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The Square is a Circle

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The Square is a Circle

Author Bio

Nat Schneller is an English Major and CIMS minor. He is interested in all forms of writing.

The Square is a Circle: A Music, Playlist, Thingy about Gender

NAT SCHNELLER

Overture by Rush

Nate Schneller, twenty-two-years-old, is a man. He has a frizzy, red-blond beard. His hair is short, blond, and curly. He enjoys film studies, videogames, and collecting plastic robots that transform in vehicles. Nate Schneller is in the process of being deleted.

Nat Schneller, twenty-two-years-old, is not quite a man. She has a completely clean shaved face. His hair is not too short, blond, and curly. She enjoys film studies, videogames, and collecting plastic robots that transform in vehicles. Nat Schneller is in the process of being recorded. She is a demo tape, waiting for a full release.

Name for You by The Shins

At the time of writing this, it's been around seven months since I started going by the name Nat. It's the name my friends use for me. It's the name posted on my dorm room door, next to a picture of Rosalina from the *Mario* franchise. I still use Nate with teachers and strangers. It's still my name, but it's no longer my primary name. I now consider Nate as a kind of "full name," like my government name, Nathaniel.

Going by Nat has been kind of an adjustment. I've had to get used to people calling me that. You wouldn't think so, it's just like Nate, but the E got lost from the group. But it *is* different. Not only does it sound different, but it feels different. It feels right.

Nat represents one of my first steps in messing around with my gender presentation. It's gender ambiguous, both feminine and masculine, which is perfect for me, because I'm thinking I might be both kind of male and kind of female. Along those lines, Nat allows me to have several "full names." It can stand for Nate, Nathan, Nathaniel, and, if I'm feeling spicy, Natalie. I enjoy having Nat stand for multiple things at once. It feels like quantum mechanics in a way, like how an electron is both a particle and a wave. I like the fun of that.

Nat just sounds better to me personally. I enjoy the -at sound better than the -ate one. I suppose that's the writer in me. I think the -at sound lends itself better to puns and nicknames as well. I can be Nat-Nat or O-Nat-ural or a bunch of other silly things. I never got good nicknames as Nate. It was always the Nate the Great or Nates (because my last name is Schneller). And despite a book series, Nate the Great never particularly struck me.

I have a final reason for choosing Nat and that's spite. When my parents picked out my name, my grandmother objected: "people are going to call him Nat and he won't like it." I had a rocky relationship with my grandmother. She was old and slow and kind of annoying. She would constantly ask me if I had a girlfriend yet. She was constantly making comments that drove my mother to fury, like something backhanded about her clothes or her cooking. I still loved her, but it's complicated. So, when I decided on a new name, I figured I would take the name Nat and make it mine. Take that grandma!

Ball of Confusion by the Temptations

Ok, can I be honest with you for a second? Writer to reader? I don't know how to move on from here. I want to expand, going from the personal experience of my name to a wider discussion of gender. But it feels like I've just finished eating a cheese stick and now I'm trying to eat a giant-ass burger like you would see on *Man vs. Food*. Gender is such a wide and expansive topic. They teach entire college courses about gender. I know I'm breaking a taboo here, but I need to lay this out, as bricks, so I can build a bridge to where I want to go.

So, changing my name has been the first step with playing around with my gender. I was Assigned Male At Birth (AMAB). However, now I've been messing around with using she/her pronouns in addition to he/him pronouns. I suppose I should try to explain my ideal gender presentation. I think I have a good idea, but I'm still figuring things out. Basically, I think I feel both male and female, which is referred to as bi gender. It's that, or I'm genderfluid. I don't know yet. Anyway, I ideally would like to look androgynous, presenting femininely but in a somewhat masculine way. Basically, a tomboy. Yep, I kind of want to be a tomboy. You can laugh if you want, I feel silly writing this.

Still though, I'm not one hundred percent certain what I want. There are days when I look in the mirror and go, "I look ok, kind of hand-

some even.” Then there are other times where I go “ew my beard looks gross and I’m so big and masculine and I don’t like it.” I don’t feel a major attachment to being a man. It’s always been kind of a shoulder shrug, like I guess I’m a man. I definitely don’t relate to the stereotypical manly-man-ness society often shoves down our throats. Sports? Nuh uh. Fishing? No thanks. Big muscles? Get out of here with that shit. To me, popular masculinity is just pure toxicity, a sludge pile. I don’t vibe with that at all. I’m sweet, squishy, and socially anxious. I can’t be a big mean tough guy. Yet with all that said, I still feel some connection to the idea of being a man. There’s a thin, silver cord, connecting me to manhood. Because I feel like there is a right kind of masculinity. The kind of manliness that’s tough, but gentle, like water, smooth and flowing one moment, strong and powerful the next. I guess I connect with the kind of masculinity that my dad has. My dad is gentle, kind, smart, and resourceful. I’d like to be more like him.

However, I also want to be more feminine. Maybe it’s because it’s foreign and exotic, but femininity excites me. The first time I got my nails painted, I felt such a sense of elation. I’ve had similar feelings of joy with growing my hair out long or wearing dresses. I highly appreciate the feminine and wish I could be more like that. So, in a way, I’d like to be like my mom, caring and sweet and kind. I understand these traits don’t need to be gendered, but I do associate them with femininity.

There still is the confusion of what exactly am I, but at least some things are certain. I like painting my nails, wearing dresses, and having my name be Nat. I may find I’m not exactly trans, but those things are certain. I’m at least gender non-conforming.

True Trans Soul Rebel by Against Me!

I think I couldn’t have picked a worst time to question my gender. Anti-trans rhetoric is at an all time high. Across the US, states are passing bills outlawing trans people the ability to do sports or go to the bathroom they wish to use. There’s been about 589 anti-trans bills introduced in 2023. Not all those bills have passed, but still I think that’s frightening. Right-wing pundits have made trans people, or what they call “gender ideology” a key issue. At the Conservative Political Action Conference, Michael Knowles, a host for the conservative *Daily Wire* media outlet, stated that “transgenderism must be eradicated.” Yikes. Some people are absolutely obsessed with Trans folks. Matt Walsh, a conservative commentator,

produced a film called “What is a Woman?” I haven’t seen it, but from what I’ve heard, it’s a transphobic pile of shit. Part of me wishes to watch it, because that would be fair right? I can’t be critical of something I’ve only heard about through video essays, right? And yet I know that film would be poison to me. Not because it’s right, but because it’s propaganda. It’s designed to leak into you, fill you to the brim, and completely wash over your brain. Nobody is immune to propaganda. So I still have not seen the film.

Over the summer of 2023, I had a job at a pool and patio store called Mt. Lake. It was a good job, paid decently enough, and wasn’t too difficult. My job mainly consisted of being at the pool counter and helping customers, but sometimes I had to help with deliveries. Mt. Lake’s delivery driver was a guy named Andrew. Andrew is probably one of the most politically conservative people I have ever meet. He was a total Trump fanatic and, naturally, had some things to say about trans people. He also happened to be a fan of punk music (In an ironic twist, he once played a song called “Teenage Anarchist” by Against Me! whose lead singer is trans). One day, we were driving, talking over the thrashing of guitars, and he said, “remember, a circle is a circle and a square is a square. A square cannot become a circle. You can write a story where a square becomes a circle, but that doesn’t happen in real life. Do you understand?”

“Sure,” I said, my blood boiling. Of course, I didn’t understand that kind of reasoning. Andrew didn’t know I was questioning my gender at that time. I desperately sought a counter in my mind to his idea.

Imagine you’re sitting at a table. There’s a rubber band and four thumb tacks laying on the surface. You stick the four thumb tacks into the table, in a square formation. Then, you wrap the rubber band around the tacks. The rubber band is now a square. Now, imagine you take the rubber band off. What shape is it now? Most likely, it’s an oval, not a square. It was a square, stretched and forced to be one, but it’s true nature is an oval. Do you understand?

Boys Don’t Cry by the Cure

As with most boys growing up, I was fed a certain idea of what men and women were. Boys rule, and girls drool. That was how I was told the world worked. I played along. I was in a boy scout camp once when I was younger. I saw somebody walk by and said, “hey, I thought there were no girls in the boy scouts!” They turned around and sure enough, it was a guy. I hadn’t said that to be mean. In actuality, I was confused, because I hadn’t considered there might be boys with long hair. I was embarrassed.

Then I was bullied for the rest of camp. Oh well, I think I kind of deserved that. Probably not. But the point is that I had certain ideas of boyhood and girlhood, but I didn't really understand them. Boys aren't supposed to cry. You see this all the time. Most times a boy cries, he gets told to "man up." I definitely didn't understand this rule. Crying felt important. So I cried, usually not around other people. But still, I cried.

I grew out of "boys rule, girls drool," on my personal quest to be as nice and caring a person I can be. I think some people never grow out of it. It just becomes toxic masculinity, which is still widely accepted in the world. I don't think I'm quite a boy anymore. But I'm also *not* a boy. I still have that silver thread. And I hope someday, people like me will be more accepted. Not just genderqueer folk, but those boys who don't fit the stereotype. One day, boys will cry, and not be penalized for it.

The End by the Doors

Phew that's kind of a depressing title, isn't it? I might change that eventually. I may even just cut this section (though if you're reading this, I guess I haven't). But I want to include some final thoughts. I hope you accepted this essay with an open mind, because if you did, then hopefully that means you accept me with an open mind. This gender stuff is confusing, I'm confusing. I'm not quite like other trans people, simply just a boy or a girl. I'm greedy, I want to be both, at the same time. I hope you're ok with that.

You know, many works don't thank their readers, at least not directly in the text itself. So, thank you, for reading this. This is one of the most personal things I have written. I hope there was something here worthwhile. Take care.