

## VIATICUM

---

Keagan Wheat  
**APPROVED:**

---

Michael Snediker, Ph.D.

---

Roberto Tejada, Ph.D.

---

Maria C. Gonzalez, Ph.D.

---

Antonio D. Tillis, Ph.D.  
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences  
Department of Hispanic Studies

Viaticum

---

A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department  
of English and the Honors College  
University of Houston

---

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts

---

By

Keagan Wheat

May, 2020



## Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Pre-emptive Eulogy	10
Dear Mom and Dad,	11
At the Gravel Road	12
The Importance of Naming	13
Therizinosaurus	14
Felicia	15
Standing outside that house	16
List his features repeating	17
When X looks into	18
Caitlin	19
Lessen	20
Cait	22
Please Don't Break That	23
Daphne	24
By the Fourth Day	25
Needle Every Week	26
Name 1	27
TBD	28
Transfixed	29
I can't go to the men's bathroom, if your dad is also going.	31
Owen	32
Working in Transition	33
Alex	35
Revisions	36

I Don't Know Why I Love Him	37
O'Neal	39
Sophomore Year	40
I have to know the most efficient route,	41
Keagan	42
Don't Forget	43
Keagan Miguel Wheat Guerra	44
Looking at my Father	45
TSA	47
STP	48
A-Camp	49
He Deserves It	50
Treated with Testosterone	52
Trans Pup	54
Helpful Tools for Raising a Trans Kid	55
Dear [insert new name when you pick one],	56
Notes	58

## Introduction

The poetry collection works to increase representation of a minimally represented identity and make meaningful contributions to the way this identity is discussed and analyzed. Throughout this project, poetry addresses specific concepts surrounding the transgender identity that impact an adolescent transgender man moving through transition. The collection addresses experiences of and reflections concerning transgender identity. For my manuscript, these concerns include masculinity within family structures, inheritance of masculinity, feeling trans-ness, and strategic essentialism<sup>1</sup>. My practice is informed by and grounded in the personal experiences of transgender men, as well as by readings in queer theory, transgender studies, and queer and trans poetry that engage different aspects of being transgender. Queer theory and transgender studies have tended to focus on transgender women; the theorists I address include Sara Ahmed and Jay Prosser. To the extent that this collection addresses some ideas in these fields about transgender men, it promotes specifically addressing transgender men more often in theory.

The family element allows thinking through masculinity: how it is inherited and how that process shapes a transgender man's identity. The masculine figures in this family perpetuate various forms of masculinity. In subtle ways, masculinity is withheld from the transgender man by these family members. "I can't go to the men's bathroom, if your dad is also going." places this withholding in its most overt area, men's restrooms.

---

<sup>1</sup> Strategic essentialism means to simply explain an idea without nuance, so people unaware of that concept can quickly understand it.

The “I” of the poem recounts the various negative possibilities if the father “see[s]” him going to the men’s room. By separating the physical character of the narrator into “you” and “I,” the poem manufactures the fracturing of the transman being pushed out of his own identity. “Looking at My Father” conveys the uncomfortable inheritance of masculinity by moving through short images of similarities between the father and the “you” of the poem. These inheritances include “withhold[ing] operations and medication” and needing to “always [...] win” an argument. By switching from “my” in the title to “you” in the body, the poem distances the subject and father to illustrate the discomfort of the subject. Though inheritance is unavoidable, the transgender man also seeks other forms of masculinity that are more accessible to him. “Trans Pup” stands as a quick, loving poem. The poem ends like a love letter might, “XOXO,” to convey the affection this subject warrants. The masculine subject, “bring[ing] attention to your erasure” or “offer[ing] cuddles,” presents the possibilities of a masculinity apart from the father.

In “Queer Feelings” by Sara Ahmed, she asserts that one feels queerness by “the tiredness of making corrections and departures” (424). Ahmed demonstrates how compulsory heterosexuality forces a discomfort in the queer subject by consistently making the subject see the difference between the self and the norms. She explains that when one is aligned with the norms the person “[doesn’t] tend to notice when one experiences [comfort]” (425). She uses comfort to deliberately illustrate the “ease” and the lack of distinction between “one’s environment” and “one’s body” (425). The

heterosexual subject does not need to see “the everydayness of compulsory heterosexuality” (424).

My writing applies this idea to gender identity, rather than sexuality. The transgender subject consistently feels being transgender by “corrections and departures,” but they happen differently (424). Ahmed’s body metaphor quickly becomes literal from the transgender lens. Instead of a verbal departure of having a boyfriend, not a girlfriend, the transgender subject might have a physical characteristic that does not align with the normative ideas of a gendered body. He corrects the space he enters or the hormones in majority inside his body. He corrects the relationships he has to people, for example shifting from a daughter to a son. Though the “corrections and departures” at times are verbal, often they are physical. My collection recreates some of those moments of departure. “STP” does this by presenting an aspect of a transman’s identity that seeks to fulfill a “necessary” organ in the normative male gender. To address the weight of the discomfort, Ahmed points to specific “moments of ceremony (birth, marriage, death)” which are connected to compulsory heterosexuality (424). The feeling of transgender identity is also connected to everyday things, like public restrooms, and ceremonious things, like birth.

Ahmed describes discomfort as possibly “experienced as bodily injury” (424). In Ahmed’s theory, this could be taken as compounding stress of consistently defending oneself and resisting the norms. Within a transgender context, “bodily injury” becomes much more immediate. In my poetry, presenting as a man can cause or be construed as “bodily injury.” “Treated with Testosterone” delves into the possibility of causing cardiac



issues through unchecked use of testosterone. A treatment, used to make secondary sexual characteristics align more with one's gender, reminds one of the innate perceived deficiencies. It also causes "bodily injury" in the injection and cardiac complications. A cisgender person producing their own hormones does not have this concern, therefore they do not have this moment of feeling their gender. As in this example, the transgender subject may be the only person noticing the deviations between the transgender subject and the normative gender. Due to the internalized piece of this, a transgender subject might feel their trans-ness the most not in the company of cisgender people, but alone.

Though *Second Skins* by Jay Prosser clearly and importantly argues for the necessity of sexual reassignment surgery, the book implements language and arguments that exclude certain transgender narratives from being part of the transgender identity. One of those arguments is the wrong body to right body formula of the trans narrative, which means that the pre-transition body is wrong and the post-transition body is right. This formula creates the idea that the initial self ceases to exist or dies when a transgender person transitions. This concept leads to a strain in parent-child relationships when a child comes out as transgender, insofar as the parent begins to mourn the child in the presence of the child. The formula forces negative affect into the transgender identity. If transition metaphorically kills the previous self, every transitioning transgender person innately comes with tragedy. In a poem titled "The Little Girl Dreams of Dying," Cameron Awkward-Rich continues the first line from the title saying this little girl "wakes up in a world where she does not / exist" (Awkward-Rich 1-2). Oliver Baez Bendorf writes a poem about his body as a haunted house, titled "My Body The Haunted

House” (Bendorf 19). The first line reveals “someone died in here,” and this someone, a girl, keeps returning throughout the poem (Bendorf 1). This “girl died young / no funeral” confirming the pre-transition self, which remains within and haunting the body (Bendorf 3-4). These poems by transmen implement the wrong body to right body formula to illuminate certain aspects or feelings of being a transperson. Though these poems intimately convey the emotions within the poems, I want to demonstrate different aspects. To retain the initial self through transition, the poetry will recreate aspects of childhood with which the transman still identifies. “At the Gravel Road” does this by putting the reader into a childhood pastime, “searching for a rock.” The poetry recounts the transition out of chronological order to disrupt the idea of moving from the wrong body to the right body as the sole transition narrative.

Prosser participates in common forms of strategic essentialism. I am most interested the amount of power Prosser gives the medical industry when saying sex reassignment surgery is a “rite of passage” for the identity (Prosser 89). This denies transgender people unable or uninterested in reassignment surgeries a connection to the transgender identity. By excluding sexual reassignment surgery from even being mentioned, the manuscript, entirely focused on a transman’s experience, opens the identity. Instead of performing or even considering this “rite of passage [...] to become most fully transsexual,” this transman, subverting the formulaic expectations, excludes even the thought of it.

Works Cited

Ahmed, Sara. "Queer Feelings." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, by Donald Eugene. Hall, Routledge, 2013.

Awkward-Rich, Cameron. *Sympathetic Little Monster*. Ricochet Editions, 2016.

Bendorf, Oliver Baez. *Advantages of Being Evergreen*. Cleveland State

University Poetry

Center, 2019.

Prosser, Jay. *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. Columbia University Press, 1998.

Pre-emptive Eulogy

Yolanda Saldívar in a car screaming, crying the scene trailing  
off into some other lost memory. I never realized she didn't die in that car.

She ends in solitary confinement, alone twenty-three hours every day.  
She's high risk.

I pass these squat brick buildings covered by dusty blue sky  
as I begin to think of how my parents will be gone; no one to trail

behind or beside. I am asleep as another car accelerates toward the passenger side.  
When I wake, I slip out stepping on pieces matching the tailspin.

I don't realize I caught my hand in a closing  
car door until I see this small, dripping trail.

My mom replies to my shouts for help with *stop whining*,  
*it won't kill you*. I stand still so I won't keep tracking blood, my crying failed.

I wonder whose eulogy my parents will give.  
Might still be Felicia, all her quirky girlhood failings.

Dear Mom and Dad,

I am not *ordinary per se*.

I listen

as teachers discuss my difference.

*Sit alone*, listen.

Within the high cement wall

everyone giggles

through an *active shooter*

noticing I'm missing,

not seeing which box

I fit, boy or girl.

Yours always,

*Special Populations*

At the Gravel Road

I spend a child's version of hours  
searching for a rock in the unpaved  
road. I want one that fits into  
my hand like it has a purpose  
like I could push its button.  
I never think of what  
this remote controls.

I bring a small, chalky rock to my  
grandmother hoping  
she loves me for it.  
She writes my name across the piece  
that I miss.

She places it in a cabinet  
with glass doors next to  
dozens of plain rocks and decaying  
pictures of her family I never meet.

I return to the driveway  
walking toward the road.

## The Importance of Naming

When he calls out Felicia, an old name,  
I'm pulled away from my body.  
I can only see the places  
that grew too much or not at all.  
When I hear Felicia I hear him saying,  
*We're a heterosexual couple, but still queer.*  
I hear *of course you're a lesbian.*

You and I sit in a creaky chair  
through a lecture on some ancient text.  
The lecturer gets worked up  
about the societal importance  
of naming a baby. He starts leaving  
off *in the book...*  
He claims that names make a person,  
forgetting plasma or neurons.  
We sit with your name our mom chose  
when she only saw you.

Therizinosaurus

I tried to quickly pass  
a fragile dead bird,  
but I realized this  
broken discolored eye  
was a toy.  
I stopped.  
A sort of raptor  
adorned with feathers  
carved into the body  
weathered to lack color.

It felt like I  
summoned this wreck;  
I had been thinking  
about my fading memory  
of dinosaurs, my fading  
desire to prove a boyhood  
by standards I disregard.



Felicia

    tell dad  
conspiracy theory time  
they want                my attention  
highly      contaminated

    as long as you do  
    drunk    voice  
             constructing  
an alibi

Standing outside that house

Trees dominate the yard, rupture  
the house along decided lines, dividing

bedrooms and running halls. A shitty house  
with a foundation that rolls a marble

to cracked walls. A broken doorbell that, after ten years,  
was never fixed. The wires slipped

out of place. A duct-taped window chills a room.  
Too many holes in walls

to count or cover. Too many frames of decades  
old pictures that can't be corrected.

The TV, a steady stream of fodder  
available for intellectual debates with a father

that build into screaming  
and additional vodka. A constantly changing arrangement

of the living room closing distance  
between bodies.

A flowered room boxes him inside  
your body, the only room without

a lock. In the middle of a hall lined with photos  
of the smiling faces of family  
that turn to the point of you at every holiday.

He'll climb the smallest tree,  
to feel as tall as he can here. He runs

into walls and furniture. He  
can't seem to fit the space.

Take him on drives, so he can  
sing along with someone that sees  
someone other than you.

List his features repeating

Lend me a ream to steal the teem  
of pleated flowers of faking coward;  
Sleep through Friday sunrise  
or concert asking for names, when body  
glasses fasten neutral appearance seen  
and sweep illusions from her mind  
and protrusions of a certain kind  
ruptured image at varied stage.  
The lift of minor to major key shift  
flows slick slip through pinhole.

When X looks into

your eyes a deep muck brown  
with dark gray circling irises.

Often I forget my name  
as I meet the handshake.  
I worry genuinely.

I called myself Alex  
lied to anyone as I  
grinned with anxiety.

It's reflexive when your  
legal name refuses  
to attach.

I don't have a backstory  
down to give out  
to prove I am the person  
they constantly see.

Caitlin

Oh you're going  
to stop            doing puns  
                                quirky shit  
takes away from the allure

                  good as a whole  
less so  
                  episode by  
episode

Lessen

No one  
questions

butch lesbian  
walking the Dyke  
March but

I stand  
just a little bit  
off in

this visible  
link connecting

code still not

quite in  
line. Community

of radical inclusion  
taught me what

I have of  
queer knowledge  
relenting

care that comes  
through asking permissions  
to hug

I can't  
regrow

those queer  
beginnings into  
FTM. Though

I learned

the language still  
slip into soft

butch accent retaining  
certain gait.

Cait

a little weird    taboo

          latchkey            ish

kind- faced    journalism

          pink cheap            cross

not innocent            enough

          prevent larger

& larger actions



Please Don't Break That

I pull my knees together, lean  
toward the window in the backseat.  
The teen on my right  
exhales vaporized  
nicotine. The pen moves  
through the car in awkward  
turns. The thirty minute  
drive doesn't get through  
one full song.

The car parks near  
a bar. During the walk,  
our group loses the three  
underage members.

The bouncer passes  
the two men in front  
of me for their visible  
facial hair.

I have to show my  
learner's permit with  
your name and my  
face. Still reticent,  
he bends the card,  
turns it over in his hands.

We find the underage  
members dancing inside.  
They knew a backdoor  
entrance.

Daphne

I grew  
up with a weird kid  
being beaten with a remote  
control. Why not dispose  
of the body?

still have a real good horror story

By the Fourth Day

I had no patience for  
anything except some  
sort of explanation.  
I couldn't think of any  
answer though. I didn't even have  
the letter I sent with my mom.  
There was no longer  
any proof  
of who I was.  
My certainty disappeared  
with that letter. It could've  
been angrily balled-up  
or cast aside like a joke  
or forgotten like an unpaid  
bill that racks up fees.  
He never saw me any  
differently because he could not want to.  
He couldn't start now  
to respect me. He barely  
knew my name no matter how many years  
I lived under his roof,  
under his debates,  
under his love.  
He still knew  
everything for no reason,  
so he must have realized  
that he knew better than I did  
or possibly could.

Needle Every Week

Spilling from hard red containers,  
from sandwich kits, from tackle  
box ocean night glimmering,  
sitting on makeshift nightstand.  
Labs bookend memory.  
Soundtrack collecting alcohol pads  
blue orange grey rotate.  
Outsource T  
growing thick blood.

*It's been a long time,  
I guess.*

Name 1

small foreign faction  
never pans out as a brag  
all guilty  
careening through the window

it's a boy  
on the other end

wind down with luminol

TBD

dying in        a weird way  
we're broken    people  
inaccurate and messy person  
here's    my terrible        tattoo

      I think I  
should read this to you  
you want to guess at this  
becoming dead

Transfixed

By the TV, I can't tell  
what's playing.  
Thoughts fall over how to ask  
for a name that doesn't feel  
like addressing someone else.

A soft glimmering tree plants itself  
on the edge of a scattered room.  
This tree, taking four weeks of  
urging to buy,  
marks the time  
my mom tries  
to address my father's family's  
homophobia so I'm not the only one.

I ask about my mom's cousin,  
Stella, who changed her name  
to better match her Latina identity.  
Her favorite cousin. Stella  
took her to her first gay bar.

I encourage myself remembering  
my mom read the book I used to come out,  
*This is a Book for Parents of Gay Kids*,  
learned the basics, asked questions,  
spread resources  
for queer kids.

She apologized after forcing me  
to say I was lesbian,  
after no response, after  
silently sitting, averting.

She drove, with crumpled  
red bull cans, all night to make  
a Tegan and Sara concert.  
We stood in line alone together  
for hours laughing about "The Top 5  
Sheet Masks to Wear After  
Crying About Your Gender"  
and Elena Alvarez.

Now, I try to ask  
as seriously as nerves  
allow about getting  
a new name.

The walls and ceiling amble  
toward us, a trapping  
comfort. *After*  
*I'm dead*, she chuckles  
out. I start creating  
a list: off-limit topics  
gerbils  
my own queerness  
the silliness of men's soccer  
my own comfort

After every defense she made  
between my father's family  
and my queerness, I didn't  
actually expect the woman  
who wears a shirt reading everyone is gay  
to dismiss me again.

She hides  
in her room. After  
locking the door,  
tears fall, she  
talks to God,  
she begs for her  
baby girl.

She could grow  
to love her daughter performing  
butch dyke,  
still had the perfect number  
of one son and  
one daughter.



I can't go to the men's bathroom, if your dad is also going.

I wait,  
make sure he  
can no longer see either  
bathroom.  
For hours  
won't push his look  
into verbalization.

If I go  
stand at the urinal,  
maybe he would laugh  
ask loudly how  
I'd manage a urinal.  
Maybe he would just leave  
thinking I've perverted his daughter  
a faggot putting his expensive  
hand-held recorder  
in so much danger,  
following his footsteps too closely,  
too far.

Maybe he wouldn't even see me.

You turn apologetically  
go to the women's room.  
I follow you  
shrinking.  
I feel the strange looks though  
none are directed toward you.

Owen

bind him

hold pack

no performance

gasping therapy

peculiar figure

take coat

into custody

Working in Transition

We stood on this rock floor  
surrounding a fire pit. He  
offered me some Wendy's  
fries. I asked him if he ever felt  
like nothing could push or pull  
him from his family. *My mom  
still misgenders me, but she's  
my mom.*

I've been looking for this for  
years, for someone to confirm  
that you don't just leave  
familia even when they don't  
see a piece of you.

*She still brags about me,  
still holds me.* I see my  
grandma stutter through this  
foreign name, *KEYgen*. She  
calls me, *mija* still, My  
mom corrects her, then  
*mijo*.

My mom suggests  
*You'll be the one to abandon the family.*

I keep walking the empty sidewalk, light  
grey speckled with glimmers of feldspar or  
chert, maybe ordinary quartz anything  
catching my attention. Pass a worn yellow sign.

*I wouldn't be surprised.*

But I am still choosing them  
when I, holding his hand  
dangling from the top bunk,  
am on my way out to a dance  
with people carrying scars  
perpendicular to the one lining my chest.

Alex

everyone could be gay

lip sync

tie a tie

no instruction

down to my

Catholic

shame

blesséd all

area

Revisions

Blade forcing hair  
from my legs and face, gliding  
with only laziness slowing  
it. Heels clicking to deliver confidence,  
a woman who doesn't brake  
at restroom signs trying, deciding  
quickly the safest place, not pausing  
to drop her head to prepare.

I want to be the person in a family that isn't  
the one they might see yearly.  
I want to miss the way my father  
looks at his friend calling me it  
as he's corrected on my name. He's  
looking for some other daughter.

## I Don't Know Why I Love Him

*His*, my mom corrects my father.  
*Keagan's*, he continues. My mom misses this  
purposeful difference. He uses  
Keagan like it's a rebellious  
nickname I'll grow out of.  
She confirms my appointment,  
A yearly gift that hopes  
to keep the blue from my lips.

My father refuses my pronouns as  
he remembers the kid he held  
as staples were removed from the chest.  
He tries so hard to connect that baby,  
with dark jagged stitches half the length of her body,  
to *Keagan*. He supports what he knows  
is his child, and ignores what confuses  
his image of it.

~

Every meaningful  
debate about politics  
pushes me away from him,  
like the people that lose their appetite  
when they sit near us at a restaurant.  
They stare, as I question my father's  
support of a ballot including  
electrocuting the gay away,  
to try to remind us of  
the lack of privacy,  
but I am no longer  
phased by strangers  
looking at me  
like a glitch.  
I am always

being reminded  
of my indecency.

~

We both sit through a drive to Texas Children's  
that gets quieter each year,  
the only lasting tradition of my childhood.

Each appointment, we pass this wooden sculpture  
of a giraffe that stalks through my memories. We forget  
the right floor, never checking the map. He uses hand  
sanitizer stations in every hallway. I try to recall  
the medication I take twice daily, and his nerves talk over me.  
I regret seeing little kids playing in the waiting room, knowing  
their first memory might be just like mine,  
working to disappear into a corner  
as a nurse walks over to take labs.

We leave after hours of waiting and  
testing, and celebrate  
my 89% oxygen levels with Chick-fil-a.



O'Neal

curate this fucking                      network  
                    that's my dad's  
   favorite scene  
just gossip it away

god              damn              goon  
                    lead people away  
                    from themselves

Sophomore Year

I never miss a Monday.  
Dinosaur band-aids boost my confidence  
as a drop of blood replaces the point of a needle.  
I smell alcohol when I listen to Elton John.  
I should have sang a different song with him  
as he sped down the highway towards Galveston.  
His body reflects what I can't have.  
I'll fish for any affirmation he won't think I need.  
I am abandoning my family  
in a different way than my mother expected.

I have to know the most efficient route,

the one with the fewest people.

I try not to walk with others  
on campus, it's a necessity after dark  
when friends sit on cramped benches  
walk into the lighted water fountain.

I fall into shallow water  
took a wrong step on  
tractionless bottom.

Miss his hand saving me.

He thinks it'd be fun  
to leave the pebbled bridge  
for a quick, careless dip.

The first time someone doesn't hesitate  
to use my pronouns is at a cooking,  
metal table in the afternoon. She  
wears glasses that belonged  
in a 90's sci-fi.

He smiles at me like I have passed some test  
worth hanging on the fridge. I  
should be grateful.

With purple spirit shirts, I think  
I'd be safe, but haven't seen  
the questions up close asking how dating works,  
if Keagan is my given name. if anyone supports me.  
if I should actually be here. if I'm sure I'm okay.  
then pulling me into public hugs.

Keagan

I guess I blacked out                  edit that out!

looking for a new lawyer

worn ties

like a child's christmas art project

It's no nighty night

Don't Forget

Monday: I am reminded of the biological you,  
the way you produce a hormone that I combat with  
alcohol, testosterone, needles,  
dinosaur bandaids.

Tuesday: I get called your name, Felicia.

Wednesday: your chest needs to be bound,  
to be controlled, to be hurt,  
as it hurts me.

Thursday: I am told that I can't sit *that way*  
*with a dick*. You fail me with nothing  
in these pants. I can't measure up.

Friday: I shave the fuzz you have on  
your face. A man walks by with  
A full beard. Did you see him?

Saturday: she her you ma'am miss  
Lady, *you could be so pretty* if you got  
rid of me.

Sunday: you start church  
in a pink and purple plaid shirt  
that constricts my breathing  
your dad thinks you look nice.  
I have left everyone's mind.

Keagan Miguel Wheat Guerra

he didn't get rid of  
basic  
shape  
venn diagram  
real specific  
he's just a little ~~girl~~

Is that the right use of that word?

Looking at my Father

Right as you get comfortable sitting,  
you notice your ankles crossed,  
tucked underneath your chair.

You remember how to properly build  
muscle lifting weights, though  
you haven't worked out in eight years.

You see his tie,  
the only one you'd wear,  
searching good will  
for what could have been gifted.

You begin to tell your mom  
about a new show you started,  
which she's already watched  
thanks to him.

You tell your bestfriend  
you don't care about your birthday  
in his voice and watch  
the same look your mom gave him  
roll over your friend's face.

You hear him as you leave your bed,  
trying not to let coughing turn  
to vomiting.

No matter the argument  
or the reason for the argument  
you always have to win.

As you walk down the wood-floored  
hall, you hear him  
tromping in your every step.

You see yourself as he  
decides to withhold operations and medications,  
so no one worries over you.

You feel his mannerisms  
as you fall into any accent  
or dialect depending on your crowd.

Time and again you  
find yourself inhabiting  
his self-pitying victimhood.

You feel him push a drink into your hand  
in the bars you frequent  
reliving a childhood tradition.



## TSA

I get stopped every time I go through airport security. I am a red flag. You and I don't go together, but stand in the monitor at the same time. They try to make sense of us in a moment, but it never quite works out.

*Wait here,* they address you.

*There's something wrong,* they speak of me.

First she checks your hands that are too small. She wants to know whether or not you have drugs. Really, she is following procedure. When someone this ambiguous walks through the line, that person faces many steps.

*Is this your bag?* an agent calls across the group of people to me near another agent starting to pat me down. My bag, with me in it, makes someone else search me as they search you. It's awful to witness yourself get pat down.

The agent searching you invites another woman to see the oddity to pat you down in a place that I forget exists. But now it exists in front of everyone. These women need you to go to a room off to the side, because they don't feel comfortable with this body in front of them. I have never been such a problem to warrant being taken to this room. I didn't even know where the private search room was until now. Until I had to walk into this frosted-glass showcase with two strangers that thought my body wasn't the way it should've been. I am trapped inside your body.

STP

My package  
ships discreetly  
with a reminder in the small box  
to wash it every day.

My disenthraling  
package showing  
others what's necessary,  
kept secret, a lucid dream.

I don't want  
to explain structure.

Too many questions  
trying to reach beneath  
and see *phallic phase*  
*still smaller*  
to find the moment  
I fell into perversity or Structure  
Envy that gives them relief  
saying we see  
it can be avoided.

A-Camp

Black jeans clinging to legs  
Bratty bottom pulling a thin tie, forcing  
choking top to lean over plastic table  
Cracking voice won't embarrass  
Figuring out flag for cuddles or making out  
Giving into classic grey left for the sake of  
Keeping an outfit together and failing wifi  
Pitching through "Say my Name"  
She traces my cheeks with an index finger  
Two tops moving hips without a lead  
Varsity jacket bulks arms  
Vanessa caught hand then waist  
Vial of body glitter shimmers sliver on a necklace  
XOXO, an odd matching

## He Deserves It

After my mom's constant corrections,  
he began to tote around my new name like something  
that warranted giving  
him a shining trophy dedicated  
to his amazing ability  
to respect his child. He ran

through gendered words like they didn't rust  
his grand trophy. He would /correct/  
his usage of incorrect pronouns with my new name,  
as if that was the solution to the problem direct  
refusal to see my changes as anything but a nickname.

He gave me  
a list of chores to make /himself/  
feel better. He never asked  
about my "new" self.  
He needed a new church  
that would accept his outcast more  
than he could.

He /informed/ me that telling his parents  
wouldn't be worth it. He didn't stop  
short of saying that this  
new 'thing' would cause them too much stress.

He couldn't acknowledge any  
of the new doctors I had to see  
or the new people I had to /worry/ about  
or the new language /he refused/ to learn.  
He didn't know this new stranger,  
so he /didn't think/ to ask.

He had one son  
and one daughter; I wasn't  
part of that family.  
I wasn't the one  
that would go to church with them  
or go to lunch with them  
or go on family vacations  
with them or stand quietly  
in the picture as they urged, *Smile, Cait.*

Treated with Testosterone

I.

My hair slumps to the right  
curling over my glasses  
Hairline falling back  
a couple centimeters  
after ten months  
stretches circular face

The excess fat slowly  
sloughs off my cheeks  
beginning to become angles  
I swore to my mom were always there

My box shape straightens further  
As fat moves from pelvis  
to just below ribs

Peach fuzz morphs  
into sharp fuzz, soft beard

Voice lowering  
into throat into my chest  
No longer needing  
phlegm or tobacco  
To feel vibrations scratching  
Throughout my body

II.

*Do you use oxygen usually,  
at least at night?  
Do you get out of breath walking?*

The doctor's tone corners me into failure  
as though my body should be on suicidewatch.

Hemoglobin/Hematocrit levels are insane.

19.6/58.3

She'd recommend phlebotomy,  
the appropriate word for blood-letting,  
but she's unsure my body is able.

She gives long pauses  
whenever I need to respond,  
listening for a death rattle.

She is completely fine  
with stopping T.

III.

Testosterone therapy is  
not well-studied or fully understood.  
Some of the reversible effects are permanent.  
None of the permanent effects are reversible.  
Your dad keeps asking if you have a sore throat,  
direct result or significantly worsened by testosterone usage.  
He has yet to identify you.  
Don't mention the following effects on fertility  
to your mother already mourning her daughter.  
You understand that hormone therapy is just another reason  
to have more healthcare screening tests than others of your age,  
major birth defects are not new to me.

Trans Pup

Walks in *crop top jersey and nerf football*.  
He makes himself laugh (*very loudly*),  
giddy around his *big soft cuddly family*.  
Offers cuddling like a glass of water,  
we need it more than we take it.  
He recognizes tears about to run  
and brings attention to your erasure.  
He bounds through *reclaimed boyhood*,  
*in every conceivable way*,  
becoming any friend's *Your Biggest Fan*.

*XOXO*



Helpful Tools for Raising a Trans Kid

Donald Trump holds a rainbow flag (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

“LGBT Rights Group Claims Virginia Middle School Left Transgender Student Alone During Active Shooter Drill” Avery Anapol

“Revised Treatment of Transgender Employment Discrimination Claims Under Title VII Civil Rights Act of 1964” The Attorney General Jeffery Sessions

“After Texas Suit, Trump Administration Reverses Prison Policies Protecting Transgender Inmates” Lauren McGaughy

Dear [insert new name when you pick one],

You have so many questions that won't come to you until it's too late. The internet will teach you so much more than this.

You do not need a new name immediately or new pronouns or new hair or new clothes or certainty. These things do not just fall into your head the first time you question your gender. The people that really respect you will understand this with a little time maybe.

Feelings move you so far back. Say you're okay even when you aren't. It's too tiring to explain yourself all the time. Sure, it isn't always the best thing for your mental health, but you can't always think about that.

When you first start trying to pass, you won't. Everyday will be difficult. Here's a list of things that will keep you safe:

- |                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| -be aware of strange looks        | -Men's deodorant              |
| -be aware of people following you | -Men's shampoo                |
| -be aware of being alone          | -Men's razors                 |
| -be aware of your family's ideals | -Men's shoes with thick soles |
| -be aware of who knows            | -Men's haircut                |

Passing isn't necessary; gender is subjective. Though some days, you will want nothing else. On those days, write your name on everything, listen to the people that live as themselves, dress like you need to feel real.

Forget gender sometimes, but some days use every single product annoyingly marketed for MEN. So you know that you shave your face and have buttons on the right side and use the right deodorant and shampoo and wear the right jeans and t shirts.

You need to start collecting a chosen family. This family will range from your mom to your best friend that lives as himself to another best friend that would sleep on a couch for you. You might even have to include a transguy from YouTube that you'll never meet, but teaches you all the things you'll want to know about your new life.

Never slow your transition for the benefit of another, especially, if it will hurt you. You deserve to feel like yourself. You need to be ready for people to do this. It will hurt to hit every legal, medical, and social barrier, but the ones erected by your family will always burn.

You probably don't know for sure. You might never know for sure.

Learn from people living your life and the people fighting for you. Embrace the new subculture you belong to, because you belong. You have a new group of people that understand so many odd little things about you that barely made sense to you. You can still walk alongside the Dyke March.

You will have days when you see yourself in the mirror and you don't feel a thing. You will not pick apart any incorrect features. It won't seem like a picture imposed on you.

Looking forward,  
Keagan Wheat

P.S. No matter how much you hate yourself and how far removed you want to feel, I  
always and already love you.

## Notes

“Felicia,” “Caitlin,” “Cait,” “Daphne,” “Name 1,” “TBD,” “Owen,” “Alex,” “O’Neal,” “Keagan,” and “Keagan Miguel Wheat Guerra” use quotes from *My Favorite Murder* to create found poems.

The poem “List his features repeating” uses “Sonnet XII: On Leaving Some Friends at an Hour” by John Keats as an inspiration.