



# Crush

*Will Stockton, D. Gilson*

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The devotional, unrelenting, deviant *Crush* is a linguistic feast: the word is everything in Stockton's and Gilson's world, except when it isn't, except when it's time we "shoved // our jeans down and stepped / into the world." This is a sensual — perhaps a better word is bodily — collection, the scent of shit and frowsy hats and bleach and the boy who "always smelled / like cat litter" adding some much-needed filth to poetic longing — for what is longing, frankly, without the cleanup after? There are texts and subtexts and Facebook-stalks; there are at times startlingly tender moments, as in the poems about a brother's suicide and an uncle's AIDS-related decline. "I'm thinking of what any of us / can tolerate," the poets write in "Fall, Then Falling." I feel as if I need a shower after reading *Crush*; I can think of no higher praise. ~Randall Mann, author of *Breakfast With Thom Gunn* and *Straight Razor* The louche candor of *Crush*, like Calamus before it, makes a ravishing case for poetry as queer theory. Smitingly smart, smartingly sexy, frank as nerve endings, and swoony as the first warm nights of Spring: these poems are as vividly compelling an account of erotic multiplicity as any I know. ~Michael Snediker, author of *The Apartment of Tragic Appliances* In *Crush*, a stunning collection of erotic poems and queer meditations delineating Stockton' and Gilson's mutual crushing on each other, but also all of the ways in which, sweetly and also sadly, affection ameliorates the anguishes that, despite our deepest devotions, are never constant, Stockton and Gilson write, In Aranye Fradenburg's words, Shakespeare's sonnets describe "the love you feel for inappropriate objects: for someone thirty years older, thirty years younger. The kind of love that makes a fool, a pervert, a stalker out of you." Let's start here, for much of this description applies to Petrarchan conventions as well. Let's start here, with this affective entrance into the poems and the impossibility of dispossessing the other's voice in the manufacture of one's own machine. Let's start here, with a vision of poems as indexes of crushes rendered inappropriate, unhealthy by some gradation of difference and level of intensity. With the question of what distinguishes a crush from love if both turn you into a different self. Under oak trees and sunlight, in coffee shops and locker rooms, steam rooms and seminar rooms, and in conversation with Milton, Shakespeare, Frank O'Hara, Narcissus, Allen Ginsberg, Jacques Derrida, Aranye Fradenburg, Mary Magdalene, Freud, Oscar Wilde, José Esteban Muñoz, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Elton John, and Prince, among other poets, harlots, saints, and scholars, Stockton and Gilson explore the ways in which friendship, desire, falling, swerving, possession, holding, faggoting, falling, longing, poeming, and crushing open the self to queerly utopic, if also difficult, deflections — other, more improbable modes of being, as Foucault might have said.

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