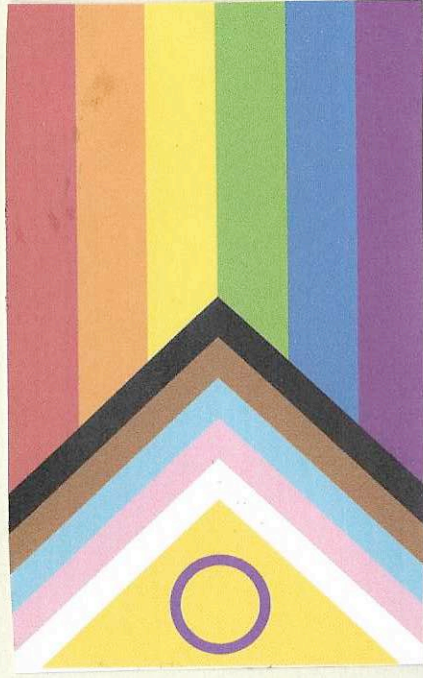


STRAIGHT
PEOPLE
ARE
SO
FUCKED
UP

Heteronormativity is what makes heterosexuality seem coherent, natural and privileged. It involves the assumption that everyone is 'naturally' heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is an ideal, superior to homosexuality or bisexuality.

Queer | A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.



I am supposed to write something else entirely – a speech to give at a family birthday. But all I can suddenly think about is how fucked up straight people are.

All this pressure they put on themselves and everyone else around them to conform to a fucked up ideal of a family. Don't get me wrong – I love my family and they have supported me through many difficult times, but as queer people, we are often accepted with a disclaimer – despite our deficiency.



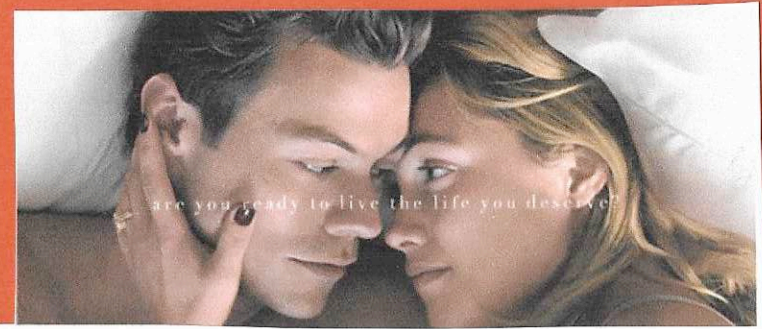
When thinking about my own family, I find it ironic that the most homophobic aunt is the one who suffered all her life from the physical abuses of her husband and passed on some of this hatred of her situation to her sons. She even dressed up her sons as girls when they were little, because she did not want boys, which disturbed the rest of the family – how queer is that?

Despite these occurrences, my aunt keeps on telling me what a sad life gay people have, and that I really should get married and have children.

She even votes for the far right that want to enforce even more fucked up gender norms.



Around the world, people who fall outside of sexual and gender norms suffer from the same expectations and heteronormative pressure, that is imposed by people who have obviously had a really SHIT TIME themselves.



Don't Worry Darling

It's all made out to be about happiness and security, but it feels like straight people cling to this narrative out of fear – fear of punishment from other straight people. This is not something to aspire to, it's something to flee from.

As supposedly deficient people, we are not even given a good heteronormative model to aspire to! It all seems like psychological warfare enacted to create more misery for everyone.

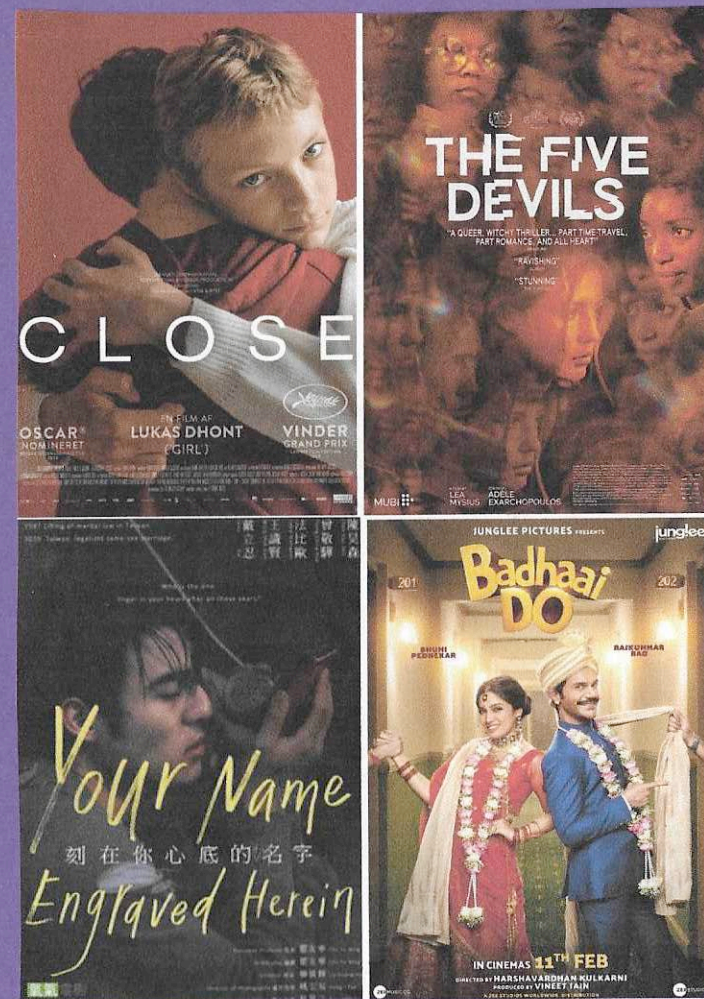


Also I feel that many straight people fear that their suffering under a heteronormative system has been in vain if there is an alternative.

Some straight people even realise both of these things, but feel they have no choice but to give in to these dynamics so that the rest of the family can continue to be considered 'normal' by other straight people. Thus, when straight people talk about relationships, it feels like their bodies and minds are not their own.

It is really hard for queer people to escape this violence. They are constantly harassed by 'normal' friends and family to conform to expectations that really only benefit oppressors.

If you look at the history of marriage in different countries, and also at the history of the family, you will find a lot of political contradiction.

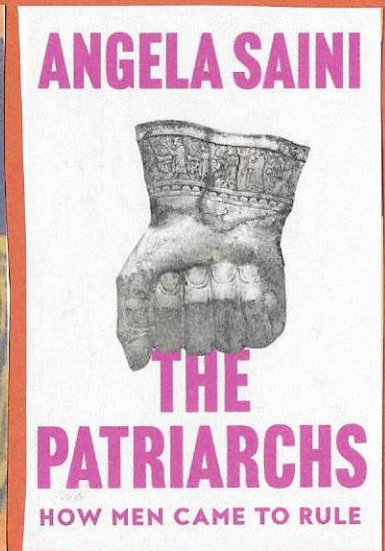
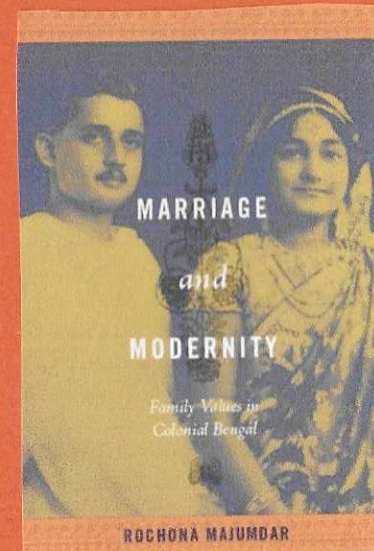
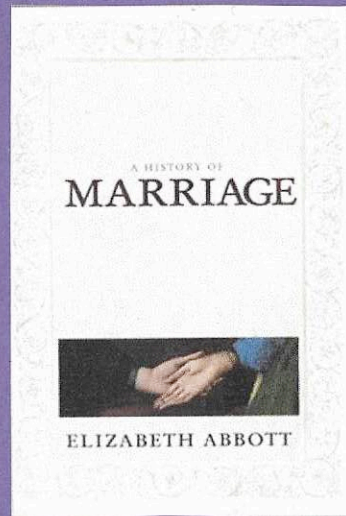
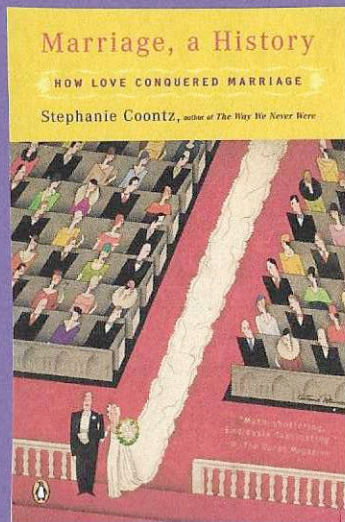


In many European countries, for example, marriage was mostly the norm for the aristocracy or other wealthy people who had property to pass on.

Poorer people had 'common law' marriages that basically meant just living with someone.

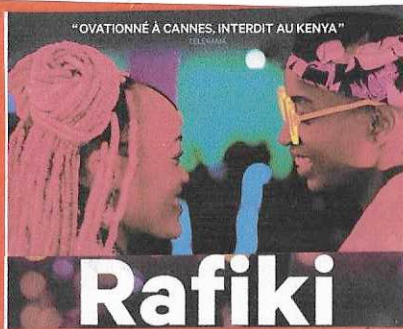
At some point, marriage became romanticised and turned into this aspirational ideal, and lots more people wanted to get married, even though it meant a conflation of romantic love and property distribution.

I once had a conversation with an Indian colleague who had the choice between romantic love and an arranged marriage, and she went for an arranged marriage, because she did not trust romantic feelings when it came to making rational choices. She felt that Western people were incredibly stupid to believe in the durability of romantic love. I think she has a point, although arranged marriage seems also just another performance of heteronormative duty.



It seems like no matter what culture, it is intensely difficult to remove yourself from all of this twisted rationality. The problem is that you usually don't want to remove yourself from your family, but the conditions of staying within the family are too punishing. They eliminate the self.

In many ways, that's the idea of the family – it's about selflessness. That technically sounds admirable, but it can also cause problems if selflessness is combined with mindlessness. It's like people have forgotten why they are doing this: for whom or what are you being selfless?



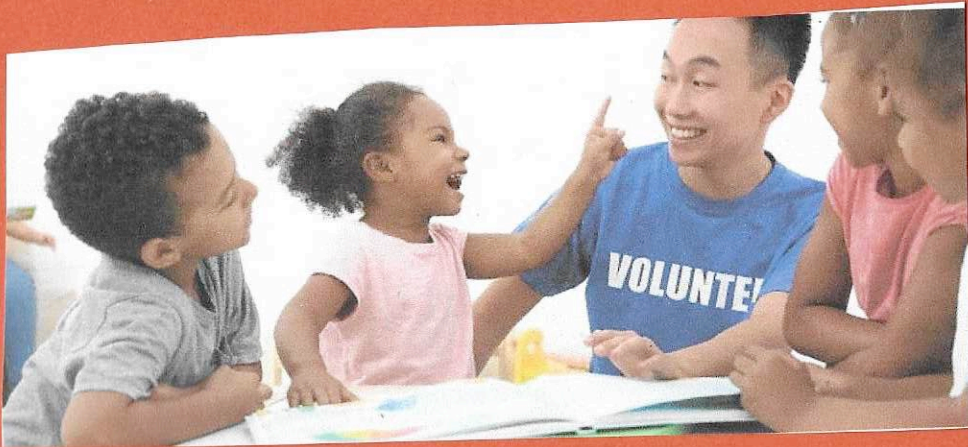
Often, heteronormativity is enforced by political or religious leaders who want either more believers or fodder for capitalism or war. Currently, capitalism does not even need that many people to function, so if you choose to reproduce, your children will probably end up unemployed *and* inherit an increasingly uninhabitable planet (and probably not even property). Many children will live in inhuman political regimes. It is like forcing everyone to produce cursed people.

With this, I am not writing against people who want to or otherwise decide to have children. I am not one of these anti-natalists who want to curb the population. I just want straight people to leave us the fuck alone with their version of 'selfnessness'.

There are other ways in which you can be 'selfless'. For example, get active in the community. This, however, would require for an expansion of heteronormative selflessness.

Many of my family members, for example, are obsessed with 'blood bonds' while disliking most of the other family for failure to be properly normative.

If blood bonds are so frustrating, why not look beyond that and volunteer to look after other people's children?



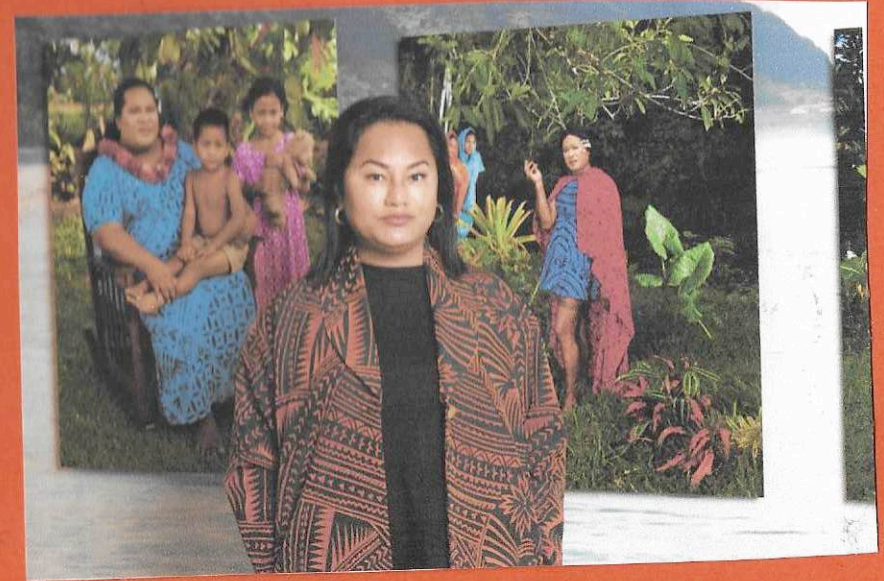
MAKE

SPACE FOR

QUEERS

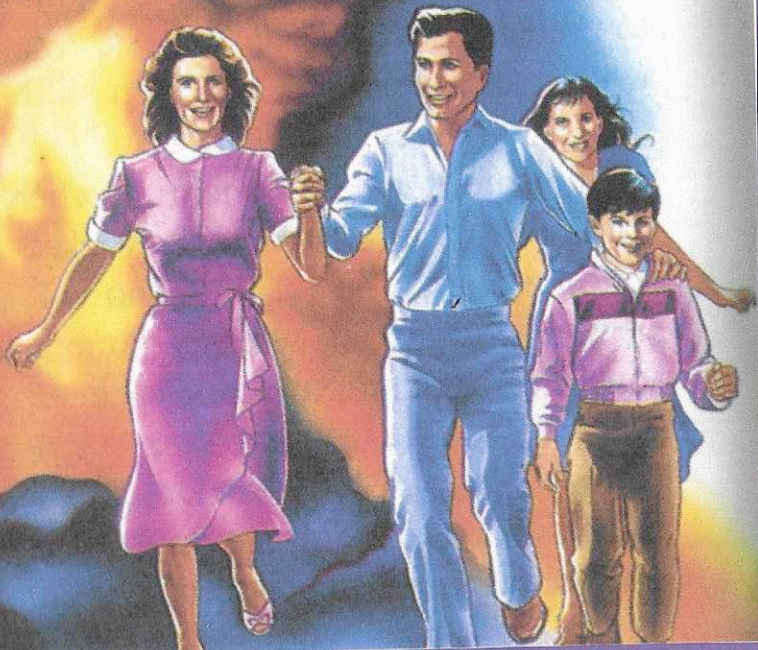
Some friends of my parents, for example, volunteer at the local primary school, helping refugee children with homework in the local language. They really enjoy this work, and it's also work that many members of the queer community would be happy to do. Ironically, we are often prevented from supporting straight people, with child minding or education, because we are 'perverts'.

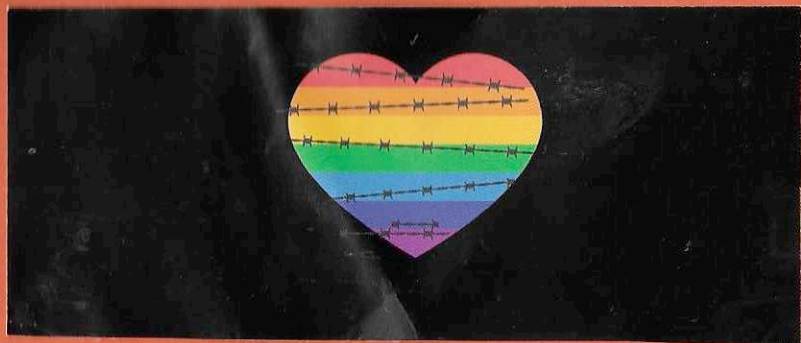
Smarter cultures have developed more constructive roles for queer people (e.g. look up the debate around the role of Samoan *fa'afafine*), but that often ended with colonialism. Laws were put in place to enforce Western social norms, and these were then reenforced by elites who wanted to suck up to colonisers or protect their lands (some tribes forcibly switched from matrilineal to patrilineal societies). This again illustrates how (self)destructive heteronormativity actually is.



Fa'afafine Yuki Kihara celebrates Samoa's third gender: 'Galleries think they can tick the box with me'

Some queer people also attempt to conform to heteronormative expectations. However, this often takes a toll. Even if a queer person is what could be called 'homonormative' (emulating straight rituals such as marriage and the nuclear family), there is always a difference, always a condition.





Often, this condition is temporal:

'well, you can do this now, but when the government, economy, population mood, head of church, [insert as in/appropriate] changes, this may all get taken away from you'.

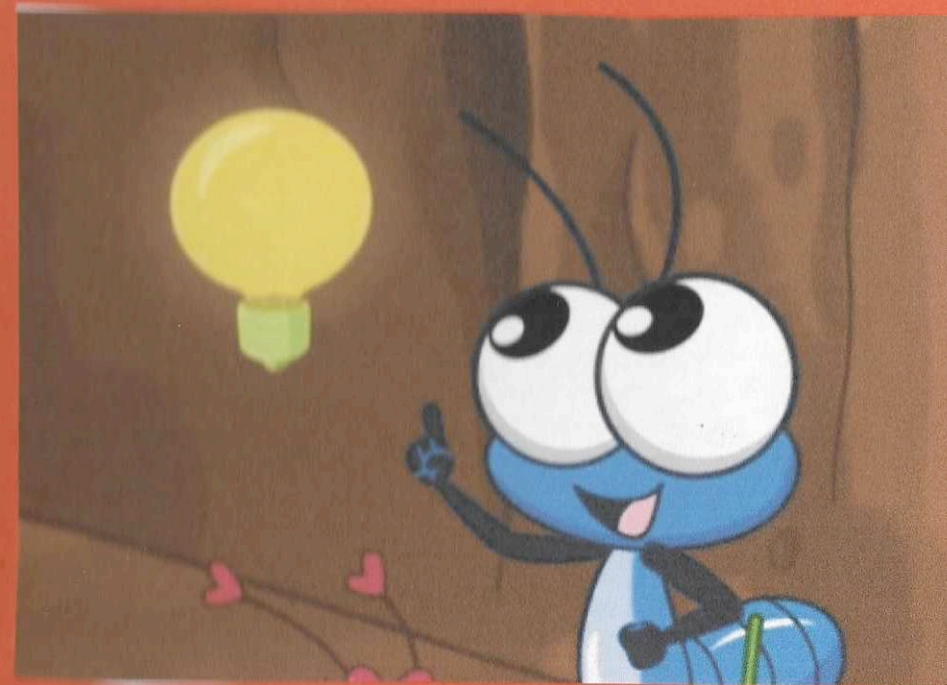
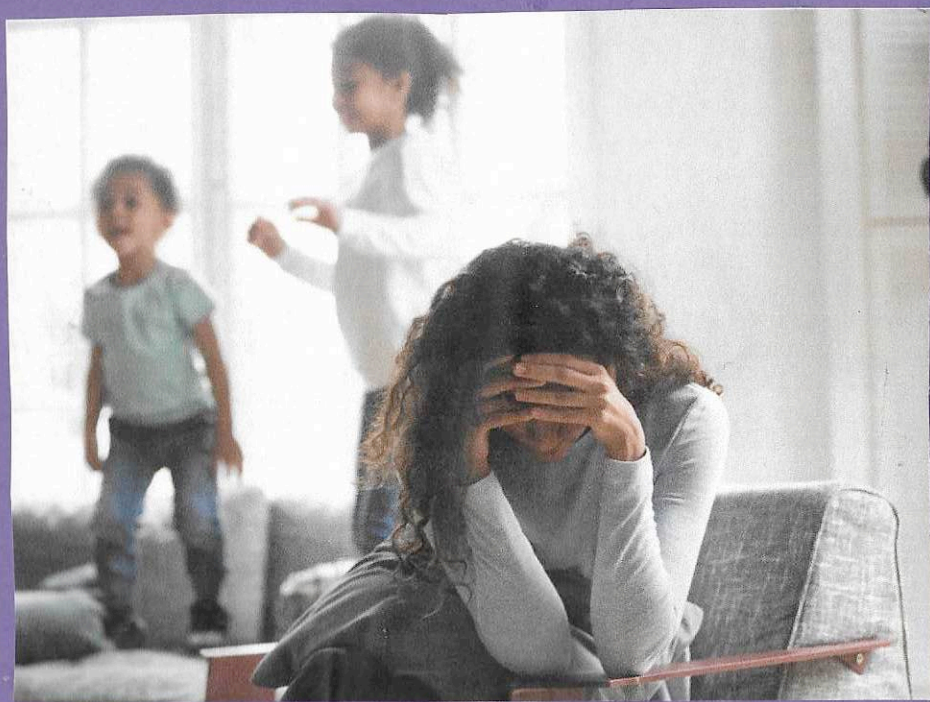
Needless to say, this is very stressful, so many queer people either don't even bother, or use things quite instrumentally.

To me, for example, marriage, where is available, can become a tool to safeguard some of our community in places where they are routinely killed. There are quite a few queer marriages that solely serve the purpose of keeping someone safe from their own people.

Straight people may call them 'visa marriages', but for many of us they at least temporarily delay death from heteronormativity. Even if straight people don't directly kill queer people, by continuing to perform and elevate straightness, they contribute to deaths within our community. Therefore, we need more straight people to think about the violence they are inflicting on us, as well as themselves.



I have to think about a friend of mine who did a study of women who regretted having children. She thought no one would answer her call, but she was flooded with emails. The same goes for the many people who have told me that they married too early and realised that this was not what they wanted from life. But it was the only story they knew!



There are so many other possibilities that don't involve this kind of pressure. This is not to say that queer relationships are all harmonious – they are not, since we are just people and have to negotiate an extraordinary amount of pressure. So what can you do?

1) Inform yourself of the histories of heteronormativity, by looking at heteronormative markers such as marriage, binary gender divisions, heterosexuality, 'legitimate' children, inheritance etc.

2) Realise that there are 'queer' people in every culture and that they all face related challenges as well as some culturally distinct ones.

3) Realise that the queer community holds a diversity of views on what exactly constitutes oppression, and that many of us have not been able to disentangle ourselves from heteronormativity.

4) Educate yourself about other types of relationships that queer people are experimenting with.

5) Don't reject queer experiments with historical models that were eliminated by religious, aristocratic or colonial authorities as 'dated' – maybe the current system is

6) If you are raising a queer child, realise that you are part of the same social system and connected through the desire for a good life, however that may look.

7) If you can vote, scan election manifestos and legal challenges for queerphobic content (this includes gender and sexuality). If you can't, see how you can otherwise participate in politics, such as LGBT+ rights advocacy groups.

8) Look at how queer practices and rights can benefit you, too. Don't let us be the scapegoat for problems that we did not create, realise that we are part of the solution.



“
**NOBODY'S FREE UNTIL
EVERYBODY'S FREE.**

Fannie Lou Hamer
Civil rights leader and women's rights activist

Evan Ifekoya – Lyrics of the GENDER song (2014)
(transcribed, might contain mistakes)

My little pony, Barbie and Ken
Pink is for Rosie, blue is for Ben
Riding a tractor in a ballet skirt
Some dude tried to lift it up so I pushed him in the dirt

Swinging on the Jungle Gym
I can go as fast as him
Swinging on the Jungle Gym
I can go as fast as him

Female, he-male, she-male, don't matter (x3)

Cook clean do the dishes
Do exactly as your husband wishes
Get with the P.R.O., P.R.O. P.R.O.gram.

Pink glitter tutu,
So future forward fruit fruit
I could build a house if I want,
Bake a cake row down a lake if I wanted to

Female, he-male, she-male, don't matter (x3)

Knife, fork, spoon
Dick, bum, poon
It's only bits and pieces
No different to cutlery

Gender isn't sex so don't get it twisted
Take it all for fact just coz it's listed
I could build a house if I want
Row down a lake bake a cake if I wanted to