

## **Portals to the Joyous: Buttholes, Beltane and Owen Connor's Queer Futurity**

Lay me down in the field of fertility. Adorn me as your May Queen. Guild my genitals with gentians. Pluck me, softly, if I want it. Observe me in the downy pastures of our making. So soft, this queer spring light, we say. So gentle, the sprouting. In this field we crest the hill and find all our lovers. In the grass we plot sex and revolution. Turn soft to fierce to something else entirely. Turn light to food to energy. Thread our roots through churned up soil. Lay the groundwork. Celebrate the present. Eyes clearly fixed on points ahead.

In these flowers we celebrate friendship. Make portraits of our friends and collaborators. Insist on their importance. Lift them into the halls of the familial. For where else were we introduced to the idea of the 'chosen family'? What would necessitate the intense validation of platonic/romantic relationships, if not an outward shunting from so many nuclear family structures? Your mother doesn't acknowledge your existence? Find another one, or ten. Not invited to family gatherings? We've already made our own. Where sisters can be mothers to each other and lovers become friends, become grandmothers with a biscuit and a hug when you need one. Where we depend on each other for survival. Because we come from the same lineage. Because we love each other. Because we are family. Because I was taught an extended type of love by the queer communities I've been lucky enough to be engulfed in. One where bloodlines were for dripping off ankles post scrape. Where blood meant love as in shedding. As in, who am I ready to bleed for? Blood, as in: my heart is filled with it.

Their faces are defiant over the background of cracks. Sometimes a visual metaphor is all you need. Is this not an engulfing part of the queer experience (as much as we can generalise any kind of experience which is to say . . . not much)? To smile, recklessly and full of joy, at your friends and the world, encased in a hobby horse or baring your butthole. Show me your truest wish in portrait. Of the joyous, the silly, the loving. Show me your lovers being deeply alive. That queer space of watching everything splintering around you. Let them see the potential dangers and bare their teeth. Let it be a smile. Let them keep smiling. Grinning up at everything that wants to keep them alive instead of casting a glance to the fractures in the back.

A facet of queerness is seeing the beauty in the butt hole. To see past the societal disgust, to a portal of pleasure. To insist on it. To have your satisfaction denied to the extent that everything has seemingly been taken from you and so you have nothing left to lose. When the world is afraid of you simply living. Let alone terrified of your fulfillment. Why not celebrate both? We're almost forced to. The perfect things that we are told to

hide or change to fit into deeply hetero beauty ideals. To be unapologetic in a society that tells you you must be either screaming or crying and you won't be taken seriously either way. So you scream and cry even louder and blast it through a glitter gun. Mismatch your cod piece to your pubes. Celebrate that penis you're 'not supposed to have'. Turn it into a vagina if you want to. A facet of queerness is the tension between radical acceptance and radical change. Both being the same in some cases. Both being different. A facet of queerness is the indescribable.

Tell me a story. One of circus and performance and agency within those worlds. I'm going back to the butthole. That rich space. The intersection of: vulnerability, pleasure, assumed dirtiness, societal shock and intimacy. Brown-eyeing the world is many things, radical and silly among them. And how better to be defiant in the face of a world that calls you all manner of things, radical and silly among them? Are we queers still seen as a Circus? Entertaining to the masses, colourful, bright, loud, a little disingenuous and above all: freaks. Tolerated for entertainment (in moderation of course, there can only be one Ellen- and they must be white), accepted for performance. Like circus performers we must either be: outlandish (a woman! With a MOUSTACHE!) or completing incredible feats of bravery (the highwire of gender presentation, the tamer and the lion of capitalist assimilation).

This isn't to say we are all gleefully performing our roles. That there can't be something rebellious about being aware of how society perceives you. Of playing into it if it suits you. Passing because it makes you safer. Working from inside the closet. We're still laughing at the audience once they leave. Still bathing in our self-made community of freaks. Still making a place where we can be safe.

Our three characters lead us in ritual. Performing archetypes to lead the community towards a better season. A bounty. A facet of queerness is entwined with the future. The imagination of it. Personal hopes towards utopia. Queering a ritual of fertility to create a fertile ground for change. One where we no longer seek to assimilate into a present that comforts others, but push onwards towards a future that is entirely our own.

And what do we mean by fertility? Nothing so pedestrian as sperm entering an egg. None of these false heterosexual dichotomies. The heterosexuality of fertility was always just as false as gender. Indeed how can heterosexuality even be seen to truly exist when gender is only a comfortable lie? Lay me softly in the daffodils. Let me laugh towards the sun when I hear them say that you have to have a penis to be a man. When I hear them say fertility is located in the womb, I'll sigh. Think how sad it must be to consciously decide to limit your existence.

Take us to the passion of Beltane. Take us to the beginning of spring. Take us to transience and change and rooting down (all puns intended). Take the queers to the holiday of nature sex and what do we do with it? Make it more fertile. Make the celebration less a penetration than a surrounding. Not just sex, not just a replenishing of commodities, but seeding a fertile future.

For where has sex been more fully celebrated than in queer communities? Discussed, dissected, laid out on a platter for ALL to consume if they want to. And when I speak of sex I mean to be all encompassing. Let us not pretend to think only of vaginal penetration. Let us celebrate sex so extensively that we celebrate the choice of it. The absence of it. The choice to be absent. For we know we need not partake in something to celebrate it. A queer celebration comes from learning that things need to breathe. Be examined. Celebrating that the inputs we've been raised on are mostly false. Celebrating that we must create our own rituals. Create the future as we see it.

A note : I am a white, mostly cis-passing queer. My takes are personal. My privilege, immense. My privilege is a result of the endless work of current and historic black queers and queers of colour. The work that continues as we read this. Please consider taking the time to donate to the LGBTQ+ Freedom Fund. The Freedom Fund posts bond to secure the release and safety of LGBTQ people in jail and immigration detention. Supporting their work is necessary, now more than ever, in light of the social justice being undertaken in North America <https://www.lgbtqfund.org/>. Gender Minorities Aotearoa is another organisation that could use your money to continue their work supporting takatāpui, trans, GNC, NB and intersex communities in Aotearoa <https://genderminorities.com/donate-to-transgender-support-rights-advocacy-health/>.

– Eliana Gray