

# Victorian Men

Angharad Williams and Sophie  
Gogl

at Francis Irv

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The most incel thing I've done, since getting a twin bed, was not getting the monkeypox vaccine. All my hot gay friends told me to get vaccinated, and I was like, *I'll get around to it*. It's chill. I haven't had sex in over a year, though maybe if I enjoyed it the last time, I would've had it again by now. Sex is either traumatic or boring. But mostly my sex life has been stamped by the single affect by which metropolitan authenticity is universally recognized: ennui. Is this normal? Everybody keeps saying that Gen Z isn't fucking. They're too busy alienating their bodies by spending too much time online or converting to Catholicism. Maybe I should just speak for myself: I have trouble getting it up. These days, I'm only horny when I'm on drugs, which is the thing they don't tell you about your 30s — your libido drops off a cliff. Did I waste the prime of my youth? I got laid more when I was young and ugly because I looked easy — chambray with thick black glasses and a fake leather jacket strutting into Metropolitain at 3:30 a.m., fresh and cheap. Then I gained 15 pounds from the antidepressants that were supposed to save my life and never did, but even though I lost my six-pack, I'm hotter now, I think. I wear Avignon by Comme des Garçons, subscribe to *The New Yorker*, and can name the current president of Brazil, but I'm still single. I want to love, but all the boys who aren't dating me think I'm standoffish, a perfectionist, frigid, asexual, inexperienced, or — as Pujan keeps

saying — that I'm one of the new Victorian men of the 21st century, waiting for the perfect partner for whom I would not have to ask if this was love I was feeling, I would just know.



“Love,” reads Angharad Williams’s painting *Untitled (1-18) #18 FI (2022)* on view at Francis Irv gallery in New York. The four letters are hued like a Starbucks color scheme for its winter frappuccino line: fuschia, orange, navy, burgundy. It stares at me and I stare back. Having never been in love, I’ve known only the desire to love, which can be mistaken for love itself, or even supersede it. Love, which is so cheap as to be free, could be mine if I really wanted it, except I don’t want it cheap. The Lacanians say I’m a neurotic who sets impossible standards for a partner

so as never to, by satisfying desire, extinguish it, preferring to live in a Wagnerian state of perpetual longing — longing being that by which we know we are alive. To me, the idea of sex becomes almost vulgar. Is this why I still fall for straight men? So that I never have to fuck them?

In a photo by Williams, *My First Suit* (2020), the artist is kneeling in a pinstripe suit and in the background is a statue, slick with patina, of a romantic ideal male in the nude, contrapposto, gazing into the distance. I imagine myself wearing that suit with flowers, donning the romantic garb from a bygone era before Instagram and streetwear fucked up the industry, longing for the perfect man who can be seen in the distance, but only at a distance, because if he came closer, I'd snarl and look away. I only want love if it's immaculate, the impossible kind only seen from afar. As a follower only of truth and beauty, I believe two things about love: that no one deserves it, ever, but that love is only true if it can be taken for granted. Even if I've never seen this love, by believing in it, I make it real. This makes me so goddamn pure and noble that you can now call me Jesus Christ or Queen Elizabeth I. I belong to no one. All of you are my lovers, and I am your savior, your queen.

