

Walk a Mile (or Two) in My Genderqueer Shoes

by Aron Ryan

For my 16th birthday, mother refused to buy
the sneakers in my size. In her words,
those are men's shoes! Still, I refused to try
heels, sandals, or women's Sketchers

for I wanted only those black D.C. sneakers
with the slick grey laces. Heaven forbid
the harsh click of heels against high school
halls (tick tock tick, tock) like a broken

watch. I wanted the squeak that solely sneakers
could speak when I'd slide down the halls
in rain-soaked soles. I wanted to run in the rain,
letting my sneakers pound against puddles,

running from what I didn't know. I didn't know
how badly I wanted to escape my own body,
how desperately I'd trade perfume for cologne,
my dresses for suits, my so-called *phase* for

the truth. Truth is, I threw such a tantrum that mom
bought those black D.C. sneakers with the slick
grey laces. Truth is, I wanna walk in men's shoes
and I don't give a damn about mother's taboos.