



In 2010, Alex DiFrancesco had a different name and was a missing person. Alone in a mental hospital, they began to have fantasies of running away permanently, changing their name, growing a beard. In their journey to coming out as transgender, DiFrancesco moved from New York City to the Midwest. *Psychopomps* follows them on the search for family, marriage, relationships with other trans people, attempts to build community, and for the elusive link to ancient beliefs about the special spiritual role of the trans individual in society.

TEACHING GUIDE

Psychopomps

by Alex DiFrancesco

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Recommended Classes:

- Creative Writing
- Creative Nonfiction / Memoir
- Queer Literature
- Trans Literature
- Hybrid Writing

Keywords:

Memoir / Lyric Essay / Pop Culture / Investigative Journalism / Transgender Studies / Queer Studies / Nonbinary Representation / Non-monogamy / Gender / Family / Queer History / Hate Crimes / Sexual Assault

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There are several approaches to non-fiction within this book -- memoir, investigative journalism, lyric essay, to name a few -- what is the effect of the collaging of styles? How does it create texture and variation?
2. Some essays call back to previous ones (the Genealogy sequence, the Flowered Tie sequence). How do these help create overall theme? How does each build upon the previous?
3. The essays "Psychopomps" and "Hank Williams is Sacred" incorporate outside texts into the essays. In what ways are these texts incorporated and blended with the narrator's experience, and what does it add to the pieces?

4. What role does spirituality play in the text? Family and alternate family structures?
5. The narrator of these pieces lives in several ways that might be considered "unconventional" -- they are of a nonbinary gender, they are non-monogamous, they have an open marriage -- what is the risk of over- or under-explaining life experience that might be considered such in a text? Which side would you fall on?
6. What is the role of empathy in this text? How does it help create richer experience than an essay that might focus entirely on one's self?

Possible Assignments:

- Identify two or three pieces of media you really love and incorporate them into a story about your life.
- Think of a story from your childhood. How might you research and find some sort of personal truth from the story you've been told?