

***Getting rid
of the Shame and the Shit***

Thoughts on ...

- ... (not) Being Part of a Couple
- ... Romantic Relationships
- ... (not) Having Sex
- ... MASCULINITY
- ... Beauty, Power & Attractiveness
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Painting my Middle Finger Nail Dark Red

Thoughts on Female* Self-Sex

[no preamble]

I've been drinking
a bottle of shame

and now I am sick

I've been drinking
a bottle of shame
it infiltrated
my body feeling

now I am sick

I feel so wrong
I feel so wrong
I know it is the bottle's fault

I can't get it off
I can't get it off
I can't get it off my mind

and I am so sick
of the shame

[131213]

The Shared Story Bonus

Thoughts on (not) Being Part of a Couple I

One reason to live as a couple – I dare assume – is to have that *one* person everything to share with.

To share your whole life with (even if only for a while)

- all the tiny aspects, all the changes and developments, the joys and fears and contradictions, the infinite accumulation of moments that make *you*... -

the *one* person to share (and thereby experience) your life as a whole.

The *one* person to narrate your life, to form a story out of all the restless, loose, unconnected aspects of a lifetime's experience. Someone who tells the story of your past, right up till the very moment and into the future.

Your story's told without anyone talking.

Presenting yourselves as a couple performs a story already.

You've met; you've gotten to know each other; you started a relationship; you share your lives. Your lives split into „before“ and „ever since“ (and maybe „after“).

I don't have that *one* person to share my whole life (up to the very moment) with; not the *one* to create, narrate my story.

I have many stories. There is no one to put the entity of everything I was, experienced, lived through, am, will be into a handy narrative. There are lots of different variations, valid all and each of them; there's no fixed story, no fixed *me* to rely on, to rest at, to conserve. There's a lot of *mes*.

I, seemingly, tell other stories then.

I tell the story of the one going to the Pub by herself.

People read different stories in me – what they wish or fear and find

contrary to their stories, I guess.

They find stories of independence (which is impossible to feel myself, if not opposed to others' stories or past experience).

They find stories of courage in the way I live my life (which I don't feel 'cause I never did “choose” between options of living, I do it the only way I can).

They see stories of loneliness or incompleteness as well (which I of course do feel sometimes, but is there anyone who doesn't?).

The multiplicity of stories is just limited by imagination.

Cause there are endless interpretations of a lifetime's experience (plus unknown more to add up).

Infinity's sometimes scary. 'course it is.

No one will decide, confirm which one is/will be *the* story to tell about your life – and all of them are equal valid.

You never can be sure how the future will change the story of your past.

You'll never know what you did right, what you did wrong and how to be sure about it.

Well, I have a lot of stories. And living in all of them.

Welcome to my worlds.

[161013]

Patchwork Romance

Thoughts on [the Term]

Romantic[-Couple-]Relationship [RZB]

„RZB/Romantische Zweierbeziehung“ - „Romantic Couple-Relationship“ - ... I keep hearing/reading that term whenever „open“ and „normative/classical“ models of relationships are discussed (in German language) ... And I can't help but being skeptical about it.

... Romance ... What even *is* romance? What's *romantic*? There's a lot of clichés coming to my mind (including a latent feeling of disgust, obligation and plastic flowers), as well as a bunch of little things I *do* feel romantic about, but don't match what's commonly regarded to be 'romantic'. It's quite difficult to say what the 'essence' of romantic things is ... but maybe that's just the refreshing, unique, precious part about it.

Romantic is something that you do just to show the other person(s) you care about them and make them feel appreciated. It emerges from the effort you take to reveal them your love (no matter what kind of love that is). Romantic is something that shows you think about that person while they are not present – that they are present to you and that you give thoughts to what they like, what could make them smile, basically who they are (to you). About what connects the both (or more) of you and what enforces, symbolizes, is central to your relationship. Romantic is something you do just to express the unique preciousness of your relationship and that you care enough about it to “waste” your time, your energy, your thoughts, (maybe your money, but I don't want to stress it that much) on it – on *you*, to make you feel loved.

So, romantic gestures are defined by their intents (and things might

be understood or mistaken as [non-] romantic gestures by the other person).

And their “shape” totally depends on the relationships and the involved people; their likes, their shared experiences, dreams, the things they do together or would like to, the setting of their lives and meetings, any aspects important to one or all of them and anything they enjoy(ed) together or whatever reminds them of each other. - Yes, romantic gestures can be almost any action, thing, words or symbols and their (full) meaning and importance will most likely only be recognized and understood by the ones involved ... And isn't that the exciting part about it? Unexpected gifts, valuable only to you ... Joys you can't buy nor order ...

Now ... does the term “romantic couple-relationship” express, that these relationships are based (solely) on romantic intents (*not sure yet what that means*) or consist mainly of romantic gestures? Although couples are “supposed” to show romantic gestures (institutionalized at least at occasions like birthdays, anniversaries or – depending on the social context – Valentine's day) and I guess lots of them (try to) actually do that ... I'm still skeptical about the term. On a pragmatic view, a couple-relationship is based on/held up by much more than just a romantic attitude (e.g. as it often serves as an institutionalized resource of company, body/sexual contact, emotional/financial/... support, organizing daily life together/split work, ... just to name some common implications regarding couple-relationships). On the other side, the term might as well imply that romance and romantic gestures are exclusively part of a couple-relationship. Well, bluntly speaking: I don't think so!

I have strong romantic feelings towards the people I care about, first of all my close friends. Not all the time of course – but neither do people in couple-relationships feel only romantic about their partner

all the time, right?!

While writing this I thought of a lot of post-cards, very long or very short sms, stupid trash I kept, words and stories people keep referring to as a sign of bonding, pictures people took for me on their holidays, public remarks about thoughts someone got out of an intense conversation with me, simple notes on rubbish paper or dry leaves, carrots and cow seals.

Things that warm my heart, letters that make me glow, pictures that move me to cry or laugh or both.

My understanding of love is bigger than something you can just share with one person at a time. There are as many ways of love as people I care about.

So if you feel like romance is only to be in your couple-relationship – so it be.

But don't try telling me I can't have romance in my life without choosing one person that I have to jump in bed with, share everything and eventually move in with* (or whatever you regard being a couple).

- don't try telling me I can't have romance the way I live my life, cause I promise the hell that I already do!

[031213]

** this is not my opinion about how couple-relationships inherently are or have to be – these are implications of the socially shared picture of “the” relationship. And that does influence relationships and how they are perceived.*

What my Attitude Tells

Thoughts on (not) Having Sex I

Sometimes when I am frustrated about not having any sex with other people lately/on a regular basis, I need to be reminded I don't *want* to have just *any* sex with *anyone*.

„ ... *and people know by your attitude what kind of sex you want to have*“ my friend said. Wait – what *kind*?! I stopped complaining for a moment, confused. What is that supposed to mean? ...

I had been moaning to my friend about sleeping alone all the time; being fed up with the dilemma of either spoiling my chances with my too-confident-being-upright-not-girlish-enough attitude or being flirty-oh-my-god-you're-so-awesome-I-laugh-about-all-your-incredibl e-jokes-girlish and puking over my own behavior before I am drunk enough not to care anymore ...

„*But honestly, how many guys are there on an average night you would like to have sex with...?*“ she asks. Well. Hm. Interesting enough to check out? Some. Considering flirting with? Few. Kissing? Hard to tell. Have sex with? „*Argh, alright. Usually there aren't any I would really go for.*“ And keeping in mind the consequences you need to deal with afterwards, especially if you don't know them very well – or worse, if you *do* knot them well – and you'll meet them all the time ... All that figuring out, makes you think twice if it's worth risking the trouble ...

„ ... know what kind of sex you want to have.“

It's true, thinking about it ... it never did cross my mind what I regard basic to sexual interaction might not meet any body's ideas. But of course, in a way I have a quite clear idea about “*what kind*” of sex I want to have – and I'm not speaking technically here, I'm thinking of base lines like respect, equality, empathy: being sensitive about the other person's reactions, needs, joys ... - as well as paying attention

to your owns ... creating an atmosphere of confidence, intimacy and (shared!) responsibility ... feeling safe with each other but exploring unknown at the same time ... being into it but laid back enough for all the awkward moments (when things don't work as planned, unexpected breaks need to be taken, communication is clumsy or the moods falls asleep – etc.) - well, being passionate and careful with each other.

Yes, ok, I have a rather clear impression of what I want (and I might not find that at the next bar table). I did have it before and I refuse to desire any less than that.

Of course these expectations might not be fulfilled (no surprise if you don't get the chance to get to know each other very well, experience with a partner can make much of a difference) ... but at least I need to be able to imagine it, right?!

So ... I need to admit a lack of sexual encounters doesn't (necessarily) mean the world is cruel; it can also be seen as a sign of healthy base lines. As stated before: I have a rather clear impression of what I want and I refuse to desire any less than that.

[051213]

Under Pressure

Thoughts on (not) Having Sex II

Check your calender. Update your schedule. Keep up with your to-do-list. Look at your watch. Answer your emails, answer your phone. Fulfill your duties, think ahead, keep the overview. Keep sitting on your chair. Take the shortest way, no time to take a walk outside. It's time to eat, you should feel hungry now. Time to go to bed, lots of things are waiting in the morning. It's time to get up, can't rest, you need to check your calender ...

Again you haven't found the time to meet that friend you promised to call two weeks ago; you're too tired to go outside now; you talked to someone you like on th street, but both of you were in a hurry; you wanted to write a letter months ago but haven't yet found the peace to focus on it and give it all the time and space that needs; you wanted to cook that special recipe but didn't want to do it alone and couldn't organize yet with a friend; and instead of going swimming you needed to work on this thing, all the time alone in front of your computer ...

The movie you're watching in the end of the day is pure emotion and action – risky moves and body discipline, exploding things and everything that increases thrill until the total tension; or exploding feelings, people who seemingly spend all their lives in a constant switchover from being in love to jealousy, from rage to desperateness, from grief to revelation, from ecstasy to fear – all in motion, embodied emotion-hyper-thrill ...

Of course all these 'people' have sex. No matter if the plot is based on a romantic story and the protagonists finally fall in love ... if someone is looking for adventures and ends up taking drugs, listening to rock'n'roll ... if the gangster did beat all his (*let's be pragmatic here – they are 99% male*) enemies, blew up all cars and celebrates

his victory with the 'hot' woman he gained on top of all the money ... Sex is set at the highest point of tension, it's shown as the mystical melting-into-each-other, the most intense state of body experience and happiness, the biggest sign of power and strength and the greatest reward.

And here you are. In front of the black screen.

And in the static emptiness of neutral flavor your scattered brain slowly starts wondering: What about all those promises? Promises of joy, intensity, a vivid life, with the perfect body, the perfect partner or at least the portion of thrill to let you know you are alive ...

Have you ever thought about the reasons you (want to) have sex with someone?

Have you ever considered they might not be the 'right' ones (regarding your needs)?

This is not a question of moral (as long as based on consent).

Sex just isn't a solution to everything. Maybe it's something else you need.

Cause there are many different 'reasons' to have sex with someone. Some I can think of: feeling/experiencing your body – body contact – relaxing – distraction – being focused on something – experiencing 'strong feelings' – creating a nice 'happening' – intimacy – create shared_positive_exclusive experiences – reassurance about a relationship, about your attractiveness, your body, your looks, your status – human bonding – experience own boundaries – the other person's recognition – other people's recognition – social pressure – as a sign of social success – following/breaking the rules, rebellion – doing something self-determined – for your own pleasure – to please the other person – feeling alive – having something to tell – exploring yourself – curiosity – loneliness – attention, care, comfort – sensation of power – forgetting everything else for a moment ...

You can give it a try; but you might find out loneliness will be home when the one-night-stand is gone; jealousy and insecurity don't vanish through sex, nor does it chain someone's mind or feelings onto you; your calendar will still tell you to swallow your desires and feelings and function efficiently, no matter how much sex you can stuff into your free time.

I'm pretty much 'pro-sex' but it turns out only to be fun when the 'context' is right. There are lots of needs and desires (as well as fears and insecurities) I experience – if I help myself being aware of them. There are lots of ways to deal with, satisfy or confront myself with them and it takes some practice figuring out which do best for each. But working on exploring these and doing something about it makes my life much more vivid and satisfying.

[091213]

There is Nothing Wrong With You

Thoughts on (not) Being Part of a Couple II

„Do you have a boyfriend?“ - How much I've always hated that question.

Luckily people who know me have stopped asking me years ago. So. Not living as part of a couple-relationship, hm? Right. Still. Not easy though.

I've always had a loving family; I've always had close friends, caring special people; I've always been part of one or the other community. [And on a slightly related note: believe it or don't, but breaking up with a friend or a community is an actual breakup to me.]

I've always been happy and thankful about that.

Yet I used to think there needs to be more ... People and media don't ask if you'd like to engage in a couple-relationship – they take it for granted and ask about the who/when/how. And you end up feeling really weird, worried and at some point ashamed about not 'getting' one: *What's wrong with me?!* You try to optimize yourself – or your standards.

You have seen – let's say – all kinds of people 'getting' boyfriends or girlfriends, how can you not 'get' any? ... One day you're sure it's your standards (you just have too specific ideas), the other day you look into your mirror and you understand why no one wants to be with you, cause you must be really wrong and not worth it and you're full of disgust and hate and shame and you wish no one will ever ask you again if you have a boyfriend, cause you'd have to say no and they would know and you will feel like a total fail ...

Cruel thing, it's always the subtle mechanisms that work best for making you assimilate – cause it's really uncomfortable not to match the criteria of 'normality' and success.

But what makes couple-relationships so interesting anyway?

Some nice aspects associated with couple-relationships I can think of:

Stroking someone's hair; having my hair stroke; stroking someones back; having my back stroke; kisses on the forehead; kissing; hugging in any way; cuddling in any way; hugging/cuddling in bed (non-sexually); sharing bed; sleeping within the same room with someone; waking up in the same room with someone; having breakfast together; spending time together while doing things for yourselves; cooking together; having meals together; watching movies together; reading to someone; being read to; talking about the small issues of the day and being listened to; getting emotional support; getting compliments; being encouraged; feeling free to be emotional around someone; feeling free to look sloppy around someone; sharing intimate experiences with someone; being conspiratorial with someone; sharing secrets; going on adventures with someone; trust someone; surprise someone; being surprised; being taken care of when sick, low or having a crisis; taking care of someone; doing something to please the other person, being romantic; being pleased, 'receiving' romantic gestures; showing affection; being shown affection; showing loyalty towards someone in front of others; being shown loyalty in front of others; being someone special for another person; having someone who is special to you; making plans together; telling stories about your life, experiences, dreams to someone who is interested in it; listening to someone's stories about their life, experiences, dreams; being interested in any aspect of someone; someone being interested in any aspect of you; someone who beliefs in you and what you do; believing in someone and what they do; being excited about someone, about meeting them, getting to know them, spending time with them; someone being excited about you; spending time with someone you like; thinking about someone while they are not present; being thought of while you are not present to them; sending

someone messages; receiving messages; protect someone in whatever way if necessary; being protected if necessary; having a shared story with someone; being asked for help and doing favors; asking for help and receiving favors; going out/attending any occasion together; sharing the things you love (to do) with someone; sharing/taking part in something the other person loves (to do); rely on someone; being relied on; holding hands; giving massages; receiving massages; being smiled at; smiling at someone; being asked about your opinion; get the other person's opinion when asked for; meeting people and seeing places the other person likes; making people you like meet/visit the places you like; being able of and comfortable with crying around someone; someone being able of and comfortable with crying around you; someone to have/raise children with???; paying the other person's drinks if needed; having your drinks paid if needed; being comfortable with being naked around someone; the other person being comfortable with being naked around you; any sexual tension; any sexual interaction; someone to share a flat with; sharing a flat's costs with someone; shared tasks in the household; feeling responsible for someone; being felt responsible for; maintaining a steady relationship with a person (caring about someone consistently, being cared of consistently, staying in touch); someone being around and taking care of you when you are bored, or low on self-esteem; working on future plans together; having heart-to-heart-talks; your heart-beat raising when you meet someone; someone having a raised heart-beat when meeting you; more hugs; more kisses; more body-contact in bed; more sleepovers; more of feeling special, unique, beloved.

Yes, I have most of these things – maybe not the quantity I desire, but I'd say the quality.

Now, don't be naive on this, don't think it's all easy.

It's – such – hard – work!

And it takes so much energy, time and of course courage to maintain

these things, to establish these relationships, to *ask* for things and to update, check, question and again maintain them.

There are no contracts – at least things tend to be more fluid and less 'guaranteed'. But changes and breaks might be handled easier – well, a lot of handling is necessary; again, don't be naive on this.

And it takes lots of energy to convince yourself there's nothing wrong with you – a lot of getting through moments of loneliness when you think everybody you care about has forgotten about you, a lot of moments when you actively and resolutely need to remind yourself of all these rich, special, unique connections you have. It takes a lot to recognize for yourself what you have; not to fall into the holes of “*Why am I the only one who never has a 'real' relationship?*”, “*I can't be normal, why am I not normal?*” or “*No one really cares about me, they all have other priorities*”.

And it's especially hard if the ones you care about are engaged in couple-relationships that form the center of their lives; if they have other 'resources' that make them less dependent on you than vice versa. It's hard if the people you care (most) about don't really know in what way they care about you and if/how other relationships than couple's can be of any matter in their lives or what friendship means to them.

It's hard not to fit into the 'picture' of normality and success, which is such closely connected to having a partner (and eventually a family); it's hard even to imagine a satisfying, hopeful way of living in the 'future' (means when your adolescence is commonly regarded to be over, when many of your communities break down due to work as a separating aspect of life-organization and when your friends move out of their shared flats and get married) ...

So if you've just found out there are more ways of living and loving and that you don't want to have the 'couple thing' any more – it's fine. But don't act like you found the Holy Grail of relationships.

And don't do it because you think it's cool or hip, please don't.

I've been hurt to deeply by a society based on couples to forget you have been part of it;
I'm still struggling too much with finding my place in it to applaud you for your breakthrough.

I'm glad you're exploring new ways; I'm happy you question your model of relationships. I know it's hard to overcome all this, you have all the rights to be upset, confused, enthusiastic and worried over it. You have and I support you!
But don't act as if you just found a brand-new solution you want to sell me; and don't assume you now share my experience of not being in a 'traditional' relationship. Please don't, cause it would wipe off all the hurt I experienced and all the effort I put into our 'not-traditional' relationship *since – like – ever*.

This is not a how-to nor a complaint nor a pamphlet. I'm not telling you what to do, I'm not judging what's right or wrong.
This is just me, telling what I feel and experience.

This is a love letter – cause love is what hurts and strengthens most.

[111213]

“Being in Love Creeps me out”

Thoughts on Beauty, Power & Attractiveness I

Being in love / being attracted to someone creeps me out.

Honestly. I am not talking about excited nervousness, fear of bonding or doubts about how a relationship should proceed (all of this is fairly sufficient to creep one out, I may add).

I'm talking about a state of mind that leaves me constantly alarmed; checking on myself about each second, with such sharp criteria, I can hardly overcome high-level tension, confusion and inability to act. It renders me scatterbrained and unable to deal with the easiest tasks/situations.

As pointed out, I am not even focusing on the aim of the other person liking me or on proceeding things between us. I am stuck at the urgent pressure of presenting myself attractive to them.

>Beauty standards<: if you have managed to get them out of your head for a while (*in my case, abandoning TV, finishing school and avoiding a lot of 'main stream' places/parties surely had a share in it*) - falling in love or attempting to be recognised by someone you are attracted to instantly brings all this unwelcome knowledge back; in its tiniest aspects, offering a complete analysis of where you've failed to accomplish them, within record time. Thank you, brain, for providing this helpful information. I might not be able to tie my shoes any more, but for sure I will notice my trousers are one centimeter too short. Wow. How reassuring.

Beauty as a highly exclusive concept: not a new thought, neither originally mine.

Beauty standards are defined incredibly accurate – yet at the same time contradicting enough to miss them by an inch, no matter what: *being young (yet adult); being slim (yet with the 'correct' curves); being tall (yet not 'too' tall, whatever that means); having bright skin*

(yet with a colouring like you've just been to the beach); having a completely 'healthy'/'abled' body (yet performing a 'fun' lifestyle which includes 'unhealthy' behaviour); wearing 'nice' clothes including the 'right' amount/use/presentation of jewellery, make-up and visible skin (neither the clothes nor you must look too 'cheap', nor too 'expensive'); having or not having hair on certain body parts (haircut, facial hair, legs/armpits/chest/genitals/...); and very basic: performing as purely male OR purely female (only specific concepts of masculinity /femininity of course) AND representing a gender-dualistic, heterosexual 'lifestyle' altogether. (This also means that expectations about you and your body presentation obviously vary, depending on where you meet the listed – and other – criteria, depending on your social position, social_cultural_situative contexts etc.)
This is just a random list, but it should transport the idea, that beauty standards and social structures of power are not independent areas.

We learn to internalise beauty as a resource and sign of recognition and success; we early get the idea that it is *inherently good* to be pretty, beautiful, attractive; we discover the 'rules' of 'looking good', practise and repeat them over and over again – on ourselves and others, as compliments, as means of regulation and/or disgust. We swallow the beauty standards and try to match them as much as we can, widely without asking WHY we need to change to be beautiful, without taking in account that beauty doesn't need to be a 'one-only-model' but can be found in diversity, variation, individuality – whatever you want to call it.

No one needs to explain to us why we should try to be beautiful_attractive – 'cause we experience the consequences/reactions on a daily basis. These experiences differ quite much, related to influences of sexism, racism, ableism, ageism and many other oppressive structures, as well as individual strategies/characteristics/priorities/likes/ ... are important. But we all share the knowledge of a) the major role of looks

regarding social success and b) specific images of what beauty_attractiveness means – or more explicitly: what is *not* part of this image. With other words: we know quite exactly what is 'wrong' with us in terms of beauty_attractiveness. No matter if we accept or reject these standards, we are unwillingly able to judge ourselves from that perspective – and for lots of people it takes a fundamental struggle to object to this automatically self-applied judgments. Even if we manage to alter these processes and adjust our own settings – we still know others judge differently. Well, judge, after all – judge you by your looks. You might (more or less successfully) try not to care; but if you fall in love and/or if you want someone to be attracted to you ... well, you might then fear your reclaimed perspective will tremble, fear they will look at you with eyes you don't like, but depend on.

Falling in love, being attracted to someone creeps me out; 'cause I've worked so hard to establish an acceptive, curious, loving new perspective on matters of beauty_attractiveness_(success?). And it's hard to maintain that while longing for any security when entering unknown/unsafe ground. I can't tremble, I mustn't fall, I need to stand upright ... but I am so afraid the ground is breaking down under my feet.

I'd love not to care ...
but sometimes I'd prefer
being careful
not to fall in love.

[090114]

„Sort Your Shit out for Yourselves!“

Thoughts on MASCULINITY

„If you are going to continue like that there are only two options: graveyard or madhouse!“ It was about 20 years ago when my grandma said that to my grandpa, demanding from him to retire from work – which he agreed on after giving some thought to it. I’m glad my grandma demanded from him to face the situation as it was and glad my grandpa got to follow her advice – for I both like them being alive and as sane as possible.

So why am I telling this story?

Well, on one hand to say I am proud of them and their decision. On the other hand I want to state something else: It is 2014. I don’t have a partner taking care about me not working too hard; and most of all, I reject being responsible for others_men not to be overburdened. People_men should be responsible for their well-being themselves. Why is that? Hm, let’s have a look:

If you...

- tend to judge yourself/get your self-esteem from what you achieve in matters of prestige
- (e.g. paid work)
- (or activist work)
- always give “more than 100%”
- (unless you need to take a break and therefore party “more than 100%” – or reject doing anything at all)
- need admiration for every step you take
- ignore the signals of your body (like tiredness, hunger, sickness, ...) on a regular basis
- have problems taking breaks (“just until the work is done”;

“just until the project is finished”; “just until the next holidays”)

- expect from yourself to have an answer to every question, being able to solve every problem
- feel like you are always behind on what’s on your to-do-list
- barely “celebrate” the closures of one thing/project/... before starting the following, because you never have enough time to do everything you want
- rarely take the time and peace to think about what is important to you, your life, your needs
- ... or how to appreciate the people and relationships in your life
- are only satisfied with something when you managed to do it “on your own”
- can’t sometimes just let things flow and put priority on what just happens, without having other things in mind
- question everything you do about how it may pay off or if there is any (financial, idealistic, social) reward

THEN you might suffer from symptoms of *MASCULINITY* infection!

MASCULINITY, what’s that now?!

MASCULINITY (in this sense) is a concept of personality characteristics, concerning self-understanding, the image you perform, what you expect from yourself and others, what you value much or less ... and it conducts behaviour patterns, of course. The concept of MASCULINITY obviously is more complex than this (more or less) random list of ‘symptoms’ and is adjusted in varying contexts and situations. It also inflicts with other concepts that are built on performing strength, power and supremacy; similar patterns ,help‘ to present oneself e.g. as ,white‘, ,western‘, ,German‘, ,healthy‘, ... Plus the success of the economical_social system we live in is based on steadily increasing accomplishment: the ability of

ignoring one's own needs/boundaries, the constant will to reach for more and eagerness of individualistic achievement are necessary. Thus capitalism values ,classical' male activities and treats them as universal at the same time. ('cause it can't ,lose' half of the inhabitants to reproduction work. Yet it doesn't *make* them universal, cause it still needs people doing the unpaid reproductive work; and still women* are more ,educated' into doing that than men* are.)

So; this is a tiny insight into the concept of MASCULINITY. It ,works' in a lot of society's areas; it ,works' in capitalism; it still ,works' in lots, lots of relationships; guess what: it also ,works' in leftist_alternative_whatsoever activism!
.. Anything of this sound familiar? ...
Well, you are reading this, that might be a ,good' sign already – cause you are probably doing that: without any declared aim/ to care about my ideas / because you don't need to use this time for getting credit elsewhere.

No one is born with MASCULINITY. Really, it's not an organ. The symptoms I listed don't need to be ,bad'. Yet following the concept as a whole might lead to distress, lacking vitality, feelings of emptiness, ... It might lead to physical damage. You might uphold the system you want to deconstruct. You might miss a lot of things, moments and developments that can't be planned. You most probably will piss people off. You might hurt or even lose relationships – 'cause people need to take care of you (*Make you tea? Listen to how hard work was?*), do less rewarding work for you (*Clean your dishes? Organise birthday presents for common friends?*), cannot ,bother' you with problems (*Talking about your relationship? Getting support with their issues?*) or feeling neglected (*Taking time for their interests? Showing them you appreciate them?*).

Well, maybe I am completely wrong.
You can think about it. If you take the time.
People. GUYS! I'm not gonna sort out your shit for you.
You'll have to do it on your own.
And you'll not get any credit for it.
No cookies!

Unless you bake them on your own.
In this case: bring them around, I'll have some.

[160114]

Getting rid of the Shame and the Shit

Thoughts on Beauty, Power & Attractiveness II

this text's full of shit 'n shame and it makes me sick. don't expect sparkly unicorns. (but they will follow soon).

The concepts of ,beauty' and ,attractiveness' are cornerstones to (sexual) power dynamics between males* and females*.

How does the usage of these concepts contribute to sexist power structures?

Let's see:

Where do ,beauty' and ,attractiveness' differ from each other?

In my connotation, ,beauty' is mostly applied as a female* quality, whereas men* are rather characterized as ,attractive' than ,beautiful'. ,Beauty' in this understanding seems to be something ,visible', something you can catch into a picture – it is about *looks*. Which means it is enough to *look* at someone to tell if s.he is ,beautiful'. The ,object' it_herself stays *passive*.

The concept of ,attractiveness' however involves interaction – it includes not only the looks of the body, but body performance, actions and reactions in social interaction (being charming, being polite, being funny, being witty, acting appropriate/eager/courages/interesting...), it includes behaviour and opinions. In short: ,attractiveness' means presenting yourself as interesting plus just the right portion of showing interest. In my view this is a much broader and more dynamic concept than ,beauty', allowing far more variety/individuality.

Of course not one of them is supposed to be 100% male* or female* – but it's hard to deny the existing gender bias in this complementary concepts of ,how to get attention from the other sex'.

This is of course a very heteronormative principle – it is fundamentally linked with the implication of heterosexuality and the organisation of reproduction (wife, husband, children...). Putting it in other words: the male*-associated concept of ,attractiveness' is more likely to present the person ,as a whole', whereas the female*-associated ,beauty' tends to reduce them to their surface.

These perceptions don't only work for others, but are connected to the self understanding/self-image as well. I hate to write this, but socialization tends to teach boys* to see themselves as a ,whole person'/'in one piece' (like children do until they unlearn it, I suppose), whereas girls* in a way are taught to distinguish between their personality and their body. I know this sounds weird; but growing up and everything you do, you think, you feel, you touch, ... being yourself, part of the ,unity You' – and later on noticing people start treating you as an object, not looking at you but looking at your body, without getting in touch with ,you' in any way ... well, how can this *not* be disturbing at all?!

This is where you learn to see the voyeuristic gaze in other peoples eyes_minds; this is how you internalise that others will check your looks and judge you as beautiful or not and therefore as worth less or more.

You'll not be surprised to hear that from my experience lots of minds and bodies of those addressed as females* have taken damage from that, in one or the other way. Well, the ones pressured to perform MASCULINITY are most probably affected negatively as well, but not quite in the same way.

Reminder: None of this is deterministic! People are not machines and influences differ, strategies of coping differ, people are not affected by these things all the same way, nor do they ,turn out' to be

the same. People are very different from each other in any aspects and can resist in uncountable ways. I'm digging up this shit to look where it comes from – this is just exploring the structures that keep people from being free from oppression and (self-) hate. Look for the source of the shit to get rid of it!

So, ,beauty'. Aiming for beauty means accepting standards/measurement/being judged. Aiming for beauty *needs you* to internalise this voyeuristic gaze. Aiming for beauty requires you to look at yourself ,from the outside', pretending to see yourself from another person's view (unconsciously thought of as ,the male* gaze' – heteronormative fundamentals, remember?) – this *forces* you to 'split' yourself into your personality and your body_looks. It might sound insane, but it's just an unconscious process that logically follows onto this requirements, isn't it?

Looking at things that closely, we need to acknowledge that aiming for beauty takes quite some effort (and I haven't even mentioned choosing clothing, applying makeup, doing hair, shaving regularly, diet control, doing sports, etc.).

So where does that discipline come from?

How does it *work* – without even noticing the amount of effort that was brought up?

Of course habits and internalisations are a main deal: *just do it, don't think about it*. But the most powerful mean of disciplining seems to me to be *shame*. It is used to regulate others, to punish them for ,wrong' behaviour, it can be used as an offence to control others. But shame works as well as an quite efficient method of self-defence in regard to self-control. By avoiding situations/behaviour others might make us feel ashamed about, we discipline ourselves and ,follow the rules': Shame works in favour of the social order. Knowing and fearing the voyeuristic gaze, trying to fulfil ,beauty standards' is most

promising for being 'safe'. Failing to ,pass' this gaze evokes shame – and might easily be associated with social, verbal and physical attacks.

Body shaming and the fear of having that body hurt are not unlinked concerns. Our bodies are part of ourselves, we live in and depend on them – if they are hurt, we are hurt. If the body additionally is a ,basic resource' for recognition, if (as with the voyeuristic gaze) people tend to see *only* our body – than disgracing that body affects our social status, our safe ground, what we (socially) are to others; to put it exaggeratedly: it can mean social death. And since social death takes all social protection with it, this threatens nothing less than existence.

If you allow ,beauty' to be a cornerstone of social existence – than body shaming can (and will eventually) tear this existence apart.

Since we thought of heterosexual behaviour and body shaming, we might go on to draw some conclusions on sexuality.

If ,attractiveness' is seen as an interactive, more wholistic concept associated with masculinity and ,beauty' as a rather superficial, passive concept associated with femininity [*all of this sounds awful miserable but I can't stop seeing this everywhere...*] ... this

corresponds obviously with patterns of ,*hitting on*' someone respectively ,*present yourself and wait to be chosen*'. Yuck!

Regarding this *very-uncomfortable-but-still-not-vanished* patterns of gendered flirting strategies and adding the *horrifying-but-daily-practiced body shaming* on females* ... it seems almost unlikely for females* to frankly express sexual desires or fantasies without a doubt (may it be verbal or nonverbal).

Communication about sexuality in general and own sexual desires in particular is hard enough (I think there is still lots of work to do in education and daily communication); but based on fear of attacks on the own body (in whatever way) and feeling ,guilty' for being ,demanding' makes things even worse.

Which is such a pity and huge loss!

Because confident, sensitive, acceptive, ... communication about sexuality and sexual desires can avoid wrong assumptions and thereby avoid things that better not happen – as well as missed opportunities for things that *shall* happen. Sexuality, as an very intense experience of physical existence, as being ,one‘ with your body, as a trustful, intimate, respect- and joyful way of getting in touch with someone – can help us a lot to get rid of the shit.

The first step to get rid of the shame and the damage might be to identify it as what it is; to see the powerful moments of resistance and joy; for many of us it took a huge burden off our shoulders to start talking about body and sexual issues with (at first hand) our female* friends with similar experiences. But we needn‘t stop there, we dare claim to get comfortable talking about these things with our male* friends, too, claiming their support, responsibility and empathy. It’s about creating awareness of the on-going shit and the big successes (that have or will come): Jumping naked into lakes. Changing clothes within the room, not in the bathroom. Wearing whatever we like and feeling amazing. Hitting on someone we like. Expressing our sexual desires. Kick ass.

... This turned out to be a lot of words. But the more I am told to be just a functioning body, the more I refuse to be quiet, the more I will speak up and let my words as well as my body talk back. I write my body back into my words, I reunite in paper and pen.

I dig up this shit
to throw it on flowers as fertiliser
-
or back to the assholes
where shit belongs.

The Good News

Thoughts on Beauty, Power & Attractiveness III

The concept of attractiveness is based on interaction, which means it only works as far as people respond to the established patterns. By not responding, repeating and encouraging to perform (gender biased) bloke-behaviour, it can be destabilised right where it happens.

The concept of beauty is build on aesthetics that are repeated over and over again. Aesthetics can be changed by not repeating them, by not following them, by not sanctioning deviance, by celebrating other pictures.

Change viewing patterns, change patterns of behaviour.
Support and celebrate yourselves and each other and don't give a shit for people who try to uphold these oppressions. You don't need to listen to them.

Take down the pictures of dead idols on your walls, substitute them with photographs of proud women*, queer women*, women* of color, women* that take up space, persons that inspire by who they are and what they fight for. Draw your own pictures of yourself, of beloved ones, of what you miss and want to see.

Enjoy the things you like to do, value your talents, try a lot of things to find them, enjoy failing, do things you are not supposed to and don't let them pressure you to do something just because you think you have to. Sleep, eat, wear, move, talk, dance in the way most comfortable to you. Do what is fun, what you are passionate about, makes you proud, is important to you, what makes your body feel good and your mind excited. Relax.

Find places, subcultures, scenes, people, platforms, websites, books, (maga)zines, music, pictures, ... where other behaviour is practiced, where other ideas are shared, where people try to deal in other ways with each other, where positive experiences and ways of resistance are offered, where you can get inspirations.

Ask questions. For example question your straightness, if you haven't yet. Or what kind of relationships you want. Ask yourself in what way you actually feel male*_female*_different*. Ask yourself which people you like and what you like about them. (Maybe they'd like to know, too.) Ask yourself what you like about yourself; be gentle. You can ask the ones you trust, too. They will know.

Surround yourself with people that like you, appreciate you, love you, laugh with you, fight with you, cuddle with you, talk with you, listen to you, understand you, support you, celebrate with you, hold you, respect you, believe in you.

Value all kinds of relationships and dare to admire all kinds of people. The casual 'good morning' in the kitchen with sloppy clothes; waving to the girl* with the undercut, tattoos and leather jacket; the smell of the guy* with the warmest hugs; listening to the (girl*? boy*?)person with the clear voice and black hair; talking to the one with the long skirt, red lips and long beard; cuddling and holding the softest hands; discussing and working on the pressing issues for hours; a walk with the girl with the huge smiling eyes; laugh with the girl* in casual black and the giggling guy*; writing love letters to persons whose smile and hug once a year is enough to make you feel at home; admiring the girl* in jogging pants with the best punchlines and the guys* in glitter.

Today you find me in jeans and sweater and I don't brush my hair and tomorrow I'll be out in skirt and all dressed up again, but I'll still be the same, I'll pun as hell and write too much and talk back and eat vegetables and chocolate, walk slowly and dance wildly and collecting hugs of my beloved manys.

What a beautiful thought this is,
what powerful ideas I got in touch with,
what attractive prospects are waiting for me ...

[030214]

Painting my Middle Finger Nail Dark Red

Thoughts on Female* Self-Sex

On the wall of my room, there's a photograph of a woman* lying naked in bed, with her hand in her panties, obviously pleasuring herself.

This is a powerful picture to me and I wish to see notions of female* self-sex¹ in public more often – not in the sense of witnessing, nor necessarily in the sense of explicit presentation. More like the opposite of invisibility and lacking awareness about its existence – let's say I wish female* self-sex to be more represented in general.

In pictures of female* self-sex I see the potential to contribute to a broader view on sex and sexuality.

It might be seen as anachronistic, but surprisingly often 'having sex' is regarded to be 'intercourse', no more, no less, no other. If this is a new thought to you, I will try to put it in easy words: having sex is not limited to / doesn't necessarily involve / might not even be connected to putting a penis into a vagina. Surprisingly enough, somewhere out there, some people still believe in the 'magical phallus' that can cure every bad and enlighten every woman* with its power ... may it be the guy from the one-night stand (*that for sure will stay a one-time encounter when behaving as follows*) who tells you how unsatisfying things are when he isn't able to 'perform' intercourse (*so everything else was ... done out of duty, to 'get to it', or what?...*) ... or 'anti-feminists' who deny critical analysis from feminists and blame them to be just confused and frustrated due to lacking penis-contact. Really – the offer for supporting patriarchy is getting a share of the privilege in the form of penetration by the holy phallus? Well, you'd better get better arguments or I'll need to continue with feminism ...

Sexuality and sexual desires are closely connected to our personalities and are different for everybody. Some people don't know sexual feelings or desires. Some aren't interested in sexual interactions or relationships with others. Some want to have sex only when in a (life-long) couple-relationship, others want to gain experience with lots of different people. Some need personal bonding, like in friendships, others prefer not to mix sexual encounters and other relationships. Some are interested only in women* or only in men* or both, or in masculine women* or feminine men*, or just in the person_s they are in love with. For some it is most important the other person is into the same 'preferences', or is aware of whatever triggers, or sensitive for consensual communication, or laughs about the same things or dresses, smells, touches them in a certain way. Most probably a mixture of several of these things and infinite aspects more.

Sexuality can be very different in consideration of partner_s, practices, preferences, interests and which priorities it has or hasn't in our lives. It depends on ourselves, what 'having sex' and sexuality means for us. It can include fantasies, the ones you want to play out as well as the ones that are to stay in your mind; it can be a feeling in the way you move, the way you dress and present yourself – to yourself or to others; it can be the joy of desire when watching, reading, listening to or imaging scenes, texts, pictures, sounds, ideas that appeal to you; it can be whatever you desire to do or passionately do with another person (looking, talking, touching, ...) - or just with yourself. It's about enjoying, about exploring and curiosity, about respect and sensitivity for yourself, and probably about much more and much other. Discovering and accepting our sexuality has a great potential to provide ourselves with feelings of power (and vulnerability, thereby empathy) and support our guidance to self-esteem and self-determination.

Looking at things this way, it seems ridiculous that self-sex often is regarded as a 'substitute' for 'real' sex, and existing only for people without partners. The general perception: persons who are not part of a couple don't have sex (meaning: couple = only setting for sexual interaction; sex = intercourse). Well, they do. With all kinds of people, in all kinds of relationships, with or without penises, and with or without other people.

And in comparison to notions of self-exploring the 'holy phallus', there are rarely notions of women* getting comfortable with their 'magic vagina' [*or her penis or other parts, that's still almost invisible*]. Thinking of the concepts that imply women*s (sexual) passivity and disinterest, the concepts that nurture a biased relationship to body and mind/personality, thinking of the 'scars' of body shaming on females* that comes with it ... I feel that these notions of female* self-sex could reveal these lies and breakdown their pressure.

So this is what I see in the photograph of female* self-sex: a woman* with sexual desires, who is not ashamed about these feelings, herself, her body; a woman* who doesn't need to be in a couple-relationship to enjoy sexual experience; a woman* who doesn't need the help of a man* to get satisfaction; a self-confident and joyful woman* who decides on her own what 'having sex' means, how, when and with whom (no matter if male*, female* or other*) or whom not she's going to enjoy that with.

Unfortunately I can't carry that photograph with me around, or make people_guys just understand its meaning.
But in another way I'm trying to carry my message along:

I paint my middle finger nail
dark red
so you easily can keep in mind
my basic message:

Fuck you
I don't need you
to fuck me

[030214]

¹ I know the precise term would be 'masturbation', but this sounds way too clinical to express something enjoyable. Lack of appropriate and self-determined words is problematic for communication, and as communication itself is a major act of action and resistance, reclaiming and creating words and language is key to emancipation from oppression. So I'm not going to use the term 'masturbation', cause I don't like it, instead I'll be using the expression 'self-sex'; as easy as that.

[no epilogue]

I love it when you're reading my mind
There's no need to guess my thoughts
I have written them down
I offer you an insight into my mind
as a gift
of doubtful consistency
I can't tell if you will like it

let your eyes wander along my lines
get a taste of my ideas
let your lips hook up with my words
dare to sense
my lyrics resonate
 with joy or anger, passion or ease
in your ears and in your heart
sensations spreading through your breath
inhale my letters
swallow my phrase
make yours what was mine
observe which words will arise from that
take a curious look at them
and with patience and care
surprise yourself with evolving thoughts

transcending place
transcending time
there is nothing more intimate
than minds that meet
witnessing you exploring my inside

I love it when you're reading my mind

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feel free to read, copy & think about

[010114]