

Strange Sisters and Boy Kings

Post-Queer Tranz-Gendered Bodies in Performance

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for O.H.D.

Cet article examine les catégories existantes et disponibles pour classer nos vies et les mouvements sociaux. Les temps est venu, dit-elle, de raffiner nos paroles dans nos pratiques "post-queer" et elle illustre l'efficacité de ces pratiques de l'incohérence dans les performances de deux artistes torontoises: un drag king "Deb Pearce (as Man Murray et Dirk Diggle)" et une artiste raconteuse et performeuse, Anna Camilleri.

In and around July of 2004, women's studies in Canadian universities took an interesting turn. That date marks my faculty appointment into the Women's Studies department at the University of Victoria. My presence at the front of women's studies classrooms is utterly confounding to students, whether or not I am out to them as a female to male transsexual man. In fact, outing myself as a tranz man only aggravates their confusion. My body, and all of the institutional and departmental authority it represents in that moment, fails to cohere with the content of our department name. As such, I often have the estranging effect of rendering our programme productively incoherent, allowing me an opportunity to mobilize the pedagogical effects of surprise (Johnson) to make gender studies simultaneously defamiliarized and new. While it might be tempting to read this incoherence as solely autobiographical, I want to suggest instead that it marks the beginning of not only a potential transformation in gender studies but also new ways of conceptualizing resistance. As I've indicated elsewhere (see Noble 2005), I am one of perhaps two female to male transsexuals working in Canadian universities, the only working in a women's studies department. While I do have a long history as an active lesbian feminist worker—one that I do not renounce despite repeated pressures from many quarters—that history was part of what made me attractive to a women's studies department. That said, my commitment to women's and gender studies is not without controversy and constant confusion, especially to my non-feminist colleagues who are not aware of my tranz iden-

tity. But it is such confusions that render me quite potent in my political interventions. I am as committed for instance to a tranz-politic as I am to ferreting out the misogyny in and racism of both queer and tranz politics and studies of a variety of shapes and sizes.

At it most evocative, "tranz" as I live it is descriptive and intersectional, marking politics lived across, against, or despite always already engendered, sexed, national, and racialized bodies. Often collapsed into "trans-gender," that umbrella term which references almost all of the above practices from one degree to another, the term "transsexual" for instance is thought to mark the use of medical technologies to correct the disjunction between the body and a self which seems at odds with that body. But at its most provocative, "tranz" and the space it references for me refuses the medical and psychological categorical imperatives or coherence through which it has always been forced to confess. But what is also at stake is a politics of self-representation within and often opposed to these violently policed dualistic options. Central to this polemic, then, has to be something of a paradox for tranz-folks seeking images of ourselves: how does one represent oneself when one's self is unrepresentable within current and often conservative categories, forms, practices, and discourses? Hence, I want to argue for the importance of tranz-art and performance artists who have created a space in which to represent the unthinkable overdetermined by binaristic gender schemas but also beyond the celebration of contradiction itself. What I document in this essay, then, is a willful and intersectional political deployment of incoherence against the hegemonies of the white supremacist, sex/gender system. Even as we pull these terms apart, an equally tenacious and conservative set of rhetorics and practices—at the heart of the sex/gender system—continues to fold one back into the other. Sometimes, that folding occurs, quite incidentally, *inside* our movements just as often as outside.

I want to challenge the existing and available categories

we have for classifying both our lives but also our social movements. For myself, the oversimplistic and invested categories of “man,” “lesbian,” “butch,” and even “ftm” are not flexible enough to name my experiences. If I call myself, as I do, a “guy who is half lesbian,” where does that fit? The realities and lived experiences of those of us who might be verging on incoherent, *post-queer* landscapes are not thinkable within the existing gender economies and lexicons.¹ Hence, the need to move beyond our still young queer vocabularies. Queer is becoming a term marked by both imprecision and fixity; it has the potential to be

tioning body. Becoming a tranz-sexual white man, for me, however, means occupying the permanent space of not just becoming; that is, it is a permanent place of modulation of what came before by what comes after, never fully accomplishing either as an essentialist stable “reality” but also of permanent in-coherence if I am to matter as a political subject at all. But it also means rendering bodies and subject positions as in-coherent as possible to refuse to let power work through bodies the way it needs to. My question here has been and remains, what happens if we refuse the coherences of gender and practice in-coherence

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centripetal or stabilizing the space it marks, or centrifugal, that is, destabilizing of the spaces it flags (as in to pervert, torsion, make strange). While I am convinced of queer’s strategic and contingent efficacy, it seems to me its time to call for another—dare I say a post-queer—refinement of our languagings?

This essay will illustrate the effectiveness of a post-queer practice of incoherence through the work of two post-queerly gendered Toronto-based performance artists: one drag king, Deb Pearce (aka “Man Murray” and “Dirk Diggler”) and one queer femme spoken word artist and performer, Anna Camilleri. While queer is supposed to function in excess of the equation gayandlesbian and its ideological liabilities, it continues to mark a relation to lesbian and gay as much as it marks distance from it; it also is just not complex enough to hold the lives and bodies of tranz folks either. Calvin Thomas, for instance, argues that such resistances of the regimes of the normal are not exclusive to gay, lesbian, or bisexual practices. Such queerings can be part of anti-heteronormative practices amongst heterosexual practices as well. But cannot a practice resistance through incoherence, be also a strategy for resistance regimes of racism as well as homo- and transphobias? It is harder to place queer in this context, that is, of challenging the coherence that is to accrue between say whiteness and masculinity. To render something incoherent means three things simultaneously: first, it means a lack of organization, or a failure of organization so as to make that thing difficult to comprehend; but it also means failing to cohere as a mass or entity. Such failures of comprehension and organization are precisely what an intersectional practice seeks. The reading of a body as “properly” gendered or as racialized “white” involves presenting signifiers within an economy where the signifiers accumulate toward the appearance of a co-herently func-

instead? Such a practice, such as that which marks the performances of drag king Deb Pearce/Man Murray, trouble our fantasies of wholeness and singularity in terms of our identities, answering that fantasy with incoherence and multiplicity instead.

What better ground to map that practice onto but the female masculinity as open secret coded onto Canadian songstress, Anne Murray. Deb’s “Man Murray” has been a successful feature of the Toronto drag king performance scene for almost nine years. Man takes aim at the gender contradictions of Canadian songstress Anne Murray by layering recognizable performances of female masculinity onto a “failed” performance of heteronormative femininity, queering that which has signified as an open secret for decades: Canada’s own butch national icon. What makes Man so pleasurable are the ways in which Deb’s performance codes not just irony but layers of irony onto each other. Layering refers to the way that drag kings will map a king persona onto their own gender identities, allowing that identity to show through cracks in the mapping (Halberstam). What Deb draws our attention to is Anne Murray’s own layering of genders. Murray has long been rumoured to have a lesbian past; this rumour is virtually unverifiable. But what is far more interesting about this rumour is the degree to which it is fed by a disavowed spectre of masculinity around Murray’s gender identity, including her deep baritone voice. Despite the signifiers of femininity that accrue around Murray—make-up including requisite blue-eye shadow, earrings, long gowns, feminine pant suits, women’s low-heeled shoes, and so forth—Murray’s performance of white femininity always already seems to fail given it is layered onto a body which reads more masculine than feminine. That is, one could argue that Murray herself, as text, before Man Murray queers her, reads as a very toned-down male to female drag queen.

It is precisely these already existing ironic layerings around Murray that Man Murray foregrounds. Man's performance is choreographed around the many other obvious markers of gender awkwardness around Anne Murray: the short masculine hairstyle, square jaw, broad face and smile, strong hand tightly gripping the microphone in a fist; pant suits with slip-on shoes, step dancing where she moves awkwardly from side to side etc. What makes this performance so effective—that is, what makes the irony so resonant—are the similar facial features that Anne Murray and Deb Pearce share. These are the faces of white butch masculinity, accompanied by what for me, as a young teenage butch, was unequivocally the voice of female masculinity as well. How else might we characterize that deep baritone voice? Only for Anne Murray herself, femininity is layered, quite incoherently onto what can only be read as female masculinity. But Man, on the other hand, is not just layered he's also queerly camped up. Man is packing a phallus not unlike the microphone Murray grips so tightly. Man draws out the awkwardness of body movements, dancing centred at the knees as they step from side to side, equally awkward facial expressions (the wink, complete with blue eye-shadow, and head nod, for instance), and continues to inhabit Murray's body through some of the crowd favourite songs, such as "Snow Bird."

Clearly, such ironic and simultaneous reiterations of failed heteronormative femininity, disavowed female masculinity, and queered gay masculinity, situate us in a post-queer No Man's Land. But drag kings are not the only inhabitants of No Man's Land. Historically, femme subjectivities have almost always been subsumed by female and butch masculinity. Over 100 years of sexological research, for instance, has rarely, if ever, spent considerable time mapping the powerful existence of queer femininity. Both the fields of feminism and queer theory have also neglected her, the former dismissing her potential while the latter folds her signifiers into pure artifice. I want to explore the work of one queer femme performance artist—Anna Camilleri—who challenges these gender hegemonies through a new kind of "fem(me)inism," post-queer, third wave feminist practices emerging as a viable form of political resistance. Camilleri's work raises compelling questions about femininity, questions that similarly overdetermine femininity on the site where it is thought to be the least self-evident and the most coherent; that is, on *queer* fem(me)ininity. In many ways, the relation between *trans-gender* and fem(me)ininity has been, to date, a *non sequitur*. Transgender typically has functioned to mark a space of subjectivity that emerges in contradistinction from the body in which it finds itself eclipsing those who find themselves in the term *femme* as it emerges on what can be (mis)read as a so-called successfully *naturalized* female body.² What happens if we refuse the coherence of that neat equation by suggesting that in the case of fem(me)ininity, what one sees is not at all what



"Man Murray." Photo: Jean Bobby Noble

one gets? The trick, for subjects of fem(me)ininity, is how to stage the gaze as a scene of that incoherence within an economy that apparently binds its subject conventional femininity in the same moment. Can fem(me)ininity resist precisely what femininity is articulated through and contained by?

One of the very recent texts to camp queer femininity is, of course, Lisa Duggan and Kathleen McHugh's "The Fem(me)inist Manifesto." This manifesto is, like other manifestoes, an attempt to articulate in the registers of hyperbole and with tremendous irony, a *femme* call to arms. The piece is written for femmes, directed at masculinity—in equal parts *tranz*, *bio-* and *female*—with the goal of destabilizing and, well, ironizing, exactly what we mean by the term *femme*. Their choice of spelling—*fem(me)*—is deliberate and works against the self-effacing imperatives of femininity; that is, the spelling, like the spelling of "boi," works as a performative to signal distance and rupture from the sign's each modifies. This manifesto maps economies of resistance, rendering femininity as a result both hyper-performative and strangely defamiliarized. In fact, each of these performance texts that I will consider here signify or perform some kind of violence: the Duggan and McHugh feminist camp mani-

festos, like any manifesto, shatters habituated thought patterns and over-familiarity on the part of the reader by jarring us into an entirely different stylization of the word. Manifestos, as a public declarative form, make manifest or visible that which habituated thought puts under erasure and by necessity are characterized by elevated diction and tone. Curiously, the term comes from the Latin *manu festus* or “struck by hand,” implying the shock of that strike as one way to get attention.

Beyond the sexual ambiguities implied by “struck by hand” the femme subject as trope deliberately plays on the

down, is where femme is” (12). As we see in the cover image of *Brazen Femme*, she is not either side of the knife blade as a binary opposition; she is its edge: “Femme is the blade—fatally sharp; a mirror reflecting back fatal illusions” (12). The violence of that edge is the redress and the pleasure.

Formerly a member of the performance troupe *Taste This* (Anna Camilleri, Ivan E. Coyote, Zoë Eakle and Lyndell Montgomery), who’s work was collected and published as *Boys Like Her: Transfictions*, Anna Camilleri is now based in Toronto and continues to write and

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spaces of incoherence between categories: she is both and fully neither lesbian nor heterosexual; she becomes the source of power in the scene by inhabiting, as Duggan and McHugh suggest, normal abnormally. “She” cannot be known and hence contained in categories; her articulations exist in both narrative levels and in both sexual subjectivities (that is, both lesbian femme and heterosexual femme fatale all at the same time). It is precisely her control of what’s intelligible or knowable situated as it is within what she knows is unintelligible for the masculinity, which allows the incoherence of the narrative to unfold the way it does:

Within postmodernism, the fem(me) reappears, signifier of another kind of gender trouble. Not a performer of legible gender transgression, like the butch or his sister the drag queen, but a betrayer of legibility itself. Seemingly “normal,” she responds to “normal” expectations with a sucker punch—she occupies normality abnormally. (108)

Fem(me) is, as Camilleri writes in the introduction to *Brazen Femme* femininity gone wrong; the trappings of femininity gone awry (13). The terms, then, of femme, are both redress and pleasure through the gaze itself, not somehow outside of it (13). While being subjected by the gaze is a consistent part of femme experience, here seeing is the tithe, the price paid for an audacious gaze: “I dared the viewer, the imagined viewer, to look. My legs spread apart, knife gripped tightly, mediating access. Seeing is the tithe, not the prize. A brazen posture? Yes” (Camilleri 11). This reconfiguration of looking doubles fem(me)inity relative to femininity gesturing to a productive categorical im/possibility—incoherence—which refuses closure: “What cannot be seen, what cannot be held or pinned

present spoken word performances. *Boys Like Her* was a collection of writings from tours and performances from *Taste This*, who identify cross the spectrum of gender identities. One of the central tensions of Camilleri’s work, both in *Boys Like Her* and since, is the representational imperatives and yet impossibilities of fem(me)inities in both queer and feminist contexts. That is, the subtitle of the collection—*Transfictions*—foregrounds both the form of the work (fictions) but also the location of the performers, including Camilleri. In *Boys Like Her*, subjectivities and gendered desire function as mirrors, especially for fem(me)inities whose gaze itself is already doubled. What those mirrored reflections, deflections, and refractions reveal is, of course, the ironies and I would argue, the incoherences, of the socially constructed face of femininity, from which fem(me)inities are redoubled. One of Camilleri’s pieces, “Skin to Scar,” commands that gaze attend to the processes by which her face was rebuilt when medically necessary and non-cosmetic surgeries became cosmetic. “Look at me,” the voice insists:

Look carefully. Do you see my face? My totally asymmetrical face? My nose is clinically described as a deviated septum. My mandible and maxilla aren’t perfectly lined up, and X-rays show that my chin is connected to my jaw with wire. Yes, I’m a head injury patient and a beautiful one at that. A beautifully built woman—I have the doctors to thank for that.... They did a wonderful job, don’t you think? ... Look at me.... This face was rebuilt. (88-89)

That invitation becomes a reiterative imperative by the time the second “Look at me” repeats. The double-sightedness that watches from two places at once—from within and from without—watches the watchers to dis-

play essentializing and naturalizing Girl-By-Nature machineries (Duggan and McHugh 154). Feminist theorist Camilla Griggers calls these technologies the abstract-machine of faciality, a process in which the face represents an apparatus that, like a machine, constantly produces and re-produces the subject through the signifiers the visual apparatus requires. The face, in other words, is not a natural extension of the flesh, nor is it a signifier of an individuated consciousness. Rather, it is a signifying mechanism, a network of interpretations organizing a zone of acceptable expressions of the signifier and acceptable conductions of meanings to signs and of signs to social subjects (Griggers). Femininity is then overcoded, abstract faciality where the face is a textual space in which meanings can be allowed to proliferate and resonate. The primary means through which this visual regime of signs is produced and consumed is, of course, through the gaze. Camilleri documents this facializing machine in action:

Beautiful. Yes beautiful.... These words repeat.... The surgeries were needed for medical reasons—and there were “cosmetic benefits.” And this, the cosmetic benefits, is what seemed to excite and intoxicate the doctors more than anything else. I remember the calculated, hungry look in the eyes of surgeons who saw me the way an architect might view a partially constructed building. “Lovely foundation, it’s a shame that it’s not finished.” They saw me as incomplete, unfinished and potentially beautiful. And what greater gift could a doctor give to this world than one more beautiful woman? (91)

But there is a way in which faciality can become *de-faced*, re-constructed. Camilleri deploys a similar rhetoric of strategic essentialism to show how fem(me)ininites are grafted from femininity, a so-called source that imagines itself as the original:

None of the doctors ever asked me how I felt about my face. Go ahead, ask me now ... How do I feel? I can say this: I grew these bones myself, muscle to tendon, skin to cheek. I pushed myself into this world. (92)

That so-called original (yet another assemblage) *loses face* and is even *effaced* in a politic that is ironically played out in the *tranz-gendered* threshold between the perceptible and the imperceptible, and between the imaginary body and the flesh (Hart).

Camilleri’s story “Super Hero” stages a similar violent tranz-(re)versal of those subject-forming but also consuming looking practices (1998). “Super Hero” is a fantasy story that the nameless narrator gives herself very late one night when she is unable to sleep. “Furious, pounding, screaming inside,” writes the narrator, “I know, mean and nasty thoughts aren’t going to get me to sleep, but tonight

I can’t just do some deep breathing [...] No, tonight is different” (131). That difference is one in which the speaker recreates a common experience for women. The scene puts a woman, late at night at the end of her shift, at a bus stop waiting for public transit, harassed by man after man (the “drive-bys”) in cars feeling, as the story suggests, like a sitting duck. Those “mean and nasty thoughts,” we soon discover, necessitate meeting and returning the gaze of one of the drive-bys as he follows the woman down the street yelling obscenities out his van window. Manipulating the desire of “Dick,” the drive-by in the van, the woman climbs into his van, plays equal part seductress and coy, convinces him to return back to her place. Once inside, the woman makes Dick comfortable and retreats to the bathroom to prepare. After returning from the bathroom, pouring a drink, the reader understands exactly what is occurring:

I pour one shot of Scotch, quietly sort through my cabinet and gather my props. Dick is looking out the window. I hand him the drink and run my index finger down his chest. He smirks and takes a swig. I smile back broadly and bring my right kneecap sharply into his groin. Dick grabs his cock and crashes to his knees.... While he’s still down, I cuff him, kick him onto his belly and hogtie him.... A beautiful sight. (133)

Camilleri’s “Super Hero’s” watches the watcher watching and then makes the scene so unbearable that the watcher stops watching and looks elsewhere, all of which is witnessed (by the watched) from two places (both within and without) simultaneously. After tormenting Dick, reminding him that he has only himself to thank for the position he is in, and after reiterating his powerlessness, the woman, who introduces herself as Anna, duct tapes his keys between his shoulder blades and throws him out of her apartment and watches him stumble down the street naked.

I walk over to my window, light a cigarette and watch the smoke scatter as it hits the pane. The streetlight is buzzing more loudly than usual. Halfway through my cigarette, Dick stumbles out of my building. He’s buck-naked, hunching over, trying to cover his cock. (135)

The text is accompanied by the same photograph that appears as the cover of *Brazen Femme*: that of a woman’s body, sitting, photographed from the neck down. The woman is seated with her legs pulled up to reveal black leather boots with a very thick high heel, legs clad in stockings held up by a garter belt, arms clasping her knees to her chest, with her only visible hand clutching a knife blade. This image of her body as signifier now draws attention to itself as that which remains, like the image of

the knife, in excess of the male gaze. That is, the appearance of the female body is that *object* which was produced by the gaze and yet is the same now *subject* functioning in excess of that same gaze. The gaze that once functioned to secure meaning has simultaneously displaced/deferred the fixed meaning of that signifier and fails to reproduce its power all at the same moment. Like Medusa, the gaze, in other words, is mirrored back onto itself with extremely tranz-formative effects.

The fem(me)ininity in performance, both textually but also when Camilleri performs “Super Hero,” stages the failure of the signifiers of femininity to secure a relation between subjectivity and the so-called female body *qua* body. In the earlier bathroom mirror scene, Camilleri stages the female doubled—that is, in-cohering—gaze as both performative, and *productively* self-naming through ritualized speech-acts.

I lock the bathroom door behind me. I look in the mirror and see myself: a bitch-femme. My eyes are hard and dilated.... I run my tongue slowly along sharp teeth. I silently call on all of the bold bitch-femmes who have come before me, to be here, now. (132-33)

The double-sightedness of fem(me)ininity, which stages a violent assault on both the gaze and the signifiers it productively consumes, does so for both Camilleri from within a number of incoherent places at once: “woman,” “bitch,” “whore/dominatrix,” but also “queer.” The male gaze is dependent upon both visibility but also a coherent point of view that provides it with the cloaked machineries of objectification. In the ironically titled “Super Hero,” and in “Skin to Scar,” that point of view is radically destabilized and shattered, as are the machineries upon which it depends. If Foucault is correct when he argues that “the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens [or watches] and says nothing” (64) then for Camilleri those relations of power operative in the gaze are inverted when it is the silent and split spectator of fem(me)ininity who watches a *performance of femininity* dominate and control the visual exchanges.

These tensions are raised by *Boys Like Her* but it isn’t until we get to *I Am a Red Dress: Incantations on a Grandmother, a Mother and a Daughter*, that the disruptural potential of Camilleri’s project is fully actualized. *Red Dress* is, as the subtitle suggests, a series of incantations on femininity as it triangulates through three generations of women. Each generation battles violent men, including a paternal grandfather who draws a line between each generation as a sexual predator. Femininity is both held to task here, for not stopping him; but femininity is also truncated, interrupted, rendered incoherent by femme, which does not take shape till the final generation. Lyrical,

poetic and elegiac in places, *Red Dress* maps that trajectory beautifully. The grammar or lexicon of *Red Dress* are the realities of women’s lives, the most potent is the consistent sexual abuse of girl children by a maternal grandfather. Structured by what each generation cannot know about itself—*Grandmother, Mother, Daughter*—*Red Dress* introduces us to the Daughter—“Annina,” violently raped by the grandfather for years—as she comes to embody, as femme, the unthinkable rage of each generation of women before her. While Annina’s experiences are the same as her mother and grandmother; her choices are not. As a femme, come of age, she files charges against her grandfather, who is imprisoned for his violence, dying shortly after his release.

The book’s red cover design signals that incantation. Annina’s mother repeats an imperative that she, herself, in unable to actualize: “when your grandfather dies I’m going to the funeral in a red dress” (115). This as possibility repeats endlessly throughout the text like a frustrated desire. “Wearing anything but black to a funeral, to my father’s funeral—now that would be a disgrace,” her mother confesses. “A red dress is for parties, for celebration” (96). But for the young Annina, that desire and its tenacity not just marks but shatters what seems to be coherent space between femininity and femme. That is, coded into what each generation cannot know—where each is cut from the same hard stone—are the templates for the next generation’s work and, in this case, a post-queer third wave fem(me)inist imperative.³

This story is a lexicon between my grandmother, my mother, and I—the stuff that mythology is made of—mother, maiden, and crone. Grandmother notices a red dress. Mother imagines wearing a red dress. Daughter becomes the red dress. The redress. (12).

Camiller’s redress/red dress and the productive failure of femininity to cohere in Man Murray are scenes of what I call post-queer tranz desire who’s logic defies even a complex queering. These are identities, desires, and bodies that defy the logic and the grammars of both the sex/gender system and even many of the attempts, well-meaning as they are, to deconstruct “gender” difference. What we are left with, then, is a completely new relation between bodies and identities; one that we might refer to as post-queer genders without genitals. These new incoherent, post-queer performances of gender, I suggest, mark an important paradigm shift within and for feminism. It is that shift we need to promote if these subjects will succeed in re-making incoherently feminist bodies.

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¹This work is part of a much larger book, in press, called *Sons of the Movement: FTMs Risking Incoherence in a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape* (forthcoming, Women's Press, 2006).

²The term *naturalized* describes an effect of engendering. While usually referring to a performative moment where an immigrant is conferred Canadian, or indeed, any national citizenship, I use it here to reference a similar performative reading practice which infers a tranzed body one based on a (mis-)reading of a gender performance, one that is assumed to have emerged naturally out of that body. Femme is often perceived—quite erroneously—as a naturalized gender, a perception that I hope to challenge.

³The metaphor of stone—stoneness—is absolutely purposeful and significant. Often used within butch-femme communities to reference butch impenetrability, Camilleri uses this metaphor, as a number of other femmes do as well, to detail a gendered emotional toughness, a kind of similar impenetrability only emotional and not sexual. One chapter details this stoneness; in "Cut from the Same Stone," Camilleri draws lines of continuity through grandmother-mother-daughter through tropes such as "Stone's Throw," "Milestone," "Sticks and Stones," "Skipping Stones," writing, toward the end, "For the longest time, I was concerned about being too soft—a soft touch, soft-hearted, soft-spoken. It wasn't until I was about twenty-four that I realized I had buried that part of me long, long ago. I had grown up into an impenetrable woman, an utterly untouchable femme, just like my mother. I had become a girl, then a woman, living in shadow, who could not bear the weight of her own heart—my heart, sunk as stone, silt cradled at the bottom of a lake" (84).

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