



Welcome letter

May 1st, 2022

Welcome to the CUTIE BIPOC ISSUE!

Being queer and BIPOC means existing at a unique intersection of identities, and exclusions.

BIPOC artists drove the creation of this issue—from crafting the initial call for submissions, to designing the final issue.

The following questions around identity, representation, and space, were provided to prompt:

IDENTITY

What does it mean to you to be queer and BIPOC? How does your identity play out in your creative process?

How does your art capture your identity?

What are the conversations that are only possible with other queer PoCs?

How have global and local LGBTQ+ communities and movements captured and represented your interests, identities, values?

What is your 'real' voice? Who are you when no one's around?

REPRESENTATION

Do you feel a sense of responsibility to teach or represent in your creative work?

Who are your inspirations?

Who do you feel represents you?

How do you do your community justice?

What does rainbow-washing and performative allyship mean to you?

How do you deal with expected emotional labour?

Why is lived-experience important in representation?

SPACE

How do you demand space for yourself?

Do you speak/act differently in different spaces? How and when do you code-switch?

How has displacement impacted you?

How does immigration influence queer identity?

How do you form your identity when no one around you looks like you?





What strategies do you use to remain authentic but also comfortable in your surroundings?

How do you innovate in white- and heterodominated spaces?

What does queerness look like/mean in diaspora communities?

How do you reconcile your ancestral culture and your 'assimilated' culture?

How do cultural boundaries and expectations surrounding intimacy and affection affect your queerness?

Where do you feel safest? Which spaces allow you to actualize yourself to the fullest?

"I am a gorgeous woman.
That's not me being
egotistical or narcissistic. It's
just a fact, I'm a knockout."
- Princess Nokia

In times of crisis, maintaining community is vital. QT brings together our collective projects to create that sense of shared space. Queer Toronto Literary Magazine is a nonprofit dedicated to elevating and celebrating queer voices in Canada.

Thank you to all the writers, poets, artists and makers for allowing QT to share your work with the world. Thank you to all the volunteers at QT without whom we would not have a magazine.

— Pax Santos, Founding Editor

This issue was designed by Sara McKenzie.

Sara is a 28 year old Vancouverite currently residing in London, England. After moving to London in 2018, she found a job with a marketing team and began teaching herself graphic design, which one day she'd love to combine with her love of travel and food. \\ Ig: @smckenziie









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Vale

TITLE

red-not-ginger-not-galangal \\ diaspora guilt

MEDIUM

Poetry

BIO

Vale is a queer, mixedrace millennial from
Mississauga. Now living
and working in Toronto,
they write poetry about
small happinesses,
mental illness, the making of
community, and questions
of identity. When not
balancing their day jobs
or creating art, Vale enjoys
video games, fashion, noodle
soup, and doing stand-up
comedy.

\ldot\ lg: @coolartbadhair

RED-NOT-GINGER-NOT-GALANGAL

Granny used to pound garlic, chilis, shallots in a mortar and pestle, and the smell would be divine, my mom says.

I have a jar of pre-minced ginger in the fridge, but the recipe calls for galangal, and a better mortar and pestle than the one I got from Kitchen Stuff Plus

I have a jar of Lao Gan Ma in the fridge; married with garlic and ginger, that smell is divine

and it gives the fried rice a little colour — isn't it funny how ginger root is pale yellow and ginger hair is orange?

I remember when my dad was younger
I remember seeing photos of him in the 80s
I remember where my curls come from
when I see hints of red in certain lights

by which I mean: red like fox fur, not like chili sauce, by which I mean: ginger which is not galangal

and I think if I could actually cook Peranakan food, maybe I'd feel like the ocean wasn't a stranger

I don't know whose eyes I need to look into to find home when home was conquered and re-conquered and colonized and ginger-red-not-red became bad luck and the code that makes up my tongue decided that it can't tolerate chili

which I spoon into my fried rice and buy dried for ayam temprah (digging out all the seeds first) and get a little bit used to, every time and the smell is divine

when the ocean stares back does it see a stranger and when the crowd passes will I see a flash of ginger hair or the eyes that will look into mine and see home

DIASPORA GUILT

I'm not suited to this.

The wind is like bodies pressed against each other in a crowd,

thick, as if there is something burning all around us

and releasing colourless smoke

(I would ask about incense, but petrichor is sometimes lovelier).

Fatigue is sending me earthbound,

and I'm sure this would be relaxing

if I was in a hammock instead of

going

somewhere

I'm supposed

to be. My brother

is walking far ahead by now —

the fire is at home in his body

and his tongue holds spice like mine holds sweetness.

The trees here are the biggest I've ever seen:

they swallow storms and I can't stop drinking in

their presence.

When I go hiking and sweat through all my clothes, I laugh

because I have finally blended into the space around me.

Are the pastels in my lipstick and Peranakan cookware the same?

Am I queer the way that gilin are chimeras of scales and flame?

This far-away place and the far-away in me

have met

like a storm, so

if I breathe and my chest aches

with the weight of tropical air,

does it prove the effort I've made to bend

my diasporic tongue into a shape that channels clouds,

drinks like the trees,

holds both spice and sweetness,

a shape that feels like home?



NAME

Ari Para

TITLE

Lessons from an Immigrant Mother

MEDIUM

Creative Nonfiction

BIO

Ari is a second generation Sri-Lankan-Canadian, Hindu, non-binary, queer artivist based in Scarborough, Ontario. They are a theatre artist and a writer with a passion for reading and learning. Ari recently published a book called Dear Body, a collection of poems about overcoming challenges in their lives without sacrificing who they are. \\ \lg: @ariirispara

LESSONS FROM AN IMMIGRANT MOTHER

When I was ten, Amma told me never to date a (white) man. I laughed and asked her why, and she said "They'll just take from you."

That year, I had my first (white) crush. Graydon Spool.

He was new to Pinewood Elementary. All I knew about him was that his mother was a makeup artist for the latest Harry Potter movie. Everyone thought that was so cool. I hadn't even read the books, but I found him funny and cute and at ten years old, that was enough.

He played the clarinet in Music and I played the alto-sax. I wasted hours daily envisioning the beautiful harmonies we could make. He sat next to my best friend in class—the smartest and most beautiful girl in our grade. She was too focused on school to care about the boys that flocked to her, but I noticed.

Every day at recess, I would try to get close to Graydon. After three months of clocking him on the playground and trying to make a dramatic entrance into his line of vision, I succeeded. Albert, his best friend, challenged my friends and I to a game of tag.

Graydon came after me first. 'I was an easy target,' he said. I was too distracted by the fact that he was talking to me to respond. The next thing he said to me was, "I know you coloured people don't really change colour, but I can see you blushing."

I started to learn what Amma meant that day.

I fell in love a few years later with another (white) guy, Greg Thompson. He was kind and respectful and went out of his way to talk to me. It almost made up for pretending to love Star Wars to lock in his attention.

Our relationship lasted a whopping three weeks. Technically, a couple months, but after three weeks he became distant, avoiding conversation and pretending not to see me in the halls at school. When he finally got the courage to end things, he said he didn't like me anymore. He said he wanted to be friends, and then ignored me the rest of the year.

My ex-best friend (who I had just had a terrible falling out with) and I started talking again. While attending a party that I begged Appa to go to, she came up to me and said, smugly, "Greg told me he broke up with you because he's always liked me." Clearly, she wasn't over our little altercation.

Things changed with time. Greg and I started talking again, leading me to believe that maybe somewhere in the distant future we would find our way back to one another. So I waited patiently, attended every high school reunion, was active in all the group chats, waiting for that fateful day.

That dream died when he did. Suicide. He hung himself in a shed. They say he didn't leave a note, but his family wanted to keep the details of his death private. Almost a thousand people attended his funeral. They created a scholarship in his name at the University he attended. There's an annual bike ride dedicated to him, with donations going to mental health organizations all over the province. A lot of his ex-girlfriends were bawling at the funeral, reminding me I wasn't the only one holding out hope.

For some naive reason, I thought Amma's advice only applied to cishet (white) men. So I was less guarded when I met Josie at work. We actually matched with each other on Tinder, making work awkward for us for a few weeks. Eventually, I asked her out.

At the time, I had moved in with my good (white) friend, Liam, who I also had a crush on. I met him when he went by Lisa, and as I slowly started to fall for him, he slowly started to come out to me, as trans. His trust in me made my heart swell for him. And of course, both Liam and I were living with You.

In my nervousness, when asking Josie to meet up at the bar, I invited Liam to tag along in case it got awkward.

It did.

The only ice breaker we had was talking about cats, mainly between Josie who was living with three cats in an illegal basement apartment and Liam, who had brought his two fur babies to live with us at our place. Eventually we strayed from talking about furry creatures and started discussing our interests, dreams, and histories. When I finally got the conversation going, Liam leaned in and whispered in my ear, "You have more game than I thought." If it wasn't for the colour of my skin, he might have seen me blush.

To this day, Josie is the most beautiful woman I have ever laid eyes on.

She's also the worst person I have ever met.

Two weeks into dating, she ghosted me. Or, tried to. Work made that almost impossible. Eventually she switched her shifts and I barely saw her. No replies to texts, no pokes on facebook—radio silence. When I finally confronted her about it, she said she was in an open relationship with another woman, which turned out to be a lie. She had been cheating on her girlfriend for two years, and I was one of many.

It was hard trying to forget her, but not all hope was lost—there was still Liam. Liam, who kept me on the back burner, Liam, who would flirt with me whenever we were alone. Liam, who would also apparently make fun of how in love with him I was when I wasn't around. Of course, it wasn't until You and I started dating that I found that out.

Liam's advances were confusing. First, it was invitations to cuddle in the morning until he had enough energy to face the day, something he did with "all of his female friends". Then, it was telling me about his sex dreams I starred in. Then, it was telling me about all the other women who were interested in him. The more he was trying to be himself, the less of a person I became to him. Eventually, he went cold, his new girlfriend hating the fact that we lived together. At first, I took pride in her hatred of me; it meant she was threatened. But her constant presence eventually served as a reminder that I would never be her. I would never be (white) enough for all the Graydons, Gregs, Josies or Liams of the world.

But then You came into the picture.

When we first met, I sensed a friend in you, never saw you as a threat, just a loveable guy. You hated that, said that was why you always got friendzoned. It didn't help our case that I was still into Liam when we started getting to know each other. That wasn't why I started pursuing you though. I genuinely fell in love with you. I don't know if you can say the same after all these years. Even if you did, not a soul would know.

I was lonely with you. I thought the comfort of the warmth of your 6'2" body next to mine would make up for my lack of trust in you, and everybody else. I remember your frame swallowing mine each night while I lay there, frozen, unable to move under the weight of you, thinking, "this is fine."

Every time you fucked me, it felt like you were colonizing my body. To this day, I'm not sure if it was something I allowed to happen, or something you made happen.

You were always trying to get me to prove myself to you and your friends. It was like auditioning for the role of girlfriend every day, and always coming up short. It was like being cast as a diversity hire anyways. It was just as motivating, just as tokenizing.

Do you remember telling me I needed help when we broke up, like you didn't need the same? You, withholding love, vulnerability, and acceptance until you got what you wanted from me (power). Me, withholding feelings, emotions, and honesty until I knew you were in it for real (you never were).

I guess I only have myself to blame. I keep falling for broken (white) people, people I think I can fix or change. In a way, I think you do the same.

There's a lot more that I want to say, but in short?
I wish I had listened to Amma.

Munea Wadud

TITLE

Sundara

MEDIUM

Digital Art

BIO

Munea Wadud is a 27 year old local Ottawa artist who is self-taught and works in multiple mediums. She is skilled in watercolours, acrylics, pastels, digital work and more! Her subjects mainly dabble with her identity as a queer, non-binary person of color and how her identity influences her art. \\ Ig:@artbymunea



Emmy Tran

TITLE

What's In The Vaccine? \Let Us Cum \Tequila Sunset \Cotton Candy \Cup of Death \I'll Follow You Into The Dark

MEDIUM

Painting

BIO

Emmy Tran is a queer visual artist based in Toronto. Her art is a creative response to her lived experiences, as it celebrates life, trauma, and sex positivity. She specializes in acrylics, and her style often explores human emotions using bright and vibrant colours, and sometimes cheeky sarcastic commentary. \(\) Ig: @emmytran

WHAT'S IN THE VACCINE?



LET US CUM







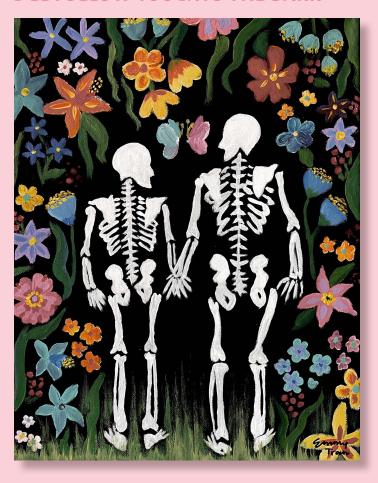
COTTON CANDY



CUP OF DEATH



I'LL FOLLOW YOU INTO THE DARK



SHANE

NAME

Michael Stuckless

TITLE

Shane

MEDIUM

Photography

BIO

I am a queer photographer born and raised in Toronto. I work predominantly in fashion but focus on gender and diversity within the commercial space. It is my goal to show other BIPOC artists who wish to break into the industry that we can do so without compromising our own ideals or adhering to the status quo.

\[
\] Ig: @stuckless









Mugabi Byenkya

TITLE

Ellipsis

MEDIUM

Poetry

BIO

Mugabi Byenkya is an award-winning writer. In 2018, Mugabi was named one of 56 writers who have contributed to his native Uganda's literary heritage in the 56 years since independence by Writivism (East Africa's largest literary festival). Mugabi wants to be Jaden Smith when he grows up. \\ Ig: @mugabs

ELLIPSIS

He kind of misses me I kind of miss him back

Ack-ack-ack!
Onomatopoetically delete that!

my thoughts my words my verbs press delete on that

Refresh

He kind of misses me

I can't delete that I can't delete the fact that I kind of miss him back or that I've spent the past five minutes formulating this reply and he can see that

Dot

Dot

Dot.

Ellipsis seamlessly stream on his screen

• • •

"I miss you too"

send

AUTHOR

Sylvia Frey

TITLE

The Human Line: Where We Are

MEDIUM

Reflection

BIO

Sylvia is a writer and visual artist living and working in Toronto. She also flirts, makes love, and falls in love in Toronto too. These things keep her here, and for some reason, won't let her go.

THE HUMAN LINE: WHERE WE ARE

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Such is the sage advice taught for millennia—a saying with meaning so very personal, so very beautiful and so very apropos to feeling that life is something worthy and delightfully just, pure, and joyful. But, to be pedantic, living life in a place sometimes lacks this beauty; no matter how generous we may feel. Being in place is a thing of chance, fortunate encounters, and is usually out of our control, no matter how much we may think we are making the right decisions, how much we may try to control our encounters, and no matter how much we stay conservative with attempts to "blend in."

The heteronormative assumption is one of the big issues of BIPOC existence. Existing in plain sight is how we are usurped into a multi-cultural society. It is, in fact, infectiously binding. When entering into this part of society—where everyone shares the same need to commiserate and address the BIPOC existence—we start to hold our secrets more tightly: our identities are purposely separated into "real" and "not really," and our support of one another is separated into "real" and "not really." Perhaps our ability to blend in has never been so apt or so great than in our navigation of our own ancestral culture.

Never introducing the "other half of me," is literally telling tall tales and lies all the time. It is funny, because it actually becomes "the thing"—the elephant—in the room. It doesn't matter if my BIPOC family lives in the same city—Toronto—we still engage in this way. We literally negotiate around the façade of my heteronormative life. They expect me to be involved in some sort of expected "relationship escalator," going towards marriage, children, and wealth. Our only safety net becomes our shared struggle against the white, patriarchal society in which we are cocooned. Acknowledging how together we are worthy, how we can live in a bigger society where we are discriminated against almost every day. Choosing how to fight our battles regulates our strengths and allows us to pool our experiences and advice to each other and helps us to help each other. A way to stay strong. Perhaps when life is handing out lemons, we choose our desired lemons so the lemonade is better.

Being forthright about my queer identity is actually a part of my façade when living and working outside my ancestral family.

This world is something that allows queerness in people when the queerness is an acceptable thing of the package—a sort of asset in the hay. Being conversant about sexuality is like a password to the world, giving me a value beyond my appearance as a minority. The terms of engagement become something. The dominant culture allows me to fight side-by-side with them. Our common struggle for acceptance and equality.

Queerness actually has a hand-hold. It is entrenched in North America's Charter—that word-for-word—we are protected against real and true discrimination. Our voices are loud and strong. Our strength is coming from our life experience of living queerly. We speak in real, serious, and official, as well as in, casual terms. We show, we prove, we are, different but most importantly—we are real. Our existence actually contributes to life, culture, and wealth. The contribution is becoming more and more as our music, our style, our fashion, our literature, and our spacetaking happens. We live in everyone's neighbourhood. We have children. We purchase cars and we are seen on vacation, travelling around the world. We are on television. In movies. People laugh, with us. People can address us in ways directly, as well as in conversation with their friends, peers, co-workers, feeling sure that what they see, know, and understand is something real. Their feelings happened for real. Their thoughts happened for real. Their reactions are allowed..... The fear and the need to speak of the emotional reaction is understood. People recognize that we are dressing the way we dress not because it is like a fad, it is our culture.

My queerness allows me to approach people and things that would normally want nothing to do with me. I still avoid being militant—though I recognize that feminism and gay rights first broke via militant demonstration against the heteronormative patriarchy. It is divisive when our BIPOC allies stand together. We cannot speak for each other. Our words, our voices, and our meanings cannot be spoken in one phrase together. We are alone. We are lonely. We cannot be together. The moment we start to hold hands and collaborate together, we lose our identity and substance. We disappear into a hetero-patriarchal-white blur.

Is it understandable that my words have double meaning for me? That the English I speak comes in both definition and translation? That having one foot in two different places—at least—forces me to choose my battles? Makes me a better artist? Allows me to choose my words? That my desires and my work take a different spin. My world exists in a different way than what the majority feels and experiences. I can influence others because of my difference. That being exposed to the things in my world allows me to make connections through time and space.

The value of people and things are always in flux. Creativity is a trait recognizable in our work when we realize that creativity happens when different, contrasting things are made relatable to each other. When we have trouble accepting the value in the things we can see, we automatically marginalize it. This type of discrimination is valued. It is called "critical discernment." It affects all the things we do in a day.



DRC

TITLE

untitled

MEDIUM

Poetry

BIO

DRC is a queer-black writer based in Tkaronto. His bylines include the New York Times and Paper Magazine. He is currently working on his debut novel. \\ Ig: @danrealee

UNTITLED

Could it be my Catholic values? What does it mean to deserve?

A primal disposition to penance.

His body pressed to my gloated gut.

The fear of sloth,

Is my body worthy of warmth?

Inner strife.

My stretch-lines traced by his fingertips.

Foreboding sense of failure.

Does this vessel warrant tenderness?

Spiritual panopticon.

Bulky thighs, pudgy waist.

St. Roch's Roman Catholic Church.

Does this face merit endearment?

Stained glassed windows,

Dark skinned; pudgy cheeks that feast and feed



Michael, the archangel,

Because he's a Twink and what am I?

his foot, on the neck of Satan. *Corpulent.*

He wields his sword, slaughters sin: Beefy beast of greasy grain.

Gluttony.

Wretched reflection.

Lazy fuck.

Retch at my resemblance.







Queer Toronto Literary Magazine is a non-profit dedicated to elevating and celebrating queer voices in Canada. QT was started in response to the criminal shortage of Canadian queer literary magazines. There are so many LGBTQ2SIA+ artists out there! And in times of crisis, maintaining community and connection is vital. QT brings together our collective projects to create that sense of shared space. QT celebrates the art queer individuals make for ourselves and for each other. We accept poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, book reviews, personal essays, reflections, memoirs, as well as artwork, drawings, comics, photographs, collages, and other visual media.





THIS ISSUE WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY:



beadwork, tattooing & cultural dance
An Indigenous artist dedicated to cultural preservation.
Her inspiration comes from her resilient family & she hopes to pass on knowledge to the next generation.

@INKEDBYINDIGENOUS @BEADWORKBYSAGA



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