

It's a funny thing. It never bothered me this much, I always thought about it, but it never really bothered me that much. So how come gender became such an issue for me in the past months? I don't really know. I don't think anything has changed in me, but maybe it's the fact that I'm out of my comfort zone, surrounded by different people than the ones I'm used to and are used to me. So I'm not myself, or at least not what I am and am already expected to be in my life in Tel-Aviv, or I just need to re-define myself here, as in any new environment.

This wasn't the first time I heard or even used the terms femme, butch and all that, just that it was never so bluntly in my eyes for some reason. I must have ignored it or didn't pay enough attention to it. But it seems to be a big deal. It just never was a big deal for me and so I never really bothered to fit in to one identity, or was asked to fit in to one.

'Oh sweety - how is your femme?' - 'My what?' 'Your femme, c'mon, the gril you're seeing' - 'If she'd knew you called her a femme.. that's funny, I never thought of her like that..' - 'You're a hard one, ok ok, your tough femme, how is she?', 'not mine..'

'C'mon, Introduce them!'.. - ok ok.. 'ehm, dude, I think she's into you...' - 'who who?' pointing > - 'Oh, sweet, but darling I'm not a fag yet...'.

I tried. Ok, I get it, not feminine enough for you. Geez. What does that even mean?

'Oh her, she's into bottom butches, and her - she's into femme cock'

With some kind of coincidence, it came up a lot in the past months and became an issue. It seemed that everyone is something: Butch / Femme / Bottom / Top. And even more it seemed that everybody is into a different kind Butch / Femme / Bottom / Top / etc.

And me, it was hard enough for me to call myself bi-sexual (as it's a binary that declares there's only 2 genders) or any other kind of thing. Queer, maybe? I found comfort in that for a while. But that comfort ran out. Everything is so demanding!

I'm the queer in the punk scene, The little kiddie punk in the queer scene. And just the weird one in College. Good enough. I'll take that.

But wait a minute, now, what the fuck am I? I'm no butch, too much of a sissy to be a butch, and it never quite fitted. Femme? Not really, I look like a drag queen in a dress, but it's still cool to dress-up in a special occasion. I'm not a trans, I feel pretty comfortable being called in female form. But sometimes people talk to me in male form and it feels nice, and I play along, and I actually like it when strangers in the street confuse me for a 10 year old boy. If I can't really state what I am and suddenly it seems that everybody is into something specific like that, how can anyone be into me? I'm kinda nothing of those. How come I suddenly feel I need to declare myself as something?

This is fucking confusing. And the worst part is, that it confused me as how I think of having sex. Am I supposed to play a role when I'm with someone? What are they? And what does that say I am? Bottom? Top? Can't I be in the middle?

Oh My TeNDeR GeNDeR aLL MiXeD Up In a BlEnDeR!

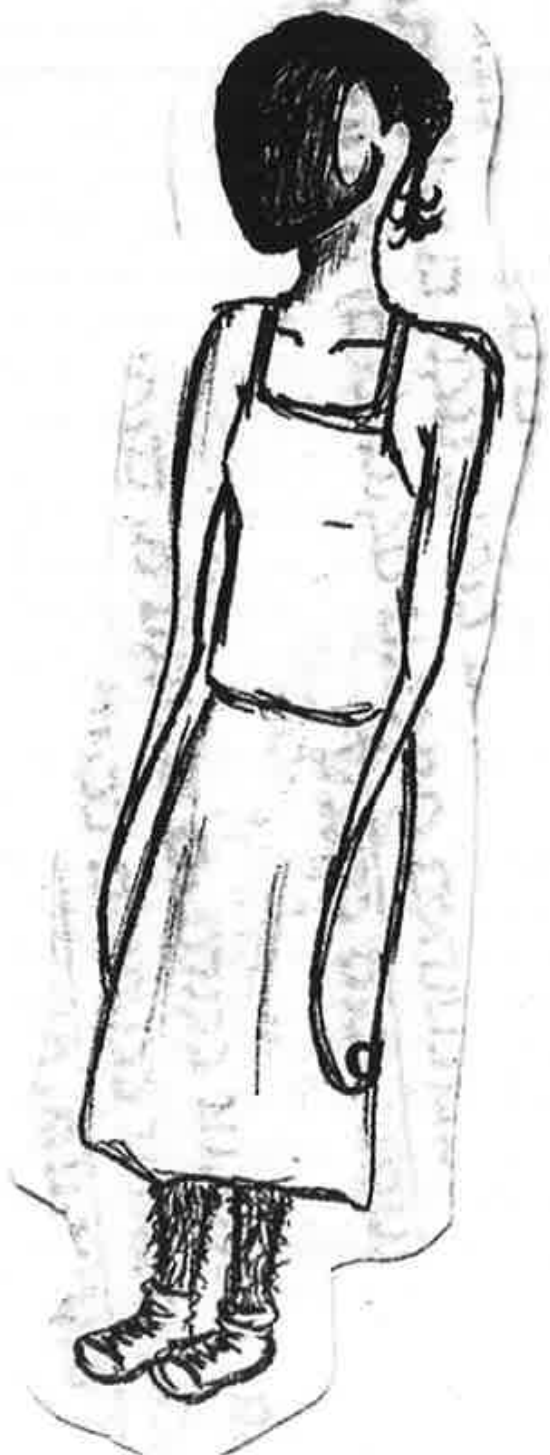
For a bit I got all this confusion in my head, and didn't really want to talk to anyone. I thought of it as silly and since I don't have any conclusion, or answer (what was even the question?) what is the point? Then I got a headache. I got to read some zines with the same kind of issues, and it was nice to just read about it, know that it's not silly and some other people out there doubt it and thinks about it and it confuses them too and it makes them happy or sad. Finally I got to open my mouth and talk to my friends about it. And that was nice too. And so, one friend reminded me of that time

we were walking in Alenbi street after some kind of night out somewhere and we bought some pastry to settle our hungry stomachs - in that place that is open till late. And the guy behind the counter, while heating our yummy pastry asked my friend: "What, what is her gender? Punk?" With a smile my friend replied "YES!" and we laughed and walked home.

So My TeNDeR GenDer got aLL MiXeD Up In A bLeNdEr, and all that came out was this punky pink paste. I'll settle with it for now, and know that it's open for changes, as most of my feelings are.

As it was nice to find other people's thoughts, feelings and questioning of their own gender I thought to ask my friends and myself to write/draw/photograph something of their own thoughts of their gender and to make yet another zine with a variety of thoughts and genders. Here it goes.

NoAxKTaNa Jan 2009



i am a boy / topi

this is the article that i've wanted to write for a very, very long time because for a very, very long time i've been in a process connected to my gender. and so finally it's coming together, the keyboard under my fingers unaware of the significance of the words that it's spelling out for me. as I start writing onto a blank screen I feel again that nervous weight down in my belly and my mind fogs with 2 questions: will i reveal too much? where will this end up taking me? why would anybody read this article? and i remember the uncountable words of others that have guided me, nurtured me on this journey and how much i've needed them in difficult times. sharing words and ideas, support and love must be one of the greatest gifts human beings are capable of giving. so here it is. if you connect to anything here written i hope it makes it clear, if nothing else, that we are a community of people in these processes and that no-one should ever feel alone.

when i was finally born, after a long, troublesome birth the doctor glanced at my genitalia and declared me a Boy. my gender assigned, i was given a Boy's name and given a tick in the box marked <Male> on my birth certificate. and so i would be a Boy.

i played with cars and dinosaurs. i climbed trees. i read Boy's, not Girl's comics. i was taught to hold back my tears. i was repeatedly told by my father that i shouldn't keep acting like a little Girl whenever i was sad. and when I finally entered the adult world at 17 my first kiss was with a Girl and we became a monogamous couple for nearly 4 years. i am a Man.

and yet somehow despite society's best efforts to confine me to its own definitions of what a Boy should be, i never quite fit. i cry all the time. Argentine telenovelas, ridiculous romantic comedies, tracy chapman, lila downs. i can't play football. i think i scored one goal in my life and it was an own goal for which i was pushed in the mud for the thousandth time that day by the Boys in my class while the teacher looked on, presumably impressed by their masculinity.

i have what I've been told is called 'feminine intuition', a soft touch, a heart that's easily broken.

i can't even throw rocks in demonstrations.
i am a feminine man.

and i love Men, i love their masculinity, their smell, their strength. so i went from Straight to Gay via maybe a week of conciliatory Bi.

ah! so now all the femininity makes sense!

Gays, I'm now told, always hung out with girls when they were little and still cry at movies. they have feelings and they express them to all and sundry. and they never, ever, play football.

great! I am a Gay man!

i am a Gay man, i am a Gay man, i am a Gay man...

so i like shopping. hmmm...no. so i like chemical drugs and commercial house music... not so much. working out in the gym? plucking hairs off my body? Interior design? oy, this isn't working at all.

so my politics and my sexuality collide and i start joining Queer demonstrations against the commercialisation of gay pride and the gay identity. i shout abuse at Gay soldiers occupying 'our' parade and remind them of iraq. i spray graffiti in buenos aires and ask people why the norm is Straight until proven Gay. i am Queer against empire, against capitalism, against oppression.

and i start to like Women again....

i am a Queer man!

sorted. over. end of process, end of article. i'm a queer Man. my new identity is radical, open, ambiguous. it allows me to be with whoever i want to be, it pushes the envelope of my sexuality.

but there's still this Man bit.

i have what I've been taught is a Man's body. it looks a lot like other Men's

bodies, and they're Men, so so am i, right?

so what is this nagging feeling that this word, Man, just doesn't quite work? It kind of slips by me, it doesn't enter me in the way it should. i can't hold on to it and it isn't doing what its supposed to be.

so one day I confess to a queer friend from the usa that maybe i'm feeling less and less identified with my gender these days. as someone whose boyfriend has breasts and a cunt she approves wholeheartedly. it's a good thing she tells me. not sick, not weird, just a good thing. and these words resonate in my ears forever

...let the performance begin!

i've always has a very (very) secret secret. i love make-up, and dresses. i always wanted to feel the breeze around my legs in the summer and to highlight my beauty with colour. the few times my ex girlfriend made me up i felt amazing. so I started making up. and i found a fabulous yellow dress in the street and started wearing it to parties. if i was a biological woman maybe i'd have had something to say about patriarchy and the enforced beauty standards of women and would have resisted, rejected, or reclaimed, but for me as someone perpetually read as Male, it felt like a liberation. i am a ...erm...a... DragQueen? ...?

my boxes are getting fuzzier and fuzzier. i am Mark, the boy who wears dresses (and later breasts) and eye make up. in the education project where i work in tel aviv with the latin migrant worker community the kids i teach go wild when they see my blue nails. and their mums look away slightly concerned. 'he thinks he's a girl!' they taunt. they're smart these kids...

but even my Queer friends seem confused and sometimes ask me if i went to a party last night pointing at my make up, but its 9 in the morning and I just wanted to look nice in the street or working in the community garden. its easier for me to wear dresses in parties because i feel less likely to be beaten up and thrown into a skip but this is Drag for some people and i

don't feel like i'm performing something more than what i feel i am inside. and even parties aren't always safe. so many times i had my (strap on) breasts groped by well-meaning friends for fun. if they were flesh and not silicon would they have done the same? and suddenly i felt indignant and insulted as a Woman. as a ... Woman.

so one day i'm sitting on the kitchen floor with my boyfriend and i tell him that i'm thinking of changing my name. Mark is going the way of Man and doesn't quite fit anymore. like that old jumper that you always loved and it looked so good on you but after one too many washes it just isn't right anymore, Mark the apostle, from Mars the roman god of war, Mark the Christian name that identifies me as Male and probably British is too small for me now, the colours washed out. and he tells me, this guy who im hopelessly in love with, that it sounds like a good thing if it's what I want. And that he'll support me through whatever it bring. And that support is nothing less than another liberation.

so one day, suddenly, topi is born. my argentine nickname with a genderless twist means that suddenly i can write emails without being gendered. i can be ambiguous, and i can be freer.

a few weeks later, touring around the spanish state for the Queeruption festival we were organising back (home) in tel aviv, i begin to introduce myself as "Ma...erm.. topi". for every new person i meet, i'm now topi. i presented the Queeruption in my favourite yellow dress and my gorgeous breasts and started to really feel topi growing inside me.

in the Queeruption itself i'm invited for the first time to join a workshop for Women and Female-identified people. and after a powerful, revealing chat with a friend who up to this point i assumed was Male through and through we participate in the workshop together. we check that it's ok with the other 'Biological Women' in the workshop that we participate, and we only get positive responses. the workshop is so powerful and so intimate and i feel

privileged to be there with such good friends, there's no words for these kinds of experiences.

old friends get the idea and start to use my new name, some quicker than others but mostly with the respect that this is something important. sadly one friend asks me if i'm going to 'oblige' people to use topi and that she isn't into it. one friend takes a year to stop calling me Mark in the third person and still slips up sometimes. she even tells me once that it's disgusting for her and it's none of my business what she calls me when i'm not in the room. some friends use my new name but ignore the genderlessness attached to it. it's just too messy. my mum cried for a week. but wait, this was just my name. i didn't get breast implant surgery (though who knows if i will or not), i didn't cut off my cock. so what could be so challenging?

i haven't even asked people to use She when they talk about me in the third person though i'd like them to. and so i begin to experience something of how important fixed identities are for people and how my fuzzy, messy quilombo of a gender just isn't enough for people to hold onto, to get their teeth into.

on a sweaty day in june, leaving the g8 demonstration in germany, me and my best friend in the world are offered a place to stay in berlin with someone we met in the queer barrio of the protest camp. we arrive at the house with our new friend and she makes us feel welcome and wanted. but there's something strange in the air and we find out the next day that she's being arguing with her housemate because she brought a Man into the house. which is me presumably because my best friend has a cunt so it can't be her. so suddenly me and my best friend are divided by our bodies after two weeks of being in the queer barrio during which i felt almost ungendered. i'd almost forgotten. if i'd worn a dress, long hair, breasts and called myself Trans when i walked in the door would it have been ok? whatever the reasons behind the decisions and prejudices of the angry housemate, i'm forced again to remember the difference between performance, sex

and gender.

For maybe the first time I feel sad about the body I was born with, and I realise what it must be like for so many people I know whose bodies don't fit their ideal image.

one day i meet an amazing woman, famously amazing, who was raised as a Boy, who realised that her gender was more complicated, who passed through Gay to Queer, who loves anarchist politics and freedom and who uses female forms when she speaks in hebrew. we have so much in common and we stay up until 5.30 in the morning thinking that its only 1 because we've entered the time warp that swallows up new lovers who have everything to tell each other. and one day i realise that my feminist Spanish (using female not male forms when im talking about us) has become queer spanish and i start to attach little 'a's at the end of my adjectives and suddenly i'm 'happy' in a female way. and my hebrew verbs go the same way and i start to 'walk' and to 'love' and to 'kiss' and to 'think' in a female way. and it fits and it feels good and i start to wish i could do this in english too. but i hear people talking about me, and those who understand are suddenly, almost spontanecusly calling me She. did my breasts grow while i wasn't looking?

and every time, it feels like a huge compliment.

i believe that i'm profoundly a product of my socialisation and all of this queer umming and ahing is one reflection of this fact. it is because of the social and political place that i've grown up in that i've been given (and have taken) the opportunity to be in this process of gender exploration. i recognise this as an enormous privilege and i want to say a few more words on the subject before this article comes to an end.

i have been privileged in the most oppressive way by a society that reads me as Male and that gives extra benefits to the people in this category. i can take my top off in public in many places and not be arrested or even feel

embarrassed, i've been given more space to talk and more influence in the world. i can pee in the street without being harassed. i might even do better in a job interview. i've been given the privilege to live without realising that i have privilege. the negative reaction that my body provoked in a woman in an apartment in berlin is because of the position that people with similar bodies to mine are given in society and her negative experiences with some of them. and thus sometimes, sexism begets more sexism. no matter how i see, feel, think of myself, this body of mine with its White skin, its 'average' size, its lack of Disability, its unambiguous Maleness, brings me immeasurable privilege. which is not a reason to hate myself for all that i haven't suffered, but inspiration to fight against such systems of privilege and oppression. which i will always do.

***.

a year on and everything has changed. storms and violent weather have torn my waters, crashed waves against my fragile shore. torments have pulled material from my depths to muddy what once seemed clear. yet deep deep down where it is dark and quiet, some things are still the same. untouched by the violence. a silence prevails and the darkness allows me to see.

they say gender is cultural and culture is context, if this is true then as i travel contexts of the world leaving carbon dioxide in my wake, my gender morphs constantly and i have nothing to hold onto and say 'this, this concrete, tangible thing i hold in my hand is my gender' and yet i'm sure that it's real.

maybe i only know it exists at all because its complexity pulled me from my tower of male privilege and forced me to learn the word 'gender'.

in my marine life deep down where the light and the turbulence don't reach i learn to see in the dark and i learn to feel my own experience safe from the winds of context and stigma and judgment and denial and ignorance.

down here i can really be myself, by myself and i feel safe. if in this moment i feel female or shemale or gendertransfuckallyourboundaries-queer or spirit or fish then that's what i am. and i define my own definitions, thank you very much.

and if i only could dwell here forever, safe and alone.

but it gets lonely and cold at the bottom of the ocean and so i take a deep breath and get myself ready for waves and i burst back into the warm sunlight with the others.

and it's busy up here, the sun dazzles me and salt stings my eyes.

i open whatever door it is i'm hiding behind and i prepare to be gendered, as an object, as a wall that needs to be painted to stop it from being ugly, as graffiti that needs to be cleaned to take its message from public space, as hair that needs to be cut to bring order back into the world for those who love order.

and so i am gendered and i gender and i realise the disempowerment that i feel in less gendered languages like english where the symbol of gender represented by pronouns depends on other people to get my gender right. gender becomes something that just happens to me. of course it always was, only now i feel it stronger. at least in spanish or hebrew people might ignore the unconventional gendering i use in my language but at least i feel like i made my point.

in a context a million miles from anywhere i belong everyone calls me He. i guess my body still looks something you should call He and so maybe actually i am He. how can i be anything else?

i mean, i can make my point - 'my gender is complicated, here please read my zine, i prefer She if you please' - but who cares? He is He. and i don't even wear She clothes so who

am i to demand? i'm not an authentic anything, not a trans, not a queer, not a poof, not a real woman with voluptuous breasts and gorgeous curves just like in the movies.

yet from somewhere far away deep under miles of water i hear a voice calling me. it reminds me to be true to myself. that i still exist out there at sea, far away from people, that i'm more than their symbols and words. i flick my tail, breath out, and head back down to safety for a while.

i resurface in stiller waters this time. the light still dazzles me but i feel safer. it is beautiful to see others who look like me and to watch the sun sparkle on their scales as they play together in the water. i feel more at home now with my marine family who ask the right questions not out of political correctness but because as much as they can, they understand.

and maybe they have a tail and not legs as well so we feel that much closer. and someone i meet just asks me straight out in our first conversation in a queer bar across the ocean 'what pronoun do you prefer?' like she was asking me if i liked salt and vinegar or ready salted more. and i sit in a circle of sex workers with genders as diverse as their footwear coming together to learn to defend ourselves against those who would steal our fins and i'm asked to tell my name, my pronoun preference and why i came, as though having a gender experience was something universal amongst human beings.

and even straight people, heterosexual people, and people whose assigned gender matches what they feel they are inside have a gender experience. not only women experience sexism, or feminism. not only people of colour know what racism means from their own experiences. and not only gender queers - or whatever we are - grow up trapped in the gender binary.

the world is profoundly transphobic.

and while in many, but not all, places i've lived it might

be relatively acceptable to come out as Gay, to come out as Genderqueer doesn't even mean anything. at least if i'm Homo i can compare myself to Hetero people. but not being transgenderqueer is so the norm that anything else barely even exists. how should i bring it up in conversation and compare myself to 'Cis gendered' people, talk about Cis-privilege? if my language didn't marginalise me enough, that single term will alienate me completely. but imagine speaking without the term White and just assuming that everyone was until proven otherwise. there are some things even more sacred than reproduction and staying in your gender box is one of them.

the world is profoundly transphobic.

there are beings that live at sea that defy definitions
(unless you're a control-freak biologist)

i swim in shallow waters
and watch anemones, corals, aliens from
another world
and as i make my lists:
animal,
plant,
crustacean,
anthozoan-cnidarian,
i imagine them imagining me and laughing at
my simplicity.
'HA!' they laugh
'She with her scales and her
hairy flat chest,
She who doesn't fit neither here
nor there,
aquatic monkey,
landlocked siren,
and she tries to put us in
boxes!'
and i smile quietly and swim on
on my journey,
glad that i'm not



This text is a talk-back to an annoying zionist and militarist lgbt column that was published in a mainstream Israeli website in the time of the bombings of Gaza. It was sent to me by a friend and is originally in Hebrew. I don't know who wrote it, and I don't have 'permission' but it was important for me to put this, so I hope whoever you are, you agree that your text is translated (not so well) and published in this zine. and thank you...

Before I'm a femme, Before I'm a Lesbian, Before I'm an Israeli, I'm a human being, once a child, a future old womyn. Before I write these empty words about unity I ask myself who this unity includes.

I'm worried for the soldiers (Because unfortunately all the 'responsible adults' in Israel don't really care for them), But I'm worried as well for families that are murdered and nameless children that are hardly heard of in the Israeli Media.

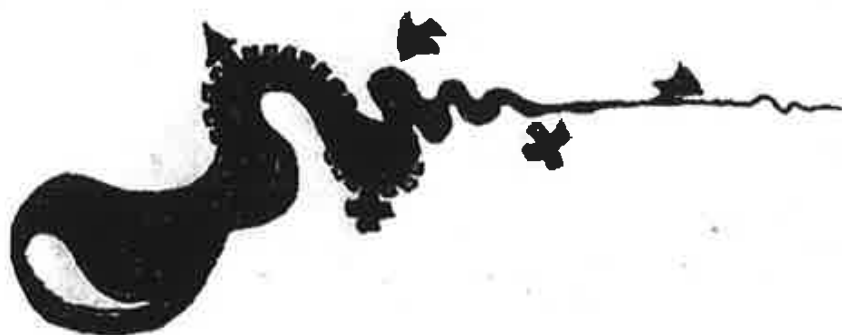
I'm worried about a harsh atmosphere where anyone who oppose this war is a traitor, I'm worried for the soft things that are being run over by racism, blindness and cruelty. Unity makes me worried, or as it seems more like uniformity.

Before I'm an Israeli, I'm a womyn and I identify with Palestinian womyn before I identify with Israeli men, before I'm an Israeli, I'm a compassionate human-being and identify with compassionate Palestinians more than I identify with murderous Jews, before I'm an Israeli I'm a femme womyn that loves butches and wonders how it is like to be butch or femme in Gaza today. Intersecting complex identities tie me to people that are not defined by borders or nations. The borders of my love or my empathy, the borders of my compassion and carrying are not, and do not end in the borders of the Israeli state.

To continue being a femme or a lesbian in these days is to challenge and criticize militarism and a bad un needed war. To continue being a femme or a lesbian or queer is to continue wearing pink feathers with freedom of thought, it's

to refuse to wear the ugly uniform and to tag along to the blind lines that are calling to delete Gaza from the map, with all it's womyn and children, butch and femme, lgbtq. It means not to give up on the humane and the complex from the simplistic and fascist.

Militarism, Occupation and Violence are the oppressors of minorities, they produce violence of any kind, sexual violence, economical violence. You can't murder children in your back yard without it seeping inside your house. Specifically now, I'm a femme, lesbian, queer
Specifically now, I'm a deviant, refusnik, opposer,
SPECIFICALLY NOW!

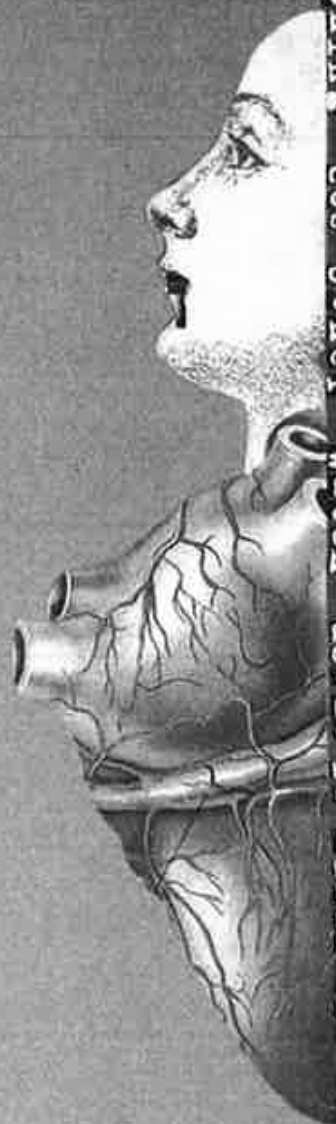


divisions, we have created them ourselves, no one dare to differ from the rest.

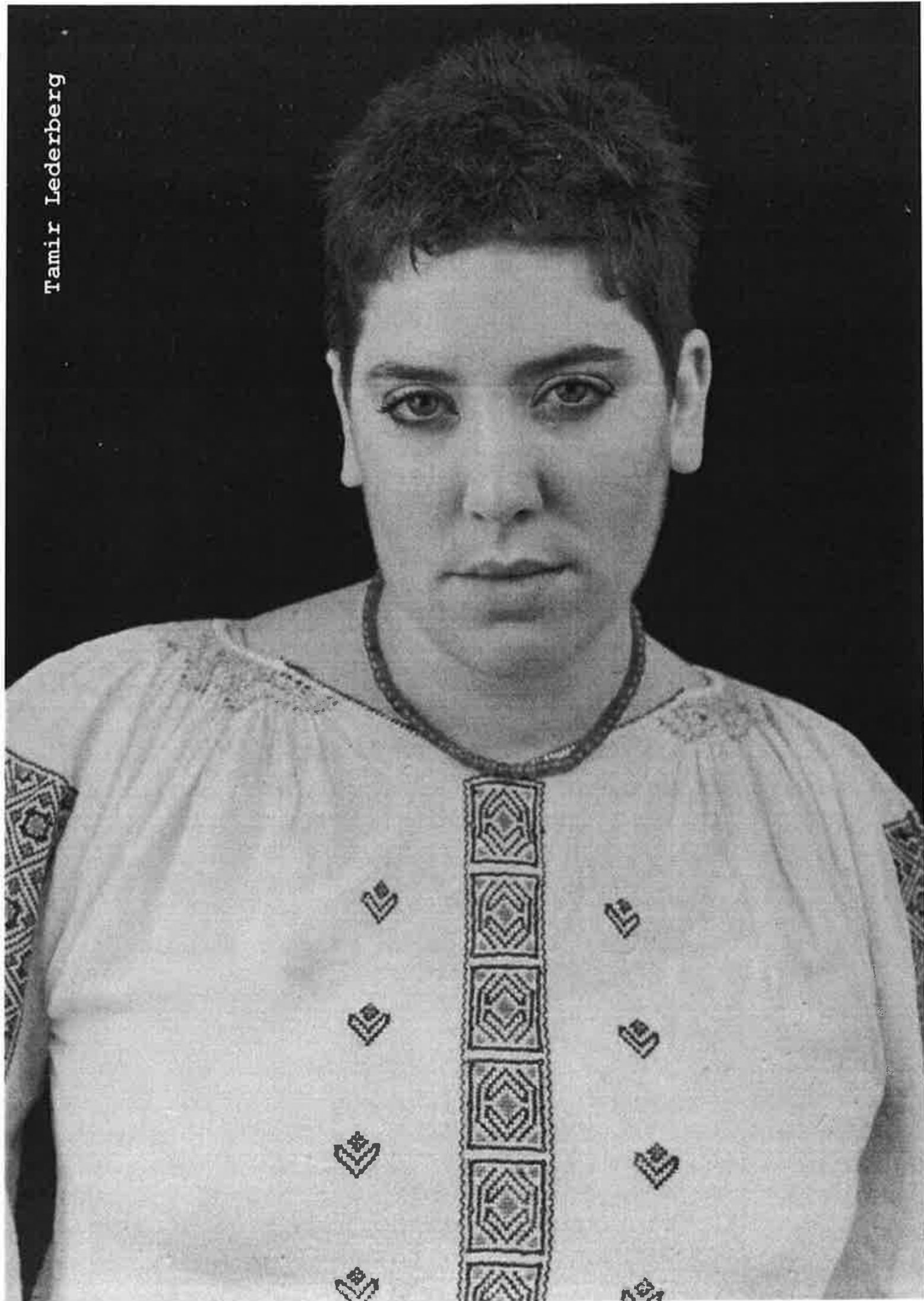
We are building our cages, no one will cross

the line to change anything else other watch us. It is difficult to understand

With a small brain that there are no limits and



Tamir Lederberg



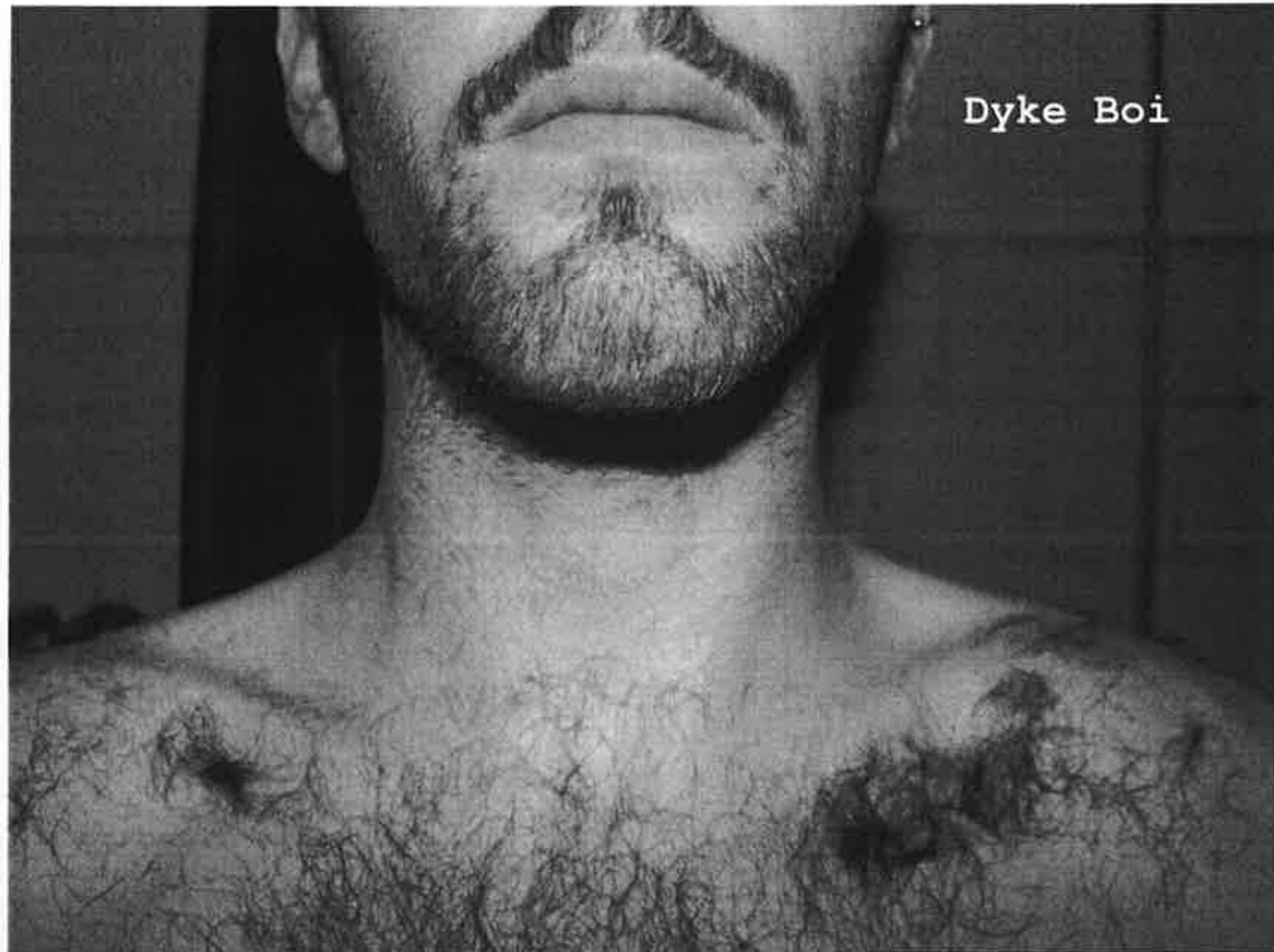




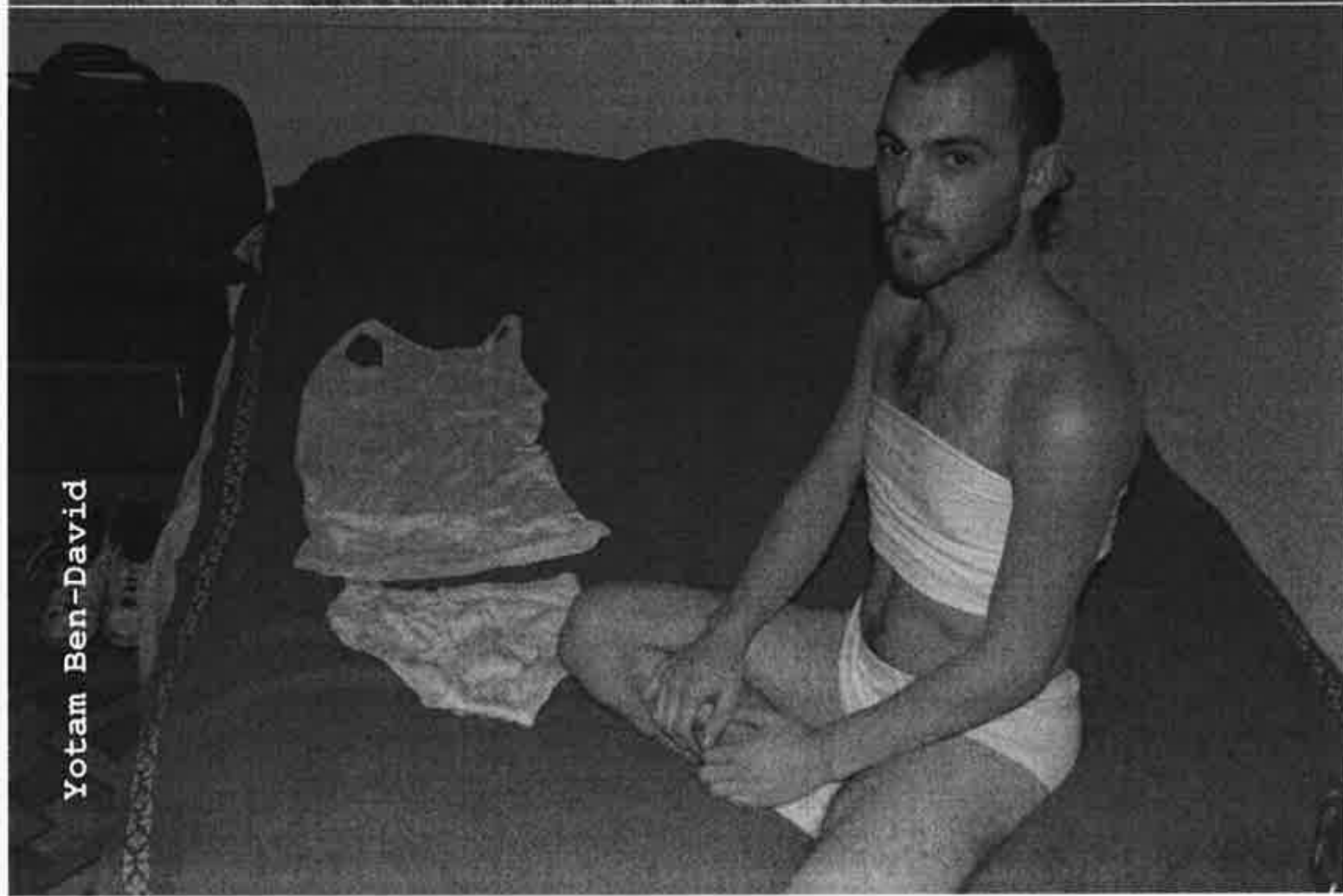
My little side show



Dyke Boi



Yotam Ben-David



shelter for unwanted dolls



A daydream: A woman is cooking on a steamy afternoon. Her armpits are moist and her cheeks are rosy. A Mizrahi song is playing in the background; the floor is wet from expectation, like her body, and the amount of light is precise, like a spice. Her face is my mother's face, and I can almost hear one of my brothers crying in his crib in the next room, but you come from behind, hug me, strong like the man my mother always wanted behind me; and in front of me the food reaches a boiling point and I'm bubbling and you cannot let me cool off, and I am fixing you a plate of desire, but we eat from the pot, Standing up, Steam streams alongside our bodies. You take me and bring me back; reminding me that it's me, and all of this under the floral apron.

אז מה בחרתי לעשות עם הגוף הזה? הייתי יכולה להעמיד פנים ולהסתיר אותו לעטוף אבל גם אז מישהו עלול היה לחשוד שזאת אריזת מתנה החיוך הכי קטן בשפתיים אדומות היה הסרט שפותח אותי אני יכולה לדבר את הנשיות שלי דרך הפה שלך את דוברת את הלשון שלי וגם מוצצת אותה את שלא אוהבת את החזה שלך היחידה שגרמה לי לזקוף את שדיי המתפרצים לוקחת אותם חזק בידיים או בשפתייך הופכת כאב ובושה לכוח שיש רק לי תחת עינייך הזוממות אני מעמיקה להבין את גופי כעומק המחשוף תוהה איך מי שמעולם לא הרגישה אישה גרמה לי להרגיש אישה אמיתית ובמקום לענות אם אני מאמצת את הדיכוי והשנאה אני מאמצת אותך לחזה שלי ואנחנו מחליטות בידיים כל אחת איפה הגוף שלה מתחיל ואיפה הוא נגמר אז תצמידי אותי לקיר ואני אהיה קרובה מאי פעם אלייך לעצמי הקירות יגנו עלינו אבל גם את ואני אלמד כל שכבת בד שכרכת סביב גופך ואקרא מהר וביסודיות כתב סתרים של שחיקות ושרירים מכווצים ולחיים סמוקות ברחוב למול מי שרצה להחזיר אותך למקומך אני אקח את ידך ואוביל אותך לבית היחיד ששכנעת אותי שהוא שלי ואזמין אותך פנימה שוב ושוב ושוב

Yael Mishali



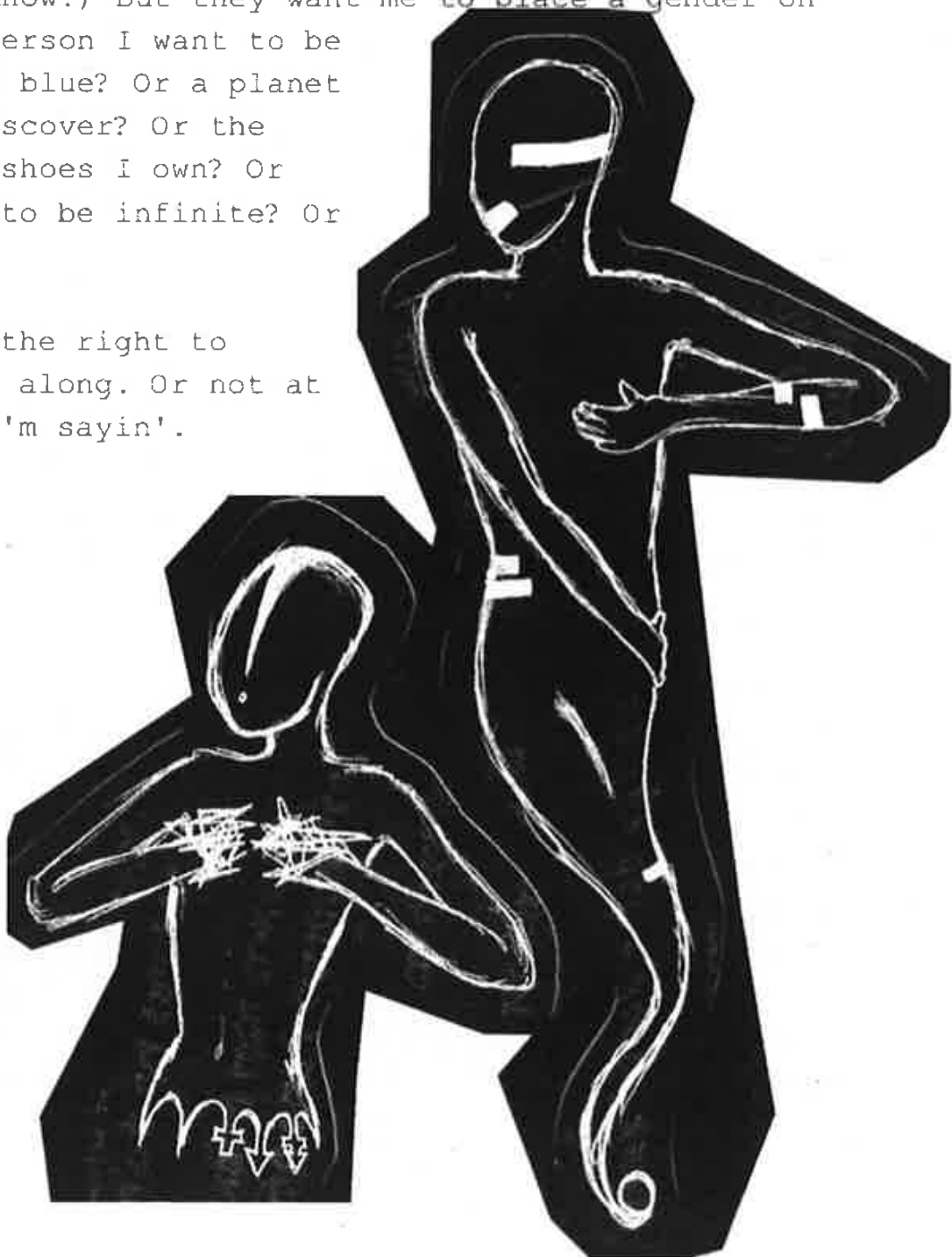
That's it. I'm choosing my own gender. I spent until my 20s wondering why the label didn't fit right, and all my 20s creating my own version of what I was told I was. But now I'm 30 and I want to decide. So I choose... Wait! There is no gender that describes me. Just two choices? Really?! In this great world with all these billions of people we only have two choices?! What if I want my gender to be the color red? Or the former planet Pluto? Or my favorite pair of overalls? Or the way it feels to climb a tree? Or what about just Emily?

It's not that I have anything against being a woman. I feel a strange sense of relief now that I get my period again every 4 weeks, and with all my being I want to be pregnant and give birth and be a mom. Specifically "Mommy". And while I never had any interest in dolls, spent the majority of my life rejecting pink, being anti-makeup and shaving, hating shopping, and finding other girls my worst enemies, I am lately kind of into those things. (Except shopping, shaving and dolls.)

But I just have an aversion to people pigeon-holing me. Fuck the stereotypes. Cause on me they come out confused. Some days I want to dress "like a boy" and when I dance I want to lead. I insist on dictating the course of my life and often find it hard to imagine sharing it with anyone else 'cause I have such a fixed picture of how it should be. I am stubbornly independent but there's this line that repeats in my head sometimes that I want to be saved... and save. I often need to be the one to "wear the pants" and some days I wear baggy pants and sit with my legs flying open. And some days I wear a short skirt ... of course even then sometimes I "forget" to cross my legs. I love to cook and sew and I'm the hostess with the mostest, but I take no pleasure from laundry or decorating or talking about facials and waxings and where to get the best haircut (with my own scissors obviously). I aspire to be someone's comic book heroine, but with the strength and power of the hero of the day. I never want to be the "woman" behind the "man." Nobody puts baby in a corner. I have also never defined my sexuality. It's always been

defined for me externally. And when it's been defined aloud it's ironically been by queer folks - the people who are ostensibly the least likely to have a penchant for defining others. Why they gain some heightened sense of their own identity by putting me in the straight box is a mystery to me. And yet they do it time and time again. I have always said I will love who I will love, and I will share my life with the one who fits my myriad supposed requirements best. (And if you know a charming, intellectual artist/musician who loves to travel, dance, eat, laugh and explore the new, and who wants to raise kids and stomp out the world's injustices with me, let me know!) But they want me to place a gender on it. What if the person I want to be with is the color blue? Or a planet we have yet to discover? Or the most comfortable shoes I own? Or the way it feels to be infinite? Or just a name.

So I'm reserving the right to define it as I go along. Or not at all. That's all I'm sayin'.



For many years now I consider myself to be queer.

I consider myself to be a queer since I see the whole concept of gender as a construction and since I don't see it as an inherent quality.

A few years ago, under the inspiration of a friend I started asking people to relate to me linguistically in the female form (in Hebrew a big chunk of the language is built around male and female forms).

On one side it was hard for me, it raised many feelings regarding peoples reactions. But on the other hand, it was a lot easier for me in the she form.

Suddenly I was not your usual oppressive male anymore; it was so much easier for me not to think of myself as a male. And some people treated me differently, plus I treated myself differently.

Being a male was hard for me, there was much guilt relating to the acts of some men and to my own acts I myself as a man sometimes do. Much guilt regarding objectification of women, hierarchy in the structure of society, violence, oppression, sex stuff, and many more uncomfortable deeds and feelings. It was such a comfortable solution for me, it's like I told myself, if it's hard for me being a boy than I'm no longer a boy.

But it didn't work. Soon enough I've noticed the guilt didn't really go away and I was still performing all these little oppressive deeds.

These feelings, were not connected to how I define myself, they are connected to the way I was raised.

I was raised not to let my emotions be shown, to be strong, not to cry (boys don't cry?), not to be afraid (men don't feel afraid, even little men). I was raised as a boy, as an agent of oppression, I was raised to feel guilty, to feel

I have to save women, to oppress everyone, I was raised (as most boys do) with people not showing enough physical closeness to me, I was raised to feel the only closeness I could have with girls I liked was through sex, that I could never have intimate relations with boys cause its either violence or homophobia and many more conditioning made at a very young age.

What I realized was that whether I called myself a man, woman or alien, it wouldn't have changed a thing regarding my sexist patterns.

For stuff to really change, for patterns to really change I had to work on them, or else they would never have gone away. So I went back to male form and started doing work, reclaiming my identity as it should be, not as I am told it is. I think the real truth about us men (as of all human beings) is that men are caring, gentle, warm, loving and always want stuff to go really well for others and for themselves.

After considerable work I've found out that this nature is still there, it's only masked by heavy oppression we experience as young people.

I'm not saying that today I'm free of sexist patterns but that I have done enough work for it to show. For me to see sexism (most of the time) as it is - a hurt in me and in my fellow men and women. And to be able to get called upon my shit, and to work on it so it wont happen anymore. I was raised a man hence I perform sexist acts towards women. I think my point is this: in our circles we have many people who were raised as males and feel they are not males but females or undefined (as myself) gender queers/transgenders etc. it is an important struggle for us all.

The last thing we would want to do though is to oppress women, I think it is our obligation as human being who were raised as males to work on our sexist patterns. It's not ok for us to act as if we don't have them, because we do, and when we don't do anything about it, well then we just keep the sexist circle

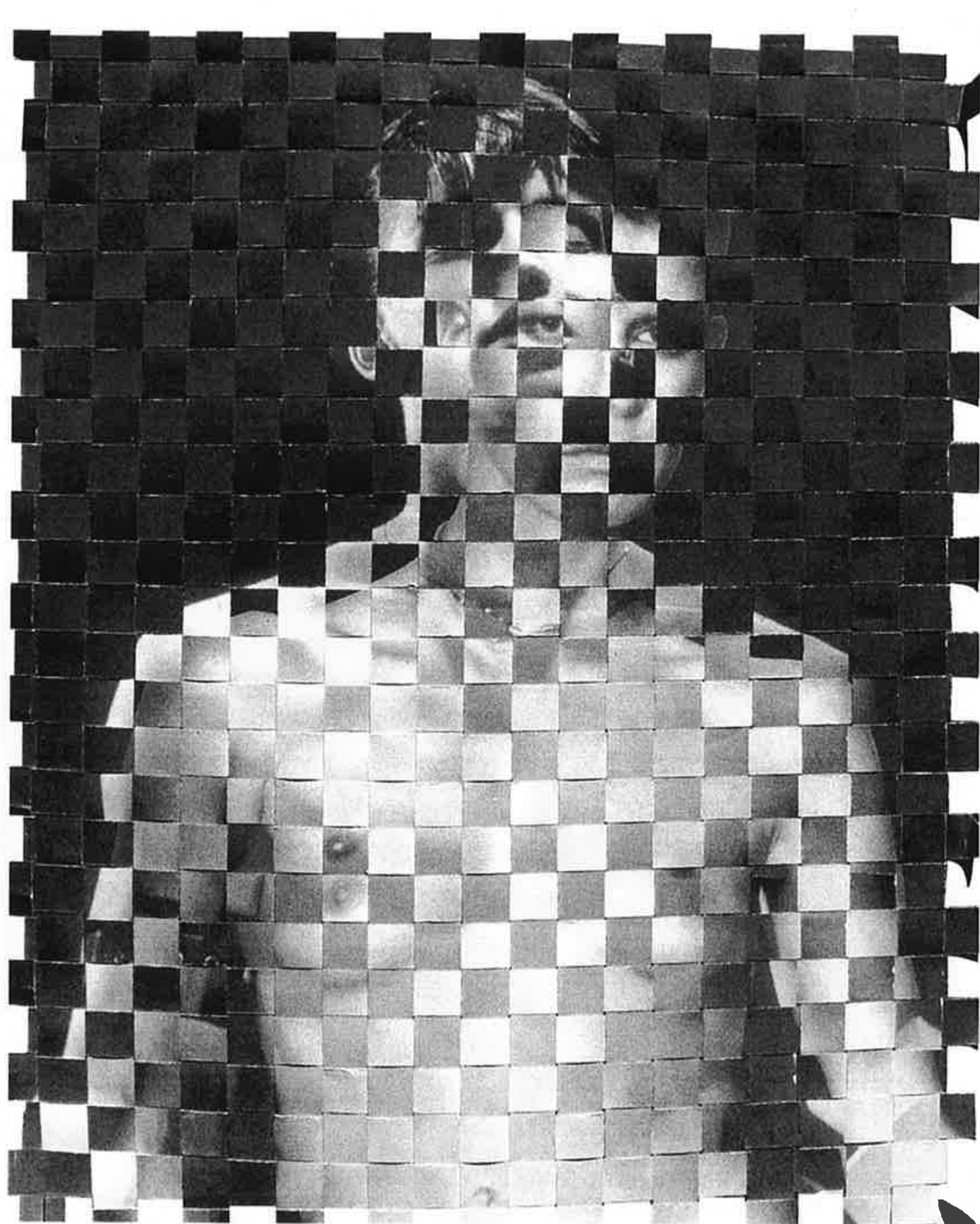
going. I also want to say that I don't consider "feeling guilty" as doing something about it, guilt is something that discourage us, its blocking our view on how things can really be, if something we should work against guilt, for us to be able to see our patterns and not repeat them.

One thing that I find most effective that we can do is forming a "raised as males" support groups for sharing stories, experiences about how hard it was, safe places for us to cry, laugh, be afraid. Just a place for us to feel our feelings, to show our true loving selves without the need to defend and for crying. To change our patterns together. I also would like to invite women around us to call us on our shit, to call us on our sexist patterns, not to make us feel guilty but for us to be able to do work on them, because many times since raised women were raised oppressed you can see the oppression better, and to know it is there when we sometimes get confused about it. We all just really want to be able to become the best allies possible for the termination of sexism, so lets do it.

Ronel

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BoyGirlBoy

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