

Aimee Herman

Ejaculating Jealousy

She wraps her temperature around my language.

She turns my skin into granules of sugar and stirs it into her.

She looks at me with eyes like the Pacific Ocean, not the color but the size, and asks me to untwist myself.

I tell her my cupboards are empty. I am without inspiration to cook or heat up or remove pre-preserved food from frozen, canned, zip-locked packaging. My starvation is loud in my stomach like the sexual tension in elevators and poetry readings. And I worry about internal famine. And I fear my bones will crumble like kindling if I don't find something to eat, fill me, fondle my mind.

I tell her about my belly and the invisible girdle I wrap it in each day; she tries to laugh away its excess. I think about swimming, swimmers, diving board enthusiasts, and suck in my breath to startle away the folds. When I am alone, I let it go. I let my

belly fold over my pants, run from my ribs, play peek-a-boo with button and zipper. Six packs and core muscles are a plane ride away, or more realistically found in air-brushed photographs attached to hollow skeletons with straight, blond hair and breast extensions.

I worry about my inability to put on skinny jeans and the fact that there is an article of clothing with the word *skinny* in front of it.

I worry about my obsession with semen and inability to produce it. It should be no mystery or surprise to me that no matter how many pounds of spinach I eat or gallons of milk I drink, I will never produce sperm.

I will not wake up one Wednesday in November and find that I have dripped sperm from inside me into my underwear. I will never masturbate alone in my bed and notice the aftermath of the hard work I just engaged in.

I will never prematurely ejaculate.

So, what can I eat or how many sit-ups should I do each day or what types of vitamins must I be ingesting in order to make some sperm inside me?

There will never be a night when I am beside my partner, limbs intricately tangled together, where we wonder if *this is the time*. The sheets will be confused beneath us and tossed to the floor. We will be sweaty because there is always lots of sweat when you work hard enough. I'll touch her belly and it will already protrude a bit because my sperm will be so potent—**superhero-Batman sperm**—that we will already see the effects.

And I think about those women who straddle razorblades each morning in their shower. Mount over-moistened strip and three blade convenience as they cut away their curls, shards of hair poking out around pussy, covering calves, flirtatious fur around anus, beneath armpits. Skin so smooth, you slide off it. Nothing to pull at, keep you there longer, bite onto, floss with. I go home and take my clothes off. Begin to count all the hairs I purposely leave and love on my body. I lift my arm and think about the digestion of salt and sweat from day lubricating the length of hair. I lift my leg and wonder what makes the hair stop growing once it reaches its final destination of measurement. I grab my cunt and watch my fingers disappear in its wilderness.

I worry about waxing. All the plastic razors decorating garbage dumps. Women who look like girls with bald cunts like Barbie doll heads after their hair has been pulled out of its stitching.

Hair.

There is something about hair that makes me mad.

This hair right here that we style and dye and cut and shape.

Hair covering scalps creating our queer identities.

Makes me want to put a hat made of tinfoil over all of it and ask you to stop judging the texture or length.

I thought it needed to be short. How else would you know I was gay?

I thought it needed to be shaped like the lesbians on television or beside me at the bar.

I *needed* you to recognize me.

So then I thought: everyone was supposed to look the same. Easier to be identified as *family*.

Then, maybe you'll talk to me.

I grabbed my curls one night and squeezed them hard, choking the life out.

Angry at the way they jut out of my scalp, limiting the possible hairstyles I can have.

Hard to have a Mohawk when your hair can't keep up an erection.

I cut my hair because I wanted everyone to know. I thought they'd know just by looking at me but apparently long hair can confuse people.

I didn't want to have to *say it* all the time.

When it was gone, something changed. Clothes began to wear me in a different way.

A sticker appeared, kind of like the one you get at orientations or meetings. White. Rectangular. With big black marker'd lettering announcing my label.

DYKE.

Wait a second. But just yesterday you called me a lesbian. I mean, a *lipstick* lesbian even though I never wear lipstick. It sticks to my teeth and tastes weird, always falls out of the lines or perimeters of where my lips actually are. And then my food tastes like whale fat or whatever they use now to make it.

I came out at nineteen. At a Chinese food restaurant in New Jersey, chewing on crispy noodles with my parents, wondering how I wanted to announce that their daughter liked the taste of pussy. No, that probably wouldn't be necessary to disclose. Announce that I like the shape of women's fingers much better than a man's dick. Still too much. Just announce I was gay and let them figure it out.

But then I had to come out again many more times and I thought, we come out of the closet *once*, yet I still have to keep doing it. Because now my hair is long again and I guess I don't look gay anymore.

When my hair was short, I was a different kind of gay. Or so I was told. Reminded.

A soft butch. Butch dyke. Stone butch. Gender queer. Boi. *O I*.

My curls hid where no one could see them. Behind lots of gel and a haircut that tried its best to mimic what everyone else had. So, you'd know I was one of you. And then we could be instant friends or lovers or at least share the look of: **I know. I get it.**

Let's be loud and visible together!

What is it about hair?

My friend, Nina, came out to me several Spring's ago. Her hair went from shoulder length to barely long enough to pull during those times that are fun to pull on hair. I asked her why she cut it. She said she wanted to find a girlfriend.

So, I started doing some research. Read a posting online: **Does short hair make you a lesbian?**

During the times of Stonewall, having short hair was necessary—at times—to spot your local gay. A way to develop kinship with one another.

Styles have changed and expanded. The faux-hawk is quite popular—allowing hair to be less spiky during the day and much more perpendicular at night. But just be careful. When out at night, make sure to wear something bright or noticeable to your partner or friends. It is really easy to lose track of a faux-hawked woman at queer bars across the country.

As my hair grew back, and curls reemerged, I watched as an imaginary person with strong fingers, picked off my label and replaced it with a new one. I recognized the handwriting. It read: **Hard to tell.**

What happens when the accessories are removed? When the hair gel is washed out and hair falls where it needs to because it is tired and has worked hard all day, all night and needs to be flaccid.

What happens when the tight *skinny* jeans are unzipped, pulled down, thrown to the corner of your room? When the sound of your thighs unclenched from beneath tight denim keeps you awake and your vagina whispers to you that it really needs much more breathing room.

What happens when the label is removed because it has lost all its stick from days, weeks, months, *years* of wearing it? When you decide to walk around naked without the pop culture-heavily researched-get up.

So, I'm just a ~~lesbian~~ ~~gay~~ ~~queer~~ ~~a big home~~ this

Experimental in words not hairstyle. I can't afford all that hair product. And the tops of my thighs can't fit into those jeans. And my belly is an ocean that fluctuates its tide and I'm OK with having a six-pack in my refrigerator instead of on my body.

Maybe when I'm ready I'll just purchase some sperm and when I squirt it into her, it will *feel* like mine.

I'm working on my disdain toward razorblades and hairlessness.

I'm translating the stories inside me, inventing languages and gestures, inconsistencies and oppositions to compete with the labels that are in desperate need of being removed.

Author Bio

Aimee Herman, a performance poet, has been featured at various poetry festivals and reading series. She currently works as an editor of erotica for *Oysters & Chocolate* and spends her time deconstructing the intricacies of the body. Her work can be found in *Clean Sheets*, *Cliterature Journal*, *InStereo Press*, *and/or journal*, *Soundzine*, and Uphook Press's latest poetry anthology, *hell strung and crooked*. She has also been featured in *Best Women's Erotica 2010* (Cleis Press). She has a severe fondness for peanut butter, curly hair and Canadians.

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