

In 'Bedecked', poet Victoria Redel speaks proudly and protectively of her young son, who revels in the beauty of objects such as jewelled rings, sparkled clip-on earrings and pink shirts.

For now, he is happily oblivious to the gender-based stereotypes and attitudes associated with his possessions and behaviours. He "*still loves a beautiful thing*" simply because it is a beautiful thing, and Redel wants to shield him from the judgemental remarks others make about him.

The poem builds to an ecstatic moment when the young boy's entire, bejewelled body catches the light and appears to cast joyful rainbows on the surrounding walls.

Bedecked

Tell me it's wrong
the scarlet nails my son sports, or the toy
store rings he clusters, four jewels to each finger.

He's bedecked.
I see the other mothers looking at the star
choker, the rhinestone strand he fastens over a sock.
Sometimes I help him find sparkle clip-ons when he says
sticker earrings look too fake.

Tell me I should teach him it's wrong to love the glitter,
that "a boy's only a boy" who'd love a truck with a remote that revs,
battery slamming into corners or Hot Wheels loop-de-looping
off tracks into the tub.

Then tell me it's fine – really – maybe even a good thing – a boy
who's got some girl to him,
and I'm right for the days he wears a pink shirt on the seesaw in
the park.

Tell me what you need to tell me
but keep far away from my son
who still loves a beautiful thing not for what it means –
this way or that – but for the way facets set off prisms and
prisms spin up everywhere
and from his own jewelled body he's cast rainbows – made every
shining true colour.

Now try to tell me – man or woman – your heart was ever once
that brave.

Victoria Redel