

All of tonight's poetry is by LGBTQ authors...some well-known and others not and some even anonymous. But let's start with some k.d. lang music.

Kathryn Dawn Lang, born November 2, 1961, known by her stage name **k.d. lang**, is a Canadian [pop](#) and [country](#) singer-songwriter and occasional actress. Lang has won both [Juno Awards](#) and [Grammy Awards](#) for her musical performances. She has contributed songs to movie soundtracks and has teamed with musicians such as [Roy Orbison](#), [Tony Bennett](#), [Elton John](#), and [Anne Murray](#). Lang is also known for being an [animal rights](#), [gay rights](#), and [Tibetan human rights](#) activist.

MUSIC: "Reflections" CD 1 TRACK 5 "You're OK"

Frank Bidart is an American academic and poet. Bidart is a native of California and considered a career in acting or directing when he was young. In 1957, he began to study at the University of California at Riverside, where he was introduced to writers such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and started to look at poetry as a career path. He then went on to Harvard, where he was a student and friend of Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop. He began studying with Lowell and Reuben Brower in 1962.

Queer

Lie to yourself about this and you will
forever lie about everything.
Everybody already knows everything
so you can lie to them.
That's what they want.
But lie to yourself, what you will
lose is yourself.
Then you turn into them.

*

For each gay kid whose adolescence
was America in the forties or fifties
the primary, the crucial
scenario
forever is coming out—

or not. Or not. Or not. Or not. Or not.

*

Involuted velleities of self-erasure.

*

Quickly after my parents
died, I came out. Foundational narrative
designed to confer existence.

If I had managed to come out to my
mother, she would have blamed not
me, but herself.

The door through which you were shoved out
into the light
was self-loathing and terror.

*

Thank you, terror!

You learned early that adults' genteel
fantasies about human life
were not, for you, life. You think sex
is a knife
driven into you to teach you that.

SHERRY WELLS READS HER SELECTIONS

Edna St. Vincent Millay was an American lyrical poet and playwright. She received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1923, the third woman to win the award for poetry, and was also known for her feminist activism and her many love affairs. She used the pseudonym Nancy Boyd for her prose work. The poet Richard Wilbur asserted, "She wrote some of the best sonnets of the century." She died in 1950.

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why (Sonnet XLIII)

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply,
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
Thus in winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:
I cannot say what loves have come and gone,
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.

About me by Kira LeMay

Im a really fun out going person once i get to know you i have been writing poetry for 9 years struggled with being bipolar schizophrenia ADHD PTSD and gender disphoria for thous who dont know what that is it means im transgender i have felt i was born in the wrong body since i could remember i had a hard life growing up but my hardship growing up has carved me into the wonderful girl thats here now and i have came a long way in bettering myself and my actions i love to play the guitar write and swim you cant get me out the water.

Life in progress

Born in the wrong body you try to fit in

Though your heart is so heavy and chances are slim

You pray for just one person to look beyond the mask

No more persecution is that too much to ask?

You long for pretty dresses and curves that are 'real' to look like a "hot mess" but there's only pain you feel

You hear voices whisper "a woman or a man?"

She, girl, woman, her why dont you understand?

MUSIC: "Reflections" CD1 TRACK 10 "I Dream of Spring"

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) Wilfred Owen was arguably the most significant poet of the First World War. Many of his poems were inspired by the homoeroticism of the Romantic period, such as Maundy Thursday - a powerful description of male-male desire. Love letters were also discovered from between him and his mentor, the soldier and poet Siegfried Sassoon.

Maundy Thursday

Between the brown hands of a server-lad

The silver cross was offered to be kissed.

The men came up, lugubrious, but not sad,

And knelt reluctantly, half-prejudiced.

(And kissing, kissed the emblem of a creed.)

Then mourning women knelt; meek mouths they had,

(And kissed the Body of the Christ indeed.)

Young children came, with eager lips and glad.

(These kissed a silver doll, immensely bright.)

Then I, too, knelt before that acolyte.

Above the crucifix I bent my head:

The Christ was thin, and cold, and very dead:

And yet I bowed, yea, kissed - my lips did cling.

(I kissed the warm live hand that held the thing.)

Anthem For Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Poet laureate of the US from 1949 to 1950, Elizabeth Bishop was famously meticulous. But while many poets may use their work as an excuse to be personal, she preferred to be objective about the world around her. That's what makes it powerful. The poetry can evoke these powerful feelings, without it devolving into revealing her secrets.

One Art

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent to be lost
that their loss is no disaster,
Lose something every day.
Accept the fluster of lost door keys,
the hour badly spent.

The art of losing isn't hard to master.
Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant to travel.
None of these will bring disaster.
I lost my mother's watch.
And look! my last, or next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.
I lost two cities, lovely ones.
And, vaster, some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.
- Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture I love)
I shan't have lied.
It's evident the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

British filmmaker Isaac Julien has described Langston Hughes as a 'black gay icon'. But he is so much more than that. He was one of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form called jazz poetry and is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance.

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams

For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

whats really wrong... anonymous teen

I am gay

Which means I like guys
But most guys don't like guys who like guys
So those guys beat on the guys who like guys.
Being gay means you have to run
Because they will hurt you when they catch you
Being gay means you have to hide
The way you truly feel.
Being gay means you have to be scared
That your secret will leave at any moment.
Being gay in a world filled with one minded people
With a fascist like mindset
Means you can't live your life.
Blending into someone you are not is hard
Acting a certain way for people is hard
But aren't we human as well?
Or are we animals?
I didn't wake up and choose.
I was born like this.
But because the majority has the upper hand
And being the way we are is written as sin
What should I do?
Or what should we do?
I'm scared...
Should I give back the life that was given to me?
Because the way I am living it is "flawed"?
Imperfection is amongst all of us. but, some believe we aren't equal... so we
have to fight for things that should be ours.

—**Guest Jose**

Dream Sequence

Maybe one day I'll tell her
You know One day
One day when I'm a little less scared
And a little more brave
You know those days
I know you do
Those days where you feel like
You can take on the world
Sometimes I let myself think
About what it would be like I
If she liked me too
It a worthless dream though
A hopeless one
One that'll only let my mind do what it wants
To be illusioned
To belief In her, us
She knows about me
I told her
You know what it's like
That amazing moment where you tell someone
And it doesn't change their opinion of you
I want to kiss her
Sometimes I almost think she wouldn't mind
I don't want to kill our friendship
But sometimes I do
It may hurt less to never see her
Than it does to see her and know she can't be mine
If only I knew for sure I'd know what to do
Forget or tell or walk away
If only I were a little less scared
And a little more brave

—**Kinda_Sorta_Me**

Adrienne Rich, U.S. poet, scholar and critic, was born on May 16, 1929, in Baltimore, MD. She was a college student when her poems were chosen for publication. Rich's increasing commitment to the women's movement and a lesbian/feminist aesthetic influenced much of her work. She also wrote compelling books of nonfiction. One of America's leading poets and essayists, Adrienne Rich was a champion for women's rights. Margalit Fox of The New York Times perhaps put it best, saying that Rich "accomplished in verse what Betty Friedan, author of 'The Feminine Mystique,' did in prose." During her lifetime, she won countless honors for her works and her activism.

Rich published an essay collection, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, in 1976, which gave voice to many women's issues surrounding parenthood and marriage. Around this time, Rich came out as a lesbian. She later became involved with writer Michelle Cliff, and the couple stayed together for the rest of Rich's life.

Tonight No Poetry Will Serve

Saw you walking barefoot
taking a long look
at the new moon's eyelid

later spread
sleep-fallen, naked in your dark hair
asleep but not oblivious
of the unslept unsleeping
elsewhere

Tonight I think
no poetry

will serve

Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud was a French poet born in [Charleville](#), Ardennes.^[3] He influenced modern literature and arts, inspired various musicians, and prefigured [surrealism](#). He started writing poems at a very young age, while still in primary school, and stopped completely before he turned 21. He was mostly creative in his teens (17–20). His "genius, its flowering, explosion and sudden extinction, still astonishes." Rimbaud was known to have been a [libertine](#) and for being a restless soul. He traveled extensively on three continents before his death from cancer just after his thirty-seventh birthday.

Antique

Graceful son of Pan!

Around your forehead crowned

with small flowers and berries,

your eyes, precious spheres, are moving.

Spotted with brownish wine lees,

your cheeks grow hollow.

Your fangs are gleaming.

Your chest is like a lyre,

jingling sounds circulate between your blond arms.

Your heart beats in that belly where the double sex sleeps.

Walk at night, gently moving that thigh, that second thigh and that left leg.

Muriel Rukeyser, 1913 – 1980 an American poet and political activist, best known for her poems about equality, feminism, social justice, and Judaism. Kenneth Rexroth said that she was the greatest poet of her "exact generation".

While her earlier work shows the influence of W.H. Auden in its intricate

rhyiming and regular meter, she later wrote more freely, famously declaring in a 1968 poetic manifesto “No more masks! No more mythologies!” Apart from her advocacy for the disadvantaged, she reflected a great range of interests, including science, in her writing, and in the 1960s and 70s became a favorite of the anti-war movement and of feminists.

Elegy in Joy [excerpt]

We tell beginnings: for the flesh and the answer,
or the look, the lake in the eye that knows,
for the despair that flows down in widest rivers,
cloud of home; and also the green tree of grace,
all in the leaf, in the love that gives us ourselves.

The word of nourishment passes through the women,
soldiers and orchards rooted in constellations,
white towers, eyes of children:
saying in time of war What shall we feed?
I cannot say the end.

Nourish beginnings, let us nourish beginnings.
Not all things are blest, but the
seeds of all things are blest.
The blessing is in the seed.

This moment, this seed, this wave of the sea, this look, this instant of love.
Years over wars and an imagining of peace. Or the expiation journey
toward peace which is many wishes flaming together,
fierce pure life, the many-living home.

Love that gives us ourselves, in the world known to all
new techniques for the healing of the wound,
and the unknown world. One life, or the faring stars

Home

by weightlsswhisprs

I get home from school open the door and I'm greeted by my dog.

I'm careful not to let her out and my sister walks in behind me.

I talk to my parents about my day and something funny my friend said.

I sit at the table with my dad and we talk.

The same question as every other day "how was your day?" he asks.

i reply with a generic "okay" and i get a drink.

he asks for a cup of coffee and i get him one.

"i love you" he says. as if he thinks i have forgotten.

i mention to him a show titled how i met your mother.

he says something about the actor neil patrick harris and i retalitate.

you are wrong i say to him.

he preaches to me words i have heard.

he runs out of material and i am still going strong.

he says to me "why are you pushing my buttons"

and i say that i'm not. perhaps i am. i am.

he orders me to take my medicine.

the ones that are used to make me happy.

seems to me like they are used to silence me.

i tell him no. and i look in his eyes and he looks like he's going to cry.

my heart sinks. i go into the bathroom and take my medicine.

"thank you" he says.

i smile trying not to cry.

Author Notes: The discussions I have with my dad on the topic of homosexuality do not end well.

Brave

The land of the free,
Home of the brave,
But what of me?
My love somehow means less,
Should I live in shame,
My morals put to the test?
The light of my life is she,
It makes no difference to you,
Are you not just like me?
Our hearts go out to Juliet fair,
And her forbidden Romeo,
Should they have stayed in despair?
Do you hold hands in the street,
Kiss on the cheek,
Try so hard to be discreet?
How would you feel,
To listen and hear,
The mockery as they say your love isn't real?
Wouldn't you hurt,
Be desperate, be angry,
Your being kicked in the dirt?
I am just like you,
In this land of the free,
But I have to be brave, too.

Author Notes

It's Pride Month. I've written this humble poem in celebration of differences and common human dignity.

June Millicent Jordan was a Caribbean-American poet, novelist, journalist, biographer, dramatist, teacher and committed activist. Jordan is regarded as one of the most significant and prolific black, bisexual writers of the 20th century.

A Poem About Intelligence For My Brothers And Sisters

A few years back and they told me Black
means a hole where other folks
got brain/it was like the cells in the heads
of Black children was out to every hour on the hour naps
Scientists called the phenomenon the Notorious
Jensen Lapse, remember?
Anyway I was thinking
about how to devise
a test for the wise
like a Stanford-Binet
for the C.I.A.
you know?
Take Einstein
being the most the unquestionable the outstanding
the maximal mind of the century
right?
And I'm struggling against this lapse leftover
from my Black childhood to fathom why
anybody should say so:
E=mc squared?
I try that on this old lady live on my block:
She sweeping away Saturday night from the stoop
and mad as can be because some absolute
jackass have left a kingsize mattress where
she have to sweep around it stains and all she
don't want to know nothing about in the first place
"Mrs. Johnson!" I say, leaning on the gate
between us: "What you think about somebody come up
with an E equals M C 2?"
"How you doin,'" she answer me, sideways, like she don't
want to let on she know I ain'
combed my hair yet and here it is

Sunday morning but still I have the nerve
to be bothering serious work with these crazy
questions about
“E equals what you say again, dear?”
Then I tell her, “Well
also this same guy? I think
he was undisputed Father of the Atom Bomb!”
“That right.” She mumbles or grumbles, not too politely
“And dint remember to wear socks when he put on
his shoes!” I add on (getting desperate)
at which point Mrs. Johnson take herself and her broom
a very big step down the stoop away from me
“And never did nothing for nobody in particular
lessen it was a committee
and
used to say, ‘What time is it?’
and
you’d say, ‘Six o’clock.’
and
he’d say, ‘Day or night?’
and
and he never made nobody a cup a tea
in his whole brilliant life!
and
[my voice rises slightly]
and
he dint never boogie neither: never!”

“Well,” say Mrs. Johnson, “Well, honey,
I do guess
that’s genius for you.”

Audre Lorde was a Caribbean-American writer, radical feminist, womanist, lesbian, and civil rights activist. Lorde served as an inspiration to women worldwide, one of her most notable efforts being her activist work with Afro-German women in the 1980s. Her identity as a black lesbian gave her work a novel perspective and put her in a unique position to speak on issues

surrounding civil rights, feminism, and oppression. Her work gained both wide acclaim and wide criticism, due to the elements of social liberalism and sexuality presented in her work and her emphasis on revolution and change. She died of breast cancer in 1992, at the age of 58. As part of the Congregation reading we will read and discuss her essay “There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions,” so it seems appropriate to include a poem of hers here.

For Each of You

Be who you are and will be
learn to cherish
that boisterous Black Angel that drives you
up one day and down another
protecting the place where your power rises
running like hot blood
from the same source
as your pain.

When you are hungry
learn to eat
whatever sustains you
until morning
but do not be misled by details
simply because you live them.

Do not let your head deny
your hands

any memory of what passes through them
not your eyes
nor your heart
everything can be used
except what is wasteful
(you will need
to remember this when you are accused of destruction.)
Even when they are dangerous examine the heart of those machines you hate
before you discard them
and never mourn the lack of their power
lest you be condemned
to relieve them.

If you do not learn to hate
you will never be lonely
enough
to love easily
nor will you always be brave
although it does not grow any easier

Do not pretend to convenient beliefs
even when they are righteous
you will never be able to defend your city
while shouting.

Remember whatever pain you bring back
from your dreaming
but do not look for new gods

in the sea
nor in any part of a rainbow
Each time you love
love as deeply as if were
forever
only nothing is
eternal.

Speak proudly to your children
wherever you may find them
tell them
you are offspring of slaves
and your mother was
a princess
in darkness.

MUSIC: "Recollections" CD1 TRACK 11 "Hallelujah"