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Writing for the Humanities and Arts

4/19/21

A Queer Look at The LGBTQ Community and The Media

I pose a question: regardless of your sexual and gender identity, socioeconomic standing, political agenda-although to be honest, I'm a bit biased -- What do people think of when they think of the LGBTQIA+ community? Probably Pride parades, rainbow flags, drag queens-- the flamboyant presenting queer. There's a lot of noise, to be truthful, and it is difficult to figure out where to fit in, especially if you are someone like me, who both doesn't see anything wrong with their own sexuality, but doesn't have the urge to "flaunt it," per se.

Before 2018, I'd wager most people outside of Australia and England didn't know who Hannah Gadsby was. She was born on January 12, 1978, in Smithton, Tasmania, Australia. She is a writer and actress, known for the Aussie TV comedy show, *Please Like Me* (2013), *Hannah Gadsby: Nanette* (2018), and *Hannah Gadsby: Douglas* (2020). She was diagnosed with ADHD and autism in 2017, and frequently refers to her being neurodivergent in her shows.

At the beginning of *Nanette*, Gadsby walks out on stage in dark dress pants, a dark shirt, and a blue blazer with black lapels, stating that she called the show "Nanette" because she'd met someone named Nanette, and she hadn't yet written the show and

she just figured she could get an hour of comedy from that person. "Turns out," she says, "No."

Gadsby begins with a riff on what it was like, as a kid growing up in Tasmania when she "found out [she] was a little bit lesbian." The consensus, she says, was that gay people were not welcome: "You should just get yourself a one-way ticket to the mainland, and don't come back," she summarizes, and she gets a laugh.

Once the special is over, what, exactly, is funny about feeling unwelcome in your own home because of who you are? What, as she continues in another anecdote, is funny about being angrily confronted by a man who believed she was another man hitting on his girlfriend? It's all with the delivery, she makes it comedic.

One of the things Gadsby is doing is exploring her storytelling tools, especially regarding trauma. And rather than question comedy itself she questions how LGBTQIA+ performers and anyone else who feels different is encouraged to come to comedy, and be self-deprecative to receive a punchline. The special can be serious and solemn at times, but it never feels forced. It is extremely funny, in many places, yet when it isn't, it is not dull and boring, but extraordinarily insightful and inspiring.

During her poignant conversation talking about acceptance in and of the queer community, Hannah Gadsby poses a simple question, but a brilliant one: "Where are the quiet gays supposed to go?" The point, or my point, is that there's this thought-- this expectation that if you don't perform your sexuality, that you aren't your sexuality.

Now clearly, Hannah Gadsby isn't a "quiet gay," although maybe both unsuspectingly and unsuspectingly that fact is true in response to the roaring applause that erupts after the end of her comedy special. Aside from her comments about the

design flaws of the gay flag; Pablo Picasso's misogynistic personality; the separation of artist and art in art history: mental health, and assertion that her favorite sound in the world is that of "a teacup finding its place on a saucer"; that previously mentioned applause comes just before Gadsby homes in for the kill with a takedown of a culture rooted in sexism and racism, that led to an admitted sexual predator running the United States of America (thankfully, that's over).

Even after I sing her praises, I continue to point out something that few comedians have commented on, or at least, with her type of frankness. She discusses gender nonconformity.

Of her in her Tasmanian town, Gadsby says: "I had to leave as soon as I found out I was a little bit lesbian. And you do find out, don't you? I got a letter. Dear sir/madam." Funnily enough, on the reaction of people when they realize she's a woman, she says: "I get a lot of side-eye." Though is quick to point out why she loves being mistaken for a man: "Just for a few seconds, life gets a whole lot easier!" Gadsby has a plethora of words to describe herself with, whether it's "Sir/madam," "gender not-normal" (her alternative: "gender normal"), "this situation," or the more common "masculine of center." In a culture where there is so much uncertainty and confusion around the language of gender, and persistent heteronormativity, Gadsby offers options. both for herself, and for those who would describe her, establishing her identity and an ambivalent fluidity at the same time: there is no one right way to be queer, and there is no one clear path for self-discovery. And though I'm the first to say that more outwardly queer folks are expressing themselves in a perfectly valid way, and

in addition to what Hannah Gadsby says, I implore you: Resist pressuring yourself just to “fit in,” find whatever works for you to be happy and break from the norm.

I would like to pose a final question or two: have your views on the LGBTQIA+ community transformed? Have your ideas about being LGBTQIA+ transformed? I know I have certainly become more informed and more well versed with the vocabulary of my community, and have made leaps and bounds in personal progress. This special was very interesting and informative. And If it doesn't move you to tears, that's okay, but I suggest you still watch this special.

Works Cited

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