

They Say, You Say

They say,

I love you.

You say,

I love you.

Nothing has changed.

The words I love you, do not change or reveal anything. The fear behind the phrase itself gives the words themselves too much power.

The words you assign to how you feel, do not change how you feel, or in fact alter the relationship in any way. Allowing a relationship to blossom or erupt as the result of words is simply the reaction of a miscommunication or an over exaggeration.

How you feel may be different than how they feel, but what do you define as love? That is the problem with words, they are too fragile, too broad, to hold any true, coherent meaning.

You are straight.

You are gay.

You are he.

You are she.

You are they.

You are X.

You are you.

Self declaration.

Does creating words for sexualities, or producing new pronouns help in identity. Or do they trap the potential for fluidity. These labels, created by the closed hearted people,

To help them understand.

For simplicity,

We categorize ourselves,

Limiting our potential for love.

These categories shame our desires and work against those who chose to blur the lines.

But these categories also breed belonging, and in human life, self declaration creates comfort.

Being Queer enters you into an elite club, does this divide or conjoin?

Queer.

Q u e e r.

Q u e e r.

The original definition, different, not normal.

But we use it related to non-normative sex. Who declared straight, normal?

Would this word create more of a collective if we stripped it of its relationship to sex?

Maggie Nelson once said, "Queer pride is a refusal to be shamed by witnessing the other as being ashamed of you."

Who are these labels for? For the "*normal*" to be comfortable, to attempt to understand.

Or for people to form a collective, to identify with a term, with a people.

But I love you, or at least I feel a way that I have learned to declare as love.

Maggie Nelson in her collection of lyrical essays, *The Argonauts*, discusses topics such as sexuality, family values, feminism, and freedom through anecdotes. Nelson internalizes greatly and questions the world and people around her. She makes heavy claims (sometimes in the role of devil's advocate) and then often goes on to refute her claims. She places a major focus on the power of words and reflects many of her discussions back to that underlying theme.

In my lyrical essay, "They Say, You Say", I emulated Maggie Nelson's work through her common topics and patterns of transition. The first major discussion of my poem was the meaning behind the words "I love you". Nelson commented on this at the beginning of her book saying, "the very task of love and of language is to give to one and the same phrase inflections which will be forever new" (13). This statement suggests that using words to change the form of something simply brings to light a feeling or presence already there. This is just an example of the many ways in which Nelson questions the power and consistency of words.

Nelson comonely transitioned subtly from essay to essay in her book. I tried to incorporate several topics into my poem to reflect that. The subject of this book is someone who romantically loves people, regardless of gender, and is in a committed relationship with another woman. She often questions her thoughts on whether "individual experience of desire [should] take precedence over a categorical one" (19). This complex thought goes beyond the question of conforming to a heterosexual lifestyle, but to question conforming to any sexuality. In my poem I lead the reader to question who categorical sexualities are designed for, the people who fit into these

categories to belong, or for heteronormative people to better understand. She also does this through questioning the meaning and origin of the word queer, which I also reflected upon in my essay.

I made some strong opinions and then went on to refute it with one line. I truthfully don't know how I feel about this question, but I used my essay to question both sides. Questioning is exactly what Maggie Nelson does in this book, she convinces herself and rants through the pages to hopefully get to a consensus that often doesn't come. This in a way makes the work more relatable as it is common among people to overly question complex thoughts and to never develop a strong solution.

Nelson also commonly quotes people in her work and responds to their words as either a sort of writing prompt or to reinforce one of her many claims. In reflection of this, I quoted her in my essay, "queer pride is a refusal to be shamed by witnessing the other as being ashamed of you" (33).

Maggie Nelson discussing many themes in her discovery of the relevance of words. She digs deep through internalizing to question her opinions about many topics. She reflects through anecdotes to find evidence to her beliefs. In my essay "They Say, I Say", I emulated Nelson's style in terms of topics and tone.