

Sam "Samira" Weinstein

LGBT Film and Theatre

A Queer/Queer cinematographic analysis

3/25/2020

I would just like to start after the fact that the term "coming out of the closet", while may be empowering for a multitude of reasons for a lot of queer people, is certainly an outdated term, and I only wish there were another way to describe that, or maybe a world where there wouldn't be a need at all.

I've had it in my head--rather, it's been subconsciously cultivating, to a point of where I view heteronormative narratives as, well, normal. I don't necessarily think that's a bad thing, that everything categorized as "straight" is intuitively wrong for me to view, much less just because I belong to a certain community. Furthermore, it is not a comment on my disposition for the fact that I think that way. It's simply just the matter of me not being surrounded by that kind of culture for a majority of my life.

And I also don't necessarily think that being gay, or being trans fluid is a huge part of my personality or anything. That's just one aspect of the person that is me. It's certainly an important part of me, yeah. I just identify with being a musician or an actor or writer more than I do with my sexuality and gender. Again, that might be different for another person. I digress.

I do like it when there's a representation of a gay couple media mediums, like television and books. Even if it's hot steamy sex, or a simple kiss, even the degradation

of my people. And while I thoroughly denounce all bigotry, and the horrible aspect of the latter part of this previous sentence, I think it's extremely important to show all the intensely positive and severely negative realities of our macroculture, within this society. We need to teach the next generation of LGBTQ + what their people went through, and for our allies to know what we've gone through--all eyes to know what hardships people have gone through. Because then we can sympathize, and empathize, learn to deal with that trauma as a community, and then become stronger and move forward from it. We are all painfully human, and all stories are human stories.

That being said, I don't think we're at the point in this metaphysical societal conversation, where the stories aren't gendered, where toxic masculinity and toxic femininity aren't pervasive, where sex isn't dysphoric for some, or where it feels normal to simply "be"-- to me at least. I'd like a narrative where it's just simple, stupid love, and they just happen to be queer. I digress.

There are instances where this has happened (heh). Most recently, and quite possibly of my favorite representations, happens to come from a television show that is on Netflix, called "Feeling Good".

Per information from the internet, it's a semi-autobiographical series from comedian Mae Martin. It is a truly and deeply personal and poignant story about navigating a modern-day fluid landscape of gender and sexuality, or in simpler terms, a modern relationship. It follows recovering addict and comedian Mae, who attempts to "control the addictive behaviors and intense romanticism that permeate every aspect of her life". Things become even more complicated for her, as she gets into an

all-consuming relationship with her new girlfriend, George. I took it upon myself to binge-watch the series, and then subsequently going back to analyze each facet of the show that got me hooked in the first place. It is indelibly sweet, quirky and fun, and while it is most certainly “gay”, it deals with the same quarrels and qualms any relationship.

For instance the relationship between George and her friends, who are fairly apathetic in the sense that they have a false sense of friendship. There's also the relationship between Mae and her parents, and more intensely, her relationship with addiction.

As someone who has dealt with addiction, I'm happy to see that this representation isn't as extreme as most, and not relying on the pitfalls and wandering naked in the street looking for an irate fix. It shows someone who has recovered, for the most part and doesn't struggle for the most part day to day life. And when she does relapse, she has a strong support system that helps her through it. (I have physical manifestations of stress when I am presented with a toxic situation, and I noticed in the show that there is a high pitched tone whenever Mae is faced with that same feeling she gets when she's on drugs).

I empathize with George, too. I didn't realize that I liked someone of the same sex until I meant my ex. It was a new experience, and luckily it was a healthy relationship where I could become more comfortable to explore and come to terms with my sexuality.

I sincerely enjoyed this show for not only representing a queer relationship in a way that makes me generally and genuinely happy, but also an addict who has and will continue to combat their addiction. It was a cathartic viewing experience.

Works Cited:

AHS Theatre Ensemble, *HERS: an Explanation of our Expectations*, 2019

Hampson, Joe, and Mae Martin. *Feeling Good, Season 1*, Netflix, 2020

Sam "Samira" Weinstein

LGBT Film and Theatre

A Queer analysis of "One Day at a Time"

4/18/2020, [EDIT] 5/26/20

One of my favorite representation of gay characters-- in any variant of media--has to be from the show "One Day at a Time". The series revolves around Penelope, an Army veteran, and her Cuban-American family, as they navigate through life. "One Day at a Time" with its contemporary outlook on life, encourages individuality, being proud of your heritage, and respecting each person's beliefs and cultures. It also encourages acceptance, love, diversity, aiming to put stigmas and stereotypes to rest.

One character that perfectly embodies this is Elena, the daughter of Penelope. She is presented as a young intelligent latinx woman, and later comes out as gay in the middle of the first season. The show perfectly nuances her sexual identity with her passions as a young person, tackling all the same turmoils and wonders of adolescence, and family life. And while I find the character and the shows writing fantastic, another character caught my attention on an even more personal level.

During the second season of "One Day at a Time", Elena meets, and eventually becomes the significant other of Syd. Zey Identify as gender non-conforming. I find this character fascinating for two specific reasons: that Syd was naturally introduced and was developed with a deeply wonderful personal relationship with all characters, and

that the conflicts that arise in the show revolve around their sexual identity and gender identity, but also play into conflicts of race, young love, etcetera.

For example, In the episode, "Locked Down," a neighborhood lockdown forces the family members and Syd to stay in the apartment while they search for the perpetrator. The sub-plot of this episode revolves around Elena trying to figure out how to make the first move with Syd and the two finally end up on the balcony outside, confessing that they are both very nervous and were both expecting each other to make the "first move." They then kiss and in a comedic tone, a cop addresses the "kissing teens" and tells them to get back into the apartment.

The second episode worth mentioning is "Homecoming." In the episodes leading up to this, Elena and her brother Alex talk about the school dance and who they are wanting to go with. In this episode, while Max decides to go with an older -- relative to him -- girl, Elena is tempted to ask Syd. It should be noted that Syd is homeschooled and Elena is afraid of both Syd not wanting to go, and them finding out that Elena is not particularly popular. However, Syd bursts into the house wearing a blazer and pants and a boom box and proceeds to sing alternate lyrics to Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire", as their homecoming proposal. Elena accepts and the episode proceeds to them going to the dance. At the dance, Elena tries to hide the fact that she is not very popular among the student body and makes her previously befriended teachers upset by saying she doesn't know them that well. Finally, after the ordeal, Syd takes Elena aside and says that they just think that Elena is the most popular there and they kiss. The episode continues with them dancing and then ends.

While I identify as trans fluid, I find it wonderful that this character is represented in a positive environment/in a positive manner, is happy with who they are and how they identify, and is overall accepted as such. If you have not seen the series, I highly recommend it. At least for you to recommend to your students to watch.

Works Cited:

- Kellett, Gloria Calderon; Royce, Mike; Lear, Norman; Miller Brent; Signer, Dan;
Jones Sebastian. "One Day at a Time" Season 2, 2018.

Samira Weinstein

Writing for the Humanities and Arts

Rough Draft Op-Ed

3/30/21

I pose a question: regardless of your sexual and gender identity, socioeconomic standing, political agenda-- although to be honest, I'm a bit biased... so, as long as there's no hate, outwardly spoken or otherwise: 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 can be 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.

I'm fascinated and grateful for the question Hannah Gatsby poses in her comedy special, "Nanette". It is a simple question, but a brilliant one: "Where are the quiet gays supposed to go?" My point--*the* point, is that there's this thought-- this expectation that, if you don't perform your sexuality, that you *aren't it*.

I've had my fare share of mornings waking up less than flawless, and while looking in the mirror, thinking about my more outwardly queer friends, wondering, "Am I really Pansexual? Am I biologically hardwired this way, or am I just doing it to fit in [to my community] ?".

Yet, after countless years of self discovery and education, I've come to a personal conclusion: that way of thinking is toxic, and quite frankly, a lot of nonsense.

Though I'm the first to say that my more outwardly queer friends are expressing themselves in a perfectly valid way; it's not the only way to be queer, and *that's okay*. It's something I've struggled with in the past, but I've found there are other ways of expressing myself and supporting the gay community, without exhausting myself. Because there is nothing more personal than who you love, sleep, and with whom spend your time! With one of the many postmodern, not-so-radical undertones of Gatsby's soliloquy, I implore you: resist any pressure to downplay or exaggerate it just to "fit in", find whatever works for you to be happy, and fuck normativity. Just be you.

Now *clearly*, Hannah Gatsby isn't a "quiet gay", although maybe both unsuspectingly and unsuspectingly it's the roaring applause that erupts after the end of her comedy special. Aside from her comments from 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 Gatsby 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).

And even after I sing her praises, noting that this is an amazing experience/performance/truth telling I've witnessed, I continue on to point out something

that most people, much less a way no other mainstream comedian, has done. Or at least, as frank and as honest as she has: She discusses gender nonconformity.

Now, as pointed out to me by one of my queer friends, among women comedians, the ratio of lesbians to straight women is strangely --though happily noticed--higher than in the general population. (I.e Ellen DeGeneres, Wanda Sykes, Rosie O'Donnell, Sandra Bernhard, and Kate McKinnon). But of life 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, with each person varying in their preferred pronouns and labels, Gadsby offers options. Both for herself, and for those who would describe her, establishing her identity and an ambivalent fluidity at the same time. It would be important to note that my pronouns are the singular "They/Them". To someone whose gender identity is rather fluid, It's important and grounding to hear someone use so many different words to describe herself. (Although she is very adamant that she is not trans).

I would like to pose a question or two to you: have your views on the LGBTQ community transformed? Have your ideas about being LGBTQ 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.

At the very least, I suggest you watch this special.

Hi Samira!

In a previous email, I sent you a copy of your Rough Op Ed with my feedback on it. I accidentally sent it before I could write this note.

It does what a first draft needs to do--whis is begin to organize your thoughts.

Remember to tell the audience about the special. Describe it to them.

There is no clear thesis statement here and consequently the essay wanders. Work on developing a thesis statement. Something like: Hannah Gatsby tells the audience of her own struggles as a gay woman, taking her story from the personal to the larger universal struggles of gay people. It's not my impression that she was questioning her sexual orientation as much as making a case for greater acceptance in the general population.

Research: not seeing any here. Add info about HG.

Works Cited: Glossary can be 1 of them. See the attached rubric. Add info about HG.

This also needs in-text citation and a proofread.

I enjoyed your candid and informal narrator's tone. It made for an interesting piece.

Works Cited

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