

Cultural Daily

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What I Love About Men / What I Love About Women

Elya Braden · Thursday, August 1st, 2013

Elya Braden has had her work appear or will be forthcoming in *Amarillo Bay, Cultural Weekly, Dogwood, Echoes Poetry Journal, Euphony, Forge, Jewish Women's Literary Annual, poemmemoirstory, Willow Review, and Scratch Anthology (Volume 3)*.

What I Love About Men

“Get the ball, you son of a bitch!” their deep voices
 shouting at the football players on TV, murmuring
 “Good night, baby” in bed, the sudden startle
 in the night. Muscled, hairy chests, a sturdy pillow
 for my head. Strong arms encircling my shoulders,
 instinctive gestures of protection—“This woman’s mine.”
 Their height, towering, broad-shouldered—
 let me be your doll, your darling, your rose.
 Gorilla hands opening mayo jars, changing
 a light bulb, cupping my breast. Curious fingers
 tracing hieroglyphics of pleasure across my inner thighs,
 lubricating my labia, caressing my clitoris.
 The impervious business suit, their battle armor
 in a world of men, of deals, meetings, conference calls,
 speeches. The starched white button-down shirt,
 bold and vulnerable, clean and honest, free
 of doubt or self-reflection, sailing into the day,
 gusted bravado on a capricious sea.
 Their pink ears, growing with age, “the better
 to hear you with, my sweetie,” sprouting stalks
 and clumps of wiry gray hair, antenna listening
 beyond and under words to my beating heart,
 blood pearling in the silence between us.
 Their confident pronouncements about history,
 the economy, politics. Their 8-year-old boy
 potty humor unabated. Their secret fears:
 humiliation, not enough money, alone
 in the dark. Their devotion to “what is right.”

The impossibility of ever knowing them completely,
 their inner worlds uncharted by explorers
 from the land of women, their seething need
 for soft words, a woman's touch,
 our reassurance that what they do matters,
 will save the world. The gentleness they reveal
 with children, dogs and horses: the calming voice,
 the tender hand, the open smile embrace.

Their penises, those proud flagpoles—bearers of passion,
 riding up ahead, the charge of the light brigade.

Vulnerability unsheathed, torch of connection burning
 to tunnel into my oasis. Their large feet striding
 into life, all swagger and brash, their florid armpits,
 their sweltering joy.

I want to dive into their fire and never be consumed.

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A writer, speaker, and creative thinking consultant, Jon Pearson was once a cartoonist for the *Oakland Tribune* and an extra for the New York Metropolitan Opera. Jon has written over three hundred short stories and his work has appeared in a slew of publications. He continues to believe that courage, caring, and creativity will save the world.

What I Love About Women

I love that women are different than men. Women have “vaginas,” a word I love almost as much as “panties,” my all-time favorite word. I love it more than “peace” or “freedom” or even “justice.” On the fifth day God created panties. And it was good. I say the word “panties” now and suddenly I am twenty-four years old in an upstairs bedroom in Berkeley, California watching Susan Murphy with her perfect butt and sculpted legs rise from the bed and saunter toward the kitchen, naked, except for her shiny, silver, nylon panties — the fineness of her ass radiating in all directions, the bored, languorous, easy, jiggling, perfectly-round-buttocks-fineness of her young womanly ass. The church of the female ass. Let us open our hymnals.

Okay, so now, I should say something really sensitive to prove I am not a lech. I like that women are soft, like flowers, begonias, after a rain, smooth and supple. Whereas men are like hiking boots, women are like rainbows, playful and evanescent, ferried aloft on unicorn breath. Whereas men are like peanut butter jars full of loose change, women are forests within forests, rolling hills, massive rises, sudden drops, valleys, crevices, inlets, outlets, glades, rushes, freshets, bevies, hamlets, slopes and eddies, a titty-slorphing, shimmy-shammying, frickle-frackle of sugar and spice and everything nice. Whereas men are pretty much a bucket of oil rags.

“Woman.” The word is like meat or drink. It is the ocean and yet, a lullaby and hearing it, I am on a sampan drifting down a river of coffee easing into a grotto made of lilac-dipped owl wings that fold into a nice...what was the question? Oh, yes. What I like about women? I like that women are different. I like that they must *sit* to pee and that, first, they must unbuckle or unstrap or unzip or untie or unbutton or unfasten things. A woman is a confection of secret inconveniences.

Women do *everything* differently than men, now that I think. They stand, they sit, they finger things. They lick their teeth. They paint their toes. They wax themselves. They sip rather than glug their water. They remember exactly where you were standing and what you were wearing when you said that *thing* you said. I am not sure they don't actually *come* from another planet: the planet titties-and-kitties-and-panties-and-cupcakes-and-babies, where everything is wordlessly known and

grace and beauty and sheer endurance will conquer all. Whereas if men all came from one place it might be a truck stop in Oklahoma.

I am being hard on men. Because a woman knows things a man can't. A woman, sitting alone on a chair has a wisdom a man will never have. A man can be a saint, a slob, a bully, a genius. But he can't have a baby. He can't feel a person growing inside him, making knees and elbows as he mows the lawn. He can't harbor life while brushing his teeth. He also can't get out of a traffic ticket by crying and looking pretty but that is different. Women are different in ways too unnamable to list. And that is what I like: that as much as I know about Elya, she is a planet, a continent, a bottomless lake. And I am her very own little merry-go-round, rusted and squeaking, but making her laugh, keeping her company, and watching my reflection in her surface, as I go round and round, knowing there are things eyes *can't* see and only love can.

Jon Pearson

Image courtesy Alexis Rhone Fancher

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