're talking about your family, as long as your partner is okay with it, it is ultimately your decision to let the cat out of the bag.

Given all that, I think the questions you want to ask yourself for more clarity are:

"Is it important to me for my family to know this part of who I am?"

"Do I feel like I am hiding something from my family? If so, does it bother me?"

"Is it possible to come out to some family members and not others?"

Armed with that info, I think you'll feel surer about your decision. What I want you to remember through all of this is that as straight-passing queer women, we often feel pressure to come out, especially when we feel like we have a seemingly "better situation" than others (for example, you think your family will be supportive). Don't put that pressure on yourself. If you want to come out, you should completely, one hundred percent do that. But do it for you, and in this case, your partner as well. Coming out should be about you feeling more free and more yourself in front of the people in your life and if that's the case here, great! If not, don't push yourself too hard just because you feel like you should.

If you decide to come out, I know you're concerned about when. It's hard to say without knowing your family but you have a few options. You could announce it at dinner to everyone all at once (rip the Band-Aid off); you could get your closest family members together and sit down with them to tell them; you could drop hints throughout interactions with them to see if they pick up on it, or to ease the "shock" later down the road; or you could even text or email them with whatever you're looking to tell them. And all of these can be done by you or by you and your partner, depending on whether their inclusion is helpful or stressful.

There are a lot of options for you right now, but I don't want that to be stress-inducing for you. Read through this edition of *BWQ* and see if any of the submissions ring true for you in some way, then cherry pick what works for you. Overall, I'd recommend going with your gut. You know your partner, family, and yourself better than anyone else.

With love,

A. Rose Bi

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street in Boston, behind Club Cafe. Call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

Come to our monthly bi brunch! All women are welcome! See calendar for dates.

2nd Mondays:

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting. 7-9pm at the Bi Office. All are welcome.

Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. 7pm. Info: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com.

1st Wednesdays:

BLiSS: Bisexual Social & Support Group. 7pm. All genders welcome. Info: bliss@biresource.net.

2nd Thursdays:

Younger Bi Group. 7pm. For bi folks 20-29. Info: Kate at youngblissboston@gmail.com.

3rd Saturdays:

Biversity Bi Brunch. 11:30am at The Burren, 247 Elm Street, Davis Square, Somerville.

4th Thursdays:

Social BLiSS, Jamaica Plain. 7pm at Café Nero. Info: Mia at youngblissboston@gmail.com.

Metro-Boston women: Keep up with local events. Join our Google group: send an email to biwomeneditor@gmail.com and we'll add you!



CALENDAR

September

6 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations welcome to attend. Meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Meets 1st Wednesdays. Info/RSVP: bliss@biresource.net

10 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Tea with Bisexual Women Partnered with Men (BWPM). A peer-led support meetup co-hosted by BI-WOC and the BRC. We will discuss a wide range of issues related to attraction, sexuality, and gender in a supportive safe space for only trans and cis women and non-binary folks of all races and ethnic backgrounds. Meets at Blue Shirt Café in Somerville. Info/RSVP: <https://www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/241898334/>

11 (Monday) 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets 2nd Mondays. Info/RSVP: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com

14 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (Young BLiSS). If you are in your 20s or mid-30s (or thereabouts) and identify somewhere along the lines of bisexual/omni/pan/fluid (or are questioning in that direction), please join us on the second Thursdays for a few hours of laughter, discussion, activities, and/or the eating and drinking of delicious things! Info/RSVP: youngblissboston@gmail.com

16 (Saturday) 11:30am, Bi Brunch. This mixed gender bi group brunches at The Burren on Elm St. in Davis Sq., Somerville. Meets 3rd Saturdays.

23 (Saturday), Annual Celebrate Bisexuality Day (CBD). Celebrate Bisexuality Day is an annual day to honor and acknowledge our community around the world. To find out the details of how the Boston community will be marking it this year, visit the Bisexual Resource Center's website at www.biresource.net and check the BRC's Facebook/Twitter.

24 (Sunday) 12-3pm. Join us for the highly-anticipated annual **BBWN Book Swap** at Steph's in Arlington. Co-hosted with Ellyn, the book swap is a wonderful opportunity to share good reads and take home future treats. Open to all genres, good condition only. Audiobooks are included. No textbooks. Plus, bring a dish and drinks to share for the monthly delicious potluck. Enjoy the safe space of bi+ women's community. RSVP to Steph at smiserlis@gmail.com.

28 (Thursday) 7-9pm Bi+/Trans* Support Group. The BRC's bisexual+/transgender* support group is a peer-facilitated, safe space in Jamaica Plain where individuals can discuss many different topics. Info/RSVP: <https://www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/hnwxslwymblc/>

October

3 (Tuesday) 6-8pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning in Western Massachusetts. A new peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets 1st Tuesdays in Amherst, MA. Info/RSVP: appleday621@yahoo.com

4 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See September 6th)

9 (Monday) 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See September 11th)

Calendar, continues next page

Calendar, *continued from previous page*

12 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (Young BLiSS). (See September 14th)

15 (Sunday) 12-3pm, Women's Potluck Brunch at Maura & Linda's in Arlington. We look forward to seeing new faces as well as hanging out with favorites in the bi+ and bi+-friendly community of Boston. Bring a friend, too! RSVP: maurahalbert@hotmail.com

21 (Saturday) 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See September 16th)

26 (Thursday) 7pm, Social BLiSS, Jamaica Plain. This group is now for all ages who are interested in some tasty snacks and discussion with like-minded bis. Feel free to bring any topics you're interested in discussing! Meets at Café Nero in JP on 4th Thursdays. Info/RSVP: Mia at youngblissboston@gmail.com

November

1 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See September 6th)

9 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (Young BLiSS). (See September 14th)

10-12 (Friday-Sunday), BECAUSE Conference, Minneapolis, MN. People from across the US will converge at BECAUSE 2017, a conference dedicated to empowering bi, pan, fluid, queer, unlabeled (bi+), and allied communities. This year's theme: Coming Home: A Bi+ Past, Present, and Future. Info: www.becauseconference.org

12 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Tea with Bisexual Women Partnered with Men (BWPM). (See September 10th)

13 (Monday) 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See September 11th)

18 (Saturday) 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See September 16th)

23 (Thursday) 7pm, Social BLiSS, Jamaica Plain. (See October 26th)



June Brunch at Robyn's in Jamaica Plain

**Are you in the Boston area?
Would YOU like to host one of our
monthly bi women's potluck
brunches?**

*If so, please contact: Charlotte at
avon.alger@gmail.com*

JOIN US!

**Come spend time with some
smart, interesting women!**