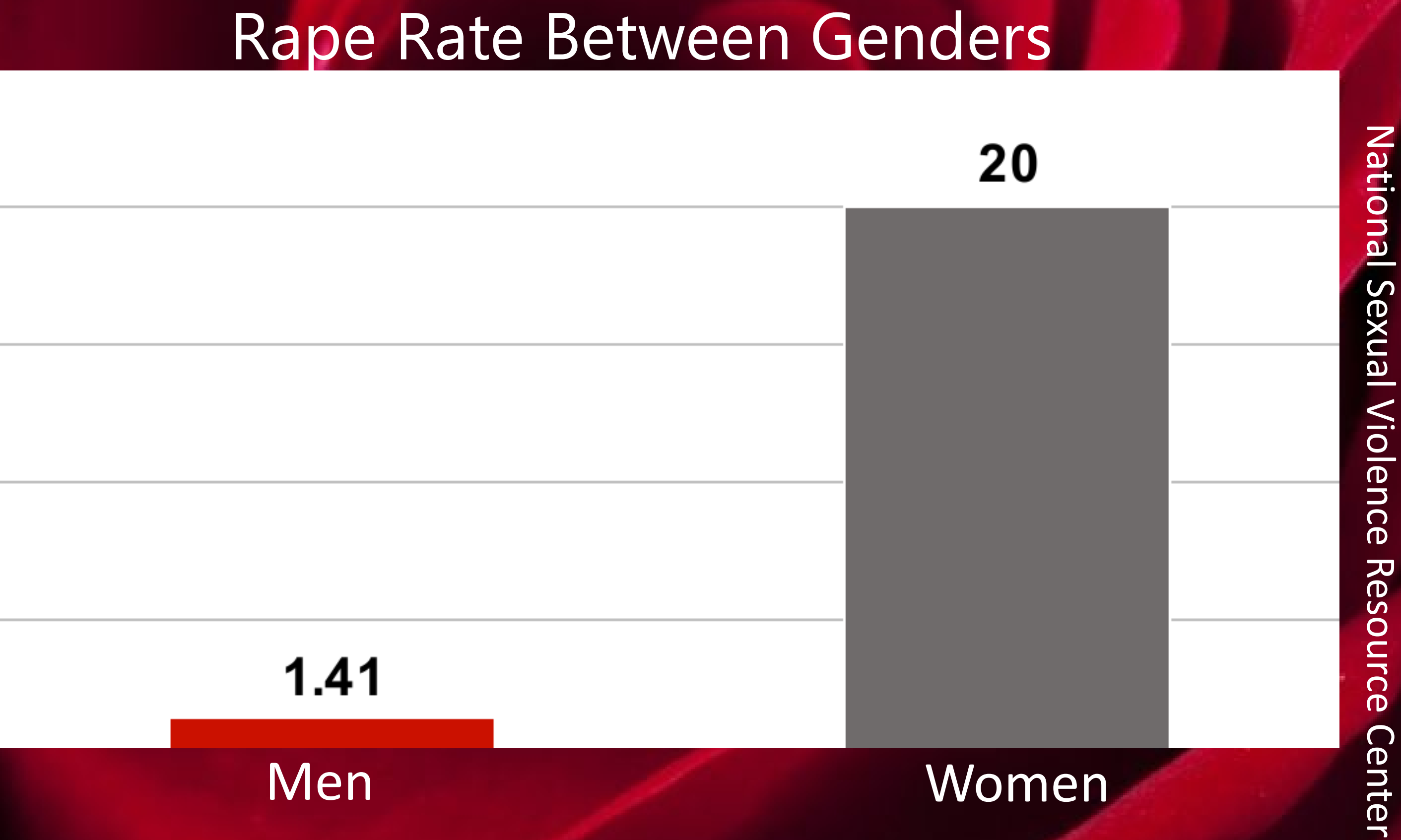


How Traditional Values Foster Sexual Trauma Through Cultural Ostracism

by Seth Frye (Missouri Western State University)

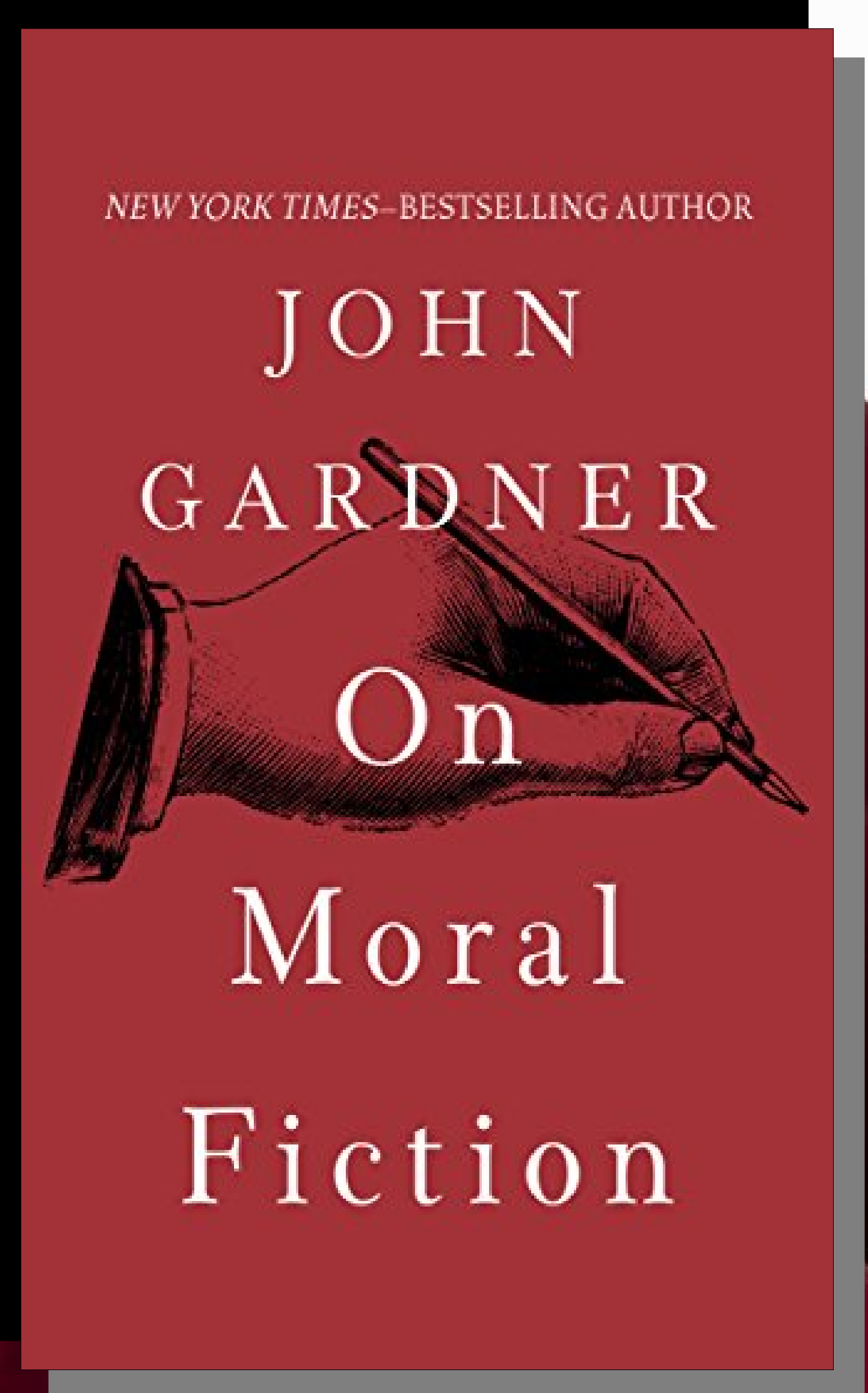


1 in 71 men will be raped in their lifetime, whereas that rate is almost 15 times higher for women, 1 in 5.

“The controversies surrounding literature and female sexuality reiterate concerns about the social position of sexual women and the threat they pose to patriarchy – concerns that have been repeatedly voiced and debated in relation to the function and responsibilities of literature as a cultural medium.”
- Alyson Miller, 2013

“Many gender-based abuses also involve the infliction of shame. For example, in numerous cultures if a woman is raped or subjected to spousal abuse and she tries to seek redress, her family and community may ostracize her and treat her as ruined property, unworthy of remarriage.”
- Irena Lieberman, 2002

The subcultural or movement identity approach sees religious movements and subcommunities as having created ‘identity spaces’ from which they seek to define themselves relative to outgroups.”
- Starks and Robinson, 2009



“It is the pain of the wound which impels the artist to do his work, and it is the universality of woundedness in the human condition which makes the work of art significant as medicine or distraction.”

- John Gardner, 181

“From One who says, ‘Don’t cry. You’ll like it after a while.’
and Two who tells you thank-you after the fact and can’t look at your face.
To Three who pays for your breakfast and a cab home and your mother’s rent
To Four who says, ‘But you felt so good I didn’t know how to stop.’
To Five who says giving your body is tough but something you do very well.
To Six Who smells of tobacco and says ‘Come on, I can feel that you love this.’
To those who feel bad in the morning yes, some feel bad in the morning and sometimes they tell you, you want it and sometimes you think that you do. Thank heavens you’re resetting ever setting and resetting. How else do you sew up the tears? How else can the body survive?”
- Yrsa Daley-Ward, “bone”

Bone by Yrsa Daley-Ward is a prose novel written to reflect on and overcome her experiences of ostracism by her family and culture as she found herself sexually and suffered abuse. It is an exploration of personal healing and was written to help others along the path of healing from the detrimental effects that gender-based violence has. Part of this healing process is telling her personal story. She came from a very traditionalist family, which caused problems as she discovered her identity. She discovered that she was bisexual and nonreligious, which caused a fundamental value clash with her family, particularly her Seventh Day Adventist grandparents, as her parents were largely absent. Because of this, she was ostracized from her family and told to figure it out on her own. This need for self-sufficiency caused her to seek out abusive partners to support her and directly led to her abuse. There were few avenues for survival given her isolation from her community and family. Her only savings grace was using her looks and sex appeal to make a living as a model, until her writing took off, first on Instagram, then with Penguin Publishing.

“Straighten that back you are sex. Look like sex. Wipe the blood from yourself. Don’t tell them what went on when the sun was busy in another street.”
- Yrsa Daley-Ward, “when they ask”

“When they ask you how you are don’t say fearful. Narrow your eyes and kiss your teeth but don’t say afraid. Don’t say more scared then ever before, or floundering. Don’t say lost without cause or that you’re not always sure you can make it. Straighten that back you are sex. Look like sex. Wipe the blood from yourself. Don’t tell them what went on when the sun was busy in another street. Do that Thing The People Do. The people who are fine, fine, fine until you get home and find them gone, gone gone. Keep suffering because it’s your God Given Right. Brawl with your being. Fight the bad fight. Fight If they ask you how you are don’t say stolen. Don’t say forgotten, passed over, ignored. Don’t you dare say Orphan. Don’t say beaten by the system oppressed and disturbed and don’t you dare say disappointed don’t you dare say damaged. Smile. Smile with all of your teeth, even the rotting ones. Even the rotting ones.”
- Yrsa Daley-Ward, “when they ask”

“emergency warning”

“Stop inciting stirrings, movements between us little rebellions, causing chaos in all of my darker places. The top half of my body is at gross political warfare with the lower. One part of me is roaring and the other wholly disapproves. You are a beautiful danger.”
- Yrsa Daley-Ward, 12

“Art and Insanity”