

Communication Perspectives on Popular Culture (2016)
Herrmann, Andrew F.
Herbig, Art (eds.)
Lanham, MD: Lexington.
pp. 1-11

ONE

Queering Popular Culture

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Popular culture texts possessing “queer” characteristics and espousing “queer” messages are important. Such texts—such queer texts—can subvert, spoil, and promote transgressive ideas about culturally prevalent, false and insidious beliefs, practices, and expectations, especially those tied to same-sex attraction, heterosexuality, sexual desire, kinship, and family. Queer texts can acknowledge, reclaim, and celebrate affects commonly perceived to be peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting, and, in so doing, curb the shame associated with these affects. Queer texts can also offer innovative ideas about intimacy, relationships, and the future.

My purpose for this chapter is to demonstrate how to interpret popular culture texts in queer ways. I first define and describe various uses of “queer.” I then discern queer characteristics of three popular culture texts: the television series *The Golden Girls* (1985–1992), the HBO television series *The Leftovers* (2014–2016), and the Disney/Pixar film *Inside Out* (2015). I conclude with additional insights about the queerness of popular culture texts.

DEFINING “QUEER”

“Queer” is a term with many uses. Queer can refer to same-sex attraction or be used synonymously with “homosexual,” “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” or “transgender.”¹ Queer can also describe messages and actions that rebel against heterosexual—“heteronormative”—expectations of intimate relationships, including biases against being single, aspirations for mar-

riage, norms about intimacy, desires for monogamy, and assumptions about the importance of biological reproduction, kinship, and family lineage.² Given these definitions, a queer popular culture text might subtly reference, or explicitly celebrate, same-sex attraction, homosexuality, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues and identities; or the text might subtly avoid, or explicitly rebel against, heteronormative expectations of intimate relationships.

Other definitions of queer do not pertain to sexuality and heteronormativity. Queer can be used to describe messages and actions that rebel against culturally prevalent, false and insidious promises about optimism, happiness, and the future.³ Queer can also describe affects commonly perceived to be peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting—affects such as undecidability, failure, depression, and melancholy.⁴ Given these definitions, a queer popular culture text might subtly avoid, or explicitly rebel against, prevalent, false and insidious promises; or the text might subtly reference, or explicitly celebrate, affects commonly perceived to be peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting.

As I mentioned, queer popular culture texts—texts that espouse any of these queer definitions and that appeal to mass, everyday audiences—are important for numerous reasons. Queer texts can subvert, spoil, and promote transgressive ways to talk about culturally prevalent, false and insidious beliefs, practices, and expectations, especially those tied to same-sex attraction, heterosexuality, sexual desire, reproduction, kinship, and family.⁵ Queer texts can acknowledge, reclaim, and celebrate affects commonly perceived to be peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting, and, in so doing, curb the shame associated with these affects.⁶ Queer texts can also offer innovative ideas about intimacy, relationships, and the future.⁷

Next, in order to illustrate various queer interpretations, I discern queer characteristics of three popular culture texts. I first describe how the series *The Golden Girls* (1985–1992) promotes queer messages, especially regarding same-sex attraction, sexual desire, kinship, and family relationships. I then offer a queer interpretation of *The Leftovers* (2014–2016)—a series that does not espouse messages of same-sex attraction or foreground non-heterosexual assumptions or relationships, but instead promotes the recognition, and even celebration of, queer affects such as melancholy, despair, and prolonged grief. As a third example, I offer a queer analysis of the film *Inside Out* (2015), a film that is queer in its references to same-sex attraction and sexual desire, as well as queer in its celebration of “sadness,” an affect often considered to be taboo.

STAYING GOLDEN

The television series *The Golden Girls* (1985–1992) foregrounds the lives of four women—Blanche, Dorothy, Rose, and Sophia—all of whom share a house in Miami, Florida. All of the women are White; Blanche, Dorothy, and Rose are in their late 50s/early 60s; Sophia is in her early 80s. Each episode focuses on comedic, though sometime serious, situations these women encounter. Even though the series ended in 1992, it has been in syndication for more than two decades on a variety of cable channels within the United States (US). As of this writing (2016), the series continues to air on two channels: Hallmark, a channel that foregrounds “family-friendly” programming; and Logo, a channel that offers programming for LGBT—that is, queer—audiences. But why might a series that ended in 1992 air on a channel that explicitly caters to queer audiences (Logo)? One explanation is that the show promotes queer beliefs, practices, and expectations, especially those tied to same-sex attraction, heterosexuality, sexual desire, reproduction, kinship, and family.

Numerous episodes of *The Golden Girls* explicitly address queer issues and demonstrate queer ways of living. Nearly every episode makes at least one reference to same-sex attraction, and some episodes foreground LGBT content. For example, in one episode, Dorothy’s best friend, Jean, who identifies as a lesbian, struggles with her intimate attraction to Rose. In one episode, Blanche’s brother, Clayton, worries about telling Blanche that he is gay; in a later episode, Clayton worries about telling Blanche that he plans to marry Doug, his (male) partner.

The content of the series—four unmarried women living together and who proudly discuss their desire to take care of each other—also disrupts traditional ideas about who constitutes a family.⁸ In one episode, Rose has a heart attack and the hospital staff will not allow Blanche, Dorothy, and Sophia to visit because they are not Rose’s “family.” When Rose’s daughter, Kirsten, arrives, she also will not allow the women to visit Rose as they are not (biological) family. Kirsten soon realizes the women are indeed Rose’s family and arranges for them to visit. In another episode, a city official threatens to fine Blanche for renting her house to too many people (Dorothy, Rose, and Sophia). Blanche bypasses the fine by putting all of the women on the title to the house, as it belongs to, and thus should be owned by, all of them.

Other episodes of *The Golden Girls* offer representations of relationships that could be interpreted as queer—that is, as peculiar, absurd, and inappropriate. One episode foregrounds Blanche’s conflict with her daughter, Rebecca, for pursuing artificial insemination and wanting to have a child as a single, unmarried mother. Another episode features Dorothy’s conflict with her White son, Michael, and his desire to marry a Black woman who is nearly twice his age. Another episode shows Rose’s struggle with dating a short person. Numerous episodes also unapologet-

ically celebrate aging and foreground the women's sexual desires—another queer feat of the series, especially for people who frame these desires as peculiar and inappropriate.⁹

BEING LEFTOVER

Ten years ago, Brett—my friend and first significant boyfriend—died suddenly, either from committing suicide after coming out as gay to his father, or because of complications from diabetes.¹⁰ I had never had someone so close to me die, especially someone who felt like my only family. I was estranged from my family of origin after telling them I identified as gay, and Brett comforted me through many tumultuous interactions. He was my security, someone who cared for me when no one else could/would. Brett was also the first relational partner with whom I ever lived. He served as my queer mentor who taught me to feel less shame about my sexuality, and the first person to show me how ex-boyfriends could remain loving and close.

I miss Brett every day. But I have learned not to tell many people that I still miss him. In moments when I have said that I do, some people—even friends and family members—have questioned me about his significance in my life, questions that indicated something peculiar and inappropriate—queer—about my grief: I should no longer miss Brett as I did, and I felt as though I was expected to improve my sadness, as it may be unhealthy. But why can't I miss Brett, often and publicly, without the risk of being questioned or evaluated? Why can't my grief be considered a lengthy, and possibly even permanent, temperament never to be absolved or wished away? Why can't I embrace, and even celebrate, being a melancholic queer?¹¹

Others have made similar observations regarding the peculiarity and inappropriateness—the queerness—of prolonged grief. Blake Paxton uses queer theory to “convey alternative frameworks for long-term grief” and to subvert “feeling rules for emotional expression.”¹² Carolyn Ellis critiques the tendency to view prolonged grief as pathological, as something from which to “move on.” Instead, she argues, “it can be healthy to hold on to grief as a way to maintain a relationship with a person who has died.”¹³ And in writing about the continued mourning of his father's death, Jonathan Wyatt attempts to “trouble the received wisdom about bereavement,” noting that his mourning “does not feel pathological” and that he does not envision or desire the process to end.¹⁴

My experiences with grieving Brett, coupled with this research on prolonged grief, inform my queer interpretation of *The Leftovers*, an HBO television series based on the book by the same name. *The Leftovers* primarily takes place in a small community—Mapleton, New York—and focuses on how members of the community cope with the mysterious

disappearance of two percent of the population three years prior. Some community members grieve by joining the Guilty Remnant, a cult whose members wear white, constantly smoke, refuse to (verbally) speak, and believe that the disappearance was an act of/by God. Some community members grieve by committing crimes and harming others, including members of the Guilty Remnant. Some members try to better understand, and to establish effective ways to cope with the loss of their friends and family members such as by purchasing expensive, personalized mannequins that resemble the people who disappeared.

Although *The Leftovers* is not queer in terms of same-sex attraction, it is queer in its tone and content: It is melancholic, pessimistic, and unhappy, characteristics that others may consider to be peculiar and inappropriate—and maybe even disgusting. The soundtrack to *The Leftovers*, composed by Max Richter, is also brilliantly, and queerly, melancholic, pessimistic, and unhappy, each track tinted by grief and loss. For Mapleton residents, there is no forgetting or adequate ways to grieve and three years after the disappearance, their grief still exists. The sudden, catastrophic disappearance continues to tarnish community relationships, many of which are represented as eccentric, incoherent, and scarred by the past.

THE PROMISE OF SADNESS

In *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed, a prominent queer theorist, writes against popular uses, conceptualizations of, and desires for happiness—an unattainable affect that she frames as prevalent, false, and insidious. Ahmed's writing encourages me to think about the ways in which sadness and depression continue to be stigmatized, at least when juxtaposed against ideas of joy and happiness. I think about depression being dismissed as weak or unimportant, as a temperament to cure, or how it may even be racially considered, as Boylorn experienced, a “white person's disease.”¹⁵

These ideas inform my queer interpretation of the Disney/Pixar film *Inside Out*. The film tells the story of Riley, an eleven-year-old girl, and how five emotions—Anger, Sadness, Joy, Disgust, and Fear—guide her ideas and inter/actions. Throughout the first part of the film, Joy dominates Riley's emotional state; the other emotions matter much less and turn to Joy when Riley encounters disconcerting or stressful situations. Joy also aggressively curbs Sadness' influence on Riley by trying to distract Sadness with tasks such as reading cognitive operating manuals, asking Sadness to stay in a circle outlined in chalk on the floor, and even trying to encourage Sadness to become less sad.

Joy soon loses control of Sadness and both characters fall out of the emotional “control center.” With the support of other minor characters,

the goal of the rest of the film is to return Joy to the control center. The motivation to return Sadness is not as important because it is still perceived that Sadness is less necessary, and even unnecessary, for Riley's well-being. However, on their journey together, Joy not only experiences sadness, but also recognizes the importance of Sadness for Riley; Joy recognizes that all of Riley's joyful experiences have tinges of sadness, and, without Sadness, Joy could not exist.

Although Joy realizes that Sadness is one emotion Riley can use to garner attention from others—a realization that still frames sadness as an emotion that can/should motivate concern from others and, as such, may need to be improved (whereas joy cannot be used to garner attention nor does joy need to be improved)—Sadness is recognized as a necessary emotion; the character becomes important, and even celebrated, in the text. With this message, the film becomes increasingly queer as it rails against the culturally prevalent, false, and insidious promise of joy and happiness.

There are other queer characteristics of *Inside Out*, all of which relate to sexuality, same-sex attraction, and LGBT identities. For example, Riley wears a rainbow sweater when she first arrives in San Francisco—a possible reference to the rainbow typically associated with same-sex attraction, homosexuality, and LGBT identities, and a reference further enhanced by the setting of San Francisco, a city known for its queer spaces, histories, and sexual freedoms. Another queer instance happens when Disgust says, "There are no bears in San Francisco," to which Anger replies, "I saw a really hairy guy; he looked like a bear." Anger's comment offers an explicit, yet still coded, acknowledgment of "bear" subculture—that is, the community that celebrates large and hairy gay men.¹⁶

I interpret one of the minor characters, Rainbow Unicorn, in a queer way as well, not only because of the use of "Rainbow" in the character's name and the rainbow color of its mane, but also because of the character's subtle references to sex, desire, and the pornography film genre/industry. For example, when Joy first meets Rainbow Unicorn, Joy says, "I loved you in *Fairy Dream Adventure, Part Seven*." Mainstream films typically do not use seven sequels; porn films often do. Then, when Fear sees Rainbow Unicorn acting, Fear says that Unicorn should find a different plotline, a comment that suggests all of Unicorn's previous roles were similar—another common characteristic of porn actors/films. In the same scene, when Rainbow Unicorn begins to act, its flowing mane and demure posture resembles the classic image of Venus, the Roman goddess of love, sex, and desire.¹⁷ Further, the "top definition" of "Unicorn" on Urban Dictionary.com refers to a bisexual person, often a woman, who becomes sexually, though not emotionally, involved with an "existing couple"—another instance of how a Unicorn can signify sex and desire.¹⁸

Taken together, all of the aforementioned queer characteristics queer *Inside Out* in two additional ways. First, children, a primary audience of

the film and an audience often assumed to be asexual,¹⁹ will be exposed to subtle and ambiguous references about porn, sex, and desire. Second, the film may even equip children with the ability to at least talk about five emotions and, further, be able to say, with less shame, that they feel sad and that feeling sad is ok.

MAKING QUEER TEXTS | READING TEXTS QUEERLY

A queer popular culture text might subtly reference, or explicitly celebrate, same-sex attraction, homosexuality, LGBT issues and identities; or the text might subtly avoid, or explicitly rebel against, heteronormative expectations of intimate relationships. Although I demonstrated how texts such as *The Golden Girls* and *Inside Out* illustrated such queer characteristics, many popular culture texts also possess these characteristics. Examples include songs such as Macklemore's "Same Love" or Kacey Musgrave's "Follow Your Arrow," television series such as *Modern Family*, *Looking*, or *The L Word*, or the rainbow photo filter that allowed Facebook users to add a rainbow tint to their profile photo in order to mark their support for the United States Supreme Court ruling in support of same-sex marriage.²⁰

A queer popular culture text might also not reference sexuality at all. Instead, the text may subtly avoid, or explicitly rebel against, culturally prevalent, false and insidious promises; or it might subtly reference, or explicitly celebrate, affects commonly perceived to be peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting. Although I demonstrated how texts such as *The Golden Girls*, *The Leftovers*, and *Inside Out* illustrated such queer characteristics, many popular culture texts possess these characteristics as well. Examples include songs such as Radiohead's "Creep," Hozier's "Take Me to Church," or Rihanna's, "Diamonds," films such as *Requiem for a Dream*, *Amour*, *Blue Valentine*, *45 Years*, or *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, and television series such as *Lost* or *Six Feet Under*.

To conclude, I want to make two additional observations about queer popular culture texts. First, queer texts are contextual: They become queer in the moment they are interpreted as peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, disgusting, or as not/anti-heterosexual. As such, texts may not always be queer—they may be perceived as peculiar and inappropriate in one context, but typical and appropriate in another time and place.²¹ Further, when a text becomes less peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting, it becomes less queer.²² For example, within the United States, the hula-hoop, a prominent toy of popular culture, may have been normal in the 1950s; however, the popularity of the hula-hoop has since diminished. If someone asked for a hula-hoop, or advocated for a hula-hoop competition, the person may now be perceived as peculiar—that is, as a bit queer. Or consider how cigarette smoking, especially in many

public contexts within the United States, has become increasingly peculiar, inappropriate, and even disgusting; in such contexts, smoking has become a queer act.

As long as queer can be used as synonymous with same-sex attraction, homosexuality, and LGBT issues and identities, popular culture texts such as the ones I reference will always be queer in these ways. However, when heteronormative expectations of intimate relationships lessen in importance (e.g., desires for biological reproduction), when culturally prevalent, false and insidious promises lessen in importance (e.g., the unwieldy praising of happiness), and when affects commonly perceived to be peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting (e.g., prolonged sadness or grief) become less peculiar and more appropriate and coherent, then the texts I've described may become less queer. New queer characteristics might develop and may be illustrated in these texts, but knowing these new characteristics means trying to predict what future expectations, ideas, and affects will be considered peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting.

Second, note that the study of popular culture could be considered a queer area of study. Popular culture is still sometimes perceived as taboo, referred to as a part of "low culture," considered to be of not much importance and inappropriate for academic study; given that popular culture consists of the "everyday experiences of ordinary folks," it lacks seriousness and prestige, and is perceived to revel in "the informal, the underside, the grotesque."²³ However, as I've argued, one way to be queer is to acknowledge, reclaim, and celebrate inappropriate and disgusting—grotesque—texts through "love and identification,"²⁴ texts that may never appear in, or be appreciated by, supposedly less disgusting and more appropriate "high culture" contexts such as theatres, museums, and even universities. By reading, and appreciating, this essay about popular culture, you too have become increasingly queer.

As I have tried to illustrate, queer popular culture texts—texts that possess queer characteristics and/or espouse queer messages and texts that appeal to mass, everyday audiences—have numerous purposes: They call attention to harmful cultural assumptions and expectations; subvert, spoil, and promote transgressive ideas about same-sex attraction, heterosexuality, and kinship; acknowledge, reclaim, and celebrate affects commonly perceived to be peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting; and provide innovative ideas about intimacy, relationships, and the future. Given these purposes, queer texts offer us different possibilities for relating with others, different ways to understand ourselves, and different techniques for incorporating peculiar desires, attractions, and affects into our lives.

NOTES

1. Authors who use queer synonymously with same-sex attraction, homosexuality, and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender identity include Alexander Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Pamela Demory and Christopher Pullen, eds, *Queer Love in Film and Television: Critical Essays* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Corey Creekmur and Alexander Doty, eds, *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

2. As Sara Ahmed writes, "to be 'in line' is to direct one's desires toward marriage and reproduction; to direct one's desires toward the reproduction of the family line." Conversely, Ahmed argues, to be queer is to be out of line with one's desires and against reproducing the family line. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 74. Julia Erhart associates queerness with donor conception as "donor conception is easily associated with sexual outlaws and practices: lesbians, infertile women and men, men who masturbate for money." Julia Erhart, "Donor Conception in Lesbian and Non-lesbian and Television Families," in *Queer Love in Film and Television: Critical Essays*, eds, Pamela Demory and Christopher Pullen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 83. Other authors who use queer to describe messages and actions that rebel against heteronormative expectations of intimate relationships include Michael Cobb, *Single: Arguments for the Uncoupled* (New York: New York University Press, 2012) and Anne M. Harris, "Ghost-child," in *On (Writing) Families: Autoethnographies of Presence and Absence, Love and Loss*, eds, Jonathan Wyatt and Tony E. Adams (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2014), 69–75.

3. Authors who refer to messages and actions that rebel against culturally prevalent, false and insidious promises about optimism, happiness, and the future as "queer" include Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); and Dustin Bradley Goltz, *Queer Temporalities in Gay Male Representation* (Routledge: New York, 2010).

4. Joseph Litvak writes, "Although it is hard to think of queer theory apart from a certain tonality of the euphoric and the outrageous, it now seems to me that what I have always secretly loved about it is its preternatural responsiveness to the rich modern repertoire of bad vibes, the verve with which it picks up on all the clammy emotions." Joseph Litvak, "Glad to be Unhappy," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (2007): 524. doi: 10.1215/00382876-2007-011. Other texts that refer to affects commonly perceived to be peculiar, inappropriate, incoherent, or disgusting as "queer" include Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Stacy Holman Jones and Tony E. Adams. 2014. "Undoing the Alphabet: A Queer Fugue on Grief and Forgiveness," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 14, no. 2 (2014): 102–110. doi: 10.1177/1532708613512260. Blake Paxton, "Queerly Conversing with the Dead: Re-membering Mom," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 14, no. 2 (2014): 164–173. doi: 10.1177/1532708613512273.

5. Authors who describe how queer texts can subvert, spoil, and promote transgressive ways to talk about prevalent, false and insidious beliefs, practices, and expectations include Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*; Judith Butler, "Gender as Performance," in *A Critical Sense: Interviews With Intellectuals*, ed, Peter Osborne (New York: Routledge, 1996): 109–125; and Erin J. Rand, *Reclaiming Queer: Activist & Academic Rhetorics of Resistance* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014).

6. "Part of what I understand to be the exciting charge of the very word 'queer,'" Eve Sedgwick writes, "is that it embraces, instead of repudiating, what have for many of us been formative childhood experiences of difference and stigmatization." Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "How to Bring Your Kids up Gay," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer*

Politics and Social Theory, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 80.

7. Stuart Hall, "What Is this "Black" in Black Popular Culture," *Social Justice* 20 (1993): 113.

8. Elizabeth Yuko writes, "The portrayal of these women as a family unit is comforting for those who found it difficult to identify with their biological family—including many LGBT individuals. It presented the possibility of finding a group of people to serve as a surrogate but very real family, even later in life. Living in a society with such an emphasis placed on heterosexual romantic relationships as the most authentic and the only basis for being considered a family, *The Golden Girls* emphasized the importance and legitimacy of a family falling outside those rigid parameters." Elizabeth Yuko, "Op-ed: Why *The Golden Girls* Never Lost Its Luster," *Advocate*, September 8, 2015, accessed September 15, 2015, www.advocate.com/commentary/2015/09/08/op-ed-why-golden-girls-never-lost-its-luster.

9. Judith C. Daniluk, *Women's Sexuality Across the Life Span: Challenging Myths, Creating Meanings* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003).

10. Tony E. Adams, *Narrating the Closet: An Autoethnography of Same-Sex Attraction* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2011); Holman Jones and Adams, "Undoing the Alphabet."

11. Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*.

12. Paxton, "'Queerly Conversing,'" 165.

13. Carolyn Ellis, "Seeking My Brother's Voice: Holding onto Long-term Grief through Photographs, Stories, and Reflections," in *Stories of Complicated Grief: A Critical Anthology*, ed., Eric D. Miller (Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers, 2014): 4.

14. Wyatt, Jonathan. "What Kind of Mourning? Autoethnographic Fragments." *International Review of Qualitative Research* 2 (2010): 501.

15. Robin M. Boylorn, *Sweetwater: Black Women and Narratives of Resistance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013): 89.

16. For discussion of the bear subculture, see Patrick Santoro, "Lather, Rinse, Reclaim: Cultural (Re)conditioning of the Gay (Bear) Body." In *Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life*, eds., Robin M. Boylorn and Mark P. Orbe (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2014): 159–175.

17. I thank Kathy Denker for this observation.

18. I thank Chris Patti for this observation. "Unicorn," Urban Dictionary, accessed September 1, 2015, www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Unicorn.

19. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, eds. *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

20. As I mentioned, the rainbow has become a symbol often affiliated with same-sex attraction, homosexuality, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender identities and issues. After the June 2015 Supreme Court ruling in support of same-sex marriage, more than 26 million users added the rainbow tint to their photo. Associated Press, "Rainbow Facebook Photos: Armchair Activism or Shifting Tide?" *New York Times*, July 2, 2015, accessed September 15, 2015, www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/07/02/technology/ap-us-tec-facebook-rainbows.html.

21. Kenji Yoshino notes, "an identity that is normal in one sphere will often be queer" in another context. For example, he refers to mothers as the "queers" of the corporate workplace (United States), as many have to avoid flaunting, and even discussing, their roles as mothers. In other contexts—e.g., working as a stay-at-home mom—mothers may be considered less queer and more normal. Kenji Yoshino, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* (New York: Random House, 2006), 162. The act of hand-holding by people (perceived to be) of the same-sex is another example of the contextual characteristic of queerness, as same-sex hand-holding may be less queer in a LGBT-friendly space such as in a bar that caters to LGBT audiences, more queer if it happens in a rural grocery store. See Stephanie Rosenbloom, "A Simple Show of

Hands," *New York Times*, October 5, 2006, accessed September 15, 2015 from www.nytimes.com/2006/10/05/fashion/05hands.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

22. Judith Butler argues when acts become increasingly predictable and normalized, they begin to lose their queerness. Butler, "Gender as Performance."

23. Hall, "Black Popular Culture," 107–108.

24. Feil argues that camp—a characteristic of homosexual (queer) culture that acknowledges, reclaims, and celebrates inappropriate and disgusting texts through "love and identification"—"reinvests both queerness and low culture with value, as it simultaneously redefines what 'value' means." Ken Feil, "'Fearless Vulgarity': Camp Love as Queer Love for Jackie Susan and *Valley of the Dolls*," in *Queer Love in Film and Television: Critical Essays*, eds., Pamela Demory and Christopher Pullen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 142.