

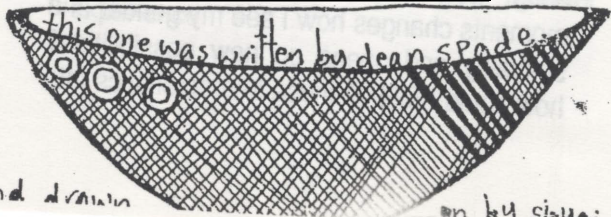
LETTER

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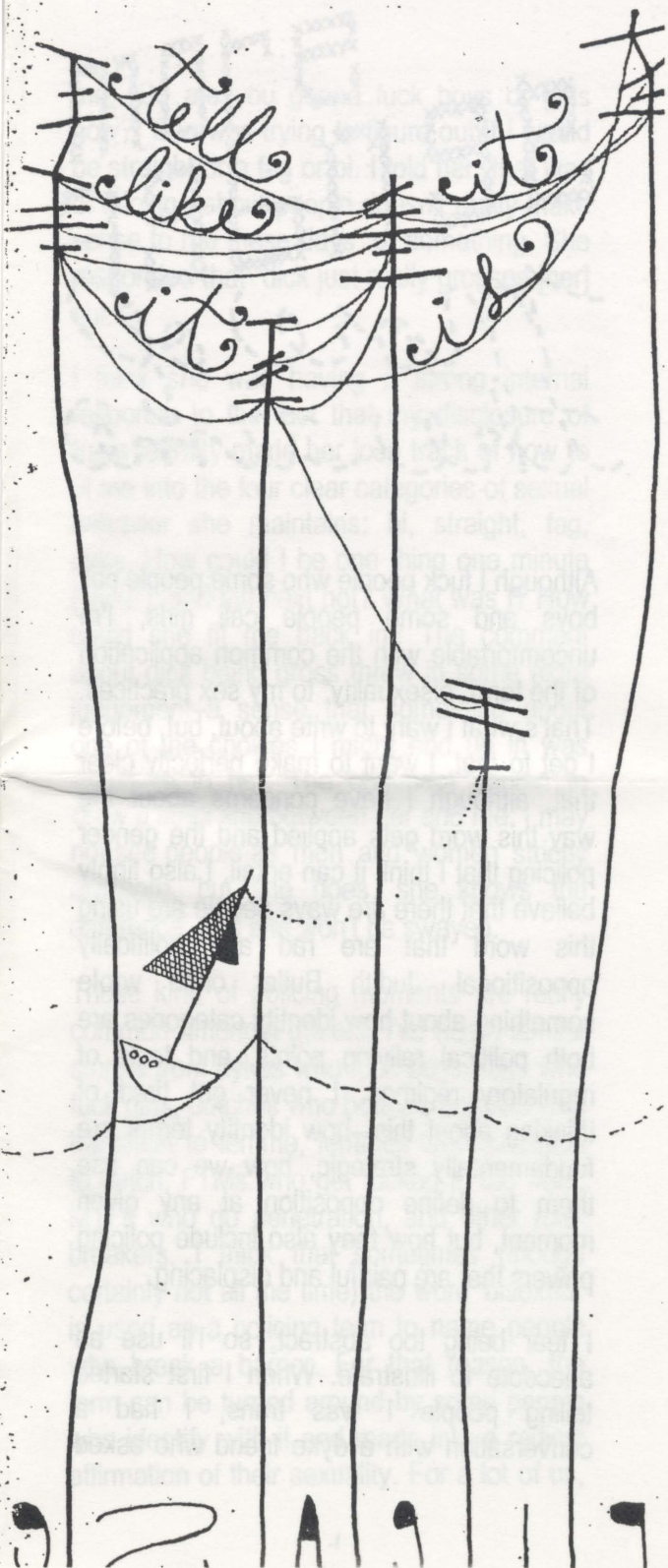
Cocksure is the first in a series of zines based on writing from the transmissions page at makezine.org. as trans writers and allies we want to distribute our critical-resistant writing about trans + queer politics to a paper zine audience.

please borrow, steal, copy + distribute the ideas in this zine and send us your writing at



and drawn

on by slyairl



gender  
queer

Although I fuck people who some people call boys and some people call girls, I'm uncomfortable with the common application of the term "bisexuality" to my sex practices. That's what I want to write about, but, before I get to that, I want to make perfectly clear that, although I have concerns about the way this word gets applied and the gender policing that I think it can entail, I also firmly believe that there are ways people are using this word that are rad and politically oppositional. Judith Butler once wrote something about how identity categories are both political rallying points, and tools of regulatory regimes. I never get tired of thinking about this—how identity terms are fundamentally strategic, how we can use them to define opposition at any given moment, but how they also include policing powers that are painful and displacing.

I fear being too abstract, so I'll use an anecdote to illustrate. When I first started telling people I was trans, I had a conversation with a dyke friend who asked

though, the term operates as a fake catch-all that shuts down the complex conversations we're trying to have about our identities and sex practices.

My first and foremost problem with the term is the 'bi' part. Bi means two—like if you're bi you fuck both of two options. Being fundamentally opposed to the regulatory notion of dichotomous gender, and living, as I do, in a non-cohesive, dichotomy-defying body and mind, this makes the term totally inadequate to me. I don't see myself as falling into either of the imaginary two categories "man/woman," and I don't approach the people I want to fuck with those categories in mind. I am committed to an idea of gender that is about an ever-changing layering of gendered characteristics and perceptions, not at all about two poles, a continuum, or any boxes. Please don't understand me to be promoting 'non-labeling.' What I love is specific, detailed, stimulating, inventive uses of language to constantly re-inscribe and re-identify body and sex experiences, rather than simplistic terms that shut down conversations about how hot we all really are. If I'm chasing a scrawny, new-wave, eyeliner wearing faggotbutchswitch lesbian, and a jocky-but-sensitive preppy trannyfag, and a tough-but-gentle punk activist trans lady top, how can that be made to fit me into one of 4 categories? Why would we want to do that, rather than talking in detail about how each one of those desirous moments changes how I see my gender and sexuality and opens up new possibilities? how could I fold all those characteristics into

neat and tidy gender categories for those hot people? Would they still be hot if I did?

I know that for some trans people, transition is a process of moving into a new 'fully inhabited' identity category, where the goal is to be accepted and fully integrated into that category. For me, though, and a lot of other trans people I know, it's not about following a new set of rules closely, but about colliding identities, occupying multiple identities, and throwing the rules into crisis. The process involves changing what body parts mean, separating biology from destiny, and applying new meanings to sex practices. I think a lot of non-trans people similarly want to (and do) shift and multiply, access varying communities, and define themselves with pleasure, intention, and no eye toward continuity. Legal, medical, and capitalist institutions remain aligned against these queer culture-making processes, pushing us to occupy singular categories, make life-long decisions, and buy gender-appropriate products. These institutions occasionally make a little room for a new assimilated category, like a whitewashed upper-class monogamous married patriotic version of gay identity, but only to use that as a new regulatory (and marketing) strategy. We owe it to each other and ourselves to embrace surprising and even disturbing constructions of desire that defy easy categorization, and to constantly invent new language with which we can express the variation of erotic and gender experience.

me, "So are you gonna fuck boys or girls now?" She was trying to figure out if I would be straight or a fag or bi. I told her "that way of thinking about people doesn't really make sense to me these days" or something. She responded that "dick just really grosses [her] out."

I think she was having a strong internal response to the fact that my disclosure of trans identity made her lose track of how to fit me into the four clear categories of sexual behavior she maintains: bi, straight, fag, dyke. How could I be one thing one minute ('dyke'), and the next not? What was I? How could she fit me back in? The comment about dick being gross threw in some extra judgement—a sense that something about one of the choices I might end up in was repulsive to her. The comment served to draw a strict line between her and me: I may not see people as 'men' and 'women' strictly anymore, but she does, she knows the difference, and she won't be swayed.

These kind of policing moments are really common amongst queers. I've heard similar stories from dykes who fuck boys, fags who fuck girls, butches who bottom, butches who transition to femme, femmes who transition to butch, FTMs who get fucked in the front, MTFs who do penetration, and other rule-breakers. I think that sometimes (though certainly not all the time) the word 'bisexual' is used as a policing term to name people who break a barrier. For that reason, the term can be turned around by some people who identify with it and made into a radical affirmation of their sexuality. For a lot of us,