

On “Going Into” Myself, Janelle Monáe, and Learning to Be a “Free-ass Motherf*cker”

By Marya Mtshali

Some may consider me a “late-in-life bisexual” (although I disagree that it’s ever too “late” to come out or, to paraphrase actress Niecy Nash, “go into” yourself ¹). Therefore, my life experience and education on how systems of power operate in our society resulted in me being fortunate enough to know that I would have to intentionally seek out positive and validating examples of bi+ sexualities.

When I realized I was bisexual in February of 2019, it would not be an understatement to say that Janelle Monáe’s album, *Dirty Computer*, became my soundtrack for most of the year. If I’m honest, I wasn’t really into Monáe’s music prior to this, but I always admired their fashion sense (those suits!) and their outspoken political views. However, after doing multiple searches for songs about bi+ sexuality, Monáe’s “Make Me Feel” kept popping up, so I felt like I should at least give it a try... and I did not regret it.

In the music video for the song, Monáe, accompanied by “bicon” Tessa Thompson, is enamored with Thompson and a man they meet at the club that the video is set in. One of my favorite scenes is when Monáe, who identifies as pansexual, dances back and forth between their two love/sexual interests while awash in the bisexual colors of blue, purple, and pink. Ultimately, they all come together, signifying that Monáe doesn’t have to limit their attraction to a single gender.

Another aspect of Monáe’s bi/pansexual representation that was important to me is how central Blackness is not just in this video but in their “emotion picture” for the album *Dirty Computer*. (If you haven’t seen it, I HIGHLY recommend watching it in its beautiful queer entirety on YouTube.) In a world that often attempts to render Black queer people as invisible or, within Black communities, to argue that Blackness and queerness are antithetical to one another, this is a subtle yet powerful move on Monáe’s part. For these reasons, seeing images of Black bi+ people specifically was necessary for me and gave me much needed sustenance.

Towards the end of the *Dirty Computer* “emotion picture,” there is a scene on a beach where Monáe, Thompson, and



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the anonymous guy from the bar are on the beach at sunset, expressing their love and appreciation for each other in tender embraces and laughter while an instrumental version of Monáe’s song “Don’t Judge Me” plays in the background. There is so much happening in this brief simple scene: Black joy, tenderness and love; polyamory; bisexuality; the primacy of connecting with other humans and with nature. In the lyrical version of the song, Monáe speaks to being authentic to themselves despite society’s prohibitions: “Let’s reintroduce ourselves / From a free point of view / If I’m gon’ sin, it’s with you / Tattoo your love on my heart / Let the rumors be true.” This is a bold and beautiful expression from Monáe, a femme person operating in a world that associates Black femininity with wantonness and polyamory, and bisexuality with promiscuity. Monáe has continued to try to live in their authenticity by recently coming out as non-binary. In an interview with *The Los Angeles Times*, Monáe said “My pronouns are free-ass motherf*cker and they/them, her/she.” I luxuriate in the fact that I am seeing more and more people—especially people of color—living their lives openly as queer people. In my attempt to live as a “free-ass motherf*cker” like Monáe, these people serve as support and reminders to people like me that bi+ people have always been here and fight to always continue to be.

Marya Mtshali (she/her) is a sociologist and postdoctoral researcher at the Harvard Kennedy School. Originally from South Carolina, she now resides in Boston with her dog Tesla and her two cats,



1 Nash describes that in falling in love with her wife, Jessica Betts, she didn’t “come out” but went into herself to find out who she really was. In other words, it was not that she was hiding her queerness, but in fact discovered that it was there within her. This is a sentiment that deeply speaks to my own experience as well.

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

The theme of this issue is "Pop Culture." We received submissions covering a wide range of related topics, reflecting the expansive terrain covered by this theme: music, television and streaming shows, zines, films and actors, books, social media, gaming, comics, and podcasts. Inside this issue, you will also find beautiful artwork, poetry, our Research Corner, and an interview with the organizers of Frente Bissexual Brasileira.

And now a bit of "housekeeping":

We don't ask often, but we're asking today: please consider supporting our work. Info about how to donate is on our website, at BiWomenQuarterly.com. If you donate during the month of June, please consider doing so via Give Out Day. We are participating for the first time in this annual drive, and it would be helpful to bring in some donations. People browsing the site are more likely to donate to an organization when they see that others support it—your support is a form of endorsement.

We are always looking for folks interested in writing for us, submitting visual artwork, and/or proofreading. The theme of the next issue is "Parenting While Bi+." Do you have something to say on this subject? Message me at BiWomenEditor@gmail.com to be added to my private lists of content contributors and proofers.

And finally, it's noteworthy that we are about to begin our 41st year of continuous publication. I have been involved since our start in 1983 and I have served as editor since 2009. I can attest that we are still alive and thriving because of a dedicated crew of volunteers and interns, and because of readers like you.

Thank you,
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Upcoming in *Bi Women Quarterly* Call for submissions

Fall 2022: Parenting While Bi+

Tell us about your experiences with parenting and/or the journey toward parenting. How has your bi+ identity shaped these experiences? What challenges and hopes do you have, and how have bi+ communities mattered in this part of your life? Submissions due by **August 1, 2022**.

Winter 2023: Bodily Autonomy, Privacy, & Feminism

With the impending repeal of Roe v. Wade, and the devastating loss of constitutional rights to bodily autonomy and privacy, we invite you to share your reflections both specifically and tangentially connected to this event. What has Roe v. Wade meant to you? What are your thoughts as an international observer? And what role does feminism play in your life as a bi+ person? Share your anger, sadness, hope for the future, or anything else coming up for you. Submissions due by **November 1, 2022**.

Submission guidelines are online at biwomenquarterly.com. Send your submissions and suggestions for future themes to biwomeneditor@gmail.com.

Note: If you do not want your full name published, or wish to use a pseudonym, just let us know.

We are an all-volunteer organization (though we do pay our interns!). Want to proofread, edit submissions, host one of our monthly brunches, help us with social media, fundraising, our Etsy shop, or our website? If you're a student, consider an internship. If you're interested in helping out, please contact Robyn: (biwomeneditor@gmail.com).

Bi Women Quarterly has been in continuous publication since 1983. It began as a project of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network (BBWN), a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women and nonbinary folks together for support and validation. Through support, education, social groups, and the production of *Bi Women Quarterly*, we seek for bisexuals and those with other non-binary sexualities full acceptance within LGBTQ+ communities and in society generally. More broadly, we seek the liberation of people of ALL genders, ALL sexual orientations, and ALL racial and ethnic identities.

Around the World: Frente Bissexual Brasileira, Brazil

This conversation between Robyn Ochs and members of Frente Bissexual Brasileira was conducted in May 2022.

You are leaders of Frente Bissexual Brasileira, which appears to be doing quite a lot. Please tell us about your organization.

The Frente Bissexual Brasileira (Brazilian Bisexual Front) is a collaborative national network made up of collectives and activists focused on the articulation of a Brazilian bisexual movement. It was created at a virtual meeting of bisexual collectives and independent activists from different regions of the country held on June 28, 2020, to celebrate International LGBT Pride Day. This event was promoted by COMBI, a collective of bisexual woman and nonbinary people from Santa Catarina, a state in the south of Brazil.

Frente Bissexual Brasileira aims to strengthen and disseminate the bisexual and monodissident (people who are physically and/or emotionally attracted to more than one gender) agenda throughout the country. It facilitates joint bisexual activism and communication about bisexual activist efforts taking place at the local and regional level throughout Brazil.

Currently, the Frente Bissexual Brasileira is composed of the following collectives: Bi-Sides (SP), Bisibilidade (RJ), Coletivo Amora (RS), Coletivo BIL (MG), Combi (SC), Frente Bi de BH (MG), Frente Bi (PI), Grupo de Mulheres Lésbicas e Bissexuais Maria Quitéria (PB), MovBi (PB), Vale PCD (PE), and dozens of independent activists.

Since September 2021, we have been part of the National LGBTI Popular Council, a civil society initiative that currently brings together 25 national organizations that work to defend the rights of the LGBTI+ population. We are present on the social networks Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube: linktr.ee/frentebissexualbrasileira. We also have a website that documents some of our work and other relevant information.

What is the legal and cultural situation for LGBTQ+ people in Brazil?

It's a complex situation here in Brazil, as we don't have any legislation that prohibits being LGBTQ+, yet LGBTphobia is a structural part of our current society. Our country has the highest murder rate of trans people in the world and the highest murder rate of LGBTQ+ people in the Americas. These murder rates are outrageous and demonstrate the seriousness of LGBTphobia as a social

policy. In 2021, we had at least 140 murders of trans people, 135 of which were travestis (a Latin American trans identity) and transgender women (ANTRA, 2022). According to data from the Unified Health System (SUS), released in 2020, every hour another person is assaulted in Brazil due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Despite our constitution stating that all people are equal and cannot be discriminated against, there are few provisions that protect our community. However, the LGBTQ+ community has had some judicial victories such as the recognition of the right to equal marriage and changes allowing trans people to change their name and gender in the civil registry, allowing LGBTphobic acts to be prosecuted under anti-racism law until specific LGBTQ+ protections are passed, and eliminating the restrictions against bisexual and homosexual men donating blood to third parties. Most such decisions have taken place in the last four years.

Yet, there is a lot of resistance against bisexual, lesbian, gay, trans, and intersex people in our country.

What words are used to describe lesbian, gay, bi,— or non-heterosexual people in Brazil? Are these words equivalent to their English counterparts, or do they have a different meaning?

We have equivalent translations for lesbian, bisexual, and homosexual. The word gay is used for homosexual men. To include other multisexual identities, we use non-monosexual and the Brazilian term monodissident (*monodissidente* in Brazilian Portuguese).

There are other words used to describe non-heterosexual people in Brazil, many that were used in a derogatory way and are now being used to express our identities and power, such as *viado* and *bicha* to describe men or people perceived as men, who deviate from the cis-hetero norm, and *sapatão* to describe women or people perceived as women, who deviate from the cis-hetero norm. Those words carry various meanings and not all of the

LGBTQ+ community feels that taking over their use is a good way to reclaim our identities. There's also a history of bisexual people being excluded from using those words in discourses which tend to say bisexual people do not deviate enough from the cis-heterosexual norm to use them. But we know those



Opening program at FBB's first Festival Bi+ in 2020

words can be used to oppress bisexual people, so we also can reclaim their power.

In Brazil we also have derogatory word *Gilete* used to describe people that have relationships with men and woman, the word refers to the razor blade brand that became a synonym to the object. The expression suggests that the person “cuts to both sides,” like the razor blade. Using that word is not as common anymore, as bisexual people are tending towards a definition of bisexuality that includes nonbinary people, moving away from binarism.

Are bi folks well-integrated into Brazil's sexual minority community?

Bisexual invisibility is a reality in the LGBTI+ community. We have always been present in the community, but little is recorded in this regard, as these bi activists are not remembered as bisexual. Their identities were assimilated as homosexuals, and today LGBTI+ groups rarely specifically address bisexualities.

What specific actions has Frente Bissexual Brasileira led and participated in?

Our first public action was Festival Bi+, an online cultural festival made by bisexual people to celebrate Bi Visibility Day 2020, which we held on September 26 of that year. This gathering of bisexuals from different parts of the country further inspired us to connect our struggles, and FBB grew stronger. In addition to organizing Festival Bi+ the following year, we have also brought conversations about the diversities of bisexual people, as we consider it essential to reflect on how social oppressions operate together. Our actions to date have all been virtual due to the pandemic. We are striving for a national reach, using our social networks and our YouTube channel.

We also collaborate with other organizations to work on different fronts that include and expand beyond promoting bisexual visibility and disrupting LGBTphobic violence. Brazil has a great LGBT+ history.

Several organizations make up our work on different fronts. In 2017, for example, the exhibition Queermuseum was presented to the public for the first time, bringing together works on gender expression and identity, diversity, and difference in Brazilian art. The exhibition caused a furor due to the onslaught of conservative groups to censor artistic content and was even canceled by the museum. A great battle ensued for freedom of expression and the arts. The following year, there was a new opening of the exhibition in another state. The exhibition shows that our lives as LGBT+ people are much greater than our struggles, that our history can become a pulse of life in many spaces. We as an organization are very inspired by those kinds of actions in which we can celebrate our lives.

As activists/advocates, of which accomplishments are you particularly proud?

The daily construction of this space of acceptance and national

articulation that is the Frente Bissexual Brasileira, and which represents a true milestone in our country with regard to the fight for rights and bisexual pride, is in itself an achievement that fills us with pride.

More concretely, we can mention the construction and release of the BRAZILIAN BISEXUAL MANIFESTO, where we were able to reflect our perspective, our claims, and what the Brazilian bisexual movement protests; also the establishment of the NATIONAL DAY OF BISEXUAL PRIDE, which we have celebrated since 2021 on September 26, in reference to the first edition of Festival BI+ (held on 09/26/2020), thus celebrating a date imbued with its own meanings that dialogue with the contemporary Brazilian bisexual movement.

We are also proud of our recognition as subjects of the LGBTI+ community with our own voices and experiences. We perceive state and regional discrepancies that we need to resolve and a strengthening of the bisexual movement as a whole from this exchange. Another great victory that emerged independently, but included people involved with the FBB, was discussion of the mental health of the bi population and the professional practice of psychology, which which reverberated in the specific resolution n. 08/2022 on the work of the Federal Council of Psychology. There are many specificities involving bisexuals in mental health and this agenda has been ignored. Having managed to raise the importance of the issue and finding allies to build this resolution and make it a reality in Brazil was an achievement that does not end here. Therefore, we are also building a Free Conference on Mental Health aimed at bringing to the national stage of the National Conference on Mental Health guidelines that consider our particularities, in order to promote an antibiphobic mental health policy.

We have also been dialoguing and claiming space within the national LGBTI+ movement. In 2021 we joined the National LGBTI Popular Council, the organizing committee of the National Seminar on Lesbians and Bisexual Women (SENALESBI), we helped in the construction of the LGBTQIA+ Seminar of the National Congress, and, in partnership with researchers from inside and outside the FBB, we are building the first national survey on bisexual people in Brazil, currently in the fundraising phase.

Are you in contact with bi activists in other countries? How did you come into contact with bi+ activists, bi+ books, bi+ websites, etc. outside Brazil? Do you see a value in transnational activism? If so, what is the value?

We believe in the importance of organization and mutual strengthening between bisexual people and activists, for the achievement of rights, visibility, and acceptance. In this sense, we believe that the wider this network is, the stronger our community will be. To work towards this, we are building a mapping of networks of bisexual activists in Latin America and other countries to contact and share the BRAZILIAN BISEXUAL MANIFESTO, which is now available in Spanish

and English versions, in addition to the original Portuguese language. We have already had the opportunity to dialogue with fellow activists from Germany, through an article we wrote and which was published in Bijou (German Bisexual Journal). In addition, members usually represent FBB at Bi+ world meetings, in order to expand our international contacts. We wish for more dialogue with other bisexual people around the globe.

What else do you want people to know? Any last words?

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to be featured in *Bi Women Quarterly*!

We welcome you to follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (linktr.ee/frentebissexualbrasileira), and to learn more about us at www.frentebissexualbrasileira.org.



from a livestream called “Trans bi exist: report of resistances”

Frente Bissexual Brasileira members Bruna Klein, Ana Paula Mendes, Fernanda Coelho, Inácio Saldanha, and Fernanda Fedatto collaborated in answering my questions.

we lie at our feet with questions

By Carol E Moses



Carol E Moses is a visual artist living in Massachusetts. Moses does painting, drawing, and portrait photography/interview series. Find Carol online at carolmoses.com.

Dodgeball and Wine Labels: How Media Harmed and Helped Me on My Bi+ Journey

By Whitney Dee

Summer 2004: I'm 15, and I've just finished my first year of high school. The movie theater at the local mall has recently been remodeled, and now boasts big, reclining seats, ample legroom, and the lobby snack bar has nachos AND popcorn: by mid-aughts standards, it's the height of luxury. To celebrate surviving the school year, my aunt takes my cousin and me to dinner and then to see the movie *Dodgeball*.

If you haven't seen *Dodgeball*: Peter owns a scrappy-but-loveable everyman's gym (literally called "Average Joe's Gym") that serves a clientele of loveable misfits. The gym is struggling financially, and in order to keep it from being bought and turned into a parking lot by mega-evil gym conglomerate Globo Gym (owned by a ripped and villainous character played by Ben Stiller), Average Joe's has to win a dodgeball tournament. Among the members of this scrappy underdog team is Kate, a skinny, blonde attorney hired by Globo Gym to facilitate the purchase.

Many of the jokes in the movie are funny. Rip Torn and an early-career Jason Bateman are both supporting characters. A pre-doping-scandal Lance Armstrong makes a cameo. And who doesn't want to see someone humorously get hit in the face with a dodgeball? Who doesn't want to see the underdog take down the big guy? But, like so many mainstream comedies, especially at the time, many of the jokes in the movie are also homophobic, transphobic, fatphobic, and/or racist. But, watching it, I felt okay laughing at them because they were "edgy." Besides, my gay cousin was laughing. I was fat and I was laughing. It's probably fine, I think. Then, the end of the movie: Kate's girlfriend shows up. Kate has been the punchline of tons of "I think she's a lesbian" jokes throughout the entire film: she played college softball, she's smart, and she's not immediately romantically interested in Peter. Kate's girlfriend congratulates her on Average Joe's team winning the tournament. They kiss. "I knew she was a lesbian!", a teammate says.

Kate turns to Peter and says, "I'm not a lesbian!" Then, while still holding her girlfriend in one arm, says, "I'm bisexual!" and passionately kisses Peter.

My aunt whispers, "She's a slut!"

Oh. I thought. Okay, bisexuals are sluts. And they're not monogamous. Got it.

Despite growing up in a family, a school, and community where gays and lesbians were not only tolerated, but celebrated, I hadn't seen bi+ relationships portrayed in the media prior to seeing *Dodgeball*. Moreover, bisexuality wasn't ever taught to me or presented as an option: it was gay or straight. Both were fine and great and healthy. But the choice was binary, and you had to choose your side.

The memory of seeing this bi+ relationship portrayed as both an afterthought and as punchline, and my aunt's reaction to it, followed me through the rest of high school, through college, and into adulthood. I volunteered at Pride, I worked with the LGBT student groups, I wrote letters, I called my senators, I advocated for gay rights, but I didn't really know any bi+ people, and when I did, I still secretly thought: they're confused, they're promiscuous, they're on their way to realizing they're actually gay. People said this to me. My mom said this to me. When one of my best friends came out as bi, my mom said, "He's actually gay," and when he did later come out as gay, it was taken as evidence by my mom (and by me) that being bi+ wasn't really a thing.

By the time I started admitting to myself, in my mid-20s, that I was indeed bi+, my belief in the stigma, stereotypes, and internalized biphobia had somewhat subsided, but the *Dodgeball* scene and all the bi+ stereotypes, still slithered around in the dark corners of my psyche.

So, when I looked in the mirror, and thought "I really think I'm bi+," my brain would swiftly follow it up with, "But who cares? I don't need to come out. It's all just a spectrum anyway. Just keep dating guys and know that you could probably date another gender if you want. Just leave it at that." So, I kept telling other people that I was straight, despite knowing this wasn't true.

When I was 29, I finally felt ready to come out to other people as bi+. I think being in a loving, healthy, and supportive long-term relationship gave me a space to explore while still feeling safe. My partner supported and encouraged me in so many other aspects of my life: encouraging me to apply for a new job when I was becoming unhappy in the job I had when we met, talking me down when I had a panic attack on the way to an audio storytelling workshop and, above all, simply making me feel loved and respected. I had also started browsing resources of groups like #StillBisexual, Bi.org, and Bisexual Resource Center, and started seeing stories like my own.

When I finally came clean with myself about being bi+, I was scared but exhilarated and ultimately, relieved. I came out to my partner first. His questions were basic: "Do you still love me? Do you still want to be with me? Do you still want to be monogamous?" (Yes, yes, and yes). He then said, like always, "Okay. I love you, and I support you."

Summer 2019: A few months after coming out to my partner, I started watching the TV show *Schitt's Creek* for the first time. While I had come out to my partner, a close friend, and to my mom at that point, I still didn't feel entirely comfortable explaining my bisexuality to other people. During episode 10 of the first season of the show, the character David Rose shops for wine with his friend Stevie, who says she thought he was

gay by saying she only likes red wine and thought he did, too. David Rose then delivers the now-infamous “wine and not the label” speech where he explains, “Um, I do drink red wine. But I also drink white wine. And I’ve been known to sample the occasional rosé. And a couple summers back, I tried a Merlot that used to be a Chardonnay, which got a bit complicated... I like the wine and not the label. Does that make sense?”

I teared up at this perfect and beautiful metaphor. Not only was it such a clear explanation of how I felt, but Stevie’s reaction to it was wonderful to see: she was honest about feeling new to it all, but she was supportive. The scene was brief, but powerful. I loved that David’s sexuality didn’t become a major plot point and didn’t get belabored throughout the series as a thing that needed to be discussed. It was presented as a fact. And it included more than two genders! I felt so affirmed.

Looking back at my aunt’s comment during *Dodgeball*, I’m not so sure anymore that she was intentionally being biphobic with her comment. I think she may have actually been saying, “That woman is not bisexual...she’s just a slut.” Which is still slut-shaming, but, at the time, it may have been a genuine attempt to defend against the harmful bisexual stereotype that was being portrayed. Yet, as a young person exploring her own sexuality, and with no other positive media portrayals of a bi+ person, I took it as the shameful and negative thing I suspected it might be and buried myself deep in the closet.

While I love my partner and am glad I’m with him, I often wonder what would happen if I’d seen the wine speech instead of the *Dodgeball* scene when I was 15, and while I mourn for my younger self and all the years I spent denying my bisexuality, I’m also grateful that positive media representations of bisexuality and pansexuality are becoming more and more prevalent.

Biphobia, bi+ erasure, and negative bisexual stereotypes still exist in the media. But I’m hopeful that a questioning 15-year-old will see the wine speech in *Schitt’s Creek*, or watch Rosa Diaz come out as bisexual on *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, or watch the TV show *The Bisexual*, or see any other positive portrayal of bi+ identities in the media and that they’ll feel seen, and realize that being bi+ is, above all, valid.

Whitney Donielson (she/her) lives in the Pacific Northwest with her loving and affirming spouse, and a sweet and anxious dog. She works in higher education, and enjoys making audio stories, reading, cooking, and spending time outside.



Killing Villanelle

By Rae N. Watanabe

Killing Villanelle is a violation of all that is holy to *Killing Eve* fans, which is why there has been a loud and bitter wailing against her death in the series finale.

We love Villanelle because she’s a psychopathic assassin but she’s also childlike. We’re introduced to her as she eats ice cream and studies how the man behind the counter interacts with a child eating ice cream across the room. Being a psychopath, she has to teach herself how to act normally. She’s extremely playful—even asking for lollipops and stickers from a hospital doctor in season two, being told they are for children, and pilfering them anyway. Even the way she murders has a sense of fun about it, which often proves shocking, yet funny. She kills one man by taking out her hairpin, shaking her head flirtatiously, and then jabbing her hairpin (with poison in it) into the man’s eye. Moreover, she often kills horrible men who some women would love to murder, which gives her a touch of *Dexter*.

Villanelle is also romantic. From the moment Villanelle sees Eve (who works for MI6) in a hospital bathroom, she’s mesmerized by her. She becomes obsessed with her, but Eve is likewise obsessed with Villanelle: “I think about you all the time. I think about what you’re wearing, and what you’re doing, and who you’re doing it with. I think about the friends you have, I think about what you eat before you go to work, and what shampoo you have, and what happened in your family. I think about your eyes and your mouth, and what you feel when you kill someone. I think about what you have for breakfast. I just want to know everything.” Villanelle also steals Eve’s suitcase and returns it filled with designer clothes that fit Eve perfectly. When Eve put on that black and white dress that Villanelle chose for her, fans across the world gasped at its perfection. It’s true that Eve crawls into Villanelle’s bed at the end of season one only to stab her, and it’s equally true that Villanelle shoots Eve at the end of season two after being rejected by Eve. But at the end of season three, Villanelle has transformed. She is willing to walk away from Eve and let Eve walk away from her. She loves Eve in an unselfish way.

And this is why killing Villanelle is unholy. She is the character who changed the most—from a 100% psychopath to an assassin tired of murdering others. She is the “sort of” psychopath who confesses to Eve, “I feel things when I’m with you,” during season three. Psychopaths do not feel; Villanelle does. In many ways, loving Eve transformed Villanelle. She does not need to die and “rise up” with angel wings of blood. She has already been reborn. She should have been allowed to live with the woman she loved and the woman who loved her. That ending would have been heavenly.

Rae N. Watanabe is a retired teacher.

Growing Up Queer and Neurodivergent: Emerging Understandings of Myself Through Pop Culture

By Lindsey Thomson

I am a white bisexual woman who grew up in a very small, conservative town where pop culture—music, television, magazines, books—provided windows into a world that was much larger than the boundaries of what felt like our own small world. In some very important ways, pop culture helped me understand who I was and who I wasn't, who I did and didn't want to be, and who I could be. Pop culture is tied closely to many core memories and some of the most critical times of my life—what I look back on and see now as a series of pieces, however imperfect, that slowly unlocked and awakened understandings of myself that I was only at the beginning of realizing and connecting with as a young bisexual woman, and eventually as a late-discovered neurodivergent woman.

As a teenager, I looked quite young for my age (common for autistic women, I have since learned) and not at all different from a typical white cis girl growing up in a small town in Ontario, Canada in the '90s. On the inside was a very different story, however—I often felt confused about who I was, largely because I did not see many pop culture icons whom I felt were like me and I was very sure I was way too boring to be that different from the other girls at school whom I was assumed to be like. I was very quiet and did my best to blend in and listen while my friends talked endlessly about the Backstreet Boys and NSYNC, while I daydreamed about playing the drums, forming my own band, and my ongoing fascination with Raine Maida, the lead singer of Our Lady Peace.

I became very enamored with Our Lady Peace in the late '90s, listening to and reading and re-reading Raine Maida's cryptic and poetic lyrics and deeply analytical and artistic takes on life and the complexities of humanity. They melded so well with the emerging characteristics of my young neurodivergent mind and its wanderings and constant processing of the deeper meaning of life. I saw glimpses of my emerging queer and neurodivergent self in the shreds of pop culture I was drawn to. For many of my teen years, I hyper-focused on Our Lady Peace's music without yet knowing this was an emerging, lifelong special interest (intense "special interests" being characteristics of girls and young autistic women that are commonly dismissed and glossed over as regular passing interests of teens, when in fact they are a core indicator of neurodivergence).

As a teen, I continued to be drawn to punky or broody musicians and often wondered if I could pull off a more punky style myself (I decided I could not and continued to only dream of this possibility). I would spend hours watching music videos on Muchmusic at my grandparents' house (a second home for me and my sister located in a slightly larger small town where we had access to cable TV). I was drawn to bisexual

musicians like Billy Joe, the lead singer of Green Day; feminists like Shirley Manson, the lead singer of Garbage; and really any musician dubbed "alternative" with an energy of rebelliousness and questioning of the norms and systems we were meant to live under.

I hadn't connected the dots yet, but there was an unspoken sameness that I couldn't put my finger on at the time. My young brain knew on some level that I was defining some very important values and ways of being for myself. I knew that I had to find ways to become who I so desperately wanted to be and to build a life that actually fit who I would soon learn I was... bisexual, autistic, and a young woman who just wanted to dream so much bigger than the traditional, heterosexist role I was assumed to be heading into as a white woman.

Fast forward to my 20s and 30s. I have had the privilege of attending university for psychology and social work, living in more than a few different cities, dating and loving people of different genders, marrying my partner who is a woman, and being part of the messy work of building and re-building bisexual queer communities, both online and in real life. I have witnessed changes in pop culture that have made at least some intentional space for better representations of bisexual people and across a range of bisexual lives.

In 2022, at 38 years of age, I see increasing numbers of celebrities coming out as queer and/or non-binary, and trans. I see more storylines including well-developed bisexual characters with varying and sometimes complex stories (e.g., Rosa from *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, Gael and Malika from *Good Trouble*, Casey in *Atypical*). Still, there are things I would love to see more of and still yearn for as someone who has spent a lot of time searching for bisexual community.

First, I would like to see not just single characters who are bi and surrounded by mostly gay men, lesbians, and/or straight people. I want to see more bisexual characters speaking to each other about common challenges and successes. I want conversations about life between bi friends who have overlapping and different stories, about navigating their romantic lives, families, careers, activism, and community building as bisexual people. I want to go beyond the rare confronting of biphobia within queer communities as seen in the *L Word*, and would love to see representations of uncomfortable but necessary ongoing conversations and the hard work of acceptance of bi/pan folks within queer communities and recognition of our historical and ongoing contributions to queer movements.

I want to see greater diversity and more complexity in bi characters—more BIPOC, disabled and/or neurodivergent, varying genders, ages, and more representations of a range of characters to showcase how diverse and multi-faceted bi+

individuals and communities really are. There continues to be only so much tolerance for diversity in one character, at least in the facets of pop culture with which I am most familiar.

I want to see the complex realities of bi+ folks represented and re-imagined in pop culture beyond existing written bi+ anthologies, private Facebook groups, and rare queer community storytelling events that hold the entirety of our loving, joyful, messy, painful, imperfect, taboo, and ultimately just complex human lives so they can be witnessed in their full beauty—ideally without heterosexist, biphobic, fetishizing, and other oppressive lenses that are often applied. I want bi stories to be told and understood not as just flipping between a gay and straight experience. I want bisexual experiences and lives to be represented as inhabiting unique and multifaceted spaces all their own, and combining with our other identities in unique, intersectional ways. I want representations of bisexuality that are unmitigated by heterosexual and homosexual desire, and not to have our experiences shoved and reshaped into binaries and boxes that do not represent bi+ folks. I want our experiences to be represented in their full uniqueness and complexity, rather than being understood and represented as a mishmash of heterosexual and homosexual desire.

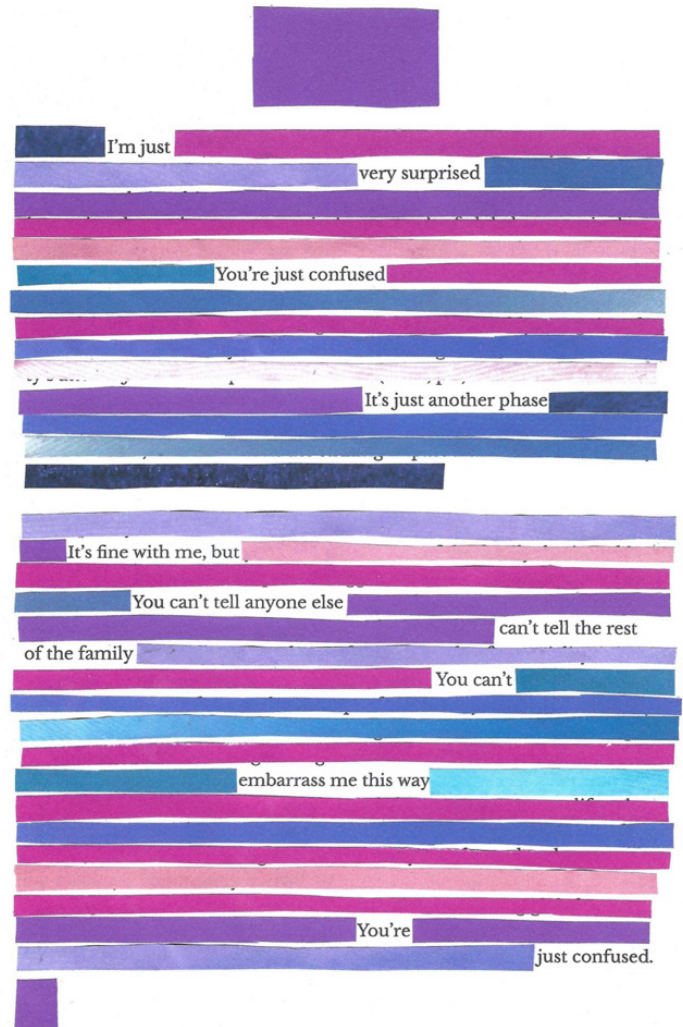
Overall, I have an ambivalent relationship with many facets of popular culture because even at 38 years of age, I am still yearning to feel truly reflected and to see bi+ folks who are multiply marginalized adequately represented. Even more so, I want to feel inspired and to re-imagine what diverse bi people and communities can be for ourselves and the wider world. I want pop culture to more fully acknowledge and celebrate the full diversity of queer communities and to tell stories in ways that increase our power and validity in the world, instead of pushing the stories and lives of bi+ folks to the margins. I remain hopeful that more bi+ folks will continue gaining positions and platforms where we can fully tell our own stories.



Lindsey Thomson lives in Guelph, Ontario, Canada, with her wife CJ, two rescue dogs, and a 28-year old turtle. She identifies as a neurodivergent bisexual woman and is a specialist in community-engaged research and teaching at the University of Guelph, and who is very passionate about the role of research and community collaboration in social change.

Bi-erasure poem

By Astra Papachristodoulou



Astra Papachristodoulou is a poet and artist based in London. She is the author of several poetry books including Constellations (Guillemot Press, 2022). Her work has been exhibited in various galleries in the U.K. and internationally.

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A Cancelled Bisexual Gem: *Generation*

By Jen Winston

I'm no stranger to TV heartbreak—that is, falling in love with shows that wind up getting cancelled. During high school, I watched every episode of *Arrested Development* live on the air, tuning in every Thursday night. I became overly attached to the characters in *Freaks & Geeks*, thinking of them as my friends, which made it all the more devastating when I learned that the series wouldn't be coming back. I binged Season One of *Tuca & Birdie*, losing myself in the feminist buddy comedy of it all, so much so that I literally wept when I realized there was no Season Two. (Thankfully, the internet's outrage fixed that.)

Those moments were tough, but they couldn't prepare me for the latest punch to my gut: when HBO cancelled *Generation*.

For those of you who didn't watch *Generation*, here's my opinion on what you missed: a top-tier half-hour dark comedy that was everything *Girls* wanted to be. There's gorgeous cinematography, incredible acting, and fashion that actually seems affordable (I'm side-eyeing you, *Euphoria*). The show was created by Zelda Barnz and her father Daniel Barnz, and Zelda's authentic Gen Z connection shows—the writing gives a realistic (even voyeuristic?) look at the day-to-day lives of teens today, touching on everything from dating to family drama to queerness to pregnancy.

As one would expect from a Gen Z show, *Generation* bursts with diversity—the ensemble cast includes interracial families, immigrant parents, and queer people of all ages and identities. These stories don't feel like a checked box, nor do they “virtue signal”—*Generation* presents non-white, non-hetero narratives as a fact of life, as foundational to the modern high school experience as gel pens once were to my own. Given the state of Hollywood, this is a massive achievement, but maybe you're still skeptical. I get it—it's rare that these so-called “diverse” stories include strong bi representation.

Leave it to *Generation* to prove us wrong. The show features two openly bisexual characters, one of whom is Nathan (Uly Schlesinger), a lovestruck guy crushing on his friend Chester (Justice Smith) while struggling with his uptight mom (Martha Plimpton). Someone describes Nathan using the word “bisexual” (or more accurately: they critique his mom for being biphobic in her remarks about his sexcapades).

I find that, for bi characters, the act of naming is critical: In my book *Greedy*, I wrote about how rarely I heard the word “bisexual” in the media, which led me to believe bisexuality was a behavior rather than an identity. I saw it as something you did, rather than something you could be, which gave me massive impostor syndrome until I had my first queer hookup (and even after that). I also thought that the worst thing a

bisexual person could be was a stereotype—slutty, promiscuous, uncertain—and that made me terrified of coming out: I *was* slutty, promiscuous, and uncertain, and I was terrified of proving the stereotypes right.

But *Generation* highlights just how messy (and, dare I say, FUN) bisexuality can be, reminding us that there was nothing wrong with those tropes in the first place. After Nathan's pursuit of Chester falls flat, he begins hooking up with a female classmate named Ariana (Nathanya Alexander). This could feel like lazy bisexual representation, where we see that someone is bisexual by watching them sleep around, wreck homes, etc. But because we've already been told Nathan is bisexual—because that word has been used in the context of identity rather than behavior—Nathan's hookups have a different effect. We're able to see Nathan's story as *his* story, recognizing his character's decisions as singular and not necessarily reflective of all bi people everywhere. Instead of a promiscuous bi stereotype, he becomes a promiscuous bi person.

But there's even more to respect about *Generation*. This show understands that not all bisexuality is treated equally by our monosexist, homophobic, patriarchal world. When Nathan's mom learns of his bisexuality in relation to Chester, she dismisses it, calls it a phase, hopes it will be over soon. But when Nathan begins dating Ariana, his mom perks up. Her reaction is all too familiar for bi people, implying that some of our desires are “wrong” while others are right.

Messy bisexual stories create space for bisexual people to be rough around the edges; they make room for us to be ourselves. *Generation* may be off the air, but maybe that's okay; it already inspired me to write more bisexual stories, and I doubt I'm the only one.

Jen Winston (she/they) is the author of the book *GREEDY: Notes From A Bisexual Who Wants Too Much*. She lives in New York with her partner, dogs, and iPhone.



Subtlety in *Skyrim* and Bisexual+ Representation

By Dani Banani

Skyrim is one of those games that I can play over and over. The endless combinations, possibilities, and outcomes of the game's quests create an immersive gaming experience that you won't want to experience just once. In the ten years that I've played this game, I have created new characters with new destinies so many times I've lost count.

As a bonus, the game allows me to be anything I want to be, along with exactly who I know I am: bisexual+.

The game has a quest to complete, and upon completion you're given an amulet that allows suitors to notice you and inform you if they're available. During my very first playthrough of the game, I discovered that men and women both were approaching and flirting with me for wearing the pendant. I remember excitedly informing my partner, "Oh, I am totally marrying a girl."

And I did, and I loved it with my entire little bisexual+ heart.

In the next playthrough, I decided to go deeper and find a compatible male to go with the characteristics I had chosen for my new character. I Googled available men to marry in *Skyrim* and chose based on their work ethic and other traits I found enjoyable. It was fun, having been able to create different characters with different desires for partners.

The game didn't limit me in ways I've felt limited in real life. My marriages to other women were valid in the eyes of NPCs (non-playable characters.) Everything is just simple in this wonderful little land of make-believe (though the addition of non-binary character options would make this world even more inclusive and affirming).

When it comes to bisexual+ representation in literally anything, I don't expect much, and I'm pleased with the minimum. This could be a controversial take on the subject, but in my opinion, bisexual+ people don't tend to act a specific way outside of relationships. When people complain that the minimal representation we've had isn't "enough," I have to question what it is those people desire. More bisexual+ people in relationships with the same gender? What makes us more bisexual+ in media that people will feel wholly represented by? Are there things to wear, say, actions to take, that would wholly represent us as bisexuals+?

Admittedly, I do completely fall under the stereotype that bisexual+ people don't know how to sit normally and all I have to say is this: sitting normally is overrated—enjoy that chair however you want. Within reason.

In order to satisfy the questions above, our community would have to fall under stereotypes to prove themselves, and there isn't really a need to prove ourselves (in my opinion only.) I will tell anyone and everyone that I am bisexual but beyond

saying it to people, what else do bisexual+ people do that can highlight us without solely focusing on who we like to have romantic relationships with?

Take the popular show *Loki* on Disney+ as an example. Loki admits to having had "a little of both" regarding princes or princesses who desired him; Sylvie, his variant, doesn't verbally agree but provides the body language to suggest she is also fond of more than one gender.

Many people voiced the opinion that our representation wasn't enough in *Loki*.

Maybe I'm easy to please, but to me, this small moment in the Marvel Comic Universe show put our identity out there. It labeled two extremely powerful and perhaps slightly mischievous deities of sorts who had no qualms sharing their identities before moving on to further subjects. I have to ask what was necessary beyond that? What exactly could have made our representation better? Am I being a bit of a jerk about this?

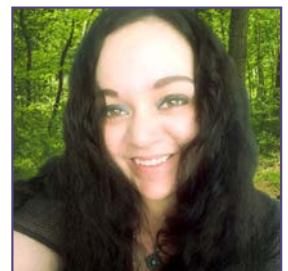
Truly, I'd be thrilled to have a conversation with someone who could help me understand that better. But I digress.

The bisexual+ representation in *Skyrim* is enchantingly subtle. The "flirting" that occurs when the amulet marks you as available for marriage can easily be ignored, as girl and boy characters will not pursue you if you show no interest. If someone is playing who is not bi+, it's simple to avoid the unpreferred gender, and options are available for bi+ players in a way that isn't over-the-top or screaming, "Yeah, we love bisexuals!" I've never been one for screaming, so the subtlety of inclusion is everything to me.

Whether my take on the subject is debatable or relatable, this is my experience when it comes to the representation of bi+ people and how I've perceived the series of events and experiences as a bi+ woman. But as I mentioned, any representation is positive to me for now. Making ourselves known through nothing more than confirmation of our identities in video games, TV, film, books, and more is a terrific opening, as it placing our existence in the world's face without rubbing it in too hard. People receive information much better when they're not feeling attacked.

I may not understand how to make representation closer to perfection, but I can be happy with an hour of sunlight between major storms.

Dani Banani (Danielle) is a Hoosier-raised woman living in Colorful Colorado with her partner and their four children. She has a passion for the Scarlet Witch and Skyrim, and spends most of her time writing.



The Paint Spot on the Merry-Go-Round: Social Media and Narrative Freedom

By Lila Hartelius

In the theater of my mind, the idea of pop culture tends to evoke an averse combination of gaudy colors and flashy lights, sealed with a signature bubble gum hot pink. In mulling over this theme, though, the notion of narrative keeps coming back to me like an unexpected paint spot on a merry-go-round, seeming more and more an integral part of the whole each time it comes around.

Which narratives are present in pop culture, and which ones are missing from it? What narratives are dominant, and what ones are marginalized? What does the framing of narratives in pop culture promote, and what does it leave out? Who finds themselves in and through these narratives, and who doesn't?

And where *is* pop culture, anyway? *What* is it? It's not a person, nor a place, nor an object. It *is* an idea, but it also has concrete presence in three-dimensional (and virtual) reality. Its voice, spoken through selected and molded narratives, weaves its way through film, television, magazines, and the like. Yet all the while it remains elusive to me, a nebulous constellation of memes and mores, values and visions, both influencing and shape-shifting in response to a public that somehow seems to remain large enough and voracious enough to sustain the industries that feed it to them.

One key element that is both present in and influenced by prevalent narratives in pop culture is the idea of life trajectory. These narratives presume certain personal and collective path tracings, each with their own milestones corresponding to different life stages and chronological ages. These narratives also differ from one another depending on a myriad of criteria, among them gender and sexuality. Pop culture narratives shape how we see not only each other but also ourselves. These narratives impose messages about what is "normal." With the internalization of these messages can come a deep-seated fear that any divergence from these "normals" may mean something is wrong with oneself and needs to be fixed.

Needless to say, the impact of these narratives on those whose life trajectories diverge from them can be harmful. It can lead not only to being subjected to structural oppression and social stigma but also to self-pathologizing of aspects of oneself which are in fact completely normal and benign. Pop culture narratives about bisexual women are full of messages that paint bisexuality in women in a socially deviant light. My impression is that these narratives often portray such individuals as either broken and out of control, or *superconfident* and hypersexual—or both. The internalization of these messages has certainly taken its toll on my self-esteem and self-image as a woman on the bi+ spectrum, and I'm still unpacking the baggage that these narratives have mistakenly delivered to the address of my psyche.

A newer vehicle for pop culture narratives like these and others complicates and complexifies the matter: social media. Channels have opened up for disparaging messages about marginalized identities to be spooled out at unprecedented rates not only at an industry level but also at a social level. Instead of having to be woven into a movie plot or published in a magazine article, biphobic conceptions of bisexual women can now be broadcast within seconds to millions in the space of 280 characters or less, and the effects seem to me to be no less damaging. Individual voices now have platforms that allow them to participate in the perpetuation and evolution (or devolution) of oppressive pop culture narratives.

At the same time, it is this very element of individual agency in the stories that get broadcast that seems to me to also be allowing for a more diverse range of narratives to be told by those who are living them and making sense of them, and heard by those who finally see themselves in someone else's experience and realize they are not alone, not broken. From coming out videos on YouTube to online discussion forums for individuals questioning their sexuality or gender identity, people are waking up to the realization that their stories don't have to "fit the mold," or even look like anyone else's. In fact, the more someone thinks they're the only person in the world who feels the way they do, the more their voluntary sharing of their personal narrative may actually be a breath of fresh air—and in some cases quite literally a lifesaver—for many others who thought they were alone, too.

It seems to me that the space that is opening up for people to define their own personal narratives for themselves is also carving out room for the emergence of a new collective narrative. On platforms like YouTube and Reddit, I have heard and read so many monosexual and non-monosexual people alike encouraging those questioning their sexuality or gender identity to take their time, reassuring them that there is no rush to have everything figured out nor to ever choose a label for themselves if they don't want to. More and more on social media I hear mentioned that sexuality and gender are fluid and that the way one understands their own sexual orientation or gender identity can change and evolve over time.

For many individuals, this narrative seems to serve as a buffer against a contrasting predominant narrative in pop culture that says one has to have their sexuality and gender identity all figured out for life as soon as possible. This latter narrative is monosexist and cissexist "ism"s (which are the fault of cisheteropatriarchy, not of monosexuality or cisness) and can be particularly distressing for individuals who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender. It also puts pressure on everyone to stick to whatever sexual or gender identity we each currently hold.

Not everyone experiences their sexual orientation or gender identity as fluid. In fact, some individuals who from a young age have had a clear and unchanging sense of being different from the “norm” in specific and fixed ways related to sexual orientation or gender identity encounter the opposite problem: being told to “give it time,” and that it’s “just a phase.” In the face of such pressure to conform to something other than whom one feels oneself to be, the idea of an immutable, life-long sexual or gender identity can be comforting and affirming. To be clear, a subjective experience of fixed sexual orientation or gender identity is completely valid and is distinct from a societal imperative for everyone to fit into neat categories in prescribed, binding ways. The latter, I feel, is inherently divisive and ultimately unrealistic seeing as humans are so incredibly diverse, and no individual’s journey is exactly like another’s.

Some (perhaps to subconsciously manage societal anxiety around perceived relative ambiguity) use the narrative of fluidity to invalidate bi+ and gender non-binary identities as non-distinct (e.g., with arguments like, “Everyone is a bit bisexual,” or “We all have masculine and feminine qualities within us”) and to invalidate sexual and gender minority identities as being “just a phase.” In spite of this, I think this fluidity narrative’s acceptance of shifting, evolving, or non-binary identities makes it a narrative that could be considered not only bi-affirmative and gender non-binary-affirmative but also important for individuals questioning their sexuality or gender. The personal exploration inherent in the questioning process may help individuals engaged in it to come to terms with what they may eventually understand their sexual orientation or gender identity to be, while taking the pressure off to ever have a definitive answer about this. This fluidity-accepting narrative seems ultimately affirmative of self-definition, because it allows space for someone to feel free to imagine themselves outside of their current self-concept if they feel drawn to do so. Using

this narrative to invalidate anyone’s self-definition—no matter how exploratory or solid the self-defining individual feels that self-definition to be—is a reflection of the attitude of those using the narrative in this way, and not a reflection of the narrative itself.

We have entered a new era of participatory pop culture in which spectators are now rewriting the script. By questioning dominant pop culture narratives that frame harmless facets of personal experience as “abnormal,” we can become agents in our own meaning-making, storytellers speaking our own personal truths, and, in doing so, inspire others to do the same for themselves.

Looking closer, I realize the paint spot on the pop culture merry-go-round is not simply narrative, but specifically social media as narrative vehicle. It can be seen as a blemish, staining the armature with unchecked personal expressions of stigmatizing attitudes running rampant. It can also be seen as the emergence of new possibility for going against currently established color schemes of the merry-go-round. Like any tool, it has the potential to harm or to help. The difference is in how and for what it is used. If we are to use it, may we do so to both personally and collectively birth and rebirth narratives that help us to feel more whole and that inspire others to do the same for themselves.

Lila Hartelius is a neurodiverse, bilingual (English & French), multidisciplinary queer artist and writer who is honored to have had the opportunity to be a EuroBiCon workshop leader. She loves cats, creative and expressive arts, ecological intelligence, and brain-friendly approaches to anything from folding laundry to becoming an Olympic ice skater.



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“Despite the abundance of it”: Why Amber Heard Inspires Me

By Mage Hadley (a.k.a. black and white thinking)

CW: This piece discusses queerphobia, IPV, and abuse

It is whilst scrolling through Twitter I see a call for submissions. Robyn Ochs, a bisexual activist and personal hero of mine, is asking for submissions for *Bi Women Quarterly*: “Name a bi+ pop culture figure (real or fictional) who inspires you, & tell me why.” The tweet from Robyn sits on my timeline between a mass of retweets from people I follow, all containing the hashtag #IStandWithAmberHeard.

Amber Heard was in her twenties when she met her abuser; he was almost fifty. Her abuser is a powerful man with many powerful friends. Her abuser did things to her that should probably remain unspoken by anyone other than Amber herself. And it took Amber a long time to escape her abuser. He was powerful, rich, enabled, and loved by millions of people who had never met him. When Amber finally did leave, she was met with a media slander campaign that could rival, and perhaps was more aggressive than, the one Monica Lewinsky suffered after her own grooming by the most powerful man on the planet back in the '90s.



Cr: Gage Skidmore, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=71236580>

Amber Heard has always been open about her bisexuality, and that alone over the years has inspired me. Being out as bisexual, and having been out for over a decade in the Hollywood sphere, can be seen as courage in its own right. Being out as bisexual in any situation can feel like constant activism.

Amber's abuser knows she is bisexual; he married her long after she had come out, and yet he used her sexuality as a weapon against her. In many witness testimonies found in legal documents relating to Amber's relationship to her abuser, you can see biphobic and lesbophobic slurs and hatred being aimed at Amber and many of her queer friends. The D slur aimed at queer women and claims of “lesbos” trying to steal “his girl,” all recorded in a British court, all incidents said by a high court judge to have had enough witnesses to corroborate their happening.

As I write this piece, Amber Heard sits in a courtroom in Virginia, being sued by her abuser for defamation for writing a piece not unlike this one. The rich cishet guys' last bastion of defense, the American justice system. He was found to have definitely abused Amber in a UK Libel case that was argued in the highest court in the country. However, he continues to abuse Amber through the court systems that generations of mishandling and misogyny have allowed. Amber is there though, straight-faced and hardy, as her abuser takes the stand to lie (under oath, mind you) about her truth.

Bisexual women have the highest likelihood of experiencing an abusive relationship, compared to straight and lesbian women. Some reports state that up to 60-80% of bisexual women will report having suffered interpersonal violence and abuse by a partner in their lifetime. Almost all those women will have been abused by a male-identifying partner. Bi-misogyny is quite literally deadly.

I don't think I can overstate the bravery of Amber Heard right now. The whole world is against her. Not because of facts or logic or reason but simply because bisexual women are never seen as “real” victims. An army of Twitter trolls piled on, more than half of which I would bet personal money on being bots, as well as a media cycle that has coddled her abuser for almost half a century. Amber's degradation by the public is one that is emblematic of how bisexual women, bisexual survivors, can expect to be treated when they tell their stories. Right now, Amber seems to be suffering on behalf of us all.

And perhaps I am just too millennial, having grown up in a world of screen and celebrities, but I can't help feeling the stakes of this case are higher than anyone really wants to fathom. Amber Heard isn't dead, she isn't silent, and she isn't backing down when the media turns against her. This makes her the minority. For years, the media, the Hollywood zeitgeist, has encouraged the endless witch hunts and shit shows surrounding bi women,

and the quite often abusive men in their lives. A lot of those women have ended up dead. *Too* many of those women have ended up dead. Whitney Houston, Amy Winehouse, Marilyn Monroe, Janis Joplin. All women who were famously dragged in the media, famously surrounded by bad men, and all famously dead due to substance abuse issues. Amber Heard isn't dead; she is fighting. And she is not alone. As she fights in Virginia, Evan Rachel Wood has been fighting in California to release the statute of limitations on abuse claims. Evan is also a bisexual actress who has recently named her abuser. Evan's abuser happens to be Amber's abuser's best friend.

For bisexual women, the world can often feel like a dangerous and haunting place, but we are not alone. People like Amber and Evan prove it. Resources like *BWQ* prove that we are not alone. We just have to find each other. We have to build communities and systems to protect all bisexual+ people. Supporting Amber Heard in her fight against bi-misogyny is a good place to start. Amber's willingness to be the face of that fight is why I find her so inspiring.

Mage Hadley is a bisexual writer and filmmaker from England, focusing on issues facing bisexual people, as well as some media and myth analysis along the way.

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I Heart Clones

By Jo-Anne Carlson



The Canadian series *Orphan Black*, which aired for five seasons from 2013 to 2017, is a personal favorite. The storyline features clones, evil (and good) scientists, and attempts by cultists and others to "take over the world" (à la *Pinky and the Brain*) by controlling the creation of life. Viewers follow Sarah Manning (played by the incredible Tatiana Maslany) as she discovers that she is a clone and comes across others just like her (also played by Maslany). It is riveting, with satisfying plot twists. But for me, the most thrilling is the way the writers of the series allow each character to be themselves and do not shy away from sexuality or its expression. Cosima, the clone who is a scientist, navigates relationships with men and women. Sarah Manning, the clone who is the driving force in the show, does not seem to have any hang-ups about the gender of the person she sleeps with, based on a memorable scene where she is in a club, dancing with a mixed-gender couple bent on a threesome. The theme throughout the series is one of discovery and growth, along with hair-raising adventures, discoveries of male clones, conspiracies, and a healthy dose of humor (Alison and Donnie!) which makes it worth watching, many times over.

Jo-Anne Carlson is a writer, artist, and musician who believes that who you love, how you love, and how many you love, shouldn't matter. Contact her at: josexpressions@yahoo.com.



First Loves, First Realizations: A Short Story

By A.J. Walkley

When I saw her face on my iPhone screen, my heart dropped. Not in an “oh my god, I’m disappointed” way. In a “who is this heavenly creature” way. The last time I’d had that feeling, I had been watching the cute guy from 12th grade Civ behind the counter at the movie theater, shoveling popcorn into a container for a snot-nosed elementary school kid. He had sandy brown hair that he had to keep shaking out of his eyes, a nose ring, and a stare that said, “I see you—I know you.”

But we’d never even talked.

And I didn’t even know myself at that point.

No, I obviously knew nothing of myself if I was having butterflies and stomach somersaults looking at Stephanie Beatriz on my phone now. Those eyes. That hair. Ohmygod that smile. The voice!

But what did this mean? Did I wish I had eyes like hers? Big, brown, and ready to swallow you whole? Did I wish to trade in my own mousy mane for her black waves? Was I wishing my teeth were as bright? That I could come up with any number of voices on the spot? That I could sing like her Mirabel?

No, that wasn’t it. Because the longer I looked at her, the more I realized my panties were getting wet. Just like with Movie Guy.

What the actual fuck?

Now my palms were getting wet, too.

What does this mean? What does this mean about *me*?

I turned my phone off, but that image of Stephanie was still plastered in my mind. She was gorgeous. Anyone would think so. Maybe this doesn’t mean...anything?

My phone vibrated then and I saw a text from my best friend, Roxy.

“Coffee? 5 minutes?”

I smiled. The bell was about to ring to end fourth period and, as soon as it did, I aimed myself at the cafeteria where Roxy was waiting, a coffee already in-hand for me.

“Damn, that was fast!”

“I left class early. I needed a caffeine boost.” I looked at her closer and she did look a little lagged.

“All nighter?” I asked, and she nodded, taking a gulp.

“Chase and I stayed up ’til 2 a.m. in my driveway...” She wiggled her eyebrows.

I bumped her side with my elbow. “Rox! Damn, girl!”

Chase was her partner going on two months. The only self-proclaimed enby in our school. Roxy had a crush as soon as they had walked into her homeroom earlier in the year, a transfer from down South. Somewhere in Florida. I had figured then that a move up to the Northeast was the best thing their parents had ever done for them. Especially right now.

“Couldn’t help it! Neither could, Chase. And totally worth it,” Roxy was saying while my thoughts turned back to Stephanie. “Mel? Don’t tell me you’re jealous! Why are you turning red?”

I glanced at my phone without intending to. I hadn’t turned off the screen. Rox picked up on it and grabbed it from my hand.

“*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*?” Her brow furrowed. “I’d say I’m confused, but I think I’m beyond. What’s up?”

Of all the people in my circle, Roxy was obviously the one person I could have talked to about this. But I couldn’t. I didn’t even know what to say.

“I AM jealous! I want someone I can make out with until two in the morning, you know!” I grabbed my phone back, not acknowledging the content I’d been watching. “Thanks for the java. Gotta get to gym!” I blew her a kiss and practically ran to class.

That night I found myself in my room, the music video for “iHOP Parking Lot” from *The Bash Brothers* up on my phone. Stephanie Beatriz was front and center. I paused it on a particularly hot take of her, a seductive look on her face. Without overthinking it, I grabbed my vibrator from my nightstand.

She was so gorgeous.

I knew I was attracted to her.

And I did know what it meant.

It meant the same thing as when I followed Bianca around in eighth grade, practically drooling any time she said my name, even as I was going behind the bleachers with Jackson. It meant the same thing as when I wanted to invite only Raven to my birthday party a year earlier—party meaning a sleepover with just the two of us, even as I was passing love notes to Miguel in art class.

I finished with a loud moan and flopped over on my stomach to pull up another photo of Stephanie. The hair. The smile. She really kind of reminded me of...

I gasped.



I thought back on what she'd been wearing that day. Leather jacket that she'd gotten for Christmas from her parents. Her wavy black hair, just below her shoulders. Her bright white smile, so striking since she'd gotten her braces off.

My heart was pounding as I typed my text.

"Rox? I have something I need to tell you..."

*A.J. Walkley is a full-time writer living in Connecticut. Walkley is a published author of the books *Queer Greer* (2012) and *Vuto* (2013). The sequel to *Queer Greer*, titled *Straight Nate*, will be released late June 2022.*

Media That Helped Me Get Through the Pandemic (So Far)

By Debbie Block-Schwenk

The topic is "Pop Culture," but I have a hard time defining what that means in these days of dozens of streaming channels and social media algorithms. Is it "What the kids are into these days?" (I'm old enough to say that un-ironically.) Even so, which kids? I have so much admiration for the LGBTQ+ young people out there—I wish them every success in the battles to come and do my best to support them when I can. I'm not sure who their pop culture icons are, though, or what queer musicians are trending.

So I'm going to write about some of the media that has helped me through these past couple of years, with an emphasis on LGBTQ+ creators or content. I consumed a lot more media during the pandemic than I had before: watching more TV, buying books I didn't have time to read, buying games on Kickstarter I haven't yet played. This article will describe just a few of them that I hope you'll enjoy hearing about. I'm mostly into sci-fi and fantasy, so nerdy picks are ahead.

Comics: *Far Sector*, written by N.K. Jemisin, art by Jamal Campbell

I'm not a big comics person, but when I heard Jemisin had written a 12-part comics series for DC Comic's Young Animal imprint I couldn't wait to grab the trade paperback. Set in the Green Lantern universe, newly chosen Green Lantern Sojourner "Jo" Mullen has been sent far into space, to the City Enduring, home to three different species who have coexisted by taking a drug that strips away their emotions. But there's just been the first murder in decades, and the peace is threatening to crumble. While working to solve the crime and a larger, political conspiracy, Jo flirts with a female cop and has a brief affair with a male member of the ruling Council. In Jo Mullen, Jemisin has written a strong, smart bi+ Black superhero who has continued to have other adventures as a Green Lantern.

Television: *The Expanse*, Amazon Prime

I've loved this gritty sci-fi show since its first season for its attention to detail and realistic, nuanced characters. One thing the show lacked was LGBTQ+ representation in any major characters. That changed in the fifth season, when Camina Drummer joined a polyamorous family of pirates in the Asteroid Belt. Through war, political maneuverings and breakups, it's never in doubt that Drummer can love both women and men. (Do I have a little crush on fierce and fearless Drummer? Guilty as charged.)

Drummer, played by Ojibwe actress Cara Gee, is one of several women of color who play pivotal roles throughout the show, especially in its sixth (and final) season.

Television: *Star Trek: Discovery*, Paramount +

Discovery centers on a main character (Michael Burnham, played by Sonequa Martin-Green) more than previous Star Trek shows, but other crew members do get screen time, including Dr. Hugh Culber and scientist Paul Stamets, played by out actors Wilson Cruz and Anthony Rapp. Their relationship's conflicts are often intertwined with the main plotlines, and it's been fantastic to see a gay couple featured on a Star Trek show. The third season added both a non-binary character and a trans character (played by a non-binary actor and a trans actor), and Tig Notaro's supporting role as the witty engineer Jet Reno is always a delight. As a long-time Star Trek fan, I've been thrilled to see so many and such a variety of LGBTQ+ characters and out actors who can be role models for young and old alike.

Podcast: *Our Opinions Are Correct*

Trans sci fi/fantasy author Charlie Jane Anders and non-binary journalist and author Annalee Newitz opine about current trends in sci fi, fantasy, pop culture, and society. Recent episodes covered the return of Cold War tropes in our culture and the rise of Action Princesses. Their delightful banter, personal anecdotes, and knowledge of geeky history make every topic entertaining, and they never fail to cheer me up if I'm having a bad day. Most episodes include an interview with an author or expert, with an emphasis on female, LGBTQ+, and/or BIPOC guests. Learn more at www.ouropinionsarecorrect.com/

Debbie Block-Schwenk lives in Boston and hasn't written for Bi Women in far too long. She reads sci-fi and fantasy, writes a bit of the same, and facilitates the Bi+ Women Partnered with Men support group for the Bisexual Resource Center.



Queer Pop Culture I Grew Up with in Russia

By Anna Kochetkova

I spent the first 22 years of my life in Russia. At first glance, you may say that Russia's homophobic attitudes did a good job at erasing queerness from my life. However, queer people have always existed in Russia, never mind the state's opinions. That said, for me personally, life was pretty queerless. Or was it?

Today, looking back, I am not so sure. In fact, during a nostalgic evening with some friends one night I took a group of multicultural queer folk through the songs of my childhood. Every single person pointed out how indeed queer my musical repertoire was. I had no clue!

I left Russia in 2008. In 2013, Russia passed legislation "aimed at protecting children from information promoting the denial of traditional family values." This legislation banned the "promotion of non-traditional sexual relations to minors"—a reference universally understood to mean a ban on providing children access to information about queer people's lives. The ban includes, but is not limited to, information provided via the press, television, radio, and the internet. The legislation applies to the gay community; however, it certainly extends to all the letters of the LGBTQIA+.

Despite its raging homophobia, Russia loves their flamboyant gay men. Some of our most popular music, theatre, and arts productions are headed by gender-defying characters: Philipp Kirkorov (born in Bulgaria), for example, with his glamorous makeup and diva personality, is one of the most well-known showmen in the country and Boris Moiseev (born in Belarus), a beloved Russian singer, choreographer, dancer, writer, actor, head of a dance group and author of popular shows, has been the Elton John of Russia for many years. Many Russian showmen wear dresses and makeup on stage and TV and most of them attribute it to their theatrical paraphernalia and/or marketing strategy.

Let's take a dive into three queer pop culture icons that I grew up with in Russia.

Ruki Vverh: "He Kisses You"

Ruki Vverh! is a name of a Russian pop and dance musical duo Sergey Zhukov and Aleksey Potekhin (eventually just Sergey Zhukov). You may know their "La la la la la..." song, which became number one in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and entered the Top-20 in many countries worldwide, including the U.K. and U.S. in 2000. I fell in love and broke my teen heart listening to the song "He Kisses You" over and over again.



This part love drama, part drag queen makeup tutorial was epic and novel to me at the time. And yet, a flamboyant gay

couple making out on a park bench in the video clip didn't flag queerness. It took a few more years and a few people pointing it out for me to notice the obvious.



t.A.T.u.: Gay for Pay?

You may have heard about t.A.T.u. and may have even listened to "All The Things She Said" and "Boy Gay," popular songs of this rather controversial musical duo. The band was formed in 1999 by music producer

Ivan Shapovalov and his business partner, who wanted to create a Russian musical project with teenage girls at the center. They apparently drew inspiration from the Swedish film *Show Me Love*, which centers around two schoolgirls who find themselves in an unexpected romantic relationship.

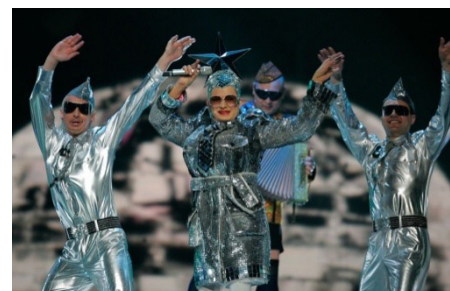
Lena Katina and Julia Volkova were very successful and popular at first. And for many of us, it was the first time we saw two women in love on TV, so public, so sexual, so rebellious. In fact, back in 2002, their song "All the Things She Said" got banned in the U.K. as it was claimed to pander to lesbians and pedophiles. t.A.T.u. represented Russia in Eurovision 2003 and came in third. Perhaps most importantly, the girls represented much more to the closeted queers in Russia and the world.

It was later revealed that the girls' queerness was not authentic, but rather, a marketing strategy driven by the producers. Their music career started to go downhill from here, especially after their song called "Disabled People," the video clip of which depicted partying and queer folk. Furthermore, Julia Volkova stated that she wouldn't accept having a gay son.

This was a very rocky piece of queer pop culture for me.

Verka Serdutchka: Ukrainian Drag

Andriy Mykhailovych Danylko (born in Poltava, Ukraine), better known for his drag stage persona Verka Serdutchka, is a Ukrainian comedian, and pop and dance singer. He represented Ukraine in Eurovision



2007 and came second. Well before that, Andriy presented Verka Serdutchka publicly for the first time in a Poltava comedy competition on January 4, 1991. Although Andriy spoke about his heterosexuality in numerous interviews, he was my first introduction to drag, which felt especially spicy at the time.

In 2013, Andriy bought a Rolls-Royce that once belonged to Freddie Mercury, and that is pretty awesomely queer to me.

Russia continues to oppress queer communities, including Chechnya's anti-gay purge, which started making national headlines in 2017. Since then, hundreds of gay and bisexual Chechen men have been abused and detained in the semi-autonomous Russian region, according to Human Rights Watch. The spread of homophobic and transphobic violence and everyday harassment against LGBT+ people and activists in the country continues to escalate with very little attention from the outside world, creating a challenging environment for prominent queer pop culture. Although there are many queer Russians in the country, the dominant narrative continues to deny their existence, punishing anyone who dares to claim otherwise. I was born into this world, thus I learnt to hide my thinking and my feelings even from myself, rendering myself blind to the queer pop culture around me.

It took me the next fifteen years to start unlearning the harmful aftermath of my indoctrination, leading me to revisit some of the dearest pop culture moments of my life. Those moments may seem rare and subtle, but they gave me hope and a different vision of my life, albeit I may have not realized it at the time. My childhood wasn't so queerless, after all.

Anna Kotchetkova lives in Australia. She is the author of Bi & Prejudice.

just love yourself and you're set

By Kristin Turner

The most inspirational artist for me would have to be Lady Gaga, known for her outrageous performance outfits and the powerful messages behind each song she performs and records. I remember the first time I saw Lady Gaga perform live on TV. I said to myself, "Wow! She's confident and comfortable being her true self." Since that moment, she has been a role model for me. She encourages me to be myself no matter what, and to realize it's okay to wear what makes me most comfortable. I find all her music enjoyable, yet the song I relate to most is "Born This Way." As a woman who is bisexual and part of the LGBTQ+ community, it took me a long time to accept my bisexuality. "Born This Way" inspires me to continue growing in my full self-acceptance. The line in the song that says, "Don't hide yourself in regret, just love yourself and you're set," really hits for me. And I am finally loving myself completely. My Dad, John Turner, once said to me, "Everyone has a question. Seek to explore yours."

Kristin Turner is a 31-year-old bisexual stay-at-home mom of a soon-to-be 12-year-old daughter.

Chapters 50+

By Dr. Barbara A. Hopkins, Ph.D.

Upon the announcement of *BWQ*'s pop culture theme and prior to the Bi+ World Meet Up, I embarked on a mission to watch every LGBT movie on my streaming channels. I am not done yet. However, not one of the 36 movies, documentaries, docuseries, or series I watched had a storyline about an elder bi+ person discovering and disclosing their identity and sexual orientation. During the Bi+ World Meet Up I was afforded the opportunity to be a participant in a breakout room with a bi+ elder. It was just the two of us. That discussion inspired this article.

I am not writing this from a scholarly standpoint; rather, as a 57-year-old, bi+, Black, cisgender female who worked extremely hard to obtain a higher learning degree. Navigating who you are and being true to yourself can be difficult and confusing during the pubescent and adolescent years. Dictionary.com defines pop culture as "cultural activities or commercial products reflecting, suited to, or aimed at the tastes of the general masses of people." Pop culture has depicted those hardships in movies like *Love, Simon*; *Handsome Devil*; and *Blue Is the Warmest Color*; as well as television shows such as *Love, Victor*; *The Bisexual*; and most recently, *Heartstopper*. However, I must ask where are the mainstream serialized shows and movies about bi+ elders discovering, acknowledging, and expressing the life they have suppressed, oppressed, and hidden for half a century or more?

Navigating realization and disclosure in senior years can be very daunting and complicated. Those who are discovering and disclosing their bisexuality in their senior years—specifically 50 years of age and more—are faced with disparities that differ from younger cohorts. Prime examples are coming out to children, grandchildren, spouse, parents, and, if married, the in-laws. In essence, bi+ elders are in bi+ purgatory—invisible in the bi+ community, invisible in the 2SLGBTQIA community, invisible in the monosexual community, and invisible in pop culture. This invisibility can lead to social isolation, depression, and internalization of stigma. Furthermore, exploring opposite or same-sex encounters can be—for lack of a better word—scary. Online dating, frequenting night clubs, or going to LGBT-friendly bars and establishments are activities geared toward a younger cohort. So, where does the newly identified bi+ elder find bi+-specific support and desired companionship today and become a part of pop culture? I do not know. Perhaps, this article is a starting chapter.

Dr. Barbara A. Hopkins, Ph.D. is a post-doctoral researcher on the lived experiences of bi+ persons, a member of the APA Division 44, contributing writer for BWQ, and a member of the leadership team of the Bisexual Research Group founded by Dr. Julia Shaw.



Generation Zine

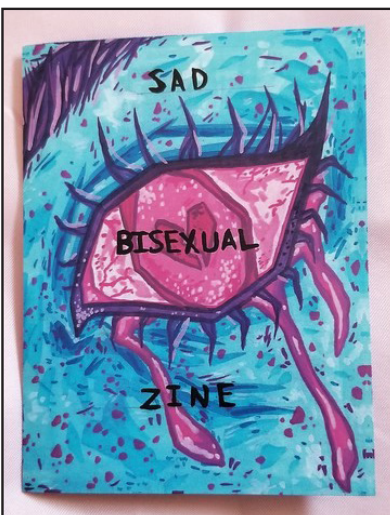
By Jen Bonardi

“Queer, punk, artist, and zinester all go together in the same persona,” says Jonathan Valelly. He would know: he’s a gay man, a lifelong punk, a prolific writer, and until recently, the longtime editor of *Broken Pencil*, a Canadian magazine on zine culture.

Zines are homemade mini-magazines, traditionally published with the help of staples and a Xerox machine. Although the medium began roughly 90 years ago as sci-fi program “fanzines,” many trace the origin of modern zines to the 1970s punk movement. If you watched last year’s Netflix movie *Moxie*, you saw Amy Poehler’s character wax nostalgic for zine culture during the riot grrl movement of the 1990s. The film focuses on the recent resurgence of interest in the medium, which Valelly attributes to the boom in comic books.

So what is the common thread running through sci-fi nerd, punk, riot grrl, comics geek, and queer identities? It’s counterculture. And not coincidentally, that’s a hallmark of the zine scene. “The queer punk political energy never went away,” Valelly says, noting that the outset of the medium’s renaissance was some time between 2010 and 2015. His theory is that this new generation of zinesters is disenchanted with the internet and smart phones. Generation Z wants an authentic analog experience—the realness of folding the paper, seeing a tangible process from beginning to end. “It’s like they’re hungry for something they never had because it’s so much realer than a Grindr profile,” he quips.

The allure of zines for young queer folks is also connected to its ephemeral impact—a rare treat in our current media landscape. “Zines are a safe place to experiment, make mistakes, fail, and have regrets because they won’t last forever, unlike your Facebook post from when you were 13,” explains Valelly. He reveals that the zine world actually has “a really intense institutional memory” but even if you write something appalling, it won’t be forever presumed to be an intrinsic part of you.



Zines not only give you space to change but also provide a generally progressive audience that focuses on good mental health. “If you’re just a teenager trying to figure out your gender by writing about it,” says Valelly, “I think that zines are a perfect way to do it.” Furthermore, the direct distribution model of zines builds a tighter,

more intimate community, giving young queers a sense of the subtly exchanged signals from when being gay was truly counterculture.

But let’s get to the important stuff: what could Valelly tell me about bi+ zines? Unfortunately, not much since there haven’t been enough bi+ zines to track their trends. What’s worse is the reason why: “Homopunk and queercore has this very anti-authoritarian, anti-normative thrust. And there still are strains in queer culture that see bisexuality as less radical, somehow, as though it’s a choice. It’s bullshit, but there’s an orthodoxy even in the zine scene, in some ways.”

Ugh. This? Still? Even here?

But as quickly as this revelation causes my spirits to plummet, Valelly offers a light of hope. Clementine Morrigan, an old pal from his zine fair carpools, recently created a zine about her experience as a bisexual woman that he thinks I’d enjoy. I buy and download *Fucking Girls*—ah, a digital zine! Very 21st century!—and promptly get my socks knocked off.

Here are some of Morrigan’s words that bowl me over with their resonance...

“The way my queer card is always on the brink of being revoked...”

“...feeling like a creep when expressing my desire for femmes...”

“...the way we attach queer legitimacy to particular sex acts makes them feel loaded and stressful...”

“...The violence of compulsory heteronormativity... We bring [it] with us into our queer worlds and our queer relationships...”

“...it ends up feeling like a friend hang out and I want desire to flow between us but I don’t know if it’s wanted...”

Excuse me, who let this woman read my diary?

In reading *Fucking Girls*, the potential for bi+ zines suddenly feels unlimited. Morrigan’s zines show how relatable and inspiring these DIY treasures can be. I begin surfing around for more bi+ zines and stumble upon: *Bisexual Survivors: Why Our Experiences Are Valid* by Nuage Collage, about bi+ interpersonal violence survivors; *Love Is Love Is Love* by Creepy Cheese, a serial zine on creative projects from bi+ people; and bi+ zines from Slovenia (*Bizine* by Kvartir) and Germany (*Make Me Feel* by SchwarzRund and SimoTier).

I ask Valelly how I might conduct a more directed search. He replies that most people get zines from fairs and zine libraries. Again, it’s these hand-to-hand distribution methods that keep the zine community small and personal. For bi+ zines specifically, he recommends looking at publications from Back Pocket Press and Mend My Dress Press, and giving Bolerium Books in San Francisco a call. And naturally, he suggests that I follow *Broken Pencil* on Instagram.

Valelly believes that the online craft marketplace Etsy.com is a popular source of zines. When I visit Etsy, I find Scotland's Foma Press which features three spectacular zines on bi+ history and activists. Other corners of Etsy yield *A Guide to Overcoming Internalized Biphobia* by Shelby Foss, and Becky Peel's *Bi the Bi: A Zine about Coming Out to Yourself*. Confirmed: Etsy is a bi+ zine goldmine.

If you delve into the site yourself, you'll notice that most of their zines are available in digital format. The internet does make accessing zines easier, although you could argue that something is lost in eschewing material production. In my opinion, the bigger concern this brings is the change in the distribution method. What creates the close community of zine appreciators, according to Valelly, is connecting with each buyer by handing your zine to them at a fair or packaging one for postal mail. My experience is that while making zines available online does widen access, you will probably still rely on contacts in the scene to find what you want.

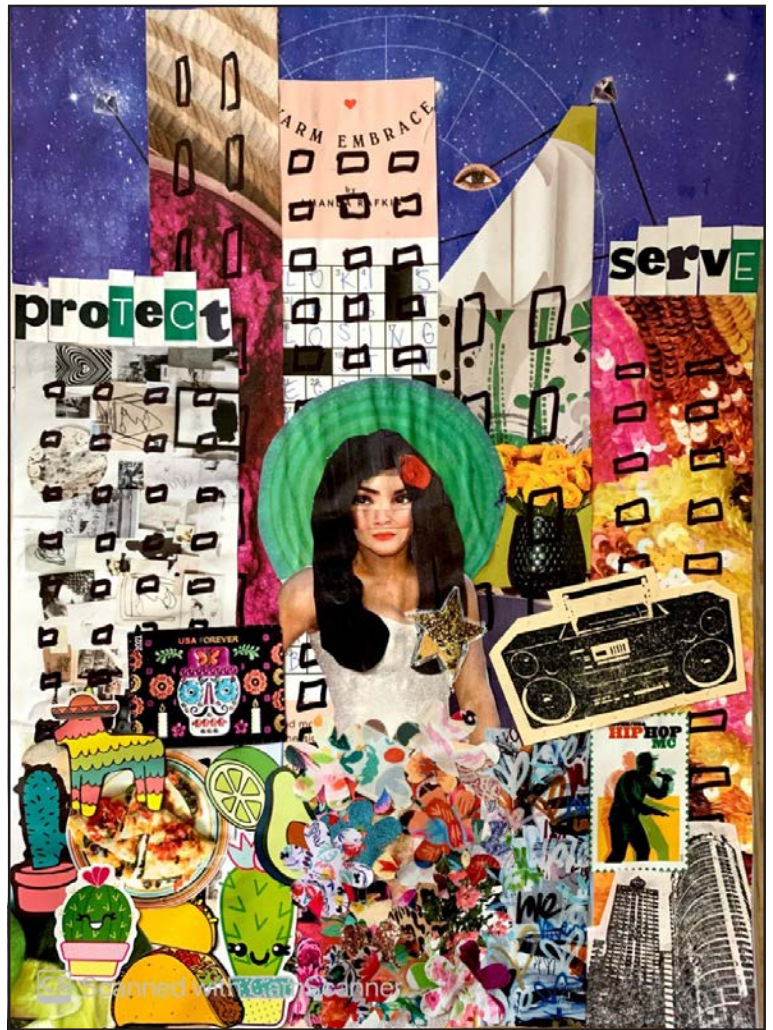
Perhaps the biggest advantage to connecting zine culture to the internet is the creation of online zine archives. With the help of the Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) at QZAP.org and the Bi/Pan/M-spec Zine Directory at BiPanLibrary.com/zines, I found classic bi+ zines like *Boobular* by Thami and *Spork* by Jeff Zick, both published in the 1990s. If you have little luck in finding bi+ zines using zine-oriented search engines, try looking through some bi+ sources. In fact, you can find mentions of two exemplary serial bi+ zines, *Fencesitter* and *The Fence*, in none other than Robyn Ochs and Sarah Rowley's book, *Getting Bi*.

Guess what else is considered a zine for and about bi+ women that started in the 1990s? Yep, you're reading it right now.

Maybe it's not that there aren't enough bi+ zines to generate trends. Maybe it's more that the ephemeral nature of zines, as borrowed from punk life, makes it hard to find and synthesize that information. The advent of the internet didn't make it simple to penetrate the zine world. You have to put effort into it and connect with real people who can guide you to zines that speak to you.

As we're talking, Valelly empathizes, "It can feel very lonely when you're the only bisexual at the Queer Zine Fair." But it doesn't have to be this way. There's so much more to say about being bi+.

Jen Bonardi served on the Bisexual Resource Center (BRC) board for five years and created bisexual character extraordinaire, Tiggy Upland.



Bi+ TV Trope, by Jen Bonardi



Pop Culture: What the Hell Is It?

By Jane Barnes

What is pop, anyway? Animated movies? Musclemen dramas? Otherworldly (we *wish*) wars? Or current music mumbled by “them” in a soft voice? Maybe it’s jeans or red hair or little girl feminist millennials discovering fashion trends that went out in 1970. Maybe pop in my squirrely youth was Johnny Mathis, gladiator movies, strawberry Cokes from green glass bottles. Fifties full skirts? Flavored ice cream with bubblegum names?

It sure wasn’t being bisexual or even sexual in my day, though many friends twisted and turned in VW bugs hoping and failing to stay unpregnant. Maternity clothes were made to cover the tummy, not to be flattering, and maternity itself was shameful. *The rubber broke!* (rubber = condom). In California then you rode to Reno in the back seat of your parents’ yellow Chevrolet and got hitched whether you still liked the guy or not.

Singers, that’s it? After not recognizing any singers, I turn on my Fire Stick and there is a person on MSNBC called Johnny Depp, surely a pop star and bad boy. Bad boy in a court of law? Let’s not minimize this. Pop star beating up his girlfriend, Amber Heard, who wrote an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* about domestic abuse, not naming Depp, though everyone knew. Is that pop? He called her vile things and wished the worst on her and was that pop culture? He’s suing for \$50 mil and she for \$100. It’s not she vs. he. It’s sexism and violence vs. basic rights.

Any woman (one in three or more) who’s cowered in a corner while a man screams insults knows this. Harmed by kitchen equipment—the frying pan or a steak knife. What have you. Yes, booze plays a large part, getting “wasted” like a big boy, and



eventually behaving outside the law while under the influence. But real recovery from that insanity is owning your behavior. Is it pop to say you’re sorry and then act like you meant it? Or not?

What about the Ukraine? Big bad Putin with his outmoded army trying to obliterate a lovely democracy? Bullying in the extreme. “I have more testosterone [read: money] than you (having stolen it from the people).” Meanwhile Zelensky’s fabulous, highly ironic, deeply bittersweet TV series, *Servant of the People*, is pop, right? Comedy may be pop, I don’t know. Lady Gaga? Yes. Pop! With a conscience and social responsibility to go from meat dress to jazz love songs!

In the fifties I listened to rock an’ roll on the San Francisco radio station from my hick town in northern California—from Elvis to R.E.S.P.E.C.T., and they had more to say than just about love songs—though love songs they were. Then gays (and I) came out and so did many singers. Cris Williamson was folk: is folk pop? Singer Rodriguez or his shadow, Bob Dylan?

I love jazz, experimental/atonal, classical (medieval thru John Cage) so that leaves country and pop, and rap of course with less music, more words, and BLM and nonbinary girls and other crucial matters. I listen to remote jazz stations, and go to concerts of my bestie Gordon, New York composer, who plays far “above” what I might call pop: electric organ, violin, piano, and carefully-placed shouts. Set designer Christine has a pitch-perfect, flute-like voice. She was in a pop band. And I was once in a viola da gamba consort (quartet) and we consorted with pop music in 1500-1600 for dancing.

My bad guy neighbor swings into his driveway with his radio blasting pop or grunge or something, after the bars have closed. The boys upstairs sometimes thump to something I don’t recognize, and Alexa plays the same Grieg on Amazon music when I ask for classical.

I think I’ll press on the mic button on my Fire Stick remote tonight and ask Alexa to play me some pop. And maybe Google will show me pop clothes. Is that vintage wear or something else? Maybe having a unisex haircut and red Buddha thread bracelets and a ripped white T? I just got the boy haircut from Dina, the hardworking Albanian. Her choice not mine. So, did she make me pass for 25? Look like pop star Katy Perry? (No, dear, you are almost 80!).

Please, you adorable bi-lettes, explain this to me! Is being out bi pop? What about bi-ing old? Then I’ve made it. Know it. Got it.

Jane Barnes regularly contributes poems, stories and essays to BWQ. She has poems coming out—so to speak—in Wrongdoing Magazine and The Gay & Lesbian Review. She is working on two poetry manuscripts, “The Inbetween” and “Deceptive Cadence.” She lives in New York City.

The Validity of Casual Bisexual Representation

By VeronicaOfOsea

“How about you? You’re a prince. Must have been would-be-princesses or perhaps, another prince?”

“A bit of both. I suspect the same as you. But, nothing ever...”

“Real.”

That casual dialogue in the third episode of the Marvel Studios series *Loki* aired on June 23rd had me screaming, rewinding, rewatching, and screaming, and it probably had the same effect on many others. Not only did this confirm what was well-known knowledge in Norse mythology and canon in the Marvel comics of the beloved God of Mischief, but it was the first acknowledgment of not one but two canonically bi characters in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. To be honest, I didn’t expect this, and it stunned me for a good second but then had me screaming with joy, not only as a fan but also as a bisexual individual. Kate Herron, the director of the first season, posted the following tweet after the episode:

“From the moment I joined @LokiOfficial it was very important to me, and my goal, to acknowledge Loki was bisexual. It is a part of who he is and who I am too. I know this is a small step but I’m happy, and heart is so full, to say that this is now Canon in #mcu #Loki.”

Included in that tweet were three hearts resembling the colors of the Bi Pride flag and screenshots of that conversation. A lovely detail about it is that nearly the whole episode is tinged in beautiful “bisexual lighting” in pink, blue, and purple.

But no victory lasts that long, especially not on social media because quickly after wide ranges of praise and acknowledgment, there were critical voices of it being too casual, too little, that it could be too easily removed to market the show in countries where being queer is still illegal. And though some of that criticism was and is still valid, very soon another argument came up as the show progressed and with it that Loki and Sylvie became the canon “ship” of the show.

In the following weeks and months and sadly up until today I came across a lot of discourse on social media that claimed the pairing was “straight” because it was male/female (m/f) presenting. And as I spent many tiring hours trying to explain to people that as long as one character is queer in whatever form—a pairing or relationship, whether it’s fictional or real—isn’t straight, I came to the realization that this argument was and is quite common whenever there is bisexual representation.

There is a notion that bisexual representation in the media is only valid if it features a same-sex pairing or showcases bisexual characters having relationships (romantically and/or sexually) with a variety of different partners of different genders. Sadly,

this is something that mirrors the experiences of a lot of my bisexual peers. As I had to defend a fictional pairing of bisexual characters for being proper bisexual representation, I have to do the same for my monogamous m/f presenting relationship IRL. And a lot of this discourse comes especially from younger members of the LGBTQIA+ community who have embodied a quite negative stance on apparently m/f presenting pairings. As much needed same-gender bisexual representation is and will be in the future, it’s equally important to remove the stigma that revolves around m/f presenting bisexuals and their need for proper representation. With the present mindset—especially on social media—I’ve seen people being shamed for different-gender attraction even if it only applies to fictional characters in terms of binary patterns.

To be honest, I was truly happy to see bisexual representation that happened casually in a conversation because, in my experience, that was how I and many of us reveal our sexuality: no dramatic actions attached, no manipulation going on, and for once not being solely centered around our sexual desires. As boring as it may sound, it felt normal and it made me feel seen. It definitely had a genuine feel to it, and I can only assume this might have been fueled by Kate Herron’s personal experiences of her own sexuality and how we manage to reveal it to those around us. And I’m even more glad that she got to embody that vision with such talented actors as Sophia Di Martino and Tom Hiddleston, who delivered that conversation in such a natural way that it resonated with and spoke to a lot of people.

As much as I agree with people and their demand for same-gender bisexual representation in the second season of the show whether it will be for Loki, Sylvie, or both, I really hope that it also might further the normality of m/f presenting bi pairings because that is the reality a lot of bisexual people live in without having to fear to be shamed for the attraction they feel.

VeronicaOfOsea is a bisexual woman using she/her they/ them pronouns living in Northern Germany in a monogamous bi relationship, battling the cliches against m/f presenting bi couples. Find them on Twitter: @VeronicaOfOsea.



To Boldy Represent ...

By Shauna Brock

Legend tells of a party. It's the late 1960s and George Takei walks up to *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry and asks if he, a gay man, can see his character, Hikaru Sulu, portrayed as openly gay. Roddenberry tells him, very kindly, that it will never fly. It was hard enough convincing the network that Black women and other people of color could be in positions of authority on the show. Homosexuality? He just can't do it. He still needs to be able to sell the show. The show still needs to make money for the network.

Star Trek is still canceled in 1969 and in a twist of irony that only the writing gods can truly appreciate, it is the queer love of the Kirk/Spock "slash" shippers that expand the fandom and usher in a whole new era of fanbase engagement. Later, Sulu would get his due when the character is shown as openly queer in the 2016 JJ Abrams *Star Trek: Beyond* movie. It is a small moment, but pays homage to Takei.

(For the uninitiated: the fanzines that featured the "slash" fic of Kirk/Spock were so popular that they helped to fuel the popularity of the show and keep it alive over the decades. You get the term "slash fic" from that little slash between their names, my queer friends.)

It is 1987. Patrick Stewart intones "Space, the final frontier" for the very first time. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* has premiered and for the next almost twenty years, queer children of what comes to be known as the Berman Era of Trek (referencing executive producer Rick Berman) will be given the likes of Tasha Yar, William Riker, Data, Kira Nerys, Jadzia Dax, Elim Garak, Julian Bashir, Quark, Odo, Kathryn Janeway, Harry Kim, Seven of Nine, and Malcolm Reed. A new era had arrived, one where the queerness was far more accessible.

But for all of the coded queer images the tellers of Trek tales gave us, and despite the best hopes and wishes of many of the actors and writers, the main characters of the franchise remained ... well ... straight.

There were the well-intentioned and yet often awkward episodes. Like the *TNG* one where Riker falls for the alien who is supposed to be non-gendered but identifies as female (legend has it that the character was initially supposed to identify as male, and Jonathan Frakes championed this idea, but the network shut it down). There was the Trill one where despite multiple host bodies, the symbiont loves Beverly. Then, there are the *DS9* episodes that really don't age very well, where Quark explores different concepts of Ferengi gender. There's that Cogenitor episode of *Enterprise* that definitely had its heart in the right place even if, as with all of the other "gender and sexuality" episodes of the time, it tripped over itself trying to do the right thing.

There is one stand-out in all of that, though. In a moment of bittersweet tenderness we watch the joined Trill Jadzia Dax fall for the current host of a past spouse. In the episode, the taboos were not about same-sex love, but instead about the complexities of Trill society and the problems of falling for someone who was involved with a past host. The iconic image of Terry Ferrell and Susanna Thompson locked in a passionate embrace is still one of the first pictures to come up in a search for *Deep Space Nine*.

But for all of the coding, all of the promise, the only place we saw queer characters was in the mirror universe, where sex and sexuality were used to define personality and very rarely in a positive light. It didn't matter that we learned how Andy Robinson played Garak as being in love with Bashir. Or that Nana Visitor and Terry Ferrell would have been open to Kira and Dax getting together. Coding is coding after all.

(And, for the record, there is a difference between coding and baiting. They are defined at the end of this article.)

But then, something happened. Trek fans resigned to writing and reading their queer fic into eternity learned of a new show. A new franchise. And, we soon learned, a future where "Queer in Space" was a very visible reality. Helmed by producer Alex Kurtzman, the franchise was about to take on a whole new dimension.

In 2017, *Star Trek: Discovery* premiered. A show starring a Black woman (Sonequa Martin-Green as Michael Burnham) and featuring multiple people of color in positions of leadership. And many of those characters were also openly queer.

Discovery gave us something that is so rare to see in mainstream television: queer people who are not just integral to the plot but who also have realistic, adult relationships that aren't about the trauma of coming out. They're just about the trauma of life on a starship. During wartime. In the middle of chaos. In the calm of peace. In season one, when we first see Stamets and Culber together, they are just brushing their teeth at the end of the day. Just brushing their teeth and talking. Not pushed to the side. Not ignored. Just being ... people.

Over four seasons of *Discovery*, all of the openly queer characters have been played by openly queer and trans actors. Wilson Cruz, Anthony Rapp, Tig Notaro, Ian Alexander, and Blu del Barrio all exist as this found family onboard the USS *Discovery*. In addition, *Discovery* actors Mary Weissman, Mary Chieffo, and Emily Coutts are also openly queer members of the company. The show is currently led by openly gay writer Michelle Paradise, who took over from Aaron Harberts, who is also openly gay.

But still Trek fans shifted uncomfortably, waiting to see what the other shows of this new Kurtzman Era would give us. Would *Discovery* be the only queer show? At first, it seemed so.

Until (SPOILER ALERT!) the confirmation on *Lower Decks* of Mariner's bisexuality, and the powerful relationship between Raffi and Seven on *Star Trek: Picard*.

Even more, as *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* approaches a premiere date, we are seeing the portrayal of iconic characters by non-binary actors (Celia Gooding, as Uhura), and starting in May 2022, we will be able to see what they do with the gender and sexuality representation in this next Trek iteration. Will we see more bi male representation? Or more lesbian rep? (Raffi and Seven on *Picard* are both confirmed to be bisexual.)

It's been a long road (see what I did there?). And it's been a frustrating one. It shouldn't have taken fifty years for fans to see active, open representation of themselves in the canon or for the producers to actively celebrate queer stories. Given the backlash against the queer characters on social media, it can be argued that there is a clear line from the network refusing to highlight representation from the get-go to how people blast newer Trek for being "too gay," and that failure to cultivate positive stories is a legacy that era of producers must live with.

It is 2020. The story has been confirmed that at a convention, Michelle Hurd (Raffi, *Star Trek: Picard*) and Jeri Ryan (Seven, *Star Trek: Voyager* and *Picard*) took a photo together. When they looked at it, Michelle jokingly declared "now that's the cutest couple ever." The producers saw the picture and ran with

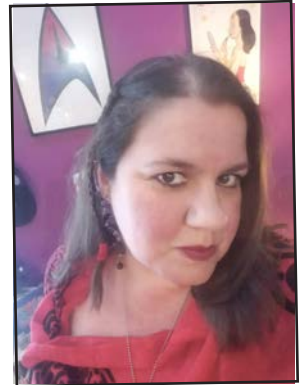
the idea. They never questioned, never worried about what the network would say. They just looked at two women with amazing chemistry and said, "Let's tell that story."

Definitions:

Queer Baiting: to create the active belief in canon that a character is queer in order to attract and monetize queer viewers and then "bait and switch" to cement the character as straight.

Queer Coding: writing and acting in ways that "identify" a character as queer to audiences and never removing the idea that the character could be queer no matter how they end up romantically attached by the end of the story.

Shauna Brock is a (recovering) community organizer. She was the founder of Utah's 1 to 5 Club and now focuses her time on writing queer romance and watching way too much Star Trek.



Who are our pop culture role models? Short answers:

I cried when I watched Rosa Diaz's coming out scene in Brooklyn Nine-Nine. At the time I was not out to my family, and I was so scared they would reject me like her parents initially did. Seeing an actual bi actor play a bi character made it feel so authentic and was such positive representation for me. I wish I'd had that when I was a teenager.

—hannahmacc93, Insta

All the vampire characters on *What We Do in the Shadows* are pansexual. The show's joyful queerness has been a huge inspiration to me in my own journey. I especially appreciate the character Nadja, who is married to a man and still matter-of-factly honors her queer identity.

—chelsnerd, Insta

Margaret Cho inspires me, because she has been adamantly out and proud as bi (while also being funny about it) since long before it was any kind of safe. A couple of decades now!

—Francesca Maria, FB

It's been such a joy over the last year to see *Hacks* take off as a mainstay of pop culture, with bi character Ava Daniels—played by bi actress Hannah Einbinder—front and center along the powerhouse that is Jean Smart. Ava is a complicated and nuanced character who I relate to in a lot of ways, including—perhaps especially—in ways that I don't particularly love but am able to embrace a bit through her. Hannah Einbinder's absolute joy in playing this role and the intentionality with which she (and the largely queer cast and creative team) works to bring authenticity, humor, and compassion to Ava is palpable and apparent in every scene.

—Avery Friend, email

At nine, I discovered my bisexuality, but like many children, I didn't have the words for it. I knew zero other queer people. A few years later, an exciting sci-fi show called *Babylon 5* aired. I had an immediate crush on Susan Ivanova (played by bi+ actor Claudia Christian), and I soon noticed that she was like me. The show pushed Susan's queer romances as far as possible for early 1990s network TV. As an adult, I met Christian and thanked her for this representation that meant everything to a younger me. She was incredibly kind and gracious.

—Erica McGillivray (they/them), email

The Research Corner

Article: Broad City: Millennial Women Surviving the Neoliberal Gig Economy in Comedy Television

Forthcoming in *Journal of Popular Culture*

In a forthcoming article, entitled “*Broad City*: Millennial Women Surviving the Neoliberal Gig Economy in Comedy Television,” to be published in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, I will explore the euphorically pansexual Comedy Central television show *Broad City* (2014-2019). From the opening scene (“What a Wonderful World”), Ilana calls best friend Abbi and states their objective: “Abbi, no joke, today is the day we become ‘Abbi and Ilana, the boss bitches we are in our minds,’ are you with me?” Even though these two white, Jewish, downwardly mobile millennials struggle in the gig economy while living in NYC, they do it with humor and their own personal flair, which leads to comedies of errors that form the plotline of the episodes fueling five seasons of debauchery and economic struggle.

Despite being the most college-educated generation to exist, millennials (folks born between 1981 and 1996) are less financially secure than their parents’ generation. Millennials entered the economy after the Great Recession, which has been slow to recover gainful employment. One outcome of this is an increase in the “gig economy,” where folks move from contract to contract or do freelance work rather than hold a steady job. This series illustrates the neoliberal context of the millennial generation and their lack of employment opportunities and potential for advancement, which can be useful in explaining the anti-work attitude of the main characters.

In *Broad City*, while struggling financially, Ilana, the bolder of the two, does not let their limited resources hold them back from a hedonist lifestyle in which they party, consume cannabis, and date people of many genders and races, without relying on identity-based terms to define their sexual orientation; indeed, their sexual orientation is never questioned. We first encounter Ilana engaging in antics to avoid work at all costs at her classified advertisements sales job at the web company called “Deals! Deals! Deals!” Most commonly, we see Ilana sleeping in the bathroom,

while her boss Todd is so passive that he seeks therapy to gain the courage to fire Ilana. However, at one meeting, we learn that the workers are not paid regularly.

While Ilana sleeps on the job and intimidates her boss, Abbi is degraded by her work—cleaning the bathroom at Soulstice Gym. As their full-time jobs are anything but stable, Ilana and Abbi supplement their work with one-off or ongoing gig work that they conduct both individually and together. Abbi and Ilana have dreams and ambitions. Abbi is a struggling artist with little time left from her employment to produce her art. She has ambition to sell her artwork for money, and we see her work toward this goal throughout the series. All of this illustrates the broader sociological and economic context in which we are currently living, including the demographics, low wealth attainment markers, high education attainment, and lack of housing and upward mobility for the millennial generation to which Ilana and Abbi belong. *Broad City* provides a comical examination of a serious social problem—the growing economic inequality that has reached white, middle-class, college-educated, up-and-coming millennials who have ambitious career aspirations but are stymied at each turn. Furthermore, it presents a pansexual world in which the characters date people of various genders and races, without couching it with identity-based language, and rather, presents it in a normative and unquestioned fashion, hinting at a pansexual utopia, even while positioned in a neoliberal context of downward mobility for younger generations.



Beverly Yuen Thompson co-edits this Research Corner with Nicola Koper. She is a professor of Sociology at Siena College in Albany, NY.

Who are our pop culture role models? Short answers:

I would say Stephanie Beatriz because she is a badass Latina, bisexual working mom who is happily married to a man and she is EXACTLY the kind of representation our community needs! And she's funny AF, and a Disney character—what more do we all need?!

—Kelly Kahler, LinkedIn

I absolutely love the show *Good Trouble* (a continuation of the show *The Fosters*—also highly recommended!), especially the character Malika Williams. Malika is a former foster child who has grown up to be a driven community activist who comes to understand herself as queer and polyamorous. Her story is one of love for herself as a queer, Black woman who is navigating relationships and larger community building. Her story is beautifully represented in the context of the weaving together of many stories of friends who become each other's chosen family as part of an intentional community.

—Lindsey Thomson, Ontario, Canada, email

Boston's Bi Book Group Creates Community

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

I swore off regular book clubs years ago when I ended up reading books that I didn't like and never would have read if given the choice. I LOVE to read, and like many people who love to read, I want to discuss what I read; but at this stage in my life, I don't want to waste time reading books that don't interest me. There are so many more books on my shelves, in the library, and in the bookstores that I really want to read!

So, when Branden Kornell decided to start up a Bi Book Group for the Boston area in July 2012 under the umbrella of the Bisexual Resource Center Meetup group, I was a little hesitant to take on the commitment. But after talking to Branden about my desire to only read books that I wanted to read, he emphasized that people would have the choice to opt in or out of particular books. With that stipulation, I was in!

Branden initially invited the book group to a restaurant so that folks could have dinner and talk books in a relaxed setting after work. When it turned out that having an involved conversation about a book was next to impossible for a group of 8-10 people to have in a noisy restaurant, Branden and his partner Simona decided to invite the group to meet in their own living room. It was a generous offer and one that created a warm and inviting atmosphere for folks to gather in a circle, share some snacks, and get into deep and intellectually vibrant discussions. And, of course, when the pandemic forced everyone into the safety of our homes, the book group continued with an online meeting, and it still persists that way now.

Over the last ten years, the group has evolved into a pattern of meeting every other month and has read 51 books. I've probably read about two-thirds of the titles that were chosen, staying away from most of the sci-fi and fantasy, which have never been my thing. We've read classics like Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, James Baldwin's *Another Country*, and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. We've read memoirs by Charles M. Blow, Daisy Hernández, and Alan Cumming. And we've read an amazing array of fiction and non-fiction.

What makes a book a bi book? It could be written by an out bi author. It could contain characters who identify as bi or it could involve bi history or theory. Or the book could break through the binaries of sexuality and gender in such a way that it ignites the bi imagination. At some point in every one of our book discussions we stop and ask the question, "Is this a bi book?" And probably 98% of the books have passed the test.

Our group may consider a book a bi book, but when you look out into the larger world of book reviews, far too often it is only discussed as a gay or lesbian book, maybe a queer book. And in those instances, any reference to relationships with other-sex partners is usually trivialized. It is refreshing to be in a circle of

folks who want to discuss the full experiences of the characters and who understand the complexities of bi lives.

When I asked Branden why he thinks it's important to have a space that focuses on bi books, he responded, "I've always enjoyed reading books with queer characters. There's incredible variety among bisexual people and the experiences—real and fictional—that they have. Some narratives are immediately accessible to me, and others are completely outside of my experience. I really enjoy having a space where fellow queer folks can talk through their connections to and criticisms of the stories; it helps me think through the texts in additional ways."

Branden, Simona, myself and a couple others have been part of the group since the beginning, and it's been great to have new people join over time. There is still no requirement to read every book, but I always look forward to the camaraderie and sense of community I feel when I gather with the gang.

These are my favorite books from each year of the Book Group:

July 2012: *In One Person*, John Irving

December 2013: *Aquamarine*, Carol Anshaw

July 2014: *The Two Hotel Francforts*, David Leavitt

February 2015: *Not My Father's Son*, Alan Cumming

May 2016: *Fun Home*, Alison Bechdel

August 2017: *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, Charles M. Blow

August 2018: *White Houses*, Amy Bloom

November 2019: *Miss Timmins' School for Girls*, Nayana Currimbhoy

September 2020: *Her Body and Other Parties*, Carmen Maria Machado

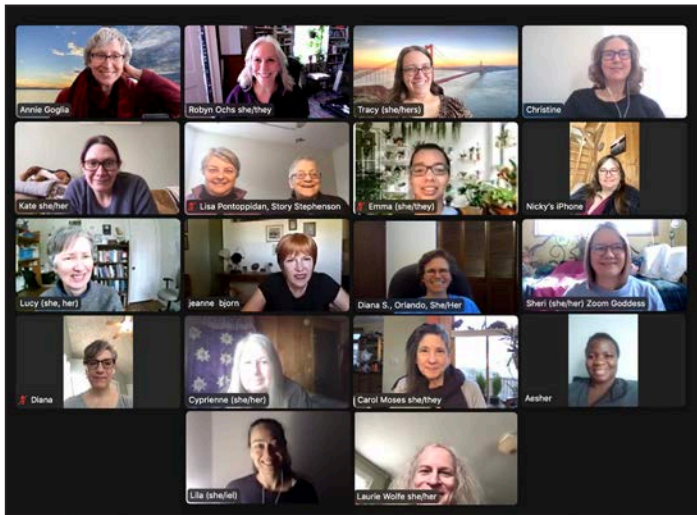
January 2021: *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, Ocean Vuong

Ellyn is the Executive Director of SpeakOut Boston, and sometimes guest editor of BWQ.



CALENDAR

Folks in the Greater Boston area: There are a large number of resources here, and you can find up-to-date information through the Bisexual Resource Center: biresource.org/boston-groups/



Here's a special invitation to our readers EVERYWHERE:

Please consider joining the Boston Bisexual Women's Network at one (or all) of our digital brunches—just be aware times listed are US Eastern Time. We are proud of our community of women (trans and cis) and nonbinary folks, and we would love to make connections across the country (and globe). Grab your coffee or tea and some food while we chat about bi+ issues and other fun topics.

Digital brunches will be held on the following dates:

5 June (Sun.) 1pm start

9 July (Sat.) 12:30 start

7 Aug. (Sun.) 1pm start

10 Sept. (Sat.) 1pm start

9 Oct (Sun.) 1pm start

(Note: Dates are subject to change. Check BiWomenBoston.org to confirm date.) Info/RSVP: BWQEvents@gmail.com.

Please join us!

IN-PERSON BRUNCHES ARE BACK!!!

Please join us for an in-person potluck brunch in my backyard in Jamaica Plain on Saturday, June 11 from 1-4pm (raindate June 12). RSVP Robyn at BiWomenEditor@gmail.com.

Additional brunches will be scheduled during the course of the summer, including a Book Swap Brunch in September.

Please message me (Robyn) if you are interested in hosting an event in July or August.



FREE BI+ GLOBAL EVENT

Join us at the 7th & 8th World Bi+ Meetups! To accommodate people in various time zones, we will have TWO meetups each time: Meetup #7 will be July 15, 4 p.m. EDT/10 p.m. CEST & July 16, 4 a.m. EDT/10 a.m. CEST; Meetup #8 will be October 28, 4 p.m. EDT/10 p.m. CEST.

Bi+ people everywhere are invited to join either or both meetups on Zoom. We'll be using breakout rooms to give folks an opportunity to meet each other in a friendly and free setting. The meeting is in English & is organized by Barbara Oud (Netherlands) and Robyn Ochs (U.S.). Pre-registration is required. Register at <https://biplus.nl/biplus-world-meetup>.

Metro-Boston women & non-binary folks:

Keep up with local events by subscribing to our Google group: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/biwomenboston>

We offer FREE digital subscriptions to this publication to people of all genders and all orientations. Subscribe at BiWomenQuarterly.com.

Consider this: If you rarely (or never) see people like yourself represented in print, your voice is especially important. When you lift your voice, someone, somewhere will FINALLY see their own experiences reflected, perhaps for the first time. (See our call for writing on page 2.)