

## Sharontheview

This project started out semi-autobiographical, however, when I came to the end of my writing I realized it is autobiographical. The characters, events and outcomes are entirely true. The pain and frustration of not fitting into a binary system of homosexual or heterosexual are real. Growing up I was taught two sexes, two genders, and one way to love. This heteronormative view of the world was very insular and could have been a comfortable place for me to stay, except internally I felt differently. Once I broke free of the heteronormative view and realized there were other ways to view the world I started searching for “my people”. What I thought I would find would be a group of people who are inclusive of everyone and welcoming to ALL. What I found was in spite of marching, advocating, and fighting for equal recognition alongside homosexual and heterosexual men and women, bisexuals and pansexuals remain marginalized groups due to fear and suspicion of “others” that is often directed at them by both the homonormative and heteronormative communities.

When shE meets N in the novel that is heR first idea that heR upbringing in a heteronormative system is not how shE really feels. N allows heR to explore what shE had always felt. The exploring shE does early on with N is more about breaking free of the heteronormative and recognizing that beyond heterosexual there is also homosexual, and homosexual is just as valid an orientation as heterosexual. This lays the ground work for further exploration once shE meets S.

Meeting Sharon truly did shatter my views of sex, gender, and orientation. Meeting her sort of turned everything on its head for a brief period and allowed me to realize the heteronormative and homonormative narrative are not inclusive of “other” groups. “...trans gender expression is already a challenge to the binary system...the trans movement challenges the binary sex/gender discussion, but because gender is almost always linked to sexuality the trans movement also challenges the binary sexuality discussion.” (Elizabeth, 334)

The interaction between the med nurse and Sharon underlined one of the themes in Laura Sell’s *Where do the Mermaids Stand*: that is that gender is “repeated” and “publicly performed”. (197)

However, even though Sharon repeatedly performed women she was repeatedly ignored because she did not fit neatly into the binary system of homosexual or heterosexual.

The remainder of the novel revolves around Jennifer's self discovery of how she identifies, the marginalization she felt identifying as bisexual and now pansexual and how she came to peace with being an "other". In the novel, "doubt and its drab looking box" symbolizes my identity and how it cannot be shoved into a neat box and labeled. While in the novel I do label myself and those around me I really wish we could live in a label free world, a world where there was no "other". However, we live in a "culture where identity terms are so important." (Elizabeth, 334)

One way bisexuals and pansexuals are marginalized is the decision of either coming out verbally or keeping that part of yourself secret. There is no "bisexual look" (Hayfield, 177) or for that matter "pansexual look". "Because bisexuality was understood as invisible and unrecognisable (sic) on the body, communication of bisexuality ('coming out') required explicit verbal statements rather than the subtler appearance cues that lesbians are able to share." (Hayfield, 177)

As a bisexual and now a pansexual identifying person I have experienced being dismissed as unable to make up my mind, just passing as a heterosexual/homosexual, going through a phase and many other marginalizing accusations. In many ways I have been made to feel that my orientation is not valid and that I need to choose a side: either heterosexual or homosexual. And if I am not going to pick a side my beliefs, values, and concerns are not important.

Common negative social beliefs about bisexuality . . . include[d] that bisexuals must have a 50/50 attraction to men and women; that they are dishonest, promiscuous, or cheat on their partners; that bisexuality is a phase or a transition; that they can't make up their minds; and that bisexuality isn't a legitimate sexual identity. (Eady, 378)

I would like to note that I left all the characters in my novel with blank skin tone. The color appears to be white but is in fact just blank, no color selected. This was done on purpose. First, because I wrote what I knew and everyone in this story is caucasian. I do not claim to understand how persons of color might experience what I experienced. Second, I hoped that the lack of color would allow the

reader to “color” in whatever color they might imagine. Additionally, ancillary characters are left without hair, eye, and skin color, again to allow the reader to fill in these characters with their own imagination.

In conclusion, I know that my experience as a bisexual or pansexual identifying individual is not unique. This sort of experience is repeated over and over on a daily basis for all kinds of people who do not fit the heteronormative or homonormative narrative. We are marginalized and pushed away because of fear and suspicion of “others”. The pain and frustration that comes with being marginalized is real and can be devastating. However, I do believe that we can rise and that the more people who “Sharontheview”\* of diversity the greater will be our understanding and acceptance of everyone.

#### Sources Cited

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\*Sharontheview – While in John George Psychiatric Pavilion Sharon and I shared email addresses so we could keep in touch after we were discharged. Hers was [Sharontheview@xxx](mailto:Sharontheview@xxx). She told me it was her way to remind herself to enjoy life and share it with someone else – Sharontheview.