Bi Women Quarterly

Fall 2025
Aging
Vol. 43 No. 4

This Isn't a Phase, Mom

By Charlotte Poitras

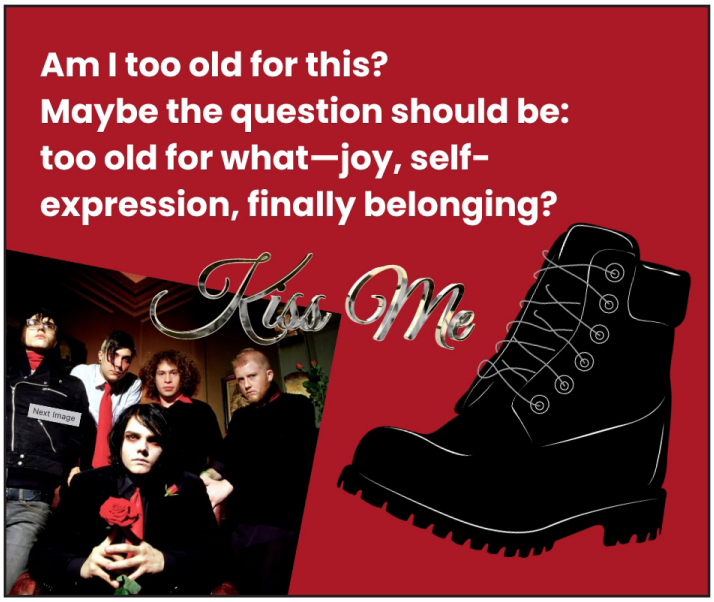
As I approach my thirties, My Chemical Romance (MCR) is back on tour with *The Black Parade*; Gerard Way, MCR's lead singer, is still my celebrity crush; and the algorithm keeps feeding me new queer pop-punk and emo singers. I never truly got to live that "phase" as a teenager—my hairstylist didn't know what the "emo look" was, piercings were forbidden at my high school, and the dress code killed any attempt at rebellion—but I already knew all the songs by heart. Now, at 29, I've finally claimed those piercings, the military boots, and I rock the pop-punk style daily, like I'm reclaiming a chapter of my youth that someone tried to skip.

I've since realized that many pop-punk and emo artists were far more openly queer than I ever imagined back then. Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong reappropriated the F-slur in *American Idiot* as a bisexual singer. Frank Iero and Gerard Way (together also known as Frerard), bandmates from My Chemical Romance, were often caught kissing on stage. Yungblud wears skirts and sings about fucking his male best friend. TX2 calls himself "kind of gay" on TikTok while unapologetically uplifting the LGBTQ+ community in his work. Yet so many of these artists are still accused of queerbaiting (hinting at queerness to get LGBTQ+ community attention), while in the same breath being bi-erased the moment they date a woman.

At 29, I'm screaming those songs from queer icons at the top of my lungs, catching up on the angst I wasn't allowed to express at 16. (Luckily, I work from home, and my colleagues haven't had to process my new "inappropriate" look on Zoom.) It turns out I needed this delayed pop-punk era—whether it's a phase or not—to fully give myself permission to live outside the neat little box the world kept trying to shove me into. Growing older hasn't dulled that rebellion; it's sharpened it, given it depth, and freed me from the fear of being "too much."

Am I too old for this? Maybe the question should be: too old for what—joy, self-expression, finally belonging? No one bullies me as an adult, unlike the teenagers who mocked me in high school. My look might be a male repellent, but I get endless compliments from the queers. Dating apps light up my inbox (though sadly, no man or woman has yet met my trifecta of queer + artistic + alternative look). I admire men with eyeliner and women with unapologetically badass tattoos. I've got *Kiss Me* tattooed inside my lower lip. And I've never been happier than now, living my teenage years with the freedom, budget, and audacity of a grown-up. (Don't we love how piercing studios take walk-ins?)

Charlotte, continued on page 9



Long in Bed

By Jane Barnes

81, long in bed weak arm
Spend the 18 hours alone
Eating oatmeal cookies
And eleven pills and to

Pass the time I watch *Love*
Is Blind Germany, UK, Japan,
Sweden, New York. Pick the
Smartest thru my wall. The

Phone love see romance in
Tahiti live in a balconied
Apartment with my chosen
One. I know what I want

Chat wit. Dark Gemini Hair
From losing Paul in foolishness
Joe who wasn't mine In any
Country but these loves all stay

Jane Barnes has published work in BWQ *for more than 14 years, and has poems in* Gay & Lesbian Quarterly, Ploughshares, River Styx, The Massachusetts Review, *and* Wrongdoing. *Her work appears in the anthologies* Bi Any Other Name *and* Getting Bi.

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Editor's Note

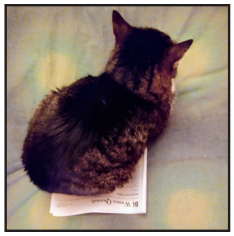
This issue's theme, Aging, is one that everyone can have a perspective about: we **all** age. And the passages of aging offer us opportunities along the way to assess and recalibrate what we are doing with what poet Mary Oliver calls our "one wild and precious life." When I offered to guest edit this issue, I had just celebrated my 65th birthday and was being a bit introspective about life and relationships, so it felt a good fit to bring this topic to the *BWQ* pages to ponder. It's important to embrace the fact of aging in our lives, because as the saying goes, "consider the alternative."

I want to thank all of the contributors for sharing their insights into our theme. We have compelling essays, poetry, fiction, and even a wonderful comic about ageism from the amazing Aubrey Hirsch! There is a particularly rich assortment of poems in this issue (over a dozen!) that explores aging from many different perspectives. And to highlight the changes that we all experience, many of our contributors shared two representations of themselves, providing a fun visual connection in the bios. I hope you enjoy taking it all in!

Ellyn Ruthstrom



Boots finds BWQ very comforting. Send a picture of yourself reading BWQ to biwomeneditor@gmail.com. Be creative!



Upcoming in *Bi Women Quarterly*

Call for submissions

Winter 2026: Allies & Accomplices

In social justice education, an "accomplice" refers to someone who actively participates in dismantling oppressive systems by using their privilege to challenge the status quo and support marginalized groups, going beyond passive allyship to take concrete actions that may involve personal risk or discomfort to create meaningful change. All accomplices are allies, but not all allies are accomplices.

What does it mean to you to be an ally or an accomplice? What are meaningful ways that people have shown allyship and accompliceship to you or to the bi+ community on a large scale or individual level? How do you practice allyship and accompliceship for others, and does your experience as a bi+ person impact the way you do so? In a time where solidarity feels more essential than ever, we're looking to hear about ways to show up in support of others, whether they be loved ones, strangers, organizations, or in any other form. **Submit by November 1, 2025.**

Spring 2026: Relationships

When thinking about your preferred relationship structure, what is your ideal configuration? Is it monogamous? Polyamorous? Solo? Are you currently in the type of relationship that is the same as your ideal choice, or were you ever? Describe the structure and fabric of your most treasured (or current) relationship, whatever form that may take. **Submit by February 1, 2026.**

We welcome essays, reviews, poetry, short fiction, news articles, and visual art. Our submission guidelines are on our website. Send your submissions and suggestions for future themes to biwomeneditor@gmail.com. You may use a pseudonym, if you prefer.

Bi Women Quarterly (ISSN 2834-5096) has been in continuous publication since 1983. It began as a project of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network (BBWN), a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women and nonbinary folks together for support and validation. Through the production of *Bi Women Quarterly* and related activities, we seek full acceptance for bisexuals and those with other nonbinary sexualities. More broadly, we work through an intersectional lens and seek the liberation of people of all genders, sexual orientations, abilities, nationalities, and racial and ethnic identities.

AROUND THE WORLD: the Netherlands
The LGBTQ+ Travel Guide Author, Alicia Valenski

By Felicia Fitzpatrick



Alicia Valenski is a writer, speaker, and the author of *The LGBTQ+ Travel Guide* for Lonely Planet, "a comprehensive and inclusive exploration of over 50 LGBTQ+ friendly destinations" across the globe. She is a Pennsylvania native and has lived in several cities in the U.S., including New York City and Richmond, Virginia, before moving to the Netherlands. She currently lives in Amsterdam with her husband, Andrew.

Felicia Fitzpatrick: Tell me about your journey to identifying as bisexual.

Alicia Valenski: I knew from a very young age. I'm not totally sure if this goes back to also being neurodivergent, but I was just very curious as a kid. I wanted to understand things and evaluate different experiences. In kindergarten, I was like, "I'm going to kiss boys and girls to get some data." As I got older, everyone started judging each other, so I did the super sneaky secret thing of saying, "Let's play Truth or Dare," or the classic, "Let's teach each other to kiss so that we're ready for boys." It wasn't until I was in early high school that I started actively hanging out with girls to hook up.

Once I got to college it was so much easier to not need to hide. I started dating [my husband] Andrew in my sophomore year. During our first conversation, I let him know that I was also into girls, and he was totally fine with it. I wasn't publicly bi for a long time, and in my mid-twenties there were really important conversations happening around marriage equality and LGBTQ rights, and I became really tired of not talking about it. I wrote "9 Things You Shouldn't Say to a Bisexual Woman In a Relationship With a Man" for *Elite Daily*, and that was me coming out.



Alicia Valenski and Felicia Fitzpatrick met as summer interns for DoSomething.org in 2013 and both wrote for *Her Campus*.

FF: Do you feel like identifying as bisexual is a different experience in the Netherlands versus the U.S.?

AV: I think there's less of a dependence on labels here. My experience seems to be that if you say, "I'm queer," or whatever label you use, it's accepted at face value. No one's pressuring you. I will tell people that I'm bi, and then they'll see Andrew, and no one here does that thing that people in the U.S. do where they say, "You're bi. You're married to a guy. What does that mean?" Andrew even will refer to me as his "gay wife," and no one's concerned, or policing, or gatekeeping the labels.

FF: Is there a bi-specific culture or are there bi+ spaces in Amsterdam?

AV: There's been a very intentional effort to build up spaces that go beyond just gay male spaces. Bar Bario is a great example of prioritizing queer women, ace women, and intersex people. They're asking, "How do we make this an accessible space for all?" They prioritize intersectionality a lot, and letting Brown and Black people know, "You are safe here." It's a beautiful space. I'm so impressed with the work that they're doing. I love going there. It's always a great time.

FF: Tell me the origin story of your book *The LGBTQ+ Travel Guide*.



AV: [When I was laid off from my job,] one of my best friends who is a literary agent said, "Maybe it's time to come back to your book conversations. I know you've been wanting to write about queerness." The idea that kept rumbling around in my head was 'Around the World with 80 Gays.' It became interviews with people around the world saying, "I live in this place. Here's what made me settle down here as a queer person and what makes it feel like home for me. This is what I would suggest other people do when they visit."

Lonely Planet was the publisher that really got what we were going for, and they felt that this concept was so fresh and original. We fleshed out how queer travel is distinctly different from straight travel and how I would elevate the voices of every single letter in the LGBTQ+ community. This needed to be from the community, for the community, and by the community. I wanted to make sure that I was not talking to just young, hot, thin, able-bodied people, but people of all sizes, ages, races, ethnicities, gender identities, and sexualities.

Felicia, continued on page 8

Aging is Making Me More Queer

By Jaxx Davis

As a disabled person, aging doesn't particularly faze me. Being disabled basically means speed running aging and I already have random aches and pains everywhere. Instead, I enjoy seeing the changes in me. I am starting to look more like my mother now and I love it. In the grip of my mental illness, I never thought I would get to my forties, so I am in constant awe of my body. I also have never been more confidently bisexual than I am now.

I came out as bisexual at the tender age of 15. Despite growing up in an unsafe environment because of who my father was, I never felt that was something I couldn't do. Although my coming out wasn't entirely unproblematic, it was easy. And then it just was. No great changes. I existed. Bisexually, but also not.



My environment was very straight and I had no queer friends. Nothing prepared me for the "what now" after coming out. Instead of going through with unpacking what all of this meant, compulsory heterosexuality and bi prejudices put me back into the closet. I was allowed to be bisexual, but in name only. With the exception of a few people, who went out of their way to remind me it was OK if I brought a girl home, being bisexual meant I had to choose men. I fully admit I internalized and chased the living hell out of the expectations that I needed to end up with a man. Looking back at my past, I was definitely with some ex-partners just to be in a relationship with a man.

The thing is, I like women A LOT. Women and other queer people, people who are nonbinary like me, people who move outside of social expectations, people with the same lived experiences, who understand queerness, are all within my preferences, but I am really not that keen on cishet men. My feelings are an almost exact flip of what people expected of me. I was allowed to like women occasionally, but only from a distance. But my attraction to men is occasional and I don't like extreme masculinity.

A few things helped me figure myself out and those things just fit into each other like it was meant to be. It all started with my partner. I have been with my current partner for 15 years now. We met at a time when we both had a lot of figuring out to do. Neither of us were out yet as trans. From the start, our relationship was different. I liked and loved her differently and more intensely than I did all my other partners, who had all been men. It was the first time I didn't just love someone, but also adored them fiercely. It wasn't until later that I understood that I liked her that way because she's a woman. What I did know was that she was easy to love, and for the first time I felt like I was too.

I have always been disabled and made to feel like shit for it, but she never did. She got my access needs and my limitations immediately and acted accordingly. Our relationship has something called access intimacy. It's a term first coined by Mia Mingus, a queer disabled woman of color, and it describes that intimate feeling that occurs when someone truly gets your access needs. A few years in, I became more disabled and suddenly bedridden, and because we had that intimacy, she made sure I never felt like I was too much.

Around that same time, I found out my gender had a name. I never understood why my feelings about gender were so different until I heard about the word *nonbinary*. As a child I used to hate not being able to be one of the boys and one of the girls. I once cut my hair because I didn't want to be seen as a girly-girl, but I hated it when someone accidentally called me a boy. I always felt like neither gender or all in one.

When I came out as nonbinary this time around, a new queer journey started. I didn't just unpack all I knew about my gender, I also started unpacking everything else. What if my sexuality isn't completely what I thought it was? What if those beliefs I thought I needed to hold were incorrect and definitely not for me?

When I met my queercrip community, I started to realize how my internalized queerhate and my internalized ableism were the same thing: I wasn't allowed to be myself so I got in my own way. Like my partner, my queercrip community saved me. I was loved. I wasn't alone. And most of all, I was allowed to be myself. This sense of security made the pieces click in my head.

My growth made me be a better partner to my partner when she came out. Only she can say whether who I was was good enough, but I know I had more to offer than I did before. I mentioned earlier that I learned that I have always loved her like a woman and her coming out was the moment I understood. It was that moment that I realized what my bisexuality meant for me.

But it took me hitting my late thirties and then forties to make me fully stop caring about other people's opinions on

my identities. People just assumed I was comfortable being myself before, but being unable to hide myself didn't mean I was comfortable in my skin. I used to be read as queer because I didn't fit into the norm, but now I exist as queer because I want to. Age made me stop giving a fuck.



Jaxx Davis shared two images about themself and aging. The first is a photo of Jaxx during their 40th year when they buzzed off all of their hair (plus the amazing Magic Wand earrings). And the second is their artwork, an ode to hormone replacement therapy (notice the patch on their thigh) which Jaxx is taking to treat their perimenopause symptoms.

I think aging can be queer, depending on how you look at aging. Which is a weird thing to say, because we all age. But just because aging is normal, doesn't mean it's accepted. You're expected to hate it. In part it's because of ableism. Live long enough and eventually you'll become disabled and you will be judged for that. However, ageism is also its own thing, tied to capitalism, tied to misogyny, tied to losing your worth because your role in society changes. Queering age means relinquishing the idea that aging is something you should hate, that aging makes you no longer important in life.

I am going through perimenopause at the moment and I am losing the ability to play the role expected of me. It's an unexpected relief. The older I get, the more I am leaning into falling out of the norm. I find that I don't want to fit in and I have been exploring what I want to do with that feeling. At 43, I am reshooting the piercings I took out because I thought I had to, and I am planning on getting more. I recently got a shirt that says "Eat your girl out or I will" and I am sure that me, a disabled person, wearing something that queer will lead to nondisabled cishet pearl-clutching, but I don't care. My new self is becoming unapologetically queer.

I think that is what I hope people take away from this piece: *aging can be queer as hell if you want it to be*. Societal expectations do not matter, but your happiness does.

Jaxx Davis (they/them) is a queer and disabled activist, artist, and writer from the Netherlands. Bedridden with severe ME, they write and create from their bed, creating simple but raw works about their life and the world.

Bronze

By B.P.D.

She stands frozen in triumph,
bathed in gold, the weight of history
pressed into folds of her gown.
A monument to the fight she won,
laws she changed,
fire she lit when the world was dark.
Her name carved in stone,
etched deep by hands that barely
learned to hold her story.
But they do not read.
They do not wonder.
They do not whisper her deeds.

Instead, they reach.

A thousand hands, careless, amused,
brushing, grasping,
rubbing her breast into copper,
a tarnished relic of some quiet joke.

A woman still reduced to touch,
even in eternity.

Did she dream of this?
To stand unblinking, unyielding,
only to be worn down
by a history that still does not listen?

One day, the gold will fade.
One day, her story will be told
not in polished curves,
but in fire that made her
impossible to forget.

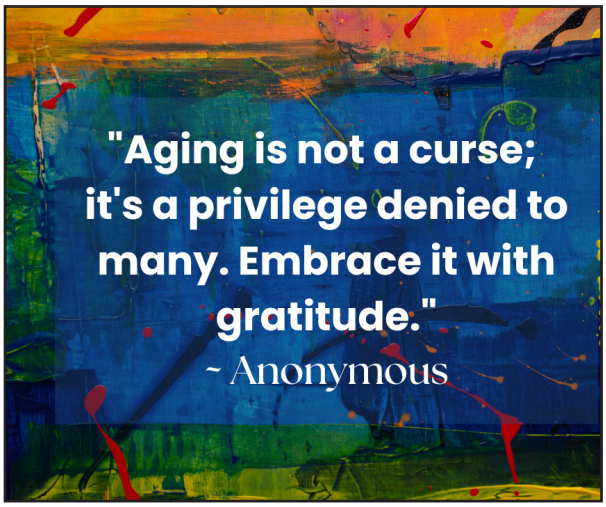
B.P.D. is a recent graduate with a degree in English Literature and lives in Flagstaff, Arizona. She hopes that her work will help with the understanding of the true mistreatment and disadvantages women and queer people deal with daily.

Reflections on Aging by Decade

By Ellie Rowland-Callanan

I was born in the UK on August 26th, 1985, when the #1 song was "Into the Groove" by Madonna, a woman to whom, as a child, I was often told I bore an uncanny resemblance. This year I am 40 years old. I feel fine about it. There is something about the big-zero birthdays which invites reflection.

The summer I turned 10, I was visiting family in Cleveland, Ohio in the U.S. For a British city kid, it was like being in a coming-of-age movie. Treehouses, the neighbor's pool, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, hanging out with my cousins in our swimsuits in my great aunt's basement/game room to escape 90+ degree heat. My Bristolian accent took on a Midwestern twang, and I returned, insufferable, romanticizing my *Now and Then* experience to anyone who would listen, earning the nickname "American Bitch" from my classmates.



Turning 20, I was at university, and to make the move from teen to adulthood, I decided to embark on a sexual act which I had thus far not performed—anal sex. The countdown to my birthday, when the deed was due, was undertaken via group chat between my housemates, our back and forth filling my long retail job days in a t-shirt printing shop with unexpected hilarity. This killed the boredom and slightly staved off my rapidly escalating petty theft habit of creating full novelty football kits for our five-a-side team.

On birthday eve, in a hot tub, the act was consummated. I reported back to my mates about my disappointment. It never did make it into regular rotation.

By contrast, turning 30 was perspective shifting. I'd spent 29 in a panic after years in a straight-passing relationship. I felt stuck, consigned to narrow-minded suburbs, desperate to be in London, more than just for work, and keen to explore my sexuality in a more vivid, queer life.

I worried about not earning enough, my relationship suffered, and my children were small. A slightly delayed quarter-life crisis ensued. By the time 30 actually arrived, I was in a Barcelona apartment with my spouse and kids, wondering *wtf* would happen now that my youth was over.

When I answered a furious rapping on the door, a naked sex worker came in, crying and speaking neither Spanish nor English. It transpired that she had been working with some young men in the apartment next door, who stole her clothes and refused to pay her. I lent her something to wear and made her tea as she waited for the police to escort her back in there for her stuff. The police were disappointing, calling her a bitch and asking why I'd invite someone such as her into my space with children present. Despite this, eventually she was able to collect her things and leave. I felt foolish to have been hung up on such an arbitrary occurrence as aging when this woman was trying to survive in a strange and hostile country and encountering such layers of misogyny. I think of her often.

This past decade has been pretty momentous. That year we finally moved to East London and my career took off, then evolved from communications into DEI and into psychotherapy. My children are in their teens, and my relationship is solid, a world away from a decade ago. I have my own private therapy practice where I work intersectionally with predominantly LGBTQ+ and sex worker clients and am active in my local community.

If that sounds like a highlight reel, I want to stress that it came with a great deal of challenging work, interpersonal struggles, and several incidences of burnout. Mental health is an ongoing consideration.

As I stare down the barrel of 40, I know what a privilege it is to age. My best friend didn't make it that far, passing away from a preventable (if she was listened to) cancer just days after her 39th birthday.

In terms of my sexuality and gender, they feel and are able to be fluid. The actions of cis men can be at times offputting to me, and I sometimes question if I still desire them, but currently it's a yes.

I've used bisexual as a self-identifier since I was around 16 and I probably won't change that now, although there are more inclusive options available which better suit my actual attraction which encompasses many gender identities. My personal style has become less femme; a combination of gender queerness and neurodivergence seems to now cause an aversion to skirts, dresses, and pretty patterns. I like my fashion soft, monochromatic, and a touch butch.

Since my friend passed, I've gotten back into tattoos and find the decoration of my body with colorful art delivered by needle to be a mindful and affirming process. In my body I feel congruent, better equipped to deal with the dysmorphia which has plagued me in cycles. My spirit is free. Leaving the corporate world around 18 months ago helped with this.

I am married to the bi-curious man I have been with since our teens. I feel internalised biphobia as I write this and hope this space

Ellie, continues on page 17

Work Required

By Glenis Moore

My body is nothing like a temple.
Temples are places of worship,
well cared for and usually beautiful,
whereas no one has worshipped at
my body for a very long time.

Now it is full of cracks
and subsidence with its windows
fogging over. Its facade is worn
so much so that even the best paint
cannot hide its imperfections.
The plumbing is a bit suspect
while the foundations aren't always
up to the task, especially in high winds,
and, as for the PA system, well
the output is liable to crackle
and the input only works
with the volume up full.
The whole thing looks OK
dressed up for celebrations
but on a day-to-day basis it's tired.

No wonder worshippers are few
and far between and then only
the truly desperate ones
seem to turn up. Perhaps I ought
to get the builders in at least
for a quote. After all, if you believe
what they say on the telly, it's amazing
what you can do with an old temple
if you try hard enough.

Thinning

By Glenis Moore

Like mist when the sun comes out,
we gradually lose cohesion.
Not listened to, hardly seen
by a society that no longer
values the old. Under thinning hair
and thinning skin, we begin to drift
to the margins, slowly pushed aside
by those who do not realize
it will be their turn one day too.
Our voices stopped,
our concerns ignored until at last
we disappear to be found two weeks later
by some horrified neighbour
who simply failed to notice
that we had gone.

Glenis Moore is a poet who currently lives in the flatlands of the Fens just outside of Cambridge, UK with her partner and three rescue cats. When she is not writing, she reads, makes beaded necklaces, knits, cycles, and runs 10K races slowly.



Glenis Moore shared: "As you can see from the photos, I used to be ginger. Now, my hair is almost white. I hated the ginger when I was younger as it made me stand out. However, now I would love to have it back as it is indicative of me as a person."

Aging with Baby

By Julie Petry, MFA



I stepped into my fifties this year and am proud of my body. Through time, I have asked a lot of it. Be it walking, dancing, gardening, swimming, voraciously cleaning house, or sitting still in meditation, my body has always been there as a trusted sacred space inviting me to connect. I love movement and bodies in motion—so much so, I made a career of it. I have been a professor of theatre and dance for the last twenty years and am proud to know my spine inside and out. I have spent my life taking conscious care of my vessel and educating others on how to do the same. I earnestly require my students to make their cell phones disappear in order to replace that sneaky addiction with an opportunity to sense an embodied body. And yet, despite all this care and wisdom I possessed and professed, time is real. And time had lessons in store for me.

I became pregnant at age 48. Something not many folks would want to attempt for good reason. I am in excellent shape, but nevertheless this experience of motherhood has kicked my butt. It wasn't the pregnancy either; I taught classes such as ballet and jazz all the way through the month before delivery. It wasn't even the birth, though that was its own special ball of recovery. What I hadn't planned for was the continuous lack of sleep and how it would impact me. I figured I would have some rough nights with the baby, but I never imagined I would end up going a full 14 months before getting more than three hours of sleep in a row. Even now, as I sit typing this, I am blurry-eyed as I've spent the last three nights having been constantly awakened by my precious teething 17-month-old daughter trying to find her mama bear while thrashing around in the covers. Yes...I am a co-sleeper. Other parents might argue I brought this on myself, and they could be right, but I know what feels right for our unique connection, and it calls for the age-old practice of family bodies sleeping nearby. Our mattress lies on the floor so she may safely exit, while my back cries out for a visit to my favorite massage therapist. Yes…I hadn't planned for any of this while I continued to age, and my body is wiped out.

I also failed to plan for the constant bending over, extensive picking up of toys, carrying her as she approaches 23 pounds, carrying her heavy go-bags, cleaning up her messy meals so often it doubles the loads of laundry to be carried up multiple flights of stairs, and barely having a moment to regroup. I failed to predict how hard it would be to breathe, shower, or find some precious alone time. As an extroverted introvert, I desperately need alone time to go out into the world every day. Thankfully, a local day care eventually came to the rescue on that one, accepting her at age one, which gave me a few precious hours of alone time each day. But the tending is still a lot to manage for a body entering Act II, even with some extra help.

So...what have I learned? That even at age 50, a body expert can be schooled on the body. Our bodies evolve. They demand and get tired. We must listen. My body wants gentleness, calm, and peace now. My body wants alone time, help, and attention from healing therapists. So, I have paid dearly for sitters I trust in order to find more of what I need. I must keep trying to offer my body what it needs. It's the only home I will have for life, after all, and I hope to see my daughter turn 50 herself. So, ask yourself…what do you need? Your body is talking to you.



Julie Petry is a practicing professor of theatre and dance. She is a native of the beautiful Pacific Northwest, mother to Georgie, author of the children's book How To Feel Good When You Wish That You Could, *and currently lives in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.*

Felicia, continued from page 3

FF: What are the differences between straight and queer travel?

AV: Straight people genuinely do not have to consider whether it is legal for them to exist in a certain place. Not just could you get jailed or fined, but you could quite literally be killed. For a person in the LGBTQ+ community, it's crucial to first check local laws and sentiments before traveling. While writing, I tried really hard to not lead with the fear because most of us know that already. We know that we're not going to be accepted in so many places. The job that we have is to find the places where queer joy exists and where we don't have to be afraid. I wanted this book to lead with joy, because we deserve it.

Felicia Fitzpatrick (she/her) is a New York City-based writer, interviewer, and content creator. When she's not writing, you can find her taking dance classes at Alvin Ailey, rewatching Gilmore Girls*, or wishing for The Cheesecake Factory to open in Manhattan.*

Oodles of Time

By Jane Barnes

I was in my twenties pretending I had oodles of time to live. Until I got cancer at 31 and prayed to God (I wasn't a prayful person) to keep me alive for a month so I could write one small book. It's been a long month; I'm 81 years old.

I survived a coma, breakdown, sepsis, cyst, pulmonary embolisms. I just had a stroke and can't walk and have a paralyzed arm, so this writer is using one finger here. But here I am: bisexual, bipolar, and virtually bicoastal, having been raised by the sea in Northern California, living in Boston 32 years, and in New York City for 25; I've had about 80 addresses and 80 jobs. Three male lovers and two wives—so much for the numbers.

I've been to many places: South America, Paris and France, lived in London, drove all over the British Isles, been to Germany, and Italy, crossed the U.S. numerous times, in New York City lived in Greenwich Village, Harlem, the Bronx, and Staten Island.

You'd think I'd slow down. Wrote my first story at seven. Since the cancer scare, I've written four poetry manuscripts, 20+ novels, a memoir, and one novel that I mostly finished the night after I went into the ER last year for the symptoms that were a stroke. I've written 100 poems with my left index finger. My aides come from everywhere: Sierra Leone, Samoa, Kenya, Pakistan, and Morocco, and cook me their national dishes.

My body's unbalanced and feels like it weighs 500 pounds. My right hand is clenched, and I take two Tylenol every six hours. Let's not mention the other 13 pills.

What's left? Korean romance shows. When I see a closeup of the man, I swoon. The woman, I swoon. Doctors come to the house. I've spent over $1,000 on my teeth this year. You-know-who is busy taking away the benefits I've paid into since I was 14.

Did I say I'm sober for 43 years? Thank you, Bill Wilson (Google it)! I've had the help of hundreds of like friends. Hey, one of my aides is 22 and openly bi; another loves women. I came out to them first.

I've had a long and eventful life. I'm grateful. If you're young, I say go for your dreams. It's more fun. And the Goddess is in your corner. Am I not proof of it?



Jane Barnes has published work in BWQ *for more than 14 years, and has poems in* Gay & Lesbian Quarterly, Ploughshares, River Styx, The Massachusetts Review, *and* Wrongdoing. *Her work appears in the anthologies* Bi Any Other Name *and* Getting Bi.

Passages

By Charlotte Bouilloux

we'll meet again in Scotland in our thirties
reminisce about life pre-Covid
pre- the heartbreaks and essays and hard work
we'll write together
revel in the art of collaboration
add autotune to it
share the songs we were afraid to show
ourselves, put words to verses and stanzas
i'll say i don't give a fuck about confessional poetry anymore,
you'll say i don't believe you
and that's fine i'll reply
i'll keep it to myself and save a seat for you
on the train.

Charlotte Bouilloux is a bilingual and bisexual poet residing in Norwich, UK. She writes in English and French, her mother tongue. Her writing mainly consists of musings on heritage, the body, gender, and feminism.

Charlotte, continued from page 1

You'll find me walking downtown at night in my military boots, wrapped in black clothes, an emo playlist blasting through my headphones, my TikTok For You page flooded with queer emo bands. You'll find me at strip karaoke, slipping out of those clothes to reveal leather underwear—though I haven't dared to sing emo there yet; my voice isn't ready for that. And maybe it's better late than never. I love whatever the hell this is: the queerness of punk, the joy of dressing for myself, and the sight of a gay kiss on stage as the purest form of rebellion.

Maybe it's not a phase at all. Maybe it's the truest version of me—the one I couldn't be at 16, but who came to life in her late twenties, fiercer and freer because she had to wait. Aging, it turns out, isn't about letting go of who you were. Sometimes it's about going back to meet the self you were never allowed to become.

Charlotte Poitras is a neurodivergent and queer artist-entrepreneur based in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. She explores the blurred lines between fiction and reality through writing, visual arts, and short films with more than 80 publications. Her work aims to entertain both hearts and minds by embracing devil's advocate perspectives.

A Year of Authenticity

By Kathryn Welch

Every New Year's Eve, my friends and I have a tradition whereby we each choose a word with which we would like to define the year ahead. Sometimes our words are wildly ambitious, sometimes they're silly (one friend chose "jackpot" in a year they were hoping to make it big), and other times they're more prosaic ("routine" and "calm" have both featured). 2025 was the year I turned 40, and as we counted down to the chiming of the New Year's bells, I chose "authentic" as my word for the year. I talked about how I wanted to make decisions based less on how I wanted to appear to others. I had recently quit drinking alcohol, which I used as an example of the sort of decisions I wanted to make more confidently in the coming year. A little voice in the back of my head was also wondering, though, whether this could be the year I finally found the courage to come out and claim a bisexual identity. In truth, I doubted it, but declaring 2025 as my year of authenticity gave me a fingerhold to start to wonder whether this could be the year.



I've always been bisexual: an overwhelming crush on a girl at Brownie Camp aged ten was one of my defining coming-of-age experiences. I vividly remember the sharing of secrets, the swapping of t-shirts at the end of our week together, and passionate and clingy telephone calls from a 1990s phone-box once we returned home. But growing up as a chronically obedient child in a time and place that, if not actively homophobic, made it very clear that it would be much better if I were straight, it never felt like a realistic option to be anything else. As the child of two police officers, I grew up in a home where being "good" (a quality prized above all others) meant coloring inside the lines, conforming to social norms, and excelling within firmly-defined understandings of behavior and success. Growing up under the UK Government's Section 28 law, which explicitly banned local authorities from "promoting homosexuality" or teaching about it in a positive light in schools, made being not-straight seem wrong, or at the very least, something that required a bold, rebellious attitude that I emphatically didn't have. And I did like boys, after all. So when I met and married a gorgeous and brilliant man in the years shortly after university, my assumed heterosexuality felt increasingly set in stone. I'd missed the boat for sexual experimentation, and with it—so I thought—my opportunity to claim a queer identity.

It took aging—and the benefits of almost two decades of that marriage to an unfailingly supportive, uplifting champion—for that assumption to start to shift. I had actually taken the first tentative step out of the closet in 2022, when I secretly ticked the "bisexual" box in the Scottish National Census. Though I did it so secretly, it still gives me enormous satisfaction to see 'my' number counted amongst Scotland's first-ever national record of the nation's sexual identity, and to know that there's a formal record, somewhere, of a queer identity I thought I might never say out loud.

I'm aging well, I think. I was a chronically shy teenager and an awkward 20-year-old who was desperate to fit in. As I hit my thirties, though, I was increasingly surrounded by brilliant, bold, powerful women a decade or two older than me, who proved an endless source of inspiration. The exact opposite of the well-behaved cultures I'd grown up with, these were women matured through a lifetime of activism. They had marched, fought, protested, and organized, not least to repeal that poisonous Section 28 that had remained law through the entirety of my school years, from 1988 to 2003. Now in their fifties and sixties, these women offered a glorious example of a courageous life that gave very few fucks, yet who were immersed in creating a good life defined not by law and order, but by social justice and solidarity. In them, I found alternative role-models for the kind of life I wanted for my second half. I envied their courage, their commitment to their values, their radical sense of ambition and their willingness to break the rules. I began campaigning on issues of reproductive justice, for feminist politics, and on wider campaigns around social equity and, tentatively, LGBTQ rights.

And so to 40, and to the year of #authenticity. As I settled into more queer and activist spaces, it came to feel increasingly ridiculous that I was hiding my bisexuality—allowing myself to be assumed to be an ally, or feeling embarrassed to be happily married (and to a *man!*) in queer spaces where I'd found nothing but friendship, acceptance, and community. A few days before my fortieth birthday, I took a deep breath and came out to my husband (whose straightforward, unruffled acceptance underlined all the reasons I made a great decision to have married him), to my Pride community, and then to friends, in a gradual, ongoing, never-not-scary process.

In some ways, nothing's changed. My relationship is as solid and monogamous as ever, my friendships are as unfailingly loving as they've always been, and I remain involved in queer

activism in broadly the same ways I have been for years. And yet in others, everything is new. I feel seen and known as my whole self for the first time in my adult life. I'm seeking out more opportunities to build a visible queer community, and to identify myself proudly as bisexual—in a way that isn't invalidated by my marriage to a man, and that in many ways was enabled through the confidence and security grown through a long-term loving relationship.

I'm able to look ahead to a second act of life that looks a little more like those queer and feminist elders I've looked up to for so long: one that is boldly committed to the pursuit of social justice, that couldn't care less about seeking approval or awaiting permission, and that defines a good life not by externally set laws, rules and norms, but by an internal moral compass that is set to care, solidarity, and community. And that perhaps helps clear the path for the next generation of young people—to show them that a good life comes in many forms, that joy, success, happiness, and authenticity can be theirs, and that you're never too old to claim the identities that fit your soul.

Here's to the glorious process of aging!

Kathryn Welch lives and works in Scotland, where she crafts things, organizes some projects, and tries to make good things happen.

Fifty

By Amber Ballweg

I turned 50 this year. By the time this is published, I won't be 50 any more. This is the first milestone that really seemed significant to me, since the 16, 18, and 21-year-old ones.

I don't have many regrets. I used to think I had none, and maybe then I didn't. Before I was old enough, experienced enough, to know differently. I've generally considered mistakes to be lessons. I mostly think scientifically, so mistakes and failures are things to be learned from and move forward. Now, however, I realize there were missed opportunities. Maybe the first mistake was a fine thing to learn from, but the compounding ones are a bit more suspect. Should I have waited longer to get into a very long-term relationship? Yes. Should I have gotten out of it when it seemed to be going nowhere? Yes. Should I have gotten out of it when it was causing me damage? Yes. Should I have gotten out of it before I became apathetic to my own life? Yes.

The process of getting older comes with benefits. Wisdom is a big one. I know myself better. I don't let myself go along for the ride, at least not for long. I regularly evaluate my life to make sure I'm still doing what is right for me, even if it means change or challenges. Twenty or thirty years later, making difficult decisions is easier. I'm a little less risk-averse and willing to be more vulnerable about who I am.

The flip side of this is I'm still cautious, physically-speaking. Years of being accident-prone, a decreasing tolerance for pain, and an increasing number of ailments have made me less likely to do something that might end in physical pain or discomfort. My best friend calls me a princess, as I wear gloves to pull weeds or worry about water or mud as slip hazards on the floor. I somewhat agree, but I still worry about it, as I live alone.

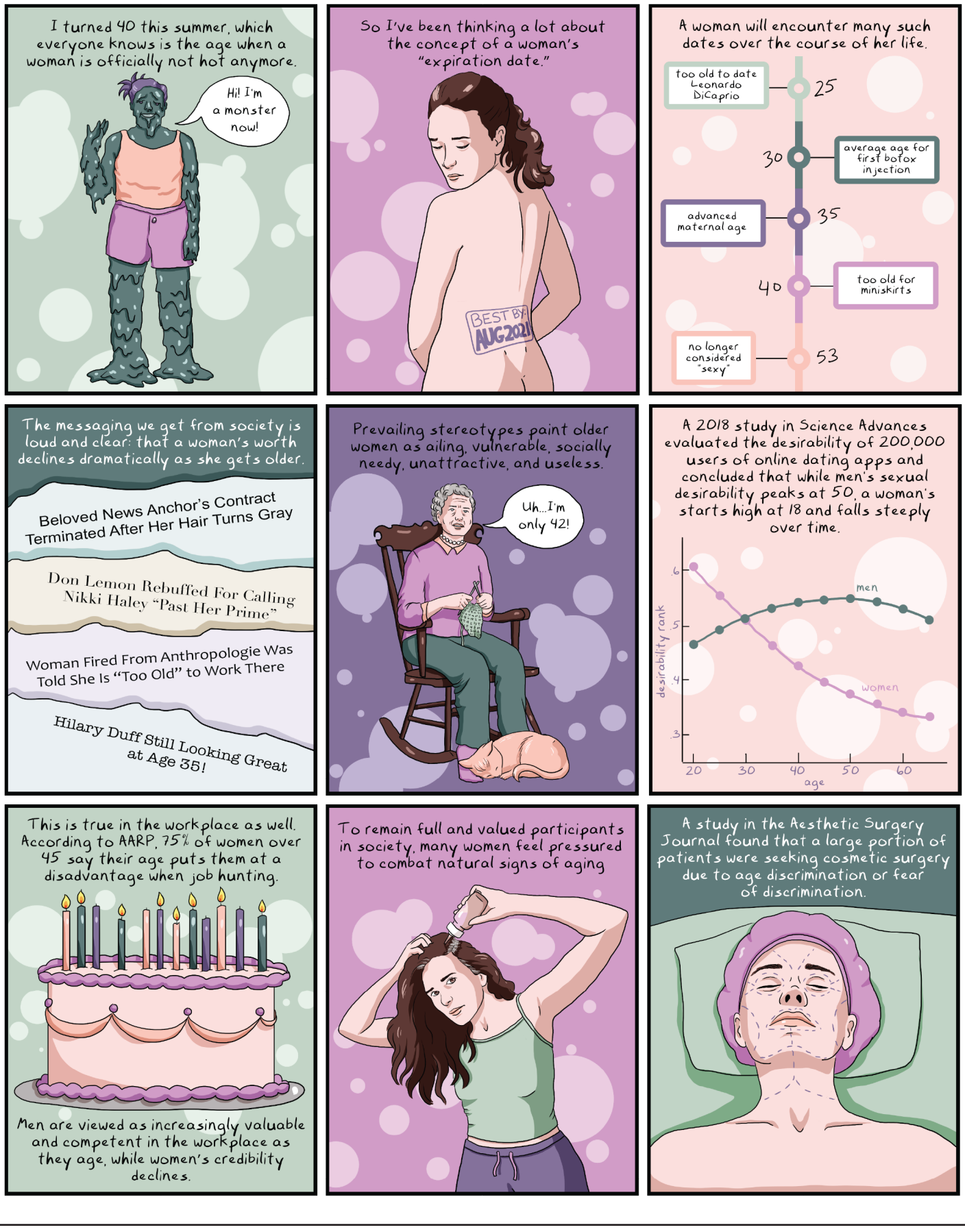
This is why I moved a few states away several years ago. I needed to live near people who would be able to care for me, even for a day or two or a handful of meal drop-offs, if something happened to me. I don't do well living in close proximity to others. I can manage a lover for an overnight or weekend, a road trip with my BFF, and eight hours in a cubicle next to a co-worker. I don't share my space well or wait in line patiently, and I get irritated when others leave a mess for me to clean. With this, I needed to be somewhere where my people could get to me if I needed assistance, but they do not have to be living with me.

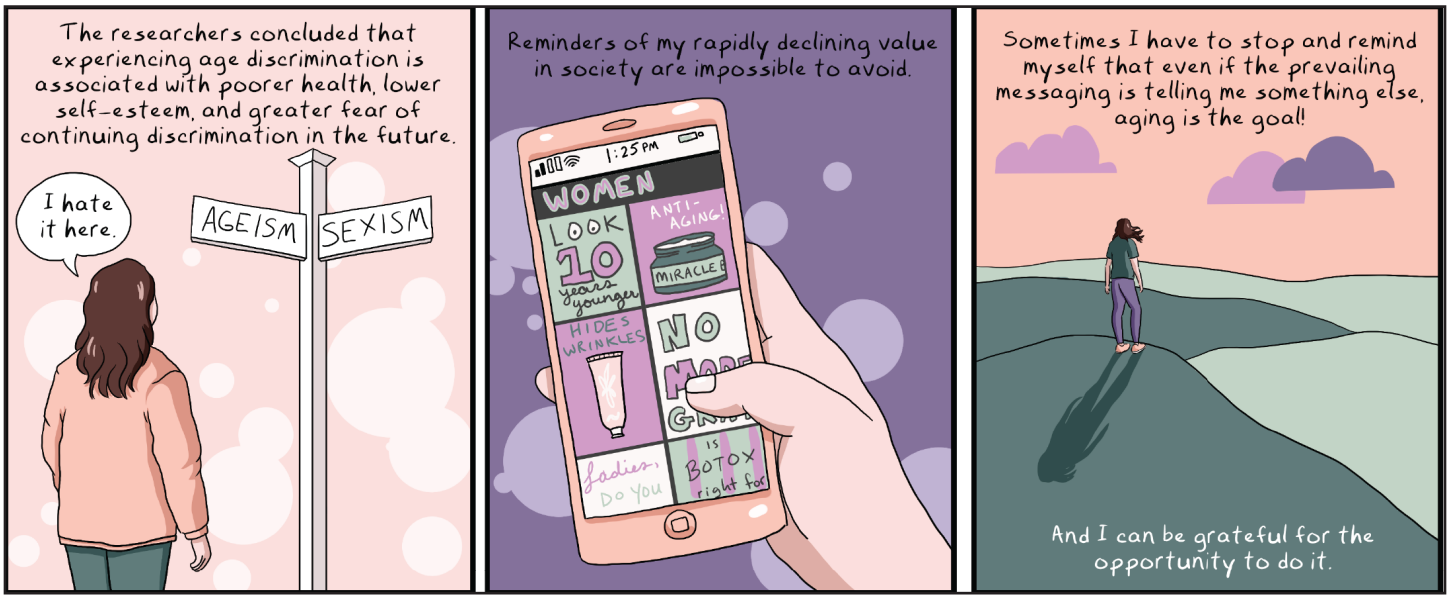
Looking forward, I need to keep managing to this point. How can I be healthier, fitter, more independent, so I can keep living alone, while managing to navigate the challenges I'm overcoming in allowing others to get closer to me emotionally? I'm still working on this. I guess we're all works in progress, and as long as I keep working towards my goals and learning, I might just make it to the next milestone age. Honestly, I'm looking forward to getting discounts, being the right age to join groups by age again (no one does group things for folks in their forties or the 50-55 crew), and having peers joining me for the old lady things I've been doing since I was in my twenties. Cats, crocheting, cozy mysteries, and more to come!

Amber Ballweg lives in the U.S. near Minneapolis, Minnesota and has one cat. She is active in community building among her various identities.



Ageism, a comic by Aubrey Hirsch





Artist Statement: I made this comic as a way to untangle my own feelings about aging in a world that tells women our worth has an expiration date. I wanted to capture the tension between the pressure to stay young and the deeper truth that aging is living. We can choose to see wrinkles and silver hair as problems to be solved, or we can view them as markers of our blessings.

Unwound

By Robin Genova

At the age of 42 I am starting to understand
Those crazy old women
In extravagant flamboyant prints
And purple hair
I am desperate to claw some color out of these bones
All of my bindings made of thread
Holding me in place
Beige and gray
Comforting and confining
Done with being an object to beautify
To make this body slender and sleek and breedable
This middle age crisis is an unwinding
A snapping of threads
Thinner than I ever imagined

Robin Genova is a Canadian-born poet from Ontario, now living in Northern California. As a neurodivergent and feminist writer, her work explores themes of identity and resilience. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Wilfrid Laurier University.



Aubrey Hirsch: Here are two photos that show my transition from dying my hair super dark brown to letting it shine in its natural color! For me, this is most representative of my journey to lean into the changes that come with aging, instead of fighting them.



Warning
By Jenny Joseph

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells
And run my stick along the public railings
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick flowers in other people's gardens
And learn to spit.



You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go
Or only bread and pickle for a week
And hoard pens and pencils and beermats and things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry
And pay our rent and not swear in the street
And set a good example for the children.
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

But maybe I ought to practice a little now?
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

Written in 1961, Jenny Joseph's poem, "Warning," was often misnamed "When I am an old woman I shall wear purple, " which is its opening line. "Warning" became a feminist touchstone that highlights older women's desire to cast off society's gendered expectations upon them, and to be more authentic and forthright. Joseph passed away at age 85 in 2018 with the distinction of having written one of the most beloved contemporary British poems. The poem also inspired the Red Hat Society which were social clubs for older women to celebrate their later years in a fun, supportive atmosphere.

Kick-ass Women Who Accomplished A Lot in Their Senior Years

(by no means comprehensive)

Eleanor Roosevelt
Mazie Hirono
Maxine Waters
Deb Haaland
Judy Chicago
Georgia O'Keefe
Hillary Clinton
Madeleine Albright
Maya Angelou
Gloria Steinem
Granny D Haddock
Ruth Bader Ginsberg
Jane Fonda
Octavia Butler
Jane Goodall
Betty White
Sojourner Truth
Elizabeth Warren
Toni Morrison
Mary Oliver
Adrienne Rich
Margaret Atwood
Lani Ka'ahumanu
June Jordan
Cherrie Moraga
Loraine Hutchins
Grace Paley
May Sarton
Harriet Tubman
Faith Petric
Katherine Hepburn
Dolores Huerta
Bernice Johnson Reagon

Born in 1985

by Philippa Greasley

You're forty? You're old.
Be told.
Get botox. Reduce your wrinkles. Take hydrolyzed collagen peptides. A UV light mask. A 17-step skincare routine.
Dye your greys.
Take up less space.
Woman of a certain age.

You must (for the male gaze)
You must count all the ways
That life begins at forty.
Providing you still look twenty.

That said, you do you, and if that's what floats your boat, go all out, if that's your bag.

But, god, I'm bored.
Isn't it boring, talking about our faces all the time?
Isn't it dull, to try to smooth the bedsheet creases in the corners of our eyes?
Because, whether or not I look forty, the Green Tiger Beetle is still so fast, when it runs, it goes blind.
And there are hammerhead sharks, right, and canal towpaths, and the sound of the rain carving a stream on my street outside, and the smell of woodsmoke climbing above a fire.
Oh, and the tide pulls the Thames back to the ocean twice a day and leaves a thousand years of human debris in its wake crunching underfoot claypipes, old coins and roofing tiles from before the Great Fire.
All just there. Right there. As if it's not the best thing ever.



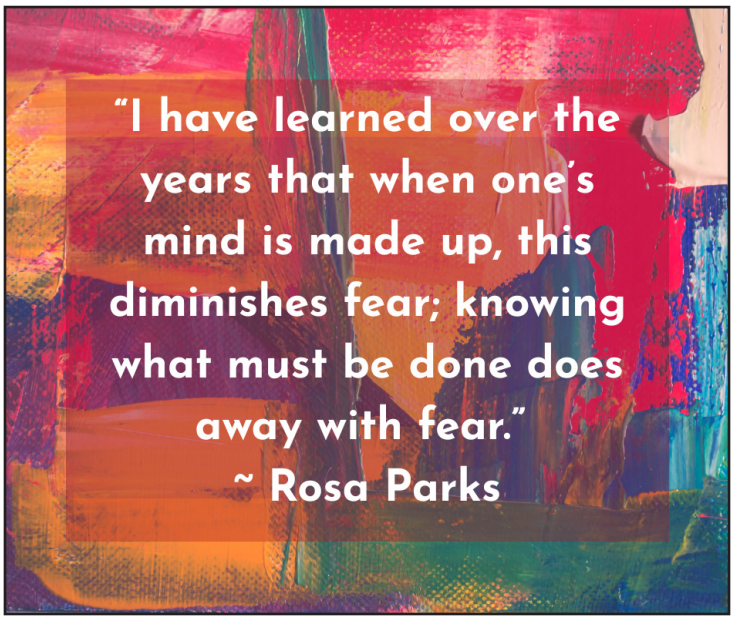
What good is new skin, anyway, for old feelings?
What good is a smooth shape that doesn't fit?
What did my body do to deserve this?
Like a wild river map, I pull from the marrow of the earth the most me version of me.
Green and golden, stitched into my bones, an erratic tattoo over and over.
Let me keep getting older.

Philippa Greasley (she/they) is an autistic speech therapist based in Oxfordshire in the UK, working on her first novel, a queernormative YA fantasy. She enjoys exploring the neurodivergent experience in her writing.

A Journey Through Life's Unexpected Lessons

By Kanika Ameerah

I was 19 and had recently moved into my very first apartment when I first came out. For some time, I'd suspected that I was "not straight" and started to slowly confide to some friends that I was bisexual. Not that I *might* be bisexual, but that I actually was. One of the first things I did upon coming out was making an hour-plus long trek from my hometown to visit the LGBT Center in Manhattan. On Friday afternoons, The Center held a support group for young women under the age of 21. I attended this group regularly, made a couple of friends, and even marched with them (under the youth contingent) in my first Pride parade. That entire summer was spent trawling every lesbian bar and club that existed in NYC, dancing my butt off until closing time and taking the long trek home at sunrise. I was not old enough to drink back then, and wouldn't have been admitted to any bars or clubs today, but it was the 90s and things were a lot more lax.



At 19, I had great expectations of what my life would look like as an out bi woman. I imagined myself permanently implanted in an alternative community, living an off-beat, bohemian existence far, far away from the rigid, close-minded, and homophobic environment in which I grew up. I quickly learned that my idealistic expectations would vastly differ from reality.

Those first few years of being out were filled with tough, painful lessons, especially when it came to understanding what community means to me. I always knew that I would never receive support from the people in my provincial hometown, but what I didn't expect was the eventual isolation I'd feel from the very community I considered a refuge.

Back then, there was a sharp and deep divide between lesbians and bisexual women and I sensed it from day one. From the disappointment in a woman's voice whenever I told her I was bi, to the snide remarks often made about bi women, or the downright anger and resentment directed towards me by others due to their past negative experiences with bi women. What was even more bothersome was the level of objectification I had experienced by straight men, couples, and even other bisexual women. After a while, being an out bi woman started to feel like a heavy burden rather than a source of pride.

I suspect that for those reasons, some of my bi friends would ultimately choose a community to assimilate into, depending on who they were in a relationship with or preferred to date. One friend suggested that I should self-identify as a lesbian, as she did, because at the time I wanted to date women and found it challenging to do so. I refused to do this because I knew I'd be living a lie.

For many years, I floated from one designated scene and community to another, trying to find a place I would fit in. As I aged, I realized that there was no one community where I would neatly fit in, and decided to form my own, composed of people from all walks of life who accepted and celebrated who I am as a human.

Another set of lessons I learned over the years was how allies don't often come in the form that you would expect. When I came out to my family, it was met with mixed reactions. My feminist, non-religious mother did not (and I suspect still does not) accept my bisexuality, and this became a source of contention between us for many years. On the other hand, my (now late) very Muslim father, stepmother, and siblings were more accepting of my orientation. Whenever I call or visit my paternal side of the family, one of the first things they'd ask me is if I found a man or woman yet, and I would always answer no to both. I feel as if this was their way of saying they accepted me.

I know that my father's family doesn't understand my orientation and disagrees with it, but their willingness to overlook their religious beliefs to acknowledge my attraction to other women out of their love for me meant a lot. The second time I felt a sense of alliance was through my job. When I worked onsite, I used to wear a bi pride pin on the lapel of my uniform blazer on two occasions: the last week of June (Pride Week), and the third week of September (Celebrate Bisexuality Week). One time, I was wearing my pin when the director of my department (a gay man) called me into his office. When I arrived, his eyes zoomed in on my pin and he looked surprised, but in a good way. It was a moment of shared, yet discreet camaraderie.

My next set of life's lessons come from the uncomfortable experience that we call dating. Some people are lucky enough to find their forever person early on, while others have a series of people that they've loved and lost over the years. Then there is me, the long-term bachelorette.

When I was younger, I presumed I would marry a man and have a family, mainly to say that I'd done it. The reasons for wanting heterosexual marriage were two-fold: I wanted to absorb myself into the straight community (due to the above-mentioned experiences) and because, as someone who was bullied for my appearance, I wanted to prove that I was lovable. It turns out that marriage and kids was not in the cards for me, even with the convenience of this new thing called *online dating*.

With my childbearing years in their sunset, I thought I would regret not having the chance of being a wife and mother, but I don't. Subconsciously, I knew that I would've been doing it for all the wrong reasons. When I was younger, my romantic desires and expectations in a partner were very surface level. I'd never given serious thought to what kind of a relationship I wanted with another person, and what that would look like. I'm confident that if I had a relationship back then, it would've been an absolute mess.

Though I'm single, my life hasn't been lonely; I've traveled quite a bit over the years (and find that I definitely prefer doing it alone), and have the companionship of furry friends and an amazing, supportive social circle. I'm surrounded by love, even if it's not the romantic kind.

Being single, especially as a middle-aged woman, is a blessing. It's allowed me time to reflect upon my desires for a relationship, release outdated beliefs, and incorporate new visions about what romance looked like. I feel that I'm in a much better place for a partnership than I ever was when I was younger.

My last set of lessons have come from the trials and errors of trying new things (more errors than trials).

There are many other things I've tried doing, only to realize that I wasn't good at them. This includes taking drama classes in high school, cheerleading, and working at a telemarketing firm, all because they all sounded like glamorous and fun things to do. Upon realizing that I have performance anxiety, the coordination skills of an ostrich, and was awful at pitching sales, I knew it was time to walk away (though with the telemarketing job, I was offered the chance to resign willingly or be fired).

In my early thirties, I ran a bisexual pop culture blog and social media website; it had a cult following and I enjoyed connecting with other bi people throughout the world. Eventually, I realized how stressful and competitive running a blog was and really missed the stability of a 9-to-5 job, so I shut the website down after a year and got a job at a medical billing company. A few years later, my mother would tell me that my brief blogging stint was what changed her mind about same-sex marriage. She was vehemently opposed to it prior and now supports it. Though I'm not cut out for freelancing or "being my own boss," I still consider blogging one of my favorite adventures and greater successes (even if it was technically a failure).

These lessons (and more) are ones I wish I could go back in time and tell my 19-year-old self in order to prevent a lot of grief, disappointment, and heartbreak, but it's doubtful that she would even listen. I'm listening to myself now, and plan to take these lessons with me onto my next chapter of life.

If not at the local biergarten drinking with friends or the airport trying to escape the U.S., Kanika Ameerah can be found at home streaming British cozy mysteries while contemplating the possibilities of life with a persnickety brown tabby. Originally from the Big Apple (New York City), she now calls the Garden State (New Jersey) her home.



Kanika shared "I have more appreciation for nature now. It allows me to slowly observe things rather than rush through the path with blindfolds."

Ellie, continued from page 6

is safe enough that I might exist in it without being somehow not enough or too much. We are not currently open, and I do not have a bi bucket list for the next 10 years, beyond open communication and making space for intimacy which respects our individual queer identities. In the present, it works well.

I once imagined a future in which my late best friend and I lived in some sort of "gals who are pals" commune as we aged, harmoniously spooning nightly, and having other visitors to bang and/or help with DIY by invitation only.

In my mind, I feel open to what is ahead, aware of the futility of assumptions for the next ten years.

Ellie Rowland-Callanan is a queer, LGBTQ+ affirmative therapist and writer based in East London, UK.



Three-Act Tragedy *by Isobel Bradshaw*

I.

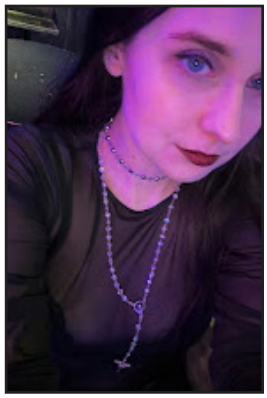
It's often said that good things come in threes. I can vouch for that, I suppose, as it's happened to me plenty of times: three surgeries before my legs worked like they should. Three men before I found one that wouldn't hurt me. Three attempts on my own life before I started to pull myself together. The Holy Trinity of *things that will knock me out without killing me*. The regular Holy Trinity. Three Sacraments of Initiation before I thought to question. Decades are a bit different—the snake of 30 years coils around me and squeezes tight. And 30 isn't old. Everyone tells me that, and I believe it myself. But it certainly feels old when you didn't expect to see 20.

II.

I've spent most of my life operating on the kind of foreshortened future common in survivors. Dodged the question of what I want to do with my life by giving the simplest and truest answer: *I want to write*. Details aren't important. I inched towards that goal one baby step at a time, operating on the knowledge that I might not get to take another. Minimized anything that could be seen as an accomplishment. Graduation. Marriage. I chafed under a spotlight, itching for a corner where no one would look at me. Charted my progress only by setbacks. Seven years separated the first attempt from the second. Ten months split the second and third; it's been less than a year since. I consider myself *in recovery* from a myriad of things. I think I'll be in recovery for the rest of my life.

III.

Time moves in a strange, syrupy way when you're not looking. I didn't think I'd hit 21, and it happened. I didn't think—twice—that I'd hit 29, and it happened. The concept of a future that extends beyond a year or two is still foreign to me, but the uncertainty is tinged with something in a way it hasn't been before. Not hope, not quite, but something close to it. A burgeoning belief that my hands are capable of producing work that matters. My body is already decaying, muscles deteriorating at a rate much faster than the average; most days it feels like my brain matches its pace. The urge to treat time as a finite resource is still there, and it grows stronger by the day, but it has the opposite effect on me now. A deadline to work with, and not against. Something to want, and not to fear.



Isobel Bradshaw is a queer and disabled author of fiction and hybrid work focusing on themes of religious trauma, queerness, and ownership of one's body. She has a BFA in Creative Writing and lives in Ohio, USA with her partner and cats.



Aden Curry is an artist and hobbyist based in Bellingham, Washington, USA. She has an interest in traditional painting, drawing, and illustration.

Artist Statement: I thought that growing up meant leaving behind the insecurities and confusion I felt as a teen, but my relationship with my identity as a bi woman has only become more volatile and complicated as I've gotten older. This piece is meant to capture the feelings of uncertainty I am having as I try to make peace with myself and the world around me.

Stars Above, Returning Home: Growing Old With So Much Love

By Karla Denisse

FLASH FICTION

It was a cool August night when they slipped away from their friends' judging eyes.

The party was so big, so carefully planned, so crowded with drinks and noise that no one would notice they were gone. They stole a small plate of cheese, grapes, crackers, and some red wine. They climbed up to the roof, then to their secret hideout: that place where city lights blurred into distant stars and the buildings turned into mountains painting the skyline.



Up there, everything felt softer. No whispers about the tension between them; no curious glances. Just them, unseen, watching the world below.

In the hush between laughter and stories, her beloved kissed Babi gently—as if life itself wasn't in a rush. Lips soft as feathers, a hand resting on her thigh, and endless possibilities traced in quiet talks of a shared future.

Years later, the memory caught Babi off guard as she brushed her hair the way her grandmother once did. Her hand still bore the faded trace of a tattoo she got in her youth, when life was laughter and drinks and drama and infinite horizons.

She remembered it as if it were yesterday: the thrill of going against the grain, of loving her beloved so fiercely it almost hurt. Loving a woman taught Babi to savor life's brief, sweet moments. Before her beloved, she had defined herself only by what she'd lost.

Losses that once felt immense, now small enough to slip into her pockets: the favorite aunt who turned out to be homophobic; her mother gone when she came out as bisexual; fleeting friends; her body that changed; the hometown left behind; the car she crashed; the shaken self-confidence; fragile fragments of health. But not her beloved.

Over the years, strength faded—not just in muscle but in spirit. Her heart grew weary of goodbyes. Plans, worries, choices left unmade became heavy columns around her soul.

Babi had always been, in some quiet way, a deeply sad person—understandable, given all she'd endured. Yet her essence survived the whirlpool of swimming upstream. Then, somewhere between turning 30 and attending her mother's funeral at 56, she chose to keep living fully—and she would choose it again a thousand times over.

All because, for Babi, loving her beloved made aging stop being about loss. Thanks to her, Babi knew what it meant to have a home. The happy memories painted her blue sky with yellow light. Then she found the strength to keep searching for herself, to defend what she wanted, to keep living new memories and resisting the world's hate they had once faced together.

And right there, on the verge of what some would call her final days, she understood at last: her youth had been about learning, stumbling, resisting. To grow older was to return to herself—to meet each new version of who she had become.

Reaching 70—once her dreaded age—had cost them 399 and one more blows, but without each other, the journey wouldn't have tasted the same.

"For the ancient Mexicans," Babi thought to herself, "death was not an end but the beginning of a new form of existence." But why wait until death? Death may be rebirth—but aging is happening now. And maybe, just maybe, it means coming home to yourself. You have to choose it, every day.

She turned to her beloved wife, smiled softly, and whispered: "Come on, let's live."

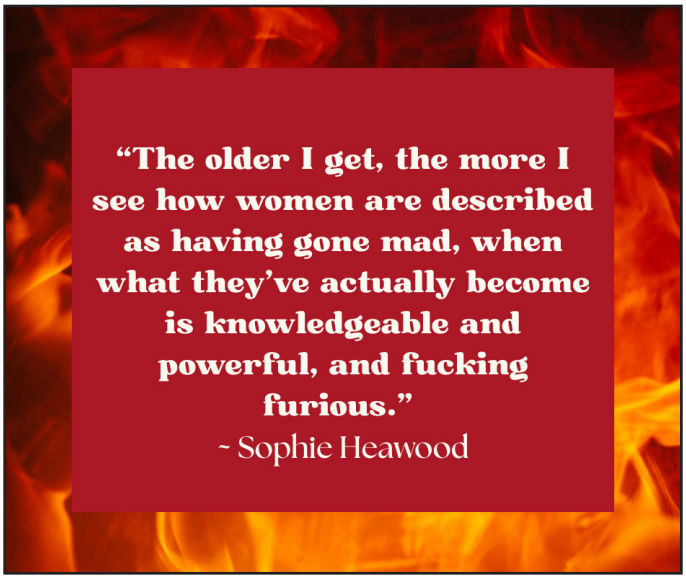
Karla Denisse, a bisexual, gender-fluid storyteller and marketer is drawn to gender equality, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and the quiet power of creativity. Queer activist, dreamer of safer spaces, believer in small revolutions. Beyond advocacy, you'll find Karla enjoying films, poetry, croissants—and soft afternoons with her dog.

I Am Old, Thank You Very Much

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

"Aging is inevitable; growing old is optional."

As I have been steeping myself with all things aging for this issue, I came upon the above quote that encapsulates one attitude toward aging that really annoys me. Separating the concepts of "aging" and "growing old" is one of those linguistic contortions that people put themselves through to continually fight against the idea that they are indeed getting old. They protest it so much you would think that when you say you are old you are saying that you are a horrible person, or that old equals decrepit or infirm. And basically, it reifies being young as the only acceptable thing to aspire to (though it is an impossibility to aspire to be younger, we only age in one direction). It is the classic binary where one side (youth) has the automatic superiority to the other side (old age).



My question is, what's wrong with being old? I am 65 now and **I am old**. Thankfully. So what? Aging is aging is aging. Everyone does it differently and denying that you are old won't mean you will stay alive any longer. How do I know I am old? Because I am not young. (See binary above.)

Does one *feel* old? One day, my close friendship circle went around the group and asked the question, "How old do you feel inside?" We had been discussing how there is a disconnect between our actual age and how we feel from within. We also explored how looking at ourselves in the mirror sometimes or seeing a current photo of ourselves can be jarring—am I really *that* old? So, we pondered what that internal age would be for each of us and there was a wide range of responses. I said that I usually felt between 35-40—until my back ached or my arthritic knees brought me to my senses.

Which brings us back to the very physical nature of aging and why people are so damned sensitive about admitting their bodies have begun to change and, yes, deteriorate. For Americans, who are especially obsessed with the anti-aging cult, admitting that one's body is weakening is seen as giving in, capitulating to aging and all the negative associations that go along with it. You are supposed to fight against it and if you don't, then you are truly judged for it. I think it is better to admit to the pain and limitations that aging eventually offers us. Face them and create connections with others who experience similar challenges.

Another way I know I am old is because of how younger people interact with me. Ageism is real and microaggressions pop up as you walk through life with an old body and grey hair. Recently, I actually had a sales assistant explain to me how I could order something online, and she started going into great detail as if I didn't understand the internet or something. I was caught off guard until I realized what was going on. *Now I get it.* This is why people don't want to appear old, because we know damn well that others will treat us differently—assuming cognitive decline or physical weakness without needing any evidence—and we want to delay that for as long as possible. The only place that age apparently doesn't seem to matter is if you are an incumbent office holder; people just keep electing you no matter how old you are, as if you are owed the job until you die. (And god forbid anyone challenges an incumbent by mentioning their age! And look how well that turned out.)

As someone who has often been involved with community-building activities, I'm skilled at meeting new people and finding ways to connect. But I have witnessed over time how that experience has changed as I age. These are my own observations, and they might be different for you, but I find that younger people no longer see me as someone they'd like to get to know on a personal level. If there are other reasons to converse—professional, volunteerism, organizing, etc.—that is still fine, but now I feel there is a generational barrier that prevents going past a certain level of getting to know each other. When it does happen, it makes it that much more special.

I've talked to a lot of bi+ folks who have been in long-term loving relationships with a single partner, and they have shared how sometimes that longevity challenges their sense of being bi+. I've never had that feeling internally, but I do sense that people observe my long-term relationship with my current female partner and cast doubt on my bisexuality. Which also demonstrates that a lot of people don't understand that bisexuality isn't about our partners; it is about our own desires and attractions. Being a part of a vibrant bi+ community in Boston for over 30 years makes me grateful for having that homebase to return to for validation and understanding about my bi identity. And we're lucky to have many single elders as well as varied partnerships as visible role models of how to live bisexual lives into our later years.

And that touches on something else I've observed over time. In a lot of people's minds, bisexuals can't be old. Huh? First of all, because bisexuality is still interpreted by many as being sexually promiscuous and people age out of that behavior, right? Similarly, if you are polyamorous, everyone knows that only young people are poly, right? And, if you are monogamous, then it's thought that you must have chosen either a straight or gay identity by then, so no more bisexuality. So many assumptions leading to the erasure of the experiences of older bi+ people!

When I turned 50, I experienced some losses that sparked me to assess what I had done in life and what else I still wanted to do. I also had a growing sense that some options were narrowing, which is such an un-American thing to admit. We are supposed to believe, "You can do whatever you want to do whenever you want to do it." That damn optimism and denialism! I actually came to realize that I wished I had had a stronger inclination to do certain things earlier in my life and had not succumbed to that unrealistic belief of perpetual youthful zeal.

Turning 65 has made me appreciate where I am and has prompted me to connect more with the people who have shaped my life. There is an understanding that—while I am still healthy and not in danger of immediate death—I realistically *could* die and I want to be prepared. I want to have meaningful connections now with people I care about, and I don't want to regret not tying up loose ends. For example, I just had a wonderful visit with a good friend of mine from when I lived in England in the 1980s. We haven't been able to see each other in person for 15 years, but it was like that gap disappeared as soon as we saw each other. Those deep, long-time connections can be so healing.

And therein is the secret to life (or at least my secret), to enjoying the process of aging, to just about anything. Connection. I don't want to be cliché about it, but exploring the connections we have to others, to our communities, to our passions, to whatever spiritual journeys we choose, it really is about finding and deepening those connections as we meander along life's passages. And as an older woman, my slower pace helps me to appreciate and celebrate all of those many connections that have given my own life meaning.

Ellyn Ruthstrom is this issue's guest editor and has been involved with the Boston Bisexual Women's Network, Bi Women Quarterly *and the* Bi Women Newsletter *for nearly three decades. She's been secure in her bisexual identity since she turned 30 and has no plans of revising it.*



Gravestone Recipes *By Alexandra Compton*

Today I learned about gravestone recipes
the practice of etching our signature
dish at our final resting place.
The greatest gift my grandma gave me
was her basic white bread recipe
because every time I make it
my home is filled with her love
and memories of us baking together.
I share this presence with my family
baking loaves to break with my sisters
on days we wish we could share with her.
It is how my fiancé met my grandma
through a warm slice of bread
and my memories of her, recalled
in a sweet-smelling haze of loaves and love.
Together, we baked much more than just bread
but it was this I always begged to make with her
whether it was the taste or her time or her trust
in me of this legacy, I couldn't get enough.
It is this that would be her gravestone recipe
if she had one, but instead it is me
who has been trusted to continue this tradition.
All of our celebrations center on sharing food
these moments of memory trapped in crumbs
for us to chew on when the years have long been swallowed.
I wonder what people will remember me by
be it a cake or a book or perhaps this elegiac bread
will I leave a legacy of love in my wake?

Alexandra Compton (b. 1999) is a writer and artist from Glasgow, Scotland. Her debut poetry pamphlet, A Thousand Binding Moments *(Bookleaf Publishing), was published in 2022 and her visual poetry installation,* In the Folds*, was exhibited at Glasgow Women's Library in 2025.*

Brown Girl

By S. Reddy

FLASH FICTION

When some of the glow-in-the-dark stars started dangling precariously from a piece of ceiling paint and spinning on hot summer days, she decided they counted as shooting stars. Even as winter came, she secretly shivered under her covers just to watch them. And when all the stars fell by the end of third grade and she still didn't have anyone pronounce her name correctly or sign her yearbook, she threw the yearbook in the trash along with the stars and decided to give up on this stupid, stupid, stupid wishing.

When she eats her first samosa on Newbury Street in November of her first year of college, she blinks and blinks and blinks again so her bright, new, human friend doesn't leave or think she's weird and she didn't even know this whole time, these 18 years, that she even liked this food, that she even liked her country (which one is supposed to be her country again?), that she was something, someone, brown and patched up and broken and whole, and all for this subpar and overpriced samosa which her dad would have gotten for her from the Indian store for half the price and double the quantity. The yearning for something, for always wanting to be someone else, to breathe a different air, to be away from the onions and garlic and vegetables that she couldn't ever properly enter into MyFitnessPal because it doesn't know, doesn't understand, doesn't speak her language. The samosa, it means something. It means something and she doesn't know it yet or she's known her whole life. She's brown when the sun starts setting, brighter when the moon starts setting and it all must mean something.

A couple years later, in her claustrophobic studio apartment she pulls open her spice cabinet drawer and pops the lids off the cinnamon and garlic powder and onion powder and cumin and coriander and mustard seeds and cardamom pods and ground ginger and all at once she pours the entirety of every single container on the countertop. Droplets fall on top of the small mountain she created, causing a tsunami, a monsoon, an earthquake, something larger than herself, and then it all turns to a mudslide.

She remembers now, the packaging of those stars, the bright blue color of flimsy cardboard that matched the color of the sticky tack she used to steal from teachers. Remembers wondering why all these kids and movies and quiz books listed invisibility as a superpower worthy of a multiple choice option when she would give up all the sticky tack in the world to be seen. The back of the package explained that stars need the darkness to shine but they also need the sunlight to give them energy. All these years later, she can close her eyes and picture the glow. It's deep inside her—that longing, the taste, the smell of that bright pink room with the stenciled purple hearts.

S. Reddy (she/her) lives in Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

Villanelle for After I Wake Up, But Before I Open My Eyes

After the song "When" by dodie

By Golda Grais

I wished I could be sixteen again.
It was a moment of weakness in my twin-size bed,
which I wouldn't wish for my worst enemy, or my best friend.

At ten, I pictured my classmates watching me through the air vents
constantly. I arched my back and fetishized the color red.
I wished I could be sixteen. Again

and again, I never felt congruence with the size of my head.
At fifteen, I craved a flat chest. I resented the moment I finally bled,
which I wouldn't wish for. My worst enemy or my best friend

might find me, and the girl looking back would inevitably upend.
At twenty-three, I gripped tight to the comforter, its worried thread.
I wished I could be sixteen again,
and I wondered if I might wake my weary pen
if I kept my eyes closed. There was a fear to look ahead,
which I wouldn't wish for my worst enemy. Or my best friend,

who said: you were a child, once. It was going to happen.
As the sun began to rise, it dawned on me, that dread.
I wished I could be sixteen again,
which I wouldn't wish for my worst enemy, or my best friend.

Golda Grais is a writer and artist from Chicago, Illinois, USA. Her works of prose and poetry have been previously published in Harrow House Journal, The Mourning Paper, B O D Y, *and* The New York Times, *among others.*

Peace is a Gift You Give Yourself, and the World

By Laurie Wolfe

I'm reclaiming the word Sissy.
We reclaimed Queer; well, others did, and it was such a brilliant thing.
But sissy; well, sissy still sounds a bit harsh to my brain.
So, now, I'm reclaiming sissy.
I'm reclaiming it cause it's the right thing to do.
And, being old; well, I'm sure you've heard that canard,
old people don't care what others think.
At least, I've given up on caring about what they think
about the word sissy.

Not just because it was the word I had to avoid
as a child.
Mostly, because when I was in my chiropractor's office,
I was talking with another woman. I was there to get fixed up
on the heels of another visit to the hospital
after having had another little stroke.
We were two old ladies commiserating about needing extra care,
and I was just about to say aging ain't for sissies,
when I realized this wasn't inclusive, or fair to myself.
And I found myself saying, instead,
I want a t-shirt that says
Aging is for Sissies, too.

That was the only word we had as a child that I knew.
And I never, ever wanted anyone to know that.
It was dangerous to be a sissy then.
A boy who liked girl things, wanted girl things;
wanted to be a girl.
The world didn't have the words. The culture.
It didn't have me.
And,
I wasn't there
in that world.

The woman I was speaking with at the office
laughed. She got the whole thing.
And then she shared about moving
into a residence that has a large population
of LGBTQ folks (20%!),
and then, she told me about her wife.

Aging is good,
Because we get to have peace, or make peace with ourselves
if not the world. With our beginnings,
our middles, our endings.
And we make friends

we find others who accept us
as much as we
accept ourselves.





Laurie Wolfe lives near Boston, Massachusetts, USA and is bi, queer, trans, femme, nerd, and spiritual. She believes we come from the universe, and we co-create with it. That people (animals, nature) are all part of our story. "Write a good one, please, and, thank you for being kind, and loving."

Artist Statement: *When I first considered writing for this issue about aging, I was thinking how we don't know when we're newly arrived, or thereafter, that the world will grow with us, and vice versa. Now that I'm older, I see how the beginning of my life goes with the middle, and the end. It's kinda like reading a novel, or as I wrote in an earlier form, like* Babylon 5*, a sci-fi series. Except, it's all about life, not fiction. Also, the events I wrote about occurred very recently, which provided me with another way to touch on this idea.*

For Him *After Phoebe Wahl's Painting "Spring"*

By Karen Quickley

In this image there's
This beautiful man (you),
And a wife, probably,
Who looks something
Like me (or at least like who
I once could have been).

There are children—
The daughter, in a bright
Red wool coat, carrying
Her toddler brother who
Is all bundled up for
This cool spring day.

Lightly, it's raining,
And I'm carrying fresh-
Cut daffodils in my basket.
You've got the umbrella
And are keeping
Both of us dry.

I'll always remember
Your corduroy pants
(A funny detail) and
These light pink petals
Falling like snow here
And there because
Of the rain and the wind.

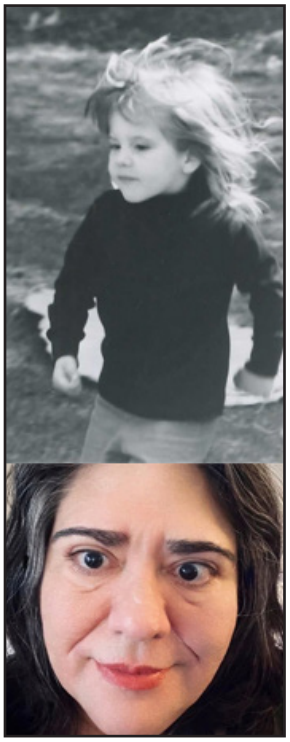
If I'd really made it here
(There), surely it would
Have been in the midst
Of a bit of weather.

And it still seems
Like it could have
Happened like this—
Somehow; some way.
If only this—if only that.

How far away
And out of reach
You seem (and certainly
Our children, now that
I'm perimenopausal).

How I want the shape
Of no other man on top
Of me in my bed.
How I might never have
You there (here).

I'm 49 now, and it's
Hard to keep waiting.
Thank you for your
Great brown beard;
Thank you for your
Kindness. Thank you
For being the best
And for imbuing
My consciousness
With my favorite dream
That I now can see
So clearly.



Karen Quickley (she/her) is a bi+ feminist poet and writer residing in the Cleveland, Ohio area in the U.S. Her work has been featured in numerous print and online publications and has been nominated for Best of the Net. More at karenquickley.net.

To Laurie Holden

By A. Kahn

Thank you for your
soft "Ohh" when I mention
seeing you in *The Majestic*
I'm as awkward at thirty-three
as sixteen
taping your picture to my wall
You inherently understand
when all I can do is blush
and slide my *Silent Hill* movie case
across the convention table



Laurie Holden

You call me beautiful

A. Kahn is a Midwestern writer and artist who loves reading, watching movies, and doing jigsaw puzzles. Her prose has been published in Of Rust and Glass, *poetry in various publications including* ONE ART, Livina Press, confetti, *and* redrosethorns, *and artwork in the horror anthology* Cafe Macabre II.



NEWS BRIEFS

By Robyn Ochs & Ellyn Ruthstrom



The Trump Administration began an assault on transgender Americans upon taking office in January 2025. Among their actions: banning transgender people from military service, restricting the option for trans and intersex folks to change the sex field of their passports to reflect their gender identity and eliminating the "X" option; prohibiting gender-affirming care for trans people under the age of 19; implementing policies forcing trans women into facilities based on sex assigned at birth; rescinding policies protecting trans (and other LGBQ) individuals from discrimination in health care; blocking schools from requiring teachers and other school staff to use names and pronouns that align with trans students' gender identity rather than the sex they were assigned at birth, eliminating federal funding for LGBTQ+-related research studies, and removing mentions of trans people from federal websites.



One of the sites from which transgender people were erased was the Stonewall National Monument—this despite the reality that transgender individuals were central to the 1969 Stonewall Uprising. Just one month in, transgender people were digitally erased from the Stonewall National Monument. And on May 28th, the administration went on to erase bisexual people from their History and Culture page. The Stonewall National Monument page originally stated that "before the 1960s, almost everything about living openly as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+) person was illegal." As of publication, all references to transgender people remain deleted, and one reference to bisexual people has been added back.

Within our own bi+ community, we must keep the history alive, remembering that out-and-proud bisexual rights activist Brenda Howard—referred to as "the Mother of Pride"—was a key organizer of the Christopher Street Liberation Day March on the first anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, beginning the enduring tradition of Pride marches.

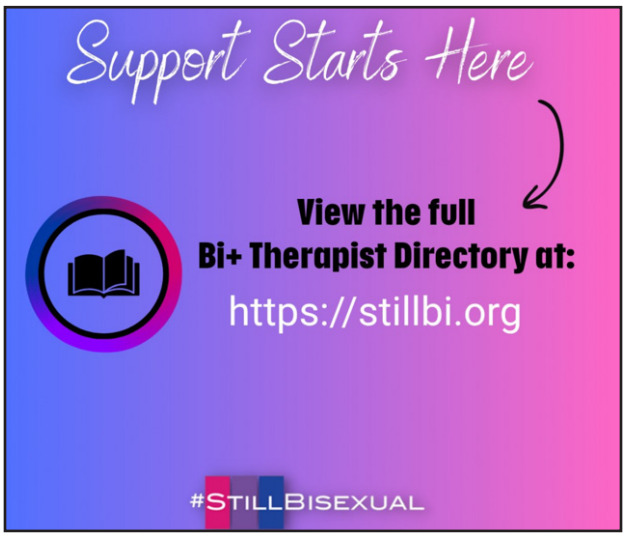


On a happier note, **Maud Angelica Behn** has become the first member of the Norwegian royal family to publicly come out as LGBTQ+. She wrote in an Instagram post: "Happy Pride from a bisexual person. This year's Pride was absolutely amazing and there was so much love." Her mother, Princess Martha Louise, showed her support by attending Norway's largest LGBTQ+ festival in Oslo.

New resource for the LGBTQ+ Community: The creators of an online resource for queer-friendly drug rehab centers, reached out to BWQ to get the word out to our readers about their website. https://drugrehabus.org/rehabs/treatment/lgbtqa.

There's more good news and more sad news. The good news is that **Still Bisexual** has produced a directory of **Bi+ Therapists.** Each therapist answered questions about how they would handle bi+ scenarios/challenges with clients in a way Still Bisexual felt was bi-competent. Nonetheless, they cannot attest to the quality of their care in other regards. The bi+ community's mental health needs are often overlooked; "LGBTQ+ affirming" often hides that they are not specifically trained on bi+ needs.

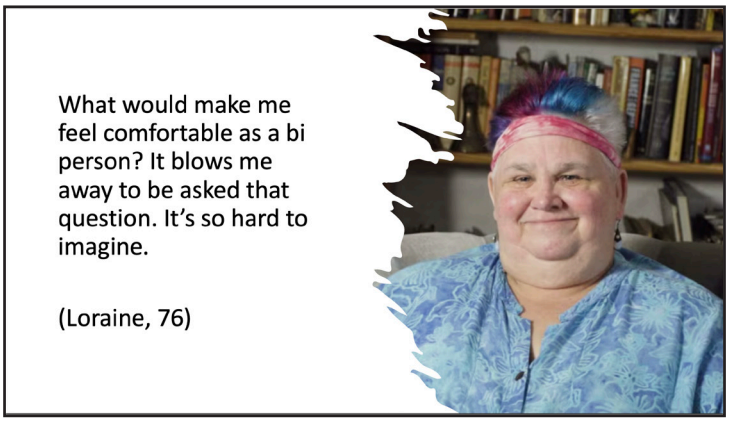
The sad news is that Still Bisexual is closing down the organization for future programs and new developments. However, StillBi.org will remain as an online resource and will host the directory for many years to come. A huge shoutout to Nicole Kristal who saw a need and created a wonderful organization that used the power of storytelling to share the real life experiences of bi+ people, helping to validate and celebrate our lives, loves, and identities.



RESEARCH CORNER: Addressing the Needs of Bi+ Elders

By Robyn Ochs

In the spring of 2024, I was invited to keynote a digital conference, LGBTQ+ Elders in an Ever-Changing World. Intrigued, I accepted the invitation and got to work. I know *a lot* about bisexual people, but—other than being in the process of becoming an elder myself—I had read little on this subject. Fortunately, I know folks who also know a lot about bi+ people. I asked them what resources were out there, and what I should read. I soon learned that there was very little written on this specific topic. I read what I could find, and some of it (special shout out to the work of BobBi Keppel) was very helpful.



I wanted to bring the voices and perspectives of actual bi+ elders into my keynote, and so I conducted a small, qualitative study. Using what I call my #BiHive (my personal and social media contacts), I interviewed 11 seniors, ranging in age from 62-91. Interviews were conducted on Zoom, by phone, or by email. Some people requested that their actual first name be used; others selected pseudonyms.

I asked each person demographic questions (age, gender identity, geographic location, whether they live at home or in assisted living, current relationship status, race, ability/disability status, etc.), and several open-ended questions about their beliefs and preferences.

One question was: ***"In your opinion, in what ways are the experiences/needs of bi+ elders similar/distinct from those of lesbian or gay elders?"***

Reported similarities included:

"We share a common experience of oppression and battle scars. We are not accepted by many in mainstream society." (BobBi, 91)

"Gay is gay to a lot of people. If you say you're bi, straight people think that's just part of the gay." (Loraine, 76)

"For bi men, the impact of the AIDS pandemic. We've experienced the death of so many of our peers, and also the natural deaths and ailments that come with age." (Ron, 81)

"I would never hide that my kids have two moms, thus invalidating their life experience." (Laurie, 62, now partnered with a man)

"For some of us, there is no difference that I can think of: I identify as bi, but I live as lesbian." (Rose, 71)

Differences included:

"Bi folks have to deal with the bi negativity that we've had to deal with at every age. For women, the worst oppression we experience is from lesbians. Assuming we live long enough to be old, we have all that experience. I've noticed that older lesbians are more oppressive of bis than are younger lesbians." (BobBi, 91)

"The trauma of being ostracized doesn't go away. Some lesbians and gay men have done to bisexual people what was done to them by others." (Ron, 81)

"I do not feel understood as a bi person. Hardly anyone here has even a glimmer of what I'm trying to say. I feel really isolated and misunderstood. People make a lot of assumptions about me that aren't true." (Loraine, 76)

"If I were a gay man, I would have had an instant, visible, and long-lasting community that's still there. But I have no bi+ community, except on the internet and in Zoom rooms." (Ron, 81)

"One of the ways in which aging bi+ folk are different from aging LG folk that I've experienced, is that while LG folk find the LGBTQ support group a place where they can relax immediately (in terms of their sexuality), I have to make decisions with new people about how safe it feels to come out and when to do so. I'm not willing to be in the closet (and this may be due to having a cis-het male partner or maybe it's just me), but I know there are some people who may not feel they can be all of who they are even in a space that's designated LGBTQ." (Melinda, 66)

I asked folks to imagine they were planning to move to a retirement community with two options available. Assuming that they could afford either, and that each provided similar size, structure, and basic services, but one was a "general public" community and the other was specifically LGBTQ+ housing, I asked which they would choose. Most chose the LGBTQ+ option, but it was clear that the gender of their current partner—if any—was a factor, as was whether the individual is culturally LGBTQ+.

I asked a series of questions to identify best practices for providers. The questions were:

As a bi+ elder visiting a health care provider, I would feel more welcome and comfortable if _____. Responses included a desire to be asked how they identify, rather than having assumptions made that they were gay or straight; an acknowledgment that they might have a sex life; bi+ specific text on their website, and bi+ specific materials displayed in the reception area and on treatment room walls; a staff that is diverse in terms of sexuality, gender identity and expression, race, etc.; that the provider understand the difference between identity and behavior—being aware that saying you are bi doesn't necessarily mean you have multiple partners or are even sexually active at all.

As a bi+ elder living in a retirement community, I would feel more welcome and comfortable if _____. People wanted to see LGBTQIA+ welcoming signage on the premises, wanted Pride to be acknowledged and celebrated, and that there be LGBTQ+-specific programs. Some wanted to see bi+ programming and to know there were other visible bi+ folks around.

As a bi+ elder about to join in a cancer support group or a bereavement group, I would feel more welcome and comfortable if _____. Suggestions included a statement of acceptance of all genders and identities; that group leaders undergo LGBTQ+ and bi+ sensitivity training, use inclusive language, and be committed to interrupting negative reactions or comments from group members; to have other LGBTQ+ people in the group; and to have the option of an LGBTQ+ group.

As a bi+ elder dependent on care for activities of daily living, I would feel more welcome and comfortable if _____. Respondents wanted a caretaker who knew and accepted their identity; if possible, an LGBTQ+ caretaker; sensitivity training and a management prepared to intervene, if needed; to feel comfortable putting up family photos; to have more than one partner visiting; and to be simply asked what they want, rather than have others assume things for them.

The keynote was very well received, and I have since presented on this subject elsewhere. I'm currently looking for more opportunities to share out what I've learned, as this is a subject about which most caregivers know very little.

And finally, I have decided to expand this study. I've now interviewed 19 individuals and would like to speak with at least 35. If you are a bi+ elder (defined here as 60+), live in the U.S., and would like to be interviewed, please reach out to me at robyn@robynochs.com.

NOTE: A bibliography accompanies this article on the *Bi Women Quarterly* website.

Robyn Ochs is an educator, speaker, grassroots advocate, and editor of Bi Women Quarterly *and two anthologies: the 42-country collection* Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World *and* RECOGNIZE: The Voices of Bisexual Men.



Boston's bi elders were out and proud for the Pride for the People March on June 14. This group alone represents over 100 years of bi activism! They've worked on marriage equality, Don't Ask, Don't Tell, transgender rights, and many other issues. They are cultural workers, have been bi support group leaders, they've written for or edited this publication, have written or published books about bisexuality, and so much more. Cheers to the elders!

Bi+ Platform Goes to Amsterdam

By Sobi Buchhammer

As bi+ activists from Russia, my colleague Nadja Arontschik and I understand the importance of international connections. This is especially so now when queer communities in many countries are experiencing a new wave of discrimination. So, when we heard that Robyn Ochs, an American bi+ activist, educator, and writer, was coming to Amsterdam, we wanted to travel from other parts of Europe in which we are living to attend her workshop and, of course, participate in Amsterdam Pride on boats. The organization that hosted us as guests, our good friend and ally, was Bi+ Netherlands.



Robyn Ochs speaking at the H'art Museum in Amsterdam on July 30th.

The workshop took place on July 30th in the Amsterdam Hermitage building. Can you imagine that? About 80 people gathered in a spacious, bright room. And we were all connected in one way or another to non-monosexual identities. People from several different countries, with different experiences and other identities, but all perfectly understanding what Robyn was talking about from the stage. Biphobia and bi-erasure are part of our everyday lives, and—even if we can't always recognize them right away—we feel them in our skin.



Barbara Oud, head of Bi+ Netherlands, on the Bi+ boat during Canal Pride in Amsterdam.

According to anonymous surveys, over the years more and more people identify themselves on the bi+ spectrum. In addition, this is the largest group within the entire queer community (who would have doubted it, right?). Of course, we discussed the myths surrounding bisexual people and double discrimination. But what was interesting and new to discuss was the feeling of alienation experienced by people who associate themselves with bi+ identities. Why do we experience it? When does it happen? What contributes to it? The feeling of loneliness and misunderstanding among queers and heterosexuals is what unites us, no matter what country we live in.

Two days after the workshop, it was Pride. In Amsterdam, it is customary to hold it on boats in Amsterdam's canals, and we became part of the Bi+ Boat, also organized by Bi+ Netherlands. It was a unique moment. Music, beautiful happy people, locals greeting us and dancing with us from the shore or their own boats. We even made it onto national television, sailing down the canal to the song "Mamma Mia" by ABBA. Despite the festive atmosphere, we were aware that we were representing the Russian-speaking community and that we still have a lot of work ahead of us.

Pride is over, but we will remember this trip for a long time. And it will surely bring new projects and partnerships in the future. We thank everyone who helped us spend this week in Amsterdam in the company of such wonderful people.



Sobi Buchhammer (seen above on the Bi+ boat during Canal Pride) is a bi activist from Russia who has been engaged in activism and raising the visibility of bisexual rights in Russia for over a decade. In 2022, Sobi emigrated because of her open opposition to Putin and Russia's war with Ukraine. And in 2023, together with colleagues from Russia, Sobi created the Bi+ Platform, an association of people and projects focused on increasing acceptance of bisexuals.

All photos with article by Lera Manzovitova.

Read about Bi+ Platform in BWQ, here:

https://www.biwomenquarterly.com/around-the-world-russia/

Movie Review: *Aging Out*

Reviewed by Janie Kang



I guess I'm showing my age when I say I missed the boat in watching the LGBTQ short film hit, *Aging Out*, written and directed by the Canadian social media influencer, Breanne Williamson, who also wrote the clever short film *Coming Out*. I never keep up with the times; my kids laugh at me as I struggle to navigate the remote control if that tells you anything. *Aging Out* is a cute romantic comedy that made its debut at the Rio Theater in Vancouver around October 2023 and is set around the holidays. The main character Jenn (played by Breanne Williamson) is a lesbian charging towards 30. She just broke up with her partner Frankie who seemed to be "The One," the perfect person from whom she felt the "puzzle pieces fit together." Through a series of relatable scenes about the woes of dating as an "older" lesbian (especially a hilarious bathroom encounter), to unexpected surprises of self-discovery, we see Jenn navigating her quest for love with relatable awkwardness, fear, and uncertainty. Although the story had some predictable elements, it was so nice to see a queer romance take center stage rather than be the side character in this film.

While I liked the play on words of "aging out" and how it's supposed to highlight the struggles and transitions we face in life as we get older, particularly when it comes to finding love, I was struck by the fact that most of the characters looked quite young. My old self was a bit disappointed. Jenn's ex and their partner (Frankie and Jade) felt clunky and underdeveloped, and I wished they had more depth. With all the hype built up in the film of Jenn trying to get Frankie back, I thought, "So what, she seems kind of meh to me" versus, "Oh, I can see why you want her back so badly." Maybe the characters were meant to be tropey, the film attempting to poke fun at itself given that the creator is a young social influencer, but it just made Jenn's internal motivation less believable.

Yet, I enjoyed the short film and its very relatable queer quips. The humorous banter and comedic timing between Jenn and her friends made me laugh like someone had spiked my eggnog. I appreciated the bi inclusivity and one-liners. The dialogue was punchy, clever, and hilarious, although the charge faded for me a bit towards the last part of the film.

At times, I forgot that it was supposed to be a short film, and I found myself hungering for more from the plot and characters, which I think is a testament to the skill Breanne, cast, and crew brought to the table. The theme of letting go of societal norms of how one is "supposed" to be, not only within heteronormative standards, but also the boxes we place on ourselves within the queer community, was eye-opening and refreshing.

Thirty is the precipice from which humans seem to universally tip from "I'm cool, young, and will live forever" to "Whelp, this is as good as it gets; it's all downhill from here." Whatever precipice you are at with your age, this film reminds us to embrace the uncertainty of life. So, what are you waiting for? Maybe even break the norm and watch it off-season. Live on the wild side. Once we let go of the need to get to the finish line, we might just find unexpected surprises along the way.

Janie Kang (she/her) lives in the Pacific Northwest region of the U.S. You can often find her stuffing her face with popcorn, mascara running down her face, enthralled in cute, sarcastic rom-coms as she waits for Princess Charming to sweep her off her feet. Or at least attempt a dropkick.

Roaring

By Meg Whelan

Our centime-sized table overfoams with pints
as Jade says *you're gay, right?* and by the time

I blush and admit *I think I like Alicia,*
Jade is already talking tarot and by the time

I give up explaining Alicia's toothy smile
and tweed vest, Jade's tiger tattoo is roaring by the time

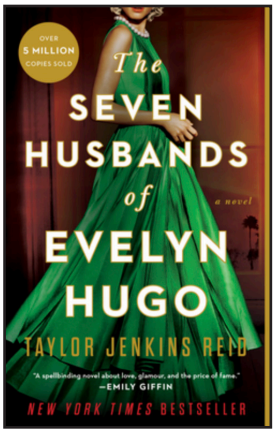
my clammy palms are clinking glasses I become
the girl who liked everybody's earlobes by the time

she was nine but who learned to have boys
and then babies by the time by the time by the time

Meg Whelan (she/her) is a poet born and raised in Kentucky, USA. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Kentucky, where she taught undergraduate poetry and film courses. Her artistic practice integrates text, visual art, and movement as holistic modes of truth-telling. Her work has been supported by So to Speak, Sixfold, and The Kentucky Foundation for Women.

Book Review: *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*

Reviewed by Casey Lawrence



When someone in my mixed-bag book club (instead of everyone reading the same book, we each choose one on a theme and then present it to the group) brought Taylor Jenkins Reid's bestselling *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* to our Pride-themed June meeting, I was baffled. I had heard of it; it's extremely popular on BookTok. But all the marketing for this book—a historical novel about an aging Golden Age actress coming out of seclusion to drop a memoir about her seven salacious marriages and various affairs—painted it as tremendously heterosexual.

"This book is *extremely* bisexual," I was told at that meeting. "Explicitly, loudly, proudly bisexual." I think many *BWQ* readers would be surprised to hear that. I certainly was!

Evelyn Hugo, 79, is no longer the blonde bombshell splashed all over the tabloids, but now she is a woman looking to make amends—and control the narrative of her legacy. Taylor Jenkins Reid renders aging not as a soft fade-out, but as a clarifying lens that brings the history of Hollywood (and all its dirt) into sharp focus. As Evelyn looks back on her life and critically analyzes her own decisions, we see how the industry's obsession with youth and beauty shaped her trajectory by pitting women against each other and discarding them the moment they "lost" their sexual currency.

"People think that intimacy is about sex. But intimacy is about truth. When you realize you can tell someone your truth, when you can show yourself to them, when you stand in front of them bare and their response is 'you're safe with me'—that's intimacy."

While the industry eventually grew tired of Evelyn when she was no longer a 1950s sex symbol or 1960s femme fatale, maturity also gives Evelyn power: the power to shed the burden of performance and the confidence to confront truths she once had to bury. In this way, the book treats aging as a form of liberation. Evelyn hires upstart journalist Monique Grant to write her biography, but the central conceit of the novel (the "why did she choose me to tell her story?") is the least interesting aspect of the book.

Frankly, by the end, I was not invested in Monique's life; I could have read Evelyn's story without the framing interview. But Evelyn. Oh, I was *invested* in Evelyn: her drama, her perseverance, and especially her tumultuous relationship with girl-next-door actress Celia St. James.

"Doesn't it bother you? That your husbands have become such a headline story, so often mentioned, that they have nearly eclipsed your work and yourself? That all anyone talks about […] are the seven husbands of Evelyn Hugo?" […]

"No," she told me. "Because they are just husbands.* I *am Evelyn Hugo."

A combination of Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, Evelyn Hugo is the kind of starlet that captivates, even on the page rather than the stage. From her humble beginning as Evelyn Herrera, desperate to use her adolescent sexuality to get out of Hell's Kitchen, to the recently post-partum actress willing to depict a female orgasm on film for the first time to prove that motherhood (and turning 40) don't neuter sexuality, Evelyn is a force to be reckoned with from age 14 to 79.

She isn't likeable. Not all of her decisions are commendable or righteous. She is a manipulative, egotistic, cold-hearted bitch. But she's also a lover. A mother. A deeply devoted wife to at least some of her husbands. Better than likeable, she's *interesting*. She's complicated. She feels real in a way that, speaking as a writer myself, is damned hard to do. We can excuse Reid for not developing Monique when she's up against such a powerhouse. *Anyone* would be eclipsed when standing beside Evelyn Hugo.

The book is fiercely and unapologetically political. It is a riveting story that features a biracial narrator; a bisexual, Cuban protagonist; a lesbian main character; multiple gay men as main characters; and a diverse cast in general. The word "bisexual" is used deliberately, firmly. Assumptions are challenged. Biphobia called out. I wasn't expecting that, even once I knew that Evelyn Hugo loved a woman, too.

Taylor Jenkins Reid did a great job painting a complex portrait of an actress who saw it all and lived to tell the tale. Evelyn uses her final years not to rewrite history, but to bring the truth out of the shadows once it can no longer hurt the people she loved. The husbands she bamboozled; the one that beat her; the lavender marriage; the ones who cheated; the ones she loved; the ones she didn't. Each husband gets his own section of her story, but through it all, there is Celia, the woman Evelyn Hugo kept running back to. It's a love story for the ages, and one I'm glad I picked up!

Casey Lawrence (she/they) has a PhD from Trinity College Dublin. After taking a five-year hiatus from creative writing to pursue her doctorate, Casey published her third Young Adult novel with JMS Books in 2023. She is from Ontario, Canada, and currently lives in Sweden with her husband, Rhys. Her fiction has recently appeared in SKIN: Anthology of Dark Fiction, Polar Borealis: Magazine of Canadian Speculative Fiction, Broken Antler Magazine, *and* Stone Quarterly Literary Arts Journal. *Find her on Bluesky @myexplodingpen.bsky.social.*



TV Review: *Adults*: Gen Z's Version of *Friends*

Reviewed by Taylor Rose Raucher



The opening scene of FX's new comedy *Adults* features our five main characters snuggled up on the subway. It is evident from their casual intimacy that there is a history of friendship and some tangled emotions. The scene devolves into a vulgar subway masturbation stand-off, but it is clear that there is heart and there is humor (that will be hit or miss).

Four of the five main characters—Billie, Anton, Samir, and Issa—are all living in Samir's childhood home while his parents are off traveling the world. They are attempting to navigate jobs, bills, and romance in a world that is more complex and frustrating than the one their elders grew up in. Finding small victories, in sometimes dubious circumstances, makes being an adult a little more attainable.

The show's dynamic is similar to ensemble comedies before it, like *Friends* that helped raise Gen X, and *How I Met Your Mother* or *New Girl* which were pivotal for millennials. The cast sells the chemistry between the characters naturally, though occasionally the drama skyrockets out of the audience's suspension of disbelief.

At least two of the main characters are confirmed to be queer: Anton is a gay black man going through a "sex drought" and the charming Canadian Paul Baker reminds the others several times that he is sexually fluid. Their sexualities are not presented as barriers in the show—there are no "coming out" storylines—but rather are brought up as nudges for the audience that say sexualities are part of their identities, and therefore part of them as complete people.

The show gets credit for normalizing queer folk in friend groups, but it still focuses mainly on hetero storylines. Billie, a 20-something, briefly dates her old teacher who is twice her age; Samir is unlucky in love but trying to rekindle a romance with his ex-girlfriend; the sexually fluid Paul Baker is dating Issa. For most of the season, the gay man of color, Anton, is single with no promising love interests.

The season features many comedic highs, from accidentally inviting the neighborhood stabber in for a drink to someone being high on ketamine during a fancy sit-down dinner. When the comedy works, it works well. However, there are many uneven moments where the humor is either too crass or too flat to get a laugh. It is a mixed bag but the highs often cancel out the lows.

Most of the romantic moments, when not played for laughs, are tender moments between Anton and Paul Baker. They are discovering their feelings for each other, behind Issa's back, throughout the first season, and it is treated with great care. The depiction of falling in love, butterflies and all, is sweet and kind, never treating the characters' sexualities as a joke.

Perhaps a second season will explore Anton and Paul Baker's relationship more deeply, and give opportunities for other characters (main or secondary) to explore themselves. It could also find a better balance of comedy, relying on the humor that worked so well in the first season and cutting the duller or more vulgar parts. As of the writing of this review, no second season has been announced.

It is comforting to have a modern comedy that treats the lives of 20-somethings with understanding: this world is different from the world of *Friends* and it's a lot harder, too. Featuring two main male characters with queer identities, including one man of color, is not revolutionary anymore. It's normal. The strongest part of *Adults* is the chemistry and affection between the characters; the radical acceptance that these new generations demonstrate could be a lesson for us all.



Taylor Rose Raucher is a writer from Western Massachusetts, USA. She has been published in Bi Women Quarterly, Historic Northampton, *and works part-time for* Mosaic Magazine. *She credits much of her success to the support and guidance of her cats.*

Boston Bi Women's Network Book Swap Brunch
Saturday, September 20, Noon-3pm

Ellyn and Kara are hosting the much-anticipated annual BBWN book swap and brunch in Melrose, north of Boston. It's a great opportunity to talk about books and to pass along great reads for others to enjoy. You don't have to bring books to participate, but you do need to bring a dish or beverage to share for brunch. Email elruthstrom@gmail to RSVP and for address.

CALENDAR



Digital brunch, July 2025

A special invitation to our readers

EVERYWHERE:

Please join the Boston Bisexual Women's Network at one (or all) of our digital brunches. We are proud of our community of women (trans and cis) and nonbinary folks, and we would love to make connections across the country and globe. Grab your coffee or tea and some food while we chat about bi+ issues and other fun topics.

Digital brunches will be held on the following dates starting at 1 p.m. EDT/EST:

Sun., October 12
Sat., November 8
Sun., December 7

Please join us! Info/RSVP: BWQEvents@gmail.com.

(Note: Dates are subject to change. Check BiWomenBoston.org to confirm date.)



Bi+ Community summer picnic on Boston Common

Consider this: **If you rarely (or never) see people like yourself represented in print, your voice is especially important. When you lift your voice, someone, somewhere will FINALLY see their own experiences reflected, perhaps for the first time. (See our calls for writing on page 2.**

Bi+ World Meetup Nov. 7th

Join us at the 17th Bi+ World Meetup on Friday, November 7th at 4 pm EST/ 10 pm CET. Bi+ people everywhere are invited to join us on Zoom. We'll use breakout rooms to give folks an opportunity to join each other in a friendly and free setting. The meeting is in English and is facilitated by Barbara Oud (the Netherlands) and Robyn Ochs (U.S.). Pre-registration is required.

Register at https://biplus.nl/biplus-world-meetup.

Metro-Boston Bi+ Women and Nonbinary Folks: Keep up with local events. Subscribe to our Google group: https://groups.google.com/g/biwomenboston

Check out BiWomenBoston.org for info about upcoming **in-person** events for women with bi+ (bi, pan, fluid, and other nonbinary) sexualities, sponsored by the Boston Bisexual Women's Network.

Show your pride!



Our pride earrings, flags, and pins are beautiful, affirming, affordable, and -- on top of all this -- support Bi Women Quarterly!

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