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Note from the Editors: On Sexuality

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Note from the Editors: On Sexuality

Ought was recently cited in the legal journal *Human Rights Review* as a significant contributor to the discussion of autistic culture. In the article, titled “Should Autists Have Cultural Rights?” Bouke de Vries (2022) asks whether autistic individuals can claim special legal protection for their culture in the same manner as other ethnocultural minorities (e.g., the Somali population in Minnesota). Ultimately, de Vries concludes that while autistic people do have many of the “building blocks” of a distinct subculture, including shared experiences, dispositions, behaviors, interests, beliefs, literature, texts, and methods of communication (pp. 210-211), the lack of unifying social norms governing the lives of autistic people disqualifies them from being defined as a separate subculture—and, consequently, from special accommodations under the law.

This journal, of course, is founded on the opposite assumption—namely, that autistic culture exists and is worth careful examination, documentation, and preservation. Indeed, the implicit argument of this issue is that autistics have culturally unique social norms surrounding gender identity, sexual orientation, and sexual practices and proclivities, as a wealth of research has demonstrated (Gougeon, 2010; van Schalkwyk, 2015; George, 2017).

To this end, this issue features several examinations of autistic sexuality, including an experimental, theory-informed poem by Anna Nygren and Hanna Hanna Bertilsson Rosqvist, in which the authors discuss their own autistic sexual practices as a new kind of rhetoric. More traditionally, Ariel E. Pliskin provides a comprehensive review of research on autism and BDSM practices, arguing that “neurological differences interact . . . to explain why autistic people may be particularly likely to get their needs met through BDSM.”

Two additional contributions interrogate the representation of autistic sexuality in popular culture. Jinx Mylo praises the unusually thoughtful representations of neuroqueer individuals in *Everything’s Going to Be Okay*, a Freeform/Hulu drama written by autistics and featuring autistic actors. And Ought Co-editor Robert Rozema reconsiders the children’s classic

Crow Boy (Taro Yashima, 1955) as a work that deliberately subverts the eugenicist reproductive policies of pre-war Japan. Rozema's work is followed, appropriately, by Jon Adams' illustration of corvids, birds the artist finds "stimmy" and "neurodivergent."

In the fine arts category, Pernille Fraser's cover art (and accompanying essay) explores the intersecting symbols of LGBTQ and autistic advocacy movements. and newcomer Laurie Green offers startling photography depicting their own journey toward sexual self-acceptance and expression. Finally, Donald Brackett reviews *The Wanting Way*, a new collection of poetry by Adam Wolfond, whose work was previously featured in the fall 2020 issue of this journal.

—Robert Rozema and Christopher Bass

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