

Butcher Queers



This edition of *Butcher Queers* is called 'The People Issue'. We would like to dedicate it to a new wave of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans and queer people who are pushing the boundaries of sexual and gender identity, photography, illustration and brave new writing.

Butcher Queers is a collaboration of queer writers, activists, artists, performers, photographers and thinkers. We don't advertise clubs, bars, events or products. We're interested in queer people. The things queers do, things queers love, things queers make and say.

We would like to include your writing, art, photography, thoughts or recipes for disaster. It may suit our zine; it may not. Whatever it is, we ask that you do it with passion. Send us an email to butcherqueers@gmail.com or visit our blog at www.butcherqueers.com.

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Thanks: Emily, Sean, Sadie, Oisin, David, Joey, Stephen, The Hive Dublin, Brian, Conor.

Will
Curator

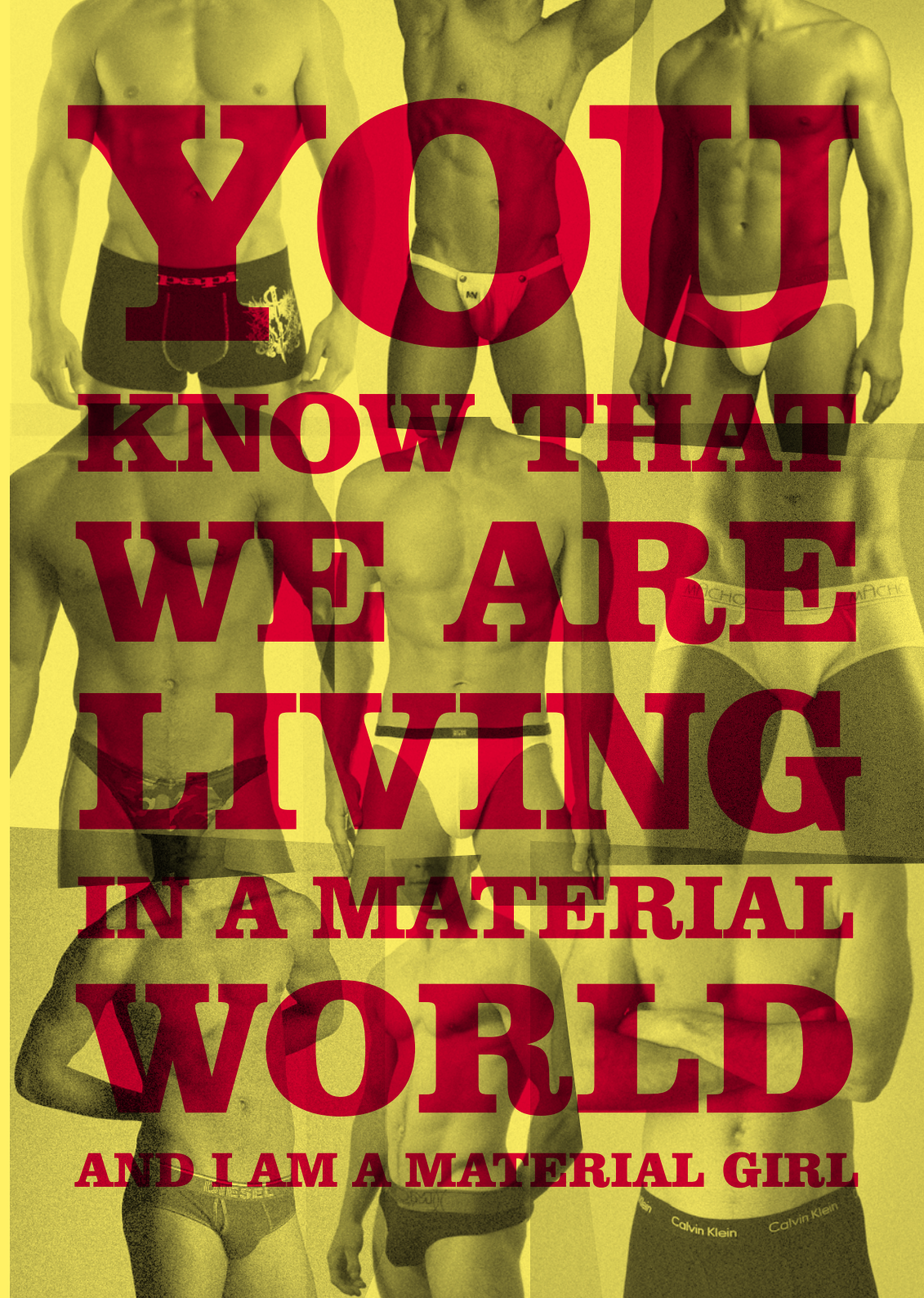
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Right: Collage of Men's Underwear adverts by Will St Leger





The USP of gay Parisian watering hole *Raidd Bar* is an illuminated, glass-fronted shower cubicle built into its left wall. At various intervals on any given evening, men as broad as ditches with six-packs like egg cartons climb in to generously lather up for the crowd's amusement. They are hard, of course, but in an aimless sort of a way. They hump their towels and soap their erections, but that's the height of it. There is a pointlessness to their flashing. They seem inappropriately coy for a job that hardly rewards restraint; they have

perfectly erect lame-duck penises.

Not that it matters. The audience is titillated in a sedate sort of way – it is France after all.

I think we should build a similar glass display case in Dublin, somewhere terribly public (just off Grafton Street perhaps – the Basebar edifice seems an obvious choice). Only, instead of a ripped lothario rinsing his willy, we should put on a more low-key, if just as controversial spectacle: Let's have two members of the same gender kissing.

Those who believe that being gay is immoral, ie. the religious, tend to have an unhealthy, if

rather understandable obsession with the exciting sex life of the homosexual. It wouldn't matter whether or not they were walloped between the eyes with a Parisian erection or subjected to the sight of two men locking lips – they would be equally affronted (and curious).

The belief, after all, of the au-courant Catholic is that active homosexuality (indulging in anal sex, to be crude – and it is a rather crude way of looking at things, this Catholic perspective) is the problem area. It's okay to be it, but to do it. Public kisses and cuddles lead the concerned religious citizen to believe that lips won't stay in the one place and that sin will surely follow.

In the greater part of Dublin, one can walk along as a recognisable faggot – floral shirt tied up above the navel, twinned with a tasteful sashay – and one will be safe. Cunts will, of course, always find a reason to intimidate you if they want one. However, for the most part, passersby will presume, if they bother looking, that you are homosexual, but they will not be offended. What offends the passive homophobe is the impression that you're going home to have sex with your boyfriend.

What gives him or her the internal idea that you're going home to have full-on sex with your boyfriend is your public display of affection (PDA), however restrained. ("I've nothing against gay boys so long as they keep it behind their own four walls.")

This makes pecking your boyfriend in the street or squeezing his hand as you cross the road together an altogether political act, which, when you think about it, doesn't make sense.

A PDA should be a wholly spontaneous moment; there shouldn't be the second's hesitation before displaying affection. But for the loved-up homosexual, things are different. Smooching another person of the same gender is almost akin to a mild act of civil disobedience.

So what's to be done? Should we chew the faces off one another in public until we erode intolerance too? Should the first few stoic romantics bear the brunt – the threat of verbal and physical abuse that we tacitly acknowledge when we don't hold hands in town – until the hoi-polloi see the light? Do we need PDA Martyrs?

Parallels between the tacit ban on kissing and the more obvious ban on civil marriage for same sex couples (the most blatant PDA of all) are inevitable. Mob consensus is a vicious

circle. Gays have 'wrong' sex – they can't have marriage – gay sex continues to be misconstrued as 'wrong'. PDA's are blatant reminders of said 'wrong' sex, therefore gay sex is fetishised and shoved to the margins.

"the religious, tend to have an unhealthy but rather understandable obsession with the more exciting sex life of the homosexual."

Daft old bags would have you believe that sex was better in Ireland in the fifties. Mary met Paddy in the Ballroom of Romance when the showband was in town, and afterwards they'd have a furtive fuck in the field. It was wrong. It was illicit. It was naughty. But it also caused great belches of shame and self-loathing. It was worse again was to be in the stifled majority, too frightened and frigid to do anything that approximated adult fun. Sex is nothing less and – crucially – nothing more than a natural act; a biological whim; an itch. Though roundly perceived as something kinky, gay sex is just the same. Gay relationships, sex and kisses are neither shady nor special.

Here is a good question: Do we prefer our air of depraved mystique? Do we like being the stoic sexual underdogs, slighted but enlightened? Do we get off on being gays who have 'wrong' sex? Do we want to cut ourselves off from the perceived 'norm'?

Let's be explicit here. Gays hang around with each other because they like each other's company. The scene is fun, not just because there is the option of running into someone who you can shag, but also because there is a simple pleasure in being around like-minded people. However, the relegation of our PDA's to the dance floors of gay bars, when only among said like-minded people is, at the very least, unproductive.

Now, form an orderly queue. Who's going to get his head kicked in to make life easier for the rest of us? **BQ**

David Babby is a writer, blogger and student of English and French in Trinity College.
www.theverytolerablecockalorum.blogspot.com

“

Gays

give me

the shits

”

Potty mouthed pontiff

slams gays for

runny arse

The Vactian Press Office was in damage limitation mode last night following a spontaneous tirade against homosexuals from Pope Benedict XVI.

In an unprecedented attack, the 83 year-old pontiff blamed homosexuals for a bout of diarrhoea as he presided over mass at St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. "Fuckin' hell! I've been on the kazi all morning and me arsehole is still twitching like a rabbit's nose," he informed the congregation, adding: "And I'll tell you sumfing. It's those poofers' fault. Prancing around with sunglasses on their heads and dressing their little dogs up... it gives me the fuckin' trots."

Remarks defended

Cardinal Sean Brady defended the Pope's comments saying, a gay also gave him the squits, after he took an 'E' at an all night rave in the back of a Chinese restaurant.



Saved: Katie makes front cover six weeks in a row.

Exclusive: Jordan's 'Secret Curse'

Print my picture

or I'll DIE

Super celeb Katie Price has broken her silence and told *Butcher Queens* about her 'Front Page Death Curse'. The 32 year-old glamour model revealed that if her image doesn't appear on the front of at least one celebrity magazine per week, she will **die within seven days**.

Talking exclusively to our magazine, the spotlight seeker said: "It started about two years ago. I didn't make the cover of a particular issue of *Heat* magazine. I could feel my life draining away."

She added: "That's when I realised that my very existence was inextricably linked with being featured on the front of semi-glossy magazines."

Superstition

A source close to the star confirmed that Katie's 'curse' is similar to that of the ravens in the Tower of London. "Just a superstition claims that the British Kingdom will fall if there are no ravens in the Tower of London, so too will Princess Jordan meet her demise from lack of print exposure," the source said.

Editors have vowed to help Katie's plight by ensuring a front cover every week. *Closer* magazine said: "If just one upskirt shot of Katie's panties keeps her alive, we'll print that picture."

'Bovril Jaws' McFadden says

I'm scarleh about

me pop at Gays

Ex-Westlife backing singer Brian McFadden told music blog *Take40.com* that his past anti-gay faux pas where a deperate attempt to deflect attention away from his fat face. McFadden landed himself in hot water in 2008 when he said on New Zealand radio: "If you are not gay, a man should not be wearing pink. Saying pink is a form of red is the same as saying homosexual is a form of male."

In the recent interview he admitted his piggy features where similar to a jar of Bovril. "So, like, you know the shape of that jar? Well there's, like, a thing in England called 'Bovril' which is, like, the exact same shape as my, like, head. The bottom part of my face is so fat, my friends call me, like, Bovril Jaws!"

While chart toppers, *Take That* have reunited with Robbie Williams, Irish boyband *Westlife* have ruled out McFadden rejoining their group.



Newly Weds: 'Fashion Icon' Brian McFadden broke with convention in 2002 by wearing the wedding cake as a coat.



Above: Sadie as her alter ego, 'Pan-Demonium' with Sean Meehan.

Butcher Queens is about, well, queers. And queer is not just gay, it's lesbian, bisexual, trans and so much more. We put 'Pan-Demonium' (better known as Sadie) in the 'so much more' category. Created in 2010 for Alternative Miss Ireland, she was the most kick-ass drag king ever to grace the Olympia stage.

Meanwhile, Pan's mate, Sean identifies himself as a 'queer guy' going through female to male (FTM) transition since 2006.

We decided to get both Pan and Sean together for a special *Butcher Queens* photo shoot and chat, talking first with Sean (our stunning cover model) about his gender journey, from an identity struggle in his 20s to the confident, happy (and hot) man he is today.

Butcher Queens: Do you believe in gender?

Sean: The more and more I've transitioned, the less and less I believed in gender. When I first came out as Trans, I know some people who assumed that this meant I would become some über macho straight dude but to be honest with you that's just not me. I never have been super butch and I didn't go through this whole transition only to turn around and pretend be someone I'm not. That would be just plain stupid and pointless, I see myself as a mixture as masculine and feminine and either side of me would never let the other one down. I'm lucky enough to have practically grown up on the scene and have had a lot of wonderful influences around me.

BQ: When did you first realise you were trans?

Sean: Deep down I've always known that I didn't fit into a male or female box; I was always somewhat masculine. Somewhere around 15 or so I told myself that no one was ever going love me the way I was, so I invented someone else who was extremely feminine to cover up the boy.

The penny dropped one night when I was 22. I was all ready to go out, long hair straightened and make-up perfect. I looked at myself in the mirror and just started to cry because everything else was perfect apart from my eyes, all I could see were these boy's eyes staring back at me. No amount of make-up could cover it up anymore. I cut my hair short that summer.

BQ: At what point did people in outside world begin to 'treat' you as a man?

Sean: The first year and a half of my transition were really tough. I got a lot of stares and comments of people on the street and public transport, which is hard for anyone, trans or not. Its only really within the past seven months that I've been passing as male. It's always the stranger on the street who lets you know. The first few times other guys have took the shoulder off me passing by, thrilled me. I was like, 'Hey, he just bumped into me like a guy! Woohoo!' A small victory, but a victory all the same. I don't get the stares and comments any more which makes such a big difference, and I always get grammatically addressed as a male!

BQ: Did winning AMI in 2006 as Funtime Gustavo change your perspective of who you are now?

Sean: Winning Alternative Miss Ireland in 2006 was one of the greatest highlights of my life so far. Funtime Gustavo was a character to be played and be creative with, and playing that role did give me a window through which to express my masculine side and maybe even nurture it. But it wasn't an influence on who I am today, rather an outlet for who I've always been.

BQ: Who is most likely to hit on you in a club or bar?

Sean: Usually gay guys who don't know me, which is a lot of fun but has also been a big culture shock, coming essentially from the lesbian world. Guys are so much more forthcoming.

BQ: Who is your ideal date?

Sean: I'm into very queer-minded people so my ideal date would be anyone from Jonny Woo to Lazlo Pearlman (FTM performer). I'm very polysexual so it really depends upon the person.

BQ: What advice would you give to others thinking about or in transition?

Sean: No-one knows you better than you. One small step you can take, which I also did, is to contact Outhouse in Dublin and start attending the trans meetings there. They really helped me get to the next step. Also, keep your chin up no matter what is thrown at you. You are still human and deserve as much respect and love as anyone else. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone I love and know

who has supported me from day one. I couldn't have done this without each and every one of those people; I am forever grateful and I love them all from the bottom of my heart.

Next we talk with Pan-Demonium, the fawn of a new day.

BQ: Where did the idea for Pan-Demonium come from?

Sadie: He comes from 'Pan' (half man, half goat), the Greek God of shepherds and flocks, mountain wilds, hunting and rustic music, as well as the companion of nymphs. He's famed for his sexual prowess and seduction of Goddesses.

The idea to create a drag king from Pan came from not wanting to do a run-of-the-mill act. I didn't want to be a girl in a suit; I wanted it to be more animalistic, more sexual, and I also wanted to perform topless (it hadn't been done by a drag king before). I thought Pan, although risqué, was a good way of incorporating it all.

BQ: Where you surprised that some of the judges thought you where a guy?

Sadie: I was hoping some of the audience would mistake me for a guy, so when I was told that some of the judges did so, I was delighted! For me, the more people confused by my gender on the night, the more successful the character and the performance was.

BQ: With your androgynous looks, do you get treated differently by men and women?

Sadie: I have on occasion encountered negativity from both men and women, but I think this is due to their lack of experience of androgyny and a fear of the unknown and different. However the gay scene has seen it all before, and embraces it.

BQ: Have you ever passed off as a guy to gain entry to place where women are not allowed?

Sadie: Not really. I haven't tried to crash a bears night or anything! Just the usual, using the men's toilets in packed pubs/clubs. **BQ**

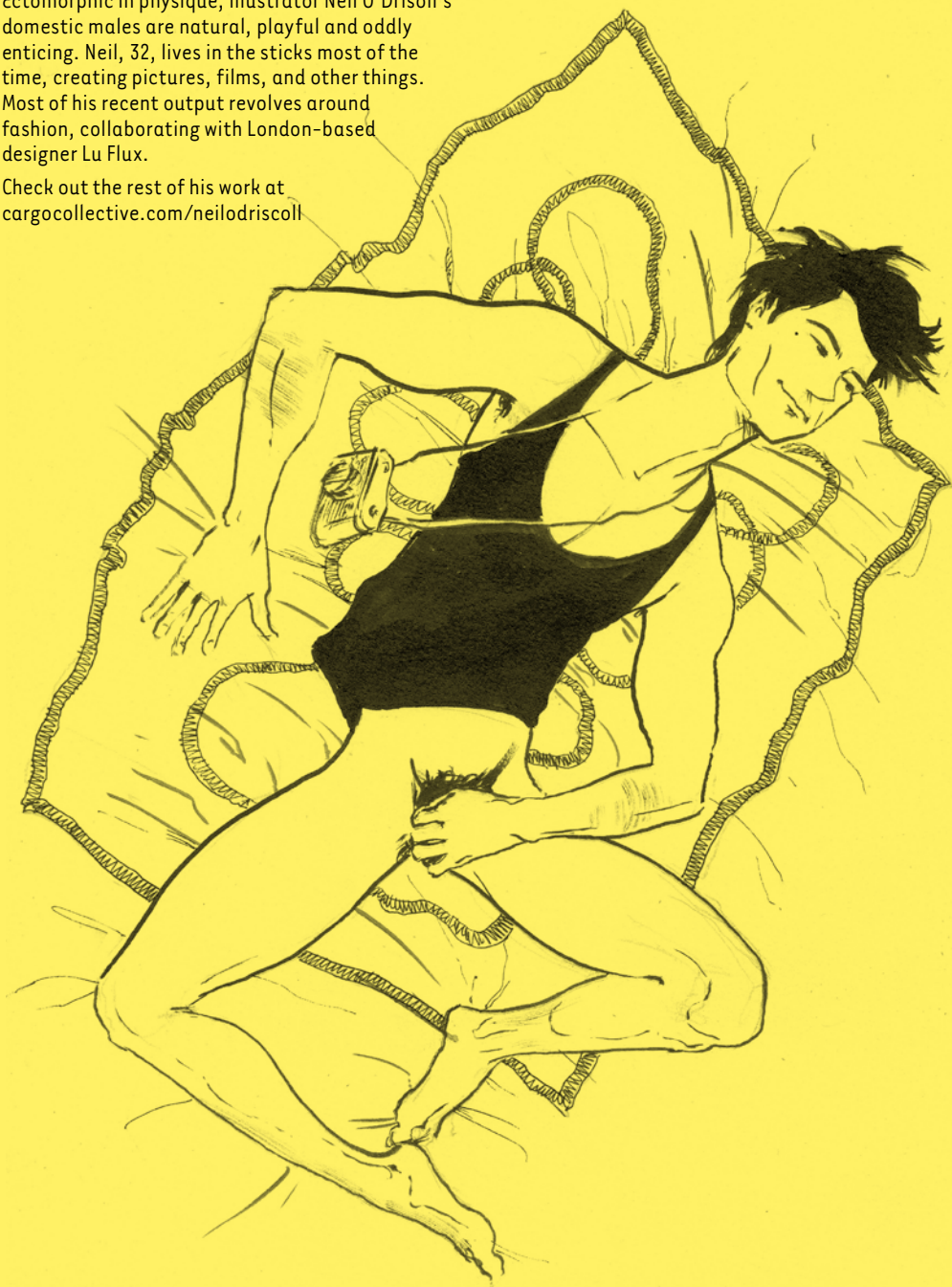


Above: Sadie as her alter-ego, 'Pan-Demonium' with Sean Meehan.

Neil O' Driscoll

Ectomorphic in physique, illustrator Neil O'Driscoll's domestic males are natural, playful and oddly enticing. Neil, 32, lives in the sticks most of the time, creating pictures, films, and other things. Most of his recent output revolves around fashion, collaborating with London-based designer Lu Flux.

Check out the rest of his work at cargocollective.com/neilodriscoll





50 CENT



If you a man and your over 25 and you don't eat puy just kill your self damn it. The world will be a better place. Lol**

6:57 AM Sep 30th via [ÜberTwitter](#)

My twitter is like heaven nigga I got like 2 million bitches on here they love man,they love me.lol

5:26 AM Sep 23rd via [ÜberTwitter](#)

Now wich one of you fine bitches wanta make a super baby with me. Oh yea never take a member of cult curtis to child support its forbidden

4:24 PM Sep 21st via [ÜberTwitter](#)

A so look I just finished fuckin a fat bitch for the first time I wanta tell you niggas don't knock it till you try it.it was bad

8:00 AM Sep 21st via [ÜberTwitter](#)



Grey Pride

Stephen Myler explores the Gay 'Big Bang'

One thing that strikes me at Pride every year is the diversity of people who turn out for the day. Of course, there's the assless chaps and drag queens so beloved of the mainstream media and the integrationistas, but you've also got a pretty good cross-section of the people who live in Ireland right now. In fact, it's probably a bit too good – a marketeer's demographic wet dream, with all those higher degrees and double-income-no-kids couples the gay community is reportedly teeming with.

Apart from the pairs of professors presenting cheek, the Pride crowd covers the genders (however many you support), age profile, the urban/rural divide, the ethnic mix, and the obese/overweight that (again, reportedly) make up the population. (I say 'reportedly', because you can't tell from the representations of people used in the media to sell us ideas and stuff, but that's a whole other can of pale pink, middle-class worms.)

“You can argue that we were all forced into such close quarters by the lack of an alternative”

So everyone has a big party, we are all directed to feel the love for a few hours by various Queer National treasures, but then what happens? Like an oil stain, all those rainbow colours go their separate ways.

Perhaps it's just the fond delusion of someone who grew up in that last great era of peace, love and brotherhood (the 1980s), but I can't help but be disappointed that the 'community' so many people talk about so much only really exists on that one day, before its members are sucked back into their atomised lives and it's business as usual for the rest of the year.

What I notice most about that business as usual is the age-divide on the gay scene. If you'll forgive the reminiscence for just a moment, back in those golden days and nights of the 1980s, Dublin's gay scene was even smaller than it is now, a few pubs with nicotine and piss-stained carpets, and clubs that were generally purple with cracked mirror walls and in basements, probably to save on heating bills. All brilliant fun, but because there were so few of them, they also constituted a sort of 'found' community; dykes, disco bunnies, leather and skin all getting down to *Kylie* or the early bumping fumbles of dance music.

You can argue that we were all forced into such close quarters by the lack of an alternative and as soon as the opportunity arose, each group spun off into its own pool of potential friends, enemies, sexual and/or romantic partners. However, needs must, and heterogenous groups of friends and acquaintances formed there, fuelled by nothing more than booze and possibly the first trickle of Ecstasy. Visitors from larger gay cities noticed this easy mix of types, and were either envious or pitying, depending on how 'sceney' they were.

Now, there's a bigger gay scene, and beyond, a panoply of what are called non-scene groups in the gay listings – all good things, no doubt, but it seems to me that all of them tend to be disconnected. The old warhorse on George's Street even manages to atomise itself. Apart from the obvious divide between Jurassic Park and the 'new bit', which must surely be called Barney's (it's purple and full of kids), there are invisible lines corralling off parts of the main bar. Lesbians form a barrier of bodies down the front, young guys lightly cruise by the dance floor, older guys heavily cruise up on the balcony, and so on.

Smaller clubs have their nights and different crowds; so each self-identifying group of people who fall under the rubrics of 'gay' or 'queer', can be assured that the majority of the clientele will be of a like mind.



Of course, given that the scene's main function (for its clientele, rather than the people who own it) is as a place to meet sexual and romantic partners, it's natural that it's going to atomise. Maybe my quibble is based on not wanting to feel like the oldest person in a place. Maybe going to a Pride-like club every weekend would be a nightmare – fights in the toilets, mega-levels of bitching and so on. Maybe my demographic, the over 35s, don't really want to be in pubs and clubs so much, and prefer dinner parties or weekend breaks – even more atomised social gatherings and, like our straight contemporaries, we aren't that bothered about meeting new people.

However, I think my dissatisfaction in the end comes down to how normalised gay people want to be. We accept the rules and behavioural norms of the 97% (or whatever number you choose)

of society that is heterosexual. In return, the advances of recent years – legalisation, equality protection, civil partnerships, general tolerance and acceptance – make for an easy life, and who wouldn't want that? Being an outsider 'queer' is all very well when you have no investment in the status quo, but becomes problematic when you move inside the walls.

I suspect that our integration merely serves to shore up agreed ideas of how society should work – the nuclear family, the teenager, social groups based on sexual orientation – that, in the short history of humanity, are recent innovations, and will quite possibly be regarded as historical artefacts in the future. **BQ**

Stephen Meyler is a writer, blogger and regular contributor to *GCN*.



**“I performed and no one
tried to take photographs”**

by Emily Aoibheann

I performed and no one tried to take photographs; it was a new and liberating experience. It felt different, more friendly, more communicative, safer. It was as if there was more time available to us in the room, as if people were engaged in a conversation with me. I was telling a story and they were absorbed in the performance and in the moment. I left the stage with a different feeling than usual, that I had been paid proper attention to, that the communication between myself and the audience had been different, better, more fruitful. On the way back through to the stage area soon after, a man stopped me and my co-performer, slowly fishing for something in his jacket pocket. Did he want to offer us a gig? Did he want us to do some amazing festival or theatrical new show? Did he want to give us something lovely? No; he wanted to take our photograph. I'm glad he didn't have his camera with him that night.

As a performer, it is common for me to seek the eye-contact of an audience and find myself starring at a room full of faceless, machine eyes. It is strangely frightening to seek human connection and be met with a crowd of gadgets looking back at you, hands holding black lenses over their faces, silent and expressionless. Suddenly I'm not a communicator, but a performing test subject in a laboratory, or relocated to some science fiction future or horrific nightmare where robots have their pet humans go through the motions of humanity for them, even if the art is now meaningless and met with meaninglessness; just another sequence of signals for the machine to record in it's interaction with a human.

The morning after I do a gig, people have already started tagging me in photos on that seemingly necessary but highly questionable social networking site. There I see my face, there are my hands, my feet, tummy, ass, my breasts, there's my smile, my costume, my work. And sometimes, if even for a moment, I feel angry. Furious that some 'photographer' feels entitled enough to upload me, to disregard me and my consent, to copyright me! (In one rare case a photographer even attempted to sell my image back to me.)

And for an instant I think: "How dare you? How dare you capture and take me? How dare you copyright me? My work? My act? My idea? My face? How dare you presume my passive compliance or pleasure in you distributing my

ass as caught on camera in a flash of white movement, my legs busy doing high kicks as you sneak your invisible lense between them, only to copyright it and spread it around the net?" It's not okay with me!

Narcissus.

The name given to the most beautiful boy ever born was Narcissus. His Mother Liriope, concerned as she was of the consequences of such beauty, sought advice from the (gender mutating) seer, Tiresias, who, wise as he was, informed Liriope that Narcissus would survive to maturity so long as "he didn't come to know himself".

The tale of Narcissus is well known to many, his name having become the word associated with self-absorption and vanity, a disregard for other people and their feelings and the privileging of oneself above the humanity and dignity of others. But, like most archetypal stories, the tale of Narcissus is more complex perhaps than our contemporary interpretation allows for. We may take the words of the seer Tiresias literally as they directly relate to our contemporary experience, to our sometimes fragmented online identities, to our performative, multifaceted selves, to our emotional development.

“Suddenly, I’m not a communicator, but a performing test subject in a laboratory,”

Bewildered at first, Narcissus starred for hours at the mirror image of himself, overcome with the first flood of love and emotion he had ever experienced. Alas, the desire he felt for the boy in the water was unattainable, impossible and immensely painful. Unable to cope, Narcissus chose death and plunged a dagger deep into his own heart.* As the blood flowed from Narcissus' wounded body into the ground, up sprang a small pale flower, a white Narcissus.

This Greek myth is much more than a beautiful boy's deadly desire for himself; it's more than a moral lesson. In the Tarot cards, Narcissus is



Above: 'Narcissus' by Emily Aobheann



Clockwise: 'Narcissus' by Emily Aoiheann

represented by the Page of Cups, the emergence of the capacity to feel. Narcissus stabs himself and as his blood dribbles into the earth new life is born in the form of a flower. The death of Narcissus is a necessary stage in developing a capacity for loving others, his gesture being appropriately self-sacrificial. Each Page in the Tarot deck is embryonic, the most fragile of beginnings which can easily be exploited, abused, misunderstood, ignored, destroyed, as can our sense of self-love and our understanding of the importance of such love: "We can easily call Narcissus callous and selfish because he has eyes for no other than himself. But he must begin with himself before he can see anyone else."**

Taking and Capturing.

If self-recognition through self-exploration represents a necessary stage in our burgeoning ability to love others, what about photographers who, in a bizarre narcissistic paradox, seem only to think of themselves? In this the digital age, voyeurism has been brought beyond the indulgence of watching, to that of an abuse of bodily integrity via technology. So obsessed are we with documentation that the impact of the live moment has largely become secondary to the retrospective life it accumulates online. Social events, community and performance-based happenings are now the fodder for photographer's careers. New media blurs the line between professional skill, thoughtless playfulness and thoughtless disregard, all the while the technology available for documentation is evolving quicker than an etiquette for its use, a critical analysis or public consideration of the potential consequences. The lack of concern for a subject's emotions or feelings on being photographed and their image being distributed seems to me the worst crime of a so-called narcissistic personality. The existing attitude of entitlement and thoughtless self-indulgence of someone with photographic ambition or indeed, a snap-happy camera, may at first seem harmless, but there is a concerning, even sinister aspect to the unrelenting and often unconsidered use of photographic and distribution technology, where those who use the technology, lack empathic and sensitive consideration of those who's image they take. **BQ**

* In some versions of the myth Narcissus thrashes himself to death.

** The Mythic Tarot, by Liz Greene and Juliet Sharman-Burke.

www.youreournarcissus.blogspot.com





Above: 'Narcissus' by Emily Aoiheann



by Joey Kavanagh

In August of this year, Ballinlough Castle in Co. Westmeath played host to gay music festival, Milk. It was a success by all accounts and word is it will become an annual event but, no matter how glowing the reports, you can bet your smelly wellies that I won't be among the 2011 attendees.

"Europe's first ever LGBT outdoor music festival!" Screamed advertisements, as if the event were pushing the boundaries and we would soon see copycat festivals springing up all across Europe.

Pardon me, but I fail to see how an event such as Milk represents 'forward thinking'. If anything, at a time when we are fighting so hard for political and civil equality, the idea of

socially self-segregating ourselves with events like this actually seems utterly retrograde. For Milk's organisers to assemble a stereotype-laden line-up, adorn their posters with rainbow flags and reckon they've got me sussed is, frankly, a little offensive.

If something is labelled as being 'for gay people', it's a surefire way to make me less interested. If the Internet is to be believed, my apathy for such segregation is the key characteristic of the 'post-gay'. And apparently, 'post-gay' is not a desirable thing to be. Charged with being internally homophobic, unappreciative of the campaign for gay rights and other such heinous crimes, post-gays are a much maligned species.

We have lesbian and gay film festivals, gay theatre festivals, gay choirs and multiple gay sports teams in Ireland. We've got gay television programmes, gay magazines, gay websites and gay radio shows – homosexuality is now a multimedia experience.

Each of these provide valuable social outlets for LGBT people, as well as helping to promote tolerance and acceptance in the wider community. As someone born at a time when same-sex activity was criminal in this country, the significance of this separate gay culture is not wasted on me.

These spaces have served as refuges for members of the LGBT community and no doubt will continue to do so going forward. However, in a country where attitudes to homosexuality have changed beyond recognition over the course of 20 years, it stands to reason that the roles these spaces play will change as well.

The campaign for gay rights has primarily been a quest for equality irrespective of sexual preference. The successes of this campaign, the product of the efforts of so many, has enabled us to establish a gay cultural identity. Thankfully, we in the LGBT community need no longer be so clandestine about our activities.

Times are changing and, accordingly, we need a change of tack. We need to consider whether our self-imposed separatism, which once served to protect us, is becoming increasingly redundant and might even inhibit future progress.

"If something is labelled as being, 'for gay people', it's a surefire way to make me less interested."

It is becoming more common to see same-sex couples holding hands in inner city Dublin. There are a growing number of genuinely 'mixed' club nights in the capital, like C U Next Tuesday and War. If a notable personality 'comes out', it's no longer the headline news it was even ten years ago when Stephen Gately crushed many a schoolgirl's fantasy.

As wider society becomes more and more accepting of homosexuality, surely it's only fair

that, at the same time, we allow ourselves be more open to embracing wider society.

It's possible to live a gay life: socialising exclusively in gay circles, setting up in a 'gay-friendly' neighbourhood and going to a gay music festival once a year. But surely the cost of immersing one's self too deeply in any one pocket of society is to limit one's life experience?

The work of the gay rights movement is far from done, obviously. Homophobia remains rampant in this country but breakthroughs are being made all the time as the campaign for equality continues to recruit supporters. The success of the movement is testament to the fact that there's strength in numbers but, to me, core to the idea of 'post-gay' is the prospect of reaching a point where we can proudly stand alone, without an LGBT community.

As fantastic as it is to have gay sporting teams like Emerald Warriors excel, I can't help but derive more pride from the success of Donal Óg Cusack, an openly gay athlete who has outpaced the nation's elite sportsmen on his way to three all-Ireland medals and two All-Star awards.

Donal Óg has asserted that his sexuality is neither a handicap nor remotely relevant to his hurling and asked to be treated just like everybody else. Granted, he's unlikely to get his wish just yet and will likely bear the 'gay hurler' tag for some time to come, but by finding acceptance in an institution as notoriously 'traditional' as the GAA, he embodies my interpretation of post-gay.

As the gay community continues to integrate with wider society, there will be those that mourn the loss of the 'otherness' of being LGBT. But if the trade-off for seeming 'exotic' is attaining full marriage and parenting rights, then I reckon it's a pretty small sacrifice to make. Otherness, as I see it, is a barrier to equality.

Call me homophobic. Call me ignorant. Call me Betty. Call me Al. I make no apologies for my delight in the fact that being gay matters less today than it has at any point in history and here's hoping its significance continues to diminish. Me? I'm post-gay and proud. **BQ**

Joey Kavanagh is a writer and blogger
www.thebubbleboy.blogspot.com



Übermensch

Oisin Byrne / Christopher Mahon
NYC 2010

"I don't want to be human! I want to see gamma rays! I want to hear x-rays, and I want to smell dark matter. Do you see the absurdity of what I am? I can't even express these things properly because I have to conceptualize complex ideas in this stupid limiting spoken language. But know I want to reach out with something other than these prehensile paws, and feel the solar wind of a supernova *flowing* over me."

(Battleship Galactica)





Above: Self-portrait by Sean Meehan.