

THE TERLOPER

Virginia Tech's Queer Magazine

Summer 2019, Issue #8



Letter from the Editor

I sat down to write this Letter at least 5 or 6 times before I even worked up the courage to put words to paper. I can feel the weight of this position, for this magazine, at this University, at this moment in America. I can feel the weight of following in Matty and Maggie's footsteps as I step in as the third Editor-in-Chief. This magazine means so much to both myself and so many others, and I don't want to let anyone down.

For me, *The Interloper* has been a formative part of my journey towards better understanding who I am. I feel like I am in constant conversation with my queerness - constantly censoring or embracing or limiting or growing or expressing. *The Interloper* gave me, as a young gay, a space to hold that conversation with other queer folk in my community who talked and researched and cared about all the things I was learning to embrace and educate myself on. As I moved from reader to writer, I formed my own opinions and began to speak for myself instead of just listening.

It empowered me to become an advocate for the community. Then, moving from writer to editor, I stepped into a mentorship role, now able to guide emerging voices into the limelight and let them become their own advocates. So what more can I do? How will my time as Editor-in-Chief challenge me to grow? I will strive to continue to be an advocate for our queer community here at Virginia Tech and in Blacksburg, as well as the queer community at large. I will strive to continue to help others grow into their own voices. Perhaps most importantly, however, I will strive to continue to listen and



learn from all of you around me. I have so much more to learn and listening is the best way to become a better human being. With that in mind, I encouraged our editors and writers this semester to focus more on intersectionality. As we fight our battles both locally and nationally, we as a queer community would be remiss to ignore or belittle the struggles of those around us who hold other marginalized identities. We would be failing in our goals as advocates and educators and activists and good human beings if we failed to acknowledge the ways in which those who hold multiple marginalized identities face bigger and different struggles.

We owe it to each other to take a moment, sit down, and listen. It is our responsibility to protect all vulnerable communities because we are each valuable and at the end of the day, prejudice exists against us because we represent a threat to traditional systems of power. If we support each other, lift up each other's voices and share our platforms and resources and energy, then we represent a true threat to those who threaten us.

Warmly,
Rachel Hargrave

THE TERLOPER

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Blooming

by Kayla Moxley

At 13 I bought a book that scared me. It fit
into my pocket & I read it secretly
but never all the way through. When I left it on my nightstand
it whispered at me until I fell asleep & I dreamed
of an identity I didn't understand.

I never looked up "lesbian" in my father's Oxford
English Dictionary & still I knew it was a word
I wasn't allowed to say. I never asked my mother why I carried shame
like extra body parts with me & eventually I grew anger
from my curiosity. Nobody had to teach me to do that.

I am devoting my time to discovering
what is already here. The parts of me that I have taken time to find
steep in my heart & like water to tea
I am becoming myself. The plants I tend are blooming
into ugly flowers that I love & it's easier every second.



Systems of Power: Kimberlé Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality

by Madeleine Cáceres

In October of 2016, Kimberlé Crenshaw stood before an audience at a TED conference. Before launching into a recitation of police brutality victims, Crenshaw asked the audience to stand and listen until they hear a name that they do not recognize. The list begins with Eric Garner, Mike Brown, Tamir Rice, and Freddie Gray, before turning to Sandra Bland, Michelle Cusseaux, Tanisha Anderson, Aura Rosser, etc.

As more and more women sit down, Crenshaw draws attention to those still standing they are mostly Black women. From here, Crenshaw introduces her theory coined out of absolute necessity: intersectionality. Put simply, intersectionality refers to how systems of power interact to affect people differently depending

on their multiple, connected identities. These identities might include age, physical or mental disability, class, sexuality, gender identification, nationality, citizenship status, race, ethnicity, linguistic fluency, and/or education.

To be effective and inclusive, any progressive activism or advocacy must be intersectional; without an intersectionality, we unknowingly reproduce many of the same oppressive structures that we claim to be against: ableism, transphobia, white supremacy, misogyny, classism, etc. Consider the following four spheres of progressive activism. How might an intersectional lens help us to better account for the ways that coexisting systems of power interact with, and potentially contradict, each other?

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS.

Most reproductive rights advocates share a core belief that people who can get pregnant should have the choice of whether to terminate or continue with their pregnancy. However, activist and academic Andrea Smith (2005) reminds us how our pro-life versus pro-choice model assumes a level of independent consumerism that does not reflect all realities. In other words, some pro-choice activism operates under an assumption that all people can freely choose to carry their pregnancy to term and care for a child without fear of economic, social, or health repercussions.

Unfortunately, many low-income or socially-isolated individuals may not feel like choice had anything to do with their decision to terminate their pregnancy. In the 1960s and 1970s, Mexican-American women on the West Coast were targeted for sterilization; many did not speak English or were coerced by medical practitioners into giving their (uninformed) consent. Elsewhere in the United States, Black women have been the target of similar eugenics programs.

Ultimately, pro-choice activism must take care to consider the complex, specific problems that women of color face beyond simply having the right to have an abortion. How might capitalism, racism, and classism interact to complicate reproductive justice rhetoric?



Kimberlé Crenshaw

WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE.

In 1963, activist and writer Betty Friedan published a landmark book called *The Feminine Mystique* articulating frustrations pervasive among women of the time. She described an all-pervading restlessness and unfulfillment that American women felt in their prescribed roles as housewives and mothers. The catch? Friedan, who was a white, college-educated woman, only interviewed and described the frustrations of white, middle-class, suburban housewives.

Friedan's descriptive analysis of "woman's condition" completely omits white working class women, poor women, and women of color. Campaigns that view women in the workplace as the epitome of liberation forget to account for a history of Black and low-income women forced to work outside the home and away from their children. For many women,

liberation might mean having the economic freedom to raise children and spend time with their families. Also, consider how the labor of childcare frequently passes to low-income, immigrant women hired by middle-or-upper-class women as au pairs or nannies. These intersectional considerations of power are integral to successful liberation movements.

SEX POSITIVITY.

When dominant spaces within larger movements overshadow the complex histories and identities of their members, marginalized members often pay a price. For example, liberal feminism's pro-sex response to radical feminism's anti-pornography, anti-prostitution came at the expense of many Black women, who had historically been portrayed as hypersexual and were not willing to join calls to further perpetuate that stereotype.

Likewise, many spheres of feminist and queer activism fail to incorporate transgender advocacy into their platforms. Racial minorities and disabled members of the queer community may also struggle to be heard within larger movements that may have racist and ableist components.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

Consider how documented and undocumented women might interact with law enforcement and other state institutions that are available for survivors of domestic abuse. Undocumented

women may be unwilling to navigate traditional channels of assistance--such as reaching out to the police or to shelters--for fear of deportation, either of them or their abuser. Black, indigenous, Latin American, and transgender women may also hesitate to reach out to institutions from which their respective communities have historically suffered abuse. What happens when domestic violence resources depend on police intervention?

Certainly intersectionality is integral to engaging in any sort of feminist activism or analysis, such as in the four instances above. However, the consequences of non-intersectional understandings of discrimination in court tend to be particularly impactful and far-reaching.

The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment works to prevent discrimination against certain groups of people; however, different standards of scrutiny apply to different groups of people. For example, sex discrimination cases are subject to an intermediate level of scrutiny, while cases related to gender identity, age, residency, and sexual orientation cases are subject to rational basis review. Racial discrimination cases are reviewed under a strict level of scrutiny, which means that defendants are

under greater pressure to justify the rationale for discrimination. To qualify for strict scrutiny, plaintiffs must be members of a suspect class. Race is one of a few suspect classes; sex and gender are not. This means that when someone goes to court after experiencing discrimination resulting from multiple, interacting identities, such as race and sex, the cases are not taken seriously. In the 1976 case of *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors*, several Black women employees filed a class action lawsuit against General Motors due to discrimination based on the fact that they were Black women.

But the company hired Black men and white women, and the court insisted that the Black women must sue their employers on the grounds of either race or sex but not both. Dominant narratives of a supposedly homogenous group's experience inevitably fail to consider that some group members' experiences are complicated by other aspects of their identity.

To paraphrase Crenshaw, assuming that the inclusion of Black people and the inclusion of women necessarily results in the inclusion of Black women reveals a trickle-down approach to justice. Here, I ask readers to consider how systems of power and oppression interact to render certain bodies invisible, such as in the cases of the hundreds of

Black women killed at the hands of violent police overreach. How can we, as members of the queer community, as activists, teachers, and scholars, use Kimberle Crenshaw's theory to inform our work? How might each group's applications differ?

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Queerness in Webcomics

by *Miranda Mauldon*

For your average queer nerd, finding your story represented in traditional comics can be a challenge. While relationships like that of Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy do exist, they are often overlooked or undersold, or used as a marketing technique. The advent of the internet provided an open forum for many communities, and the queer nerd populace found a perfect forum to build their own multiverse.

Webcomics are Comic strips or pages that are found primarily online. The advent of queers in webcomics was right with the birth of the internet, some like *Dykes to Watch Out For* by Alison Bechdel coming on the scene as early as 1987. Although queer rights and visibility were

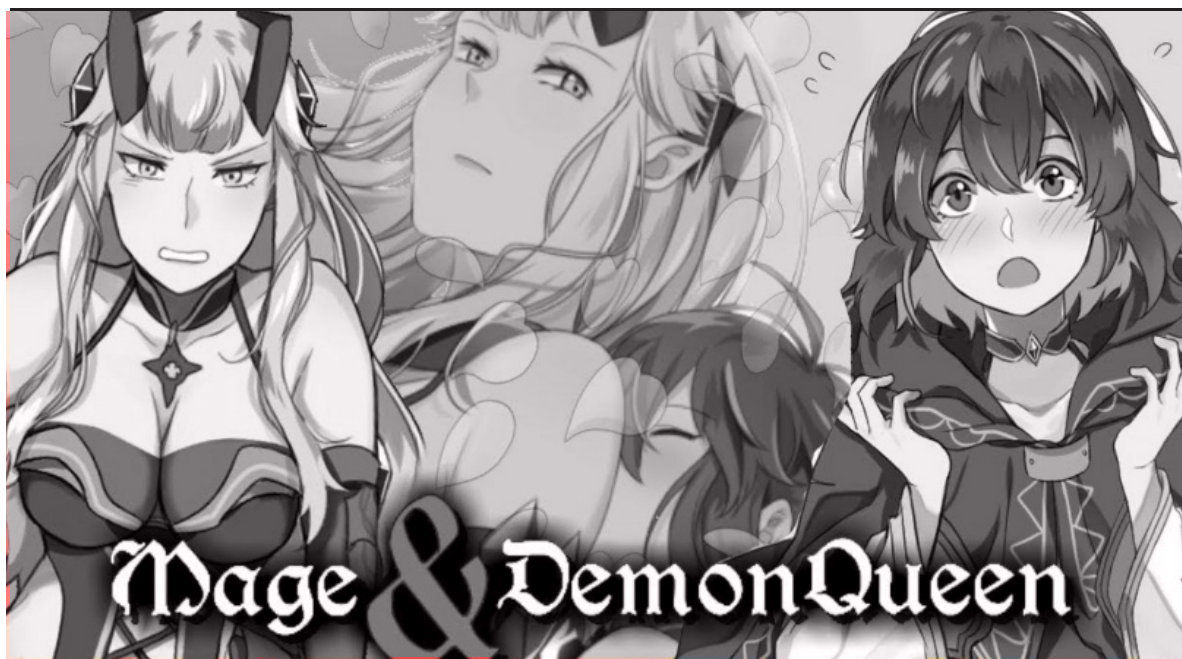
on the rise; getting a book published, let alone a comic book, was just short of impossible. Some lucky artists found places in queer magazines to showcase their stories, like *Chelsea Boys* that was published in the weekly issues of *Next* magazine. The freedom of the internet bypassed social roadblocks. No publishers, no editors, no books to print: just a blank canvas where anything could be written.

Some of the earliest webcomics looked more like comic strips than full pages, following the example of newspapers. The internet allowed artists to play with their medium and many started using full page styles that better fit computer screens. Action and larger

details could be better fleshed out, and the full page allowed artists to escape the blocky format of newspapers. In shorter strips and pages a character may be well developed but on any individual page they may come off as one dimensional. The gay man: just a flamboyant homosexual with no other real motivation immediately apparent. With longer formats, more details could be added to a single page. Backgrounds could be fuller, and more detail added to a character beyond what could fit on a drawing only two inches tall.

The age of cell phones has once again changed how web-comics are formatted, as well as the reach they have. Apps like WEBTOON, WebComics, PageFlip, Comic Chameleon

and a plethora of others has made viewing comics on your phone a million times easier and has once again made web-comics more mainstream. This medium is interesting because it combines the two previous formats. As full pages just don't fit well on such a small screen, and with artists wanting to do more than just go from panel to panel, many have taken on the form of scrollers, fading in and out of scenes. Life Outside the Circle by H-P Lehkonen does this by fading to white and using contrast in a mostly black and white comic. Although young, these comics are gaining speed and popularity faster than web-comics did at the advent of the internet. Once again, providing a great platform for queer voices and representation.





What does this amount to? The internet is a fabulous place, full of ideas and opportunities. A person can discover the words and the ideas to sum up the way they feel about romance, gender, and sexuality on one website, and find a medium to create a story to express them in another. Webcomics, and the presence of the queer community in them, allows for the stories, lives, and experiences of queer people to be seen by those who may not, or not yet, identify themselves as a part of the community.

So, where should you look for a webcomic that's right for you? While, none of these offers a complete list, many offer a good starting point:

- TopWebComics.com
- The Webcomic List

- Autostraddle
- Mage & Demon Queen
- A Common Teacher
- The Young Protectors
- Transfusions
- Zombie Roomie
- Kate or Die
- This is not fiction
- DAR
- Peritale
- Kyle and Atticus

And the many others you will add to your list of favorites!



Slice of life | Romance 23K

A Common Teacher

Dainxu 



Healthcare in Virginia: Where We Fail our LGBTQ+ Community

by Lindsay Boerger

The ability and willingness to seek healthcare is and has been an institutional and emotional problem for LGBTQ+ individuals and communities for decades. In addition to less obvious forms of homophobia in healthcare rooted in myth and misunderstanding, LGBTQ+ patients also report rejection, disrespect and abuse by staff in medical facilities, which can deter individuals in the community from seeking necessary care even if there are no viable alternatives for treatment.

The twenty-first century has seen a major pushback against homophobic and transphobic discrimination in the U.S. healthcare system, with several non-profit organizations creating independent rankings and standards for care in order to help guide LGBTQ+ patients to resources and providers with specific initiatives and training to support the needs of their communities. Each year, the Human Rights Campaign publishes a Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) in order to assess each

state's quality of healthcare for LGBTQ+ individuals. The new criteria set for 2018 outlines several specific guidelines that a medical treatment facility (inpatient or outpatient) needs to abide by in order to qualify as a "Leader in LGBTQ Healthcare Equality": non-discrimination and staff training, patient services and support, employee benefits and policies, patient and community engagement, and responsible citizenship (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

Examples of subcategories of criteria used to assess a facility's willingness and ability to accommodate the medical needs of LGBTQ+ and non-binary patients include but are not limited to:

- patient non-discrimination in quality of care,
- equal visitation for same-sex partners,
- employment non-discrimination and initiatives to hire LGBTQ staff, and

- staff training on LGBTQ patient-centered care

patient services and support including:

- LGBTQ patient services for reducing disparities among LGBTQ patients,
- transgender patient services and support to offer some specific services and policies to protect trans patients,
- patient self-identification to allow patients the option to identify as LGBTQ on medical records, and
- the ability for same-sex partners to be included in medical decision making (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

Only three facilities in Virginia were deemed exceptional leaders: VA Hampton Medical Center in Hampton, Novant Health UVA Health System Haymarket Medical Center in Haymarket, and Novant Health UVA Health System Prince William Medical Center in Manassas. Virginia's distinct lack of medical facilities with conscious and active missions to create more supportive LGBTQ+ environments, for both patients and employees, ranks us in one of the bottom brackets for inclusivity in the nation. Virginia's ranking among LGBTQ+-friendly medical facilities nationwide presents even further ramifications when it is noted that two of our leader facilities are located

in northern Virginia and one is near Virginia Beach. In a state with over 8.4 million citizens, this gaping hole in equal and non-discriminatory coverage glaringly rips for any LGBTQ+ patient living south of Prince William County and west of the coast.

Patients within this region are thus forced to drive several hours in order to be treated at a space guaranteed to provide LGBTQ+ specific services and have providers actively involved in ending discrimination over sexual orientation and/or gender in health-care, or even travel to another state for closer access to services. Through an intersectional lens, a fraction of LGBTQ+ community members would be able to afford to make such journeys to guarantee safe and inclusionary spaces to access healthcare. (Human Rights Campaign, 2017)

The consequences of not having an adequate number of medical facilities in Virginia that are responsive and sensitive to LGBTQ+ needs has proven devastating for LGBTQ+ patients in desperate need of care.

LGBTQ+ individuals often report discriminatory issues with their available and accessible medical facilities, as well as insurance companies, even after the Affordable Care Act pushed through numerous new legal protections against discrimination. Problems encountered frequently

include denial or delay in treatment if a patient reveals same-sex orientation, misgendering, not permitting same-sex partners to make medical decisions and even unwanted physical touching and abuse. When alternative treatments and services are inaccessible for LGBTQ+ populations, these types of harassment and discrimination impede patients, even those with serious illness and disability, from seeking medical care (Mirza, Rooney, 2018).

Despite the immense progress made in recent decades to legally protect LGBTQ+ patients against discriminatory practices by doctors, insurers, and facilities, new forms of conservative legislation threaten the expansion of protections nationwide. In 2016, several religious organizations and eight states challenged the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services by stating that the 1557 rule for nondiscrimination protections forces doctors to utilize treatments that oppose their personal religious ideologies.

As of last August, it was reported that the anti-discrimination legislation was set to be rescinded by the HHS after the White House stated that it was under review. By enabling care providers to deny treatment and coverage on the basis of religious disagreement, many LGBTQ+ patients will dramatically see a decline in access to equal and nondiscriminatory healthcare as new facilities will see less incentives

for providing additional training for their LGBTQ+ patients' needs (Mirza & Rooney, 2018).

The inability of LGBTQ+ individuals to have guaranteed access healthcare in facilities with standards for equal protections and treatment of patients, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, leaves many without an option for treatment. Unless the sick or injured can afford to travel significant distances to other clinics and hospitals, many LGBTQ+ individuals choose to forego treatment altogether if having previously experienced discrimination and/or abuse by their local care providers.

Unless more facilities, both in the state of Virginia and nationwide, undergo staff training initiatives to increase the quality and spectrum of their service to LGBTQ+ patients, the fight will continue forward for equal access to medical care.

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Gay at Gillie's

by Julia Simpson

"She saw the sign on the door and she signed it for us, we've got it right up there, it's the top flyer on that pole," said Anna Rose, one of the managers at Gillie's Restaurant, who was kindly taking time out of her shift to speak with me. Turning in her chair, she smiled as she pointed at a colorful advertisement for the Spring 2018 Gay at Gillie's event that had been signed by Danica Roem several months prior, after enjoying a dinner at the restaurant.

Roem is the first openly transgender individual to be elected to Virginia's General Assembly, and Rose was clearly quite proud to have her signature displayed prominently in Gillie's. Once every semester, between the hours of 10pm-1am, Gillie's Restaurant on College Avenue transforms into a queer dance bar. According to Rose, the tradition has been going

strong for at least five years, and it has become a highly anticipated event for the resident queer community, as well as for Virginia Tech and Blacksburg at large.

"I just think it's really really important that the kids at Tech know that there's... a mom-and-pop-owned local business... here in tiny little southwest Virginia, that is very accepting and very supportive, and your ally," said Rose.

The Gay at Gillie's evenings are coordinated primarily, though not exclusively, by HokiePride at Virginia Tech, and according to Rose and Phoebe Gregg - the current Outreach Chair for HokiePride - putting the event together is fairly straightforward. The fall event is typically held towards the close of October, a



queer community, as I listened to Gregg, I was struck by the meaning of her words. Here in this country, at this moment in time, being out and accepted in public shouldn't be so novel an experience; yet, for many, this is the reality. I asked Rose what it meant to Gillie's to host the event, and her answer was immediate and impassioned.

"We're here to provide a safe, welcoming atmosphere," she said. "We just wanna make sure that the community and you guys know where we stand politically. That's really important to us, especially right now."

fit exclamation mark to punctuate the culmination of National Pride Month. After the date is selected by HokiePride and Gillie's, all that's needed is to recruit a DJ and to advertise. According to Rose and Gregg, the latter is the most challenging of the requirements, and both HokiePride and Gillie's pitch in to get the word out.

"What is Gay at Gillie's?" Gregg mused as I interviewed her, eyes flicking over the various Pride flags adorning the surrounding walls of the LGBTQ+ Resource Center in Squires. "A community event," she said after collecting her thoughts. "A great social opportunity for our community. For one night, Gillie's is... a place where we can go and be queer, and out and accepted in public."

While it was wonderful to hear what Gay at Gillie's meant to the

Especially right now. In today's political climate, the reasoning behind Rose's context needs no explanation, so I'm not going to provide one. Instead I'll raise this notion: doesn't an event decorated in rainbow lights, dedicated to celebrating the diverse queer community at Virginia Tech sound like precisely what's needed, especially right now?

Unfortunately, Gay at Gillie's cannot be the cure for pervasive societal homophobia. However, it is a one-night extravaganza of music and dancing and unabashed, joyous revelry in queer identity that is well worth its recurring presence on Blacksburg's calendar.



Acing it:

Navigating life with an Asexual/Aromantic identity

by Evan Robohm

If you haven't heard about asexuals or aromantics, I'm not surprised. While these identities are included in the LG-BTQIA+ acronym, they are some of the least visible identities in our community. You may commonly find asexual/ aromantic (ace/aro) folk in the LGBTQ-IA+ community, but there are straight ace/aro people too, as the terms pertain to sexual or romantic attraction in general; not to whom one is attracted.

Navigating life with one or multiple of the identities under the ace/aro spectrums brings unique challenges, but afford us with a unique perspective. Through reading this article, you will gain a better understanding about what

asexual and aromantic identities are and how we exist in this world, supported by interviews of community members. In short, asexual describes people who don't have any sexual attraction toward others. That doesn't mean they are sex-repulsed, just not attracted to others (libido, meanwhile, is a separate concept that addresses sexual desire).

Similarly, aromantic people do not have any romantic attraction toward others, but again not all are romantic-repulsed. Ace and aro people can be sex- or romantic-repulsed; however having an ace/aro identity is not an automatic qualifier for this. Due to this uniqueness with asexual and aromantic identities, it is also possible to combine identities.



For example, I identify as both homo- and demi-sexual, and homoromantic. Similarly, someone could identify as asexual and heteroromantic. Now, this evokes an argument that LGBTQIA+ people are still debating: why do you need all these labels?

There are some people who claim that these so-called microidentities (aimed more at demi-, akoi-, gray-ace/aro, and the like) are created so that others can hop on the bandwagon as being marginalized. In my own view, people should be able to choose whatever and how many identities they want to identify with. Our experiences and identities are unique to each of us; no one should be policing the “right way” to feel about anything. There are many

more identities in addition to these main two. Listed below are some more identities in the ace/aro spectrums; check out the glossary at the end of the article for more specific info.

- Asexual
- Aromantic
- Gray-Asexual
- Gray-Aromantic
- Demisexual
- Demiromantic
- Akoisexual
- Akoioromantic
- Quoiromantic
- Soft romantic (soft romo)

Related terms:

- Aesthetic attraction
- Libido

To bring more perspective to navigating daily life as an ace/aro person, I interviewed some ace/aro people to get their opinions on these issues:

SYDNEY - asexual and gray-romantic

KAI - asexual (sex-repulsed) and lesbian

ME - demisexual and gay

Being ace/aro is not a defining feature of our day to day interactions nor does it affect routine decision making, but it can make some situations more difficult. Lack of awareness about these identities and a lot of misconceptions, like the ones described below, stack the deck of cards against us.

SYDNEY - Some people say that aphobia doesn't exist or the A stands for Ally.

KAI - I've [heard] a lot of people say [having] an ace/aro identity is mostly a result of either trauma, immaturity, or a symptom of something psychologically wrong

ME - I get the feeling that people think of being ace/aro as more of a "phase," saying things like "you just haven't had good sex yet." No, some people just don't enjoy sex as much or in the same way as you do, surprise!

In addition to these misconceptions, there's also the issue of being Othered by the LGBTQ+ community (intentional or not). Many identities, particularly lesbians and gay men, are hypersexualized both by people inside and outside our community.

The notion of hypersexualizing refers to people being treated first as sexual objects before other attributes. It also includes imposing false or inaccurate sexualities

on people. In our society, this is primarily perpetrated through the media (TV shows, movies, advertising, etc).

However, as consumers of this media, our society has grown to apply these concepts to our real lives. This is a difficult issue to deal with, as ace/aro people don't view life through this hypersexual lens, while non- ace/aro people don't really know how to view life without looking through this lens. This sexualization also applies to LG-BTQIA+ identities too:

KAI - When interacting online and consuming media, lesbians are still sexualized, both by people outside the [LGBTQ+] community and [by] lesbians themselves. [Lesbians also use this, turning it into sex-positivity] as a way to reclaim our pride. I usually ignore these things, because it's not harming me and it's kind of a way to feel included in my community.

ME - The sexualization in the gay male community has left me frequently feeling left out of my own community. When people frequently meet each other through and use hookup apps like Grindr, it's hard to relate. As you may have guessed, dating can be interesting for us ace/aro folk.

Today's hookup culture is difficult for us to navigate and understand. That, coupled with misconceptions and ignorance, can just be a lot. As such, many of us have additional

feelings to unpack when it comes to relationships in general. They may conflict with existing identities, or are just plain old confusing.

SYDNEY - My romantic and platonic feelings are so close together that I'm honestly very unsure about whether or not my feelings of affection are platonic or romantic.

KAI - In future dating scenarios, I honestly don't know if I would bring up [being asexual with] datemates because people don't usually ask how you identify ... and I don't want to make my identity seem like a big deal if it's not going to be.

All in all, ace/aro identities only make us more unique, despite the difficulties they may cause.

Moving forward, here are a few final thoughts to keep in mind! When asked what these interviewees would like people to know about being ace/aro, here is what they said:

SYDNEY - We are not any less capable of love.

KAI - Everyone is different, and while reading resources about the ace/aro spectrum can help you understand in broad terms, asking questions is the best way to get to know any individual.

ME - Your feelings, desires, attractions, or lack thereof are completely valid. Live your best life no matter what other people tell you.

**WE ARE NOT ANY
LESS CAPABLE OF LOVE.**

-SYDNEY

GLOSSARY

AESTHETIC ATTRACTION

Finding desirable features in another person. "Look but not touch." Thinking, "Wow, that person is really cute, I could stare at them all day long." Of course, this can be used in any combination with any sexual/romantic identity.

AKOIROMANTIC

Someone who feels romantic attraction at first but has their feelings fade as the relationship progresses.

AKOISEXUAL

Someone who feels sexual attraction at first, but has their feelings fade if reciprocated. Alternatively, someone who does not want their feelings reciprocated in sexual situations.

AROMANTIC

Feeling no romantic attraction for other people. Not all aromantics are romantic-repulsed however.

ASEXUAL

Feeling no sexual attraction for other people. Not all asexuals are sex-repulsed however.

DEMISEXUAL/ROMANTIC

Only feeling sexual/romantic attraction after some connection has been made with other people. The type or depth of connection is different for everyone and can also change between different situations.

GRAY-ASEXUAL/AROMANTIC (GRAY-ACE/ARO)

Feeling romantic or sexual attraction rarely, weakly, following no regular pattern, or confusingly.

LIBIDO

Your sex drive/sexual desire. This is separate from sexual attraction, so it is possible for an asexual person to have a high libido.

SOFT ROMANTIC (SOFT ROMO)

Someone who prefers low-level romantic and/or platonic relationships. This means that they might not want to express affection toward others or have others express affection toward them.

QUIIROMANTIC

Someone who does not identify with traditional romance, romantic attraction, and/or romantic orientation. Also more of a general term for those who do not fall within existing identities, or are not sure where they fit in.

WHICH QUEER FIGURE IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY ARE YOU?

1. YOU'D DESCRIBE YOUR GENDER PRESENTATION AS...

- a) Masculine.
- b) Feminine.
- c) Androgynous.
- d) Masculine, feminine, in-between - depends on my mood.

2. YOU'D RATHER SPEND YOUR FREE TIME...

- a) Listening to and playing music.
- b) Writing poetry.
- c) Swimming.
- d) Acting.

3. YOUR FAVORITE TIME OF YEAR IS...

- a) Summer.
- b) Fall.
- c) Spring.
- d) Winter.

4. IF YOU COULD ONLY BRING ONE THING WITH YOU ON A DESERT ISLAND, YOU'D BRING...

- a) Your favorite instrument.
- b) A good book.
- c) Your best swimsuit.
- d) Disney's Mulan.

ANSWERS

IF YOU MOSTLY ANSWERED A'S, YOU'RE APOLLO!

Apollo is the ancient Greek god of sunlight, music, knowledge, and poetry. He also had quite a few lovers - male and female. The most well known is his male lover, Hyacinth, who Apollo turned into the Hyacinth flower after his death. Out of anyone in Greek myth, Apollo is (arguably) the most explicitly queer.

IF YOU MOSTLY ANSWERED B'S, YOU'RE SAPPHO!

Sappho may not be a mythological figure - she was definitely a real woman who lived 630-570 BC - but she's one of the most well-known figures of ancient antiquity in the LGBT+ community. Thanks to her romantic poetry towards women, she's an icon of sapphic women (a term coming from her own name) everywhere.

IF YOU MOSTLY ANSWERED C'S, YOU'RE HERMAPHRODITUS!

"Hermaphrodite" is an offensive term, but before his name was used to describe intersex people, Hermaphroditus was a figure in Greek mythology. Originating from a cult to Aphroditus - a male version of Aphrodite - he was a demigod raised by water nymphs. One fell in love with him, prayed that they'd never part, and was answered by a god fusing them together into an intersex, androgynous being. While he wasn't a god, he was a highly venerated symbol of marriage.

IF YOU MOSTLY ANSWERED D'S, YOU'RE MESTRA!

Mestra's story is an interesting one. She was a lover of Poseidon, god of the sea, who - as a gift to his beloved - gave her the ability to shapeshift. Her father, however, exploited this and sold her to various suitors for a price; Mestra would go, but as soon as she could, escaped back to her father by turning into various animals. She did eventually marry for real, so there's a happy ending in there. While her story only involves turning into animals, she could conceivably change her appearance to become more masculine or feminine at will - making her a possible icon for nonbinary folk today.



LGBTQ+ in Cartoons, Comics, & Cinema: Steven Universe Saves the Gays

by Colie Touzel

fu-sion

/ • fyō • oZH • n/

noun

1. The process or result of joining two or more things together to form a single entity.

The art of fusion, of two things coming together to create something entirely new, helps paint a picture for those of you who haven't seen the cartoon, Steven Universe. In the cartoon, fusion helps characters illustrate what it means to be human or, in the case of this show, what it means to be

a Gem. Gems are characters who are similar to humans, but they come from outer space and have superpowers. Watching the five seasons of Steven Universe has transformed my life--much like the characters in the show transform each other emotionally and physically.

I've never watched a cartoon with such complex characters that can still appeal to adults and children alike. I especially can't get enough of the songs that creator/artist/songwriter/singer, Rebecca Sugar, writes for the show.

There are so many clever art designs and amazing puns that make the show stylistically and creatively wonderful. But my favorite parts have to do with the connections of the characters and how they continue to grow and learn from each other. I obviously urge you to watch *Steven Universe* for a multitude of reasons, but for the purpose of this article, I want to focus on why fusion is so important, and so meaningful for the queer world.

Gems can fuse together to create one stronger version of themselves and, thus, form a new character. In Gem society, only the same types of Gems are allowed to fuse together. Therefore, having two different Gems fuse together disrupts their societal norms. When viewers first discover that one character, Garnet, is a fusion of two different types of Gems, it's extremely shocking because Garnet has always just been seen as one character and not a fusion.

Therefore, when Garnet unfuses for the first time and reveals that she is actually two Gems, Ruby and Sapphire, they are both ridiculed and discriminated against by a villainous Gem named Jasper. Jasper doesn't understand why two different Gems would want to stay fused all the

time, so she separates Ruby and Sapphire in jail-type cells to keep them from fusing into Garnet. Alone for the first time in years, Ruby and Sapphire don't know what to do, but then Steven breaks them out of their cells and they fuse into Garnet again. Garnet sings this super awesome song called, "Stronger than You" while she fights Jasper, singing:

"Go ahead and try and hit me if you're able/Can't you see that my relationship is stable?/I know you think I'm not something you're afraid of/Cause you think that you've seen what I'm made of/Well I am even more than the two of them/Everything they care about is what I am/I am their fury/I am their patience/I am a conversation/I am made of love."

Garnet makes me feel like everything is right with the world. Her existence acknowledges the fact that being queer and being someone who doesn't fit the norms, doesn't have to conform and can speak out for what she wants and who she is.

She is a "conversation" because she represents everyone who needs a voice. The reason Garnet stays fused all



the time is because Ruby and Sapphire decided long ago when they first accidentally fused that they feel 'right' when they are together. Other Gems will sometimes fuse together in order to fight a battle because they are stronger as a fusion, but Garnet stays fused for love.

In the most recent season, Garnet unfuses because of the biggest reveal of the show yet (don't worry, I'm not spoiling it). Sapphire deals with her pain by running off, not understanding the news, leaving Ruby alone and confused. Ruby tries to come to terms with life as "a solitary stone" as she sings a lonesome cowboy-bluesy song, "Ruby Rider." When they both independently realize they would rather be together, Ruby decides to ask Sapphire to marry her.

The wedding episode, along with its showcase song, "For just one day let's only think

about (Love)," is one of my favorites. Most importantly, Ruby and Sapphire's marriage is the first visual representation of queer marriage in a mainstream cartoon as well as the first time that a cartoon has aired same-sex characters kissing!

As a queer person, and as a person in general, I can't recommend this show enough. It is monumental for the queer community, it is empowering for people of all ages, and I promise the variety of the soundtrack will have you singing and dancing along in no time.

Steven Universe helps us understand that fusion and Garnet and all of us are made of love.

DENIM DAY, 1979

A Watershed Event for Gay Rights at Virginia Tech

By Amy Splitt

In the late 1970s there was virtually no public LGBTQ+ community at VT. Although a Gay Student Alliance (GSA) existed, it was primarily social, very much underground, and according to Steve Noll (VT '76), former GSA Co-President, it was "just" a place for men to hook up. In fall of 1978, Nancy Kelly (VT '80), the first Lesbian Co-President of the GSA, rebooted the organization to include women as well as men, and had a political focus rather than just a social outlet.

However, "It was a very dangerous time for us," says Kelly, "...I had no role models [and] there was no visible Lesbian presence anywhere." She announced, "We need to make this a topic: we are in the shadows, we are suffering, we need to have rights! We need to be seen." Noll says, "Those meetings were more interesting than the ones that were just the guys."

Instead, it was a place to organize.

Kelly says, "We decided to have a Gay Awareness Week. At the time, we were trying not to be called Lezzies, Homos, and Queers, so the words I use are my language from the time [though] it's now LGBTQ+. Then it was "Gay." In mid-January, 1979, the GSA sponsored four very public activities: a radio program hosted by Linda DeVito at WUVT-FM; a "By the Way, I'm Gay" day, when students were encouraged to come out; a panel with the Dean of Students for Arts and Sciences; and Denim Day, inspired by the more active Gay group at Old Dominion University -- "wear denim if you support gay rights."

Denim. "What's the big deal?" Kelly thought.

She ran a small announcement in the Collegiate Times, under editor Sherry Woods. The GSA flyered the entire campus. Because Gay men were at risk of physical violence, but Lesbians simply faced

verbal outbursts, the women did the bulk of the flyering. The campus completely erupted, as well as the Town. "People lost their minds. Not in support!" says Kelly. "There were no allies."

The idea that jeans were suddenly supposed to indicate support for Gay people became a flashpoint of local outrage. "The merchants in the stores remarked that more people had come in to buy dress clothing than ever before."

On the first Denim Day, all of 20 students wore jeans. There were countermovements by Campus Crusade for Christ -- members promised to wear toothbrushes around their necks (while wearing jeans) to show that they were not in favor of Gay rights. One fraternity sported denim skirts in mockery, which amused GSA members because homophobes had been driven to cross-dressing in order to protest Gay rights.

"We knew we were hated, but we did it anyway, and we were powerful."

The event made the Roanoke Times. The GSA were called into Burruss Hall before the Dean, who reported that Governor Dalton was outraged, and that the GSA had embarrassed the State. The club was driven off campus, but they regained ground the following fall. "People did not support Gay rights, but they certainly became aware.

It was the first time we really stood up and started a conversation." The GSA had no faculty advisors, because they would have lost their jobs. Kelly had to stop living on campus. A nearby televangelist had someone sent from the Roanoke Times to spy on them, but the journalist ended up coming forward, personally apologizing to the students, and going public with a rebuttal to the outrage against the club, because there was in fact nothing scandalous to report.

Along with the negative backlash, the week's events led to more students coming out. Parents of LG-BTQ+ high school students quietly approached members of the club asking for advice. As for the club members, "We became a chosen family... and we had a ton of fun!" says Kelly. The GSA made a remarkable change on campus and in the surrounding communities. However, Kelly acknowledges the need for continued progress and community participation. Kelly says, "The reality now is that hate is coming back. It has to be confronted. ...The freedoms we have now are truly unimaginable. But we all have to be vigilant. When you are vigilant, all things are possible."

The 40th Anniversary Denim Day event were held April 4th and 5th, sponsored by the LGBTQ+ Alliance. For more info, contact Luis Garay at lhgaray@vt.edu or head to ccc.vt.edu/denimday.

Our Shared Queer History

by Taylor Mosier

When historical figures are discussed, it is often done in reverence of their life accomplishments. Whether deliberately or inadvertently, their queerness is often disregarded – often through the dismissal, simplification, or summation of their queerness to an alternative lifestyle.

To disregard individual queerness is a disservice as their accomplishments do not exist independently of their queerness, but in tandem. Recognizing this, we celebrate here a number queer individuals who have significantly and admirably contributed to our collective culture and society.



BAYARD RUSTIN

Bayard Rustin was the chief organizer of The March on Washington – where over 250,000 people attended one of the largest political rallies in history and listened to Martin Luther King Jr’s infamous I Have a Dream Speech. Due to attempts to diminish the civil rights movement through attacks on his sexuality, Bayard refused to take a prominent public role; rather, he advised civil rights leaders from behind the scenes to avoid distractions from opponents claims that he was a “pervert” or suffering from “immoral influence.” He went

on to become a public advocate for LGBTQ causes in the 1980s and his long-time partner, Walter Naegle, accepted the Presidential Medal of Freedom in his honor from President Obama.

BARBARA GITTINGS

Occasionally referred to as the “mother of the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement”, Barbara founded the first U.S. lesbian organization, Daughters of the Bilitis; took part in the initial gay rights pickets at the White House in response to employment discrimination from the federal government; advocated for LGBTQ+ books in libraries through leading the American Library Association’s Gay Task Force; and spearheaded the charge for the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality as a mental disorder. Barbara described her activism as a mission to lift a “shroud of invisibility” that allowed homosexuality to be defined in terms of disease, crime, and illness. Wishing to contribute to the proliferation of positive information, she championed LGBTQ+ reading materials. When asked what her chapter in gay history would be, she responded: “Well, gay and smiling would be part of it.”



NANCY CÁRDENAS

Nancy Cardenas became one of – if not the – first Mexican women to become an openly gay public figure. Prior to her public declaration, Nancy attended the National Autonomous University of Mexico where she earned an undergraduate and doctoral degree in dramatic arts, then proceeded to study film and theater at Yale, and Polish literature and language in Lodz, Poland. After her travels, she returned to Mexico, partook in a variety of content production, and catalyzed gay politics. Discussing and

proclaiming her own sexuality on the nationally televised 24 Horas in 1973, she established herself as a prominent public lesbian in the Mexican community. The following year, she founded the first gay organization in Mexico, El Frente de Liberación Homosexual [Gay Liberation Front], and in 1978 she lead Mexico’s first Pride march. From there, Nancy continued her work as a playwright and director, through which she strived to increase the visibility of lesbians by both authoring and producing overtly lesbian plays. She remained active in LGBTQ+ causes before dying from breast cancer in 1994.

LANA & LILLY WACHOWSKI

Lana and Lilly Wachowski may be more likely to be discovered in a modern film course, but these two sisters have made modern history – Lana has been credited as the first major Hollywood director to come out as transgender and received the 2012 Human Rights Campaign’s Visibility Award.

Her sister, Lilly, publicly came out in 2016 after stating: “Being transgender, my whole life I’ve hid. So, I’m going against every instinct, every fiber in my being now, being here and talking about my transness, but I have to. I have to because people are dying.” The sisters have directed, written, and produced a variety of iconic and award-winning films & tv shows such as *The Matrix Trilogy*, *V for Vendetta*, *Cloud Atlas*, and *Sense 8*, and they continue to be active in content production.

Such a short summation in no way encompasses LGBTQ+ figures’ contributions to both conventional and LGBTQ+ history; there are a wealth of life-changing figures to be found throughout history. Some are above, some are below.

ALAN TURING

Contributed a near unquantifiable amount to WWII; saved an estimation of at least 14 million lives and shortened the war by potential years by cracking the Enigma cryptography machine. Known as the father of artificial intelligence and was persecuted for his homosexuality by the British government.

BILLIE HOLIDAY

Prolific openly bisexual jazz singer from the 1930s-1950s who inspired an entire genre. Inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame and won 20+ posthumous Grammy Awards.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Chaired the drafting community for the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, carried through a political marriage with Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and had a long-standing relationship with Laura Hickok.

FRANK KAMENY

Led the first U.S. civil rights claim based on sexual orientation after being dismissed from the U.S. Army due to his sexuality; went on to become a leader in the gay rights movement and worked with Barbara Gittings in lobbying for the removal of homosexuality as a mental disorder.

SALLY RIDE

First American woman in space and the only known LGBTQ+ person to ever leave the stratosphere.

SIMON NKOLI

Formed the first black gay organization in Africa; organized the first Pride parade in South Africa, then met with President Nelson Mandela and campaigned for LGBTQ discrimination protection in the South African Bill of Rights.

TAMMY BALDWIN

First openly gay candidate to be elected to the U.S. Senate.

Lavender Linguistics & the Meaning of Queer

by Rachel Hargrave

For the Queer community, finding the proper way to describe and define our individual identities is a personal journey that can take years. In the past four years, I have gone from describing myself as “aggressively straight” to “bisexual” to “genderfluid bisexual femme.” Finding the right words to describe my identity has been a trial and error process as I’ve learned more about myself and the Queer community as a whole.

However, while “genderfluid bisexual femme” may be the most specifically accurate way to describe myself, there are plenty of times when I don’t want to get into that much detail. Jane Doe in my

department wondering why I use they/them pronouns doesn’t need to know every specific of my identity; that’s something I choose to share with those I care most about. I frequently find myself describing myself as “queer,” a term I have come to love over the past two years. Despite its contentious history, I value its new connotations, as well as the power of reclaiming the word as my own. “Queer” has a long and varied history, transforming from a proudly claimed identity to a slur and back to a proudly reclaimed identity. Let’s take a little journey through the discourse!

If we go all the way back, there are two competing theories for the origins of the word itself. Some linguists believe that it’s a Proto-Indo-European word that became

German's word "queer", meaning oblique, and picked up the connotation of meaning strange, odd, and eccentric. Other linguists believe that it stems from a Middle Irish word, "cuair", an adjective that means bent or a noun meaning "twisted thing." Either way, it's interesting that both origins place queer as a word that meant something distinctly "not straight". Historically, queer has often been used with negative connotations to mean strange and odd. It has also meant to spoil or ruin, i.e. "queering the deal," which meant to ruin a deal.

The first time queer was seen explicitly tied to sexuality was when John Sholto Douglas, the 9th Marquess of Queensberry in Scotland, referred to his deceased son's possible male lover as a "queer snob" in a letter to his other son. In an interesting twist of fate, the second son was a penpal of Oscar Wilde. This was the beginning of the word's use as a slur, although it's not the only historical usage of the term queer.

In George Chauncey's *Gay New York*, Chauncey outlines the way the LGBTQ community defined itself, including the many linguistic nuances of terms like gay, fairy, and queer. Chauncey writes that queer was a term that implied sexual interest in men, but lacked the effeminate gendered connotations of fairy. Queer was "essentially synon-

ymous with homosexual...", but was used by those who "were repelled by the style of the fairy and his loss of manly status" (Chauncey).

Additionally, instead of referring to their counterparts as heterosexual, they referred to them as "normals". While this may not perfectly parallel the way we use queer today, it is interesting that it's still a term intricately tied to gender expression, even as a rejection of a particular gender expression. However, as gay emerged as a more popular term, queer became more of a derogatory term once again.

The younger generation "rejected queer as a pejorative name others had given them, which highlighted their difference from other men" (Chauncey). We can see echoes of this mentality in those who dislike queer because they feel that it's too othering of a term. In less than a quarter century, however, the usage of queer completely shifted. Now, we use queer to describe our academic theories, we use it to describe our identities and our bodies, we use it to describe our love, our bands, and our community as a whole.

But how did we get there? The simple answer is: reclamation. During the AIDS crisis, militant gay activists didn't care that the term wasn't polite; in fact, that's why they chose to be called "Queer Nation." The word had shock value, took the power from the homophobes, and challenged the traditional "gay and

lesbian" gendered sexuality binary of the era. They wanted to be rough, and rebellious, and radically inclusive. While they may have been the first group to reclaim the term publically, they were far from the last, and each subsequent reclamation, such as the "Queers Read This" flier and the coining of punk-offshoot "queercore", imbued the term with their radical, anti-establishment, and non-traditional connotations. By the early 2000s, we had "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" and "Queer as Folk" were on TV, normalizing the term with its new definitions. We moved into a new linguistic era for the word.

In its current form, queer is used often as an umbrella term to encompass a wide range of both non-heterosexual identities as well as non-cisgender identities. It offers people a term that describes both their gender and sexuality together, as well as one that doesn't require them to list of a variety of terms to describe every independent aspect of their identity.

Some people embrace the still lingering connotations of strange or weird with enthusiasm, while others aren't comfortable identifying with it given its painful past. In an interesting callback to its usage in the early 1900s as outlined

by Chauncey, many love the fact that queer is a term that sets them apart from normalcy, a parallel to the queer/normal binary mentioned in Gay New York. Others aren't comfortable with the fact that it includes non-cisgender identities within it, given the transphobia that exists in the LGBTQ community. While the political radicalism ties of the words recent origins may be inspiring and empowering to some, others dislike the rebellious nature of the word, viewing it as more othering than they view themselves as.

Last year, The Interloper rewrote our mission statement. We spent hours pouring over each word that we chose, debating connotations and denotations, so we could craft a statement that truly represented the way we view the magazine and our goals. We wanted it to be both a statement to the public about who we are, as well as a reminder to ourselves of what we should always strive to be. During that process, we discussed what it meant to call ourselves an LGBTQ magazine versus a queer magazine.

In the end, we intentionally chose to use queer. We see it as a political statement, an active choice to acknowledge our power to be a radical and rebellious voice for our community. We also see it as a way to embrace both sexuality and gender, and acknowledge the complex ways the two identities

intertwine. For me personally, the choice to describe myself as queer embraces the fact that my very existence is rebellion, that my body and my love is inherently radical in our hetero and cisnormative society. It's also a way for me to embrace the fluidity that is often inherent in our community.

For me, being queer is to embrace change, to accept fluidity, to encourage a constant seeking of better self-understanding as our identities grow and shift and change. Being gender fluid, I am frequently hyper aware of my own potential for change, as my gender identity flows from masc to femme to andro throughout my week.

Queer, as an umbrella term, unites us as a community better than a plus at the end of an acronym. As an identifier, queer allows for greyness, for fluidity within our definitions of ourselves and others. It can represent non-conformity, rebellion, the radical nature of our very existence. The term queer has grown and shifted in so many ways since its origin; so have we.

Our community continues to learn more about our identities, to be more accepting of fluidity and change. Just like we still have work to do with reclaiming the word queer, we as a community still

have work to do in learning how to better accept and support all members of our community. Perhaps queer is exactly the word we need as we continue that journey of growth.

FURTHER READING:

- <https://www.autostraddle.com/more-than-words-queer-part-1-the-early-years-153356/>
- <https://www.autostraddle.com/more-than-words-queer-part-2-growing-pains-155616/>
- <https://www.out.com/out-exclusives/2016/8/17/lavender-linguistics-queer-way-speak>
- <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/32213/1/tracing-the-history-of-the-word-queer>
- <https://eportfolios.macaulay.cuny.edu/scott12sem2courseblog/files/2012/05/George-Chauncey-Gay-New-York-intro.pdf>

Insomnia

by Rachel Kiser

My fingers, once hibernating
in your spinal trenches,

now shiver and wait
to find your tracks in the snow.

When you purred upon my pink pillow
and my fan clicked and

circulated like a lullaby with
no sheep, I found soporific solace

in the crevices your back created,
how my tips wrinkled the skin and

lifted the runty hairs that frizzled away from
your freckles, how my digits like a

pothole hiccuped at the touch of an unknown mole,
how the white of my nails scanned the surroundings

the whites of my eyes carelessly overlooked.
That's what I find my fingers imagining

when they dreamingly swirl the surface of
my notebook or scribble words

to replicate how your back curves when you rolled out
from the moist sheets. It's the thing I find myself missing

the most at night, as my pointer finger rounds around
an unexplored back, feeling lost as it tries to find

where the curve of my cuticle once burrowed at night
and it reminds me that my fingers aren't

the only thing that feel
alone.



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