

The Cost of Queerness

*An Investigation into the Authenticity of Queer Representation in light of the
Commodification seen in Film*

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Introduction

In our modern world, film plays a large part in how we perceive other cultures and communities, whether we have had first-hand experience with them or not. One such example is the LGBT+ (or Queer) community. After centuries of outcasting and shame, the inclusivity of the world today means that representation, especially through film, is more present than ever.

But is this inclusion really authentic in a world where money rules the film industry? That is the question this Personal Interest Project(PIP) is seeking to explore, focusing on the authenticity of LGBT+ representation in light of the commodification and stereotyping seen in film. My interest in this hypothesis was due to my personal experience with recent queer films, which I felt portrayed a narrow and incomplete representation of a community I identify with, and heavily played into preconceived notions generated by a predominantly heterosexual and gender-conforming society.

LGBT+ people in film, whether they were portrayed as such on purpose or not, is not a new concept and remains a continuity. In fact, the community has experienced representation since the very beginning of Film, both positively and negatively. The issue with recent films, however, is the extreme commodification of this representation, negating the authenticity of it as stereotypes pervade and the films become just another Box Office product for our consumerist society.

This topic is inextricably linked to social inclusion and exclusion, how public perceptions can influence the inclusion of a group and the role of macro institutes in those perceptions. It is from my key concepts such as time, commodification, modernisation and social cohesion and their exploration that my judgements will be informed. And so, Chapter 1: *'Woeful Rancher and Clownish Queens'*, Chapter 2: *'Milkshakes and Monetization'*, and Chapter 3: *'It's a Queer inomenon!'*.

Furthermore, interpretation is largely a subjective matter that varies for each individual. In order to reflect on this, I have undertaken three primary research methods in the form of a Content Analysis of films, a Personal Reflection, and a Questionnaire. My secondary research allowed me to find the facts and gain a greater understanding of Queer film history, culture and the perspectives surrounding it. It has also allowed me to see other perspectives on the films I myself had analysed and permitted for introspection into my own bias, allowing me to adjust any preconceived notions I had about the topic, verifying the invaluable nature of investigating queer authenticity in film and its beneficial nature.

Log

Queer film has been a recurring interest, related to my curiosity as to why I disliked many modern portrayals of the LGBT+ Community compared to older films. I identify within the community and was frustrated with why I couldn't relate to these characters. Something about them felt wrong and previously impacted my confidence in my identity. From there I knew I needed to consider why that was, leading me to wonder about the authenticity of these films and the subjectivity of authenticity. Since film relies on a large audience, it had to be impacted by money. That idea further led me to look towards commodification, as I knew many minorities had their culture commodified and the LGBT+ community was no different. I was going to look into Film as a whole, but, after careful consideration, I felt it would take away from the direction I wanted my PIP to take. My involvement with the Queer Community pushed me in my enthusiasm for this topic. It directly impacted a group I was part of, and researching this also allowed me to discover my definition of authenticity. This with my dislike of poorly made films led to the creation of my thesis statement, "*An Investigation into the Authenticity of Queer Representation in light of the Commodification seen in Film*".

Issues began to arise when I commenced research, as there didn't seem to be many other people interested in the topic. Multiple attempts occurred until I finally found key phrases that led me to information regarding queer representation in film and still, I combed through many useless articles. These setbacks didn't deter me but solidified the importance of my PIP.

To investigate my topic properly, I needed to divide it into three parts. These were, the importance of themes, the commodification of queer people in film, and how stereotyping affected inclusivity in Queer film.

From my secondary research, I figured out the most appropriate methodology. Due to my PIP's nature as an investigation into film, a Content analysis of six films was a fairly obvious choice. A Personal Reflection meant I could also recognise the impact of my own experiences on my perspective of what I analysed. A Questionnaire allowed for the subjective component of my

topic to come through and provided insight into the shifting viewpoints on what makes Queer film authentic. All were highly useful in my PIP and validated multiple secondary sources.

I'm unable to speak about my PIP without noting the obstacles I had to overcome. I originally wished for a broader range in my questionnaire sample. I couldn't gather enough responses from within the LGBT+ community which may have skewed my results and resulted in overly similar answers.

My PIP has been an indispensable experience for me. It challenged my understanding of 'good' representation, and conducting this research into my chosen topic has filled me with pride. My social and cultural literacy has undoubtedly increased on this journey and allowed me to engage with different perspectives while staying genuine in my beliefs.

Chapter 1: What Queens and Cowboys Have in Common?

Queer themes in film are not at all a new or recent thing. They have existed since the very beginning of film. What is new, is the recognition and celebration of these themes. Time and proactive social movements have played a large role in this recognition, which funds a growing diversity of LGBT+ representations within Film. This recognition could not have happened without two great genres, Comedy and Tragedy, which have been used since the ancient Greeks to engage audiences and introduce change into society where others cannot.

In the primary research, more specifically the questionnaire responses, a significant trend was noticed, particularly in the earlier openly queer films¹. The majority of films that had succeeded, were in fact, a comedy of some form. This leads to the belief that in order to prevent more typically conservative audiences from being scared away by the introduction of an outwardly queer individual, directors and screenwriters created characters that were intensely stereotypical and very obviously intended for audiences to laugh and poke fun at².

The 1996 film '*The Birdcage*' is a clear example of this and supports this reasoning. It is incredibly flashy and utilises many stereotypical gay archetypes, but that is how it deals with the risks surrounding a gay film in the '90s, a freshly post-aids world. Comedy's are a staple in Queer films due to the safety of creating one, and it is through this that '*The Birdcage*' was able to influence multiple generations and raise awareness of the LGBT+ community not just in film, but outside of it³.

Comedy in general also tends to be better received by queer audiences. Many queer individuals struggle to find acceptance and happiness in their own lives and comedic takes on the LGBT+ identity give them an alternative option to the sad reality of many queer people's circumstances.

This is also why it's hypothesised that despite being an openly, modern coming-out story, 'Love,

¹ Primary Research, Questionnaire

² Henry.S , Bryan.A & Neary.A, "“Laughing ourselves out of the closet”: comedy as a queer pedagogical form', *Ethics and education*, vol. 18, p.152-156, 2023,

³ Primary Research, Content Analysis

Simon' was and is ultimately not that popular outside of cisgender and hetero-normative circles. Unlike 'The Birdcage' which is a comedy for the sake of comedy, 'Love, Simon' is a 'rom-com' that tries to normalise the queer experience, expressing that a person's sexuality does not define them.⁴ Contrary to the intention of the film, quite a large number of queer people feel a disconnect to this message, as they believe their sexuality, while not every part of their identity, is a key part of it. This with the film's attempt to be 'edgy' and the director's seeming lack of care about the quality of acting makes this adaptation feel insensitive and just isn't appropriate in today's context⁵. This is, however, mainly the opinion of younger queer audiences, who more than older ones, care about the authenticity of representation over the volume of it.

Another dilemma is that the classification of the film feels deliberately misleading. It's supposedly a romantic comedy, but it isn't actually humorous. In reality, every joke made just makes the film seem insincere to the plight of closeted teens growing up⁶. What's funny about a teen terrified of people finding out that he's gay and then proceeding to be blackmailed about it? That's something that has happened to Overall the tone of the film is in dissonance with the meaning, so while it's a well-known movie, more and more people are finding issues with its representation of the Queer community.

On the opposite side of queer thematics, we have 'The Tragedy'. This is known in two main ways: Firstly there is the bittersweet ending, where the characters clearly love each other, for better or worse, and something ends up wrong or they for some reason cannot be together (eg. such as a wife, or the time period as common issues). The Second way is called "Bury Your Gays", and is specifically a trope where all if not most LGBT+ characters are "killed off" usually in a way to make it seem their 'queerness' is the cause of death or reason for their absence⁷⁸. These are also called Token characters and are often used to appease the LGBT+ community

⁴Mannion-Krase. G 'You're allowed to still hate Love, Simon', *Queerbookbox.com*, 2020, <https://www.queerbookbox.com/blog/youre-allowed-to-still-hate-love-simon-1>

⁵ Primary Research, Personal Reflection

⁶ Phanford. C 'Where "Love, Simon" Went Wrong', in *34st.com*, 2018, <https://www.34st.com/article/2018/04/love-simon-movie-film-queer-representation-cinema-lgbtq#:~:text=I%20found%20the%20movie%20a>

⁷ Greig. A, *Queer Tragedy: 'Happy Never Afters' in Film Media*, 2020, <https://dailyutahchronicle.com/2022/02/26/queer-tragedy-happy-never-afters-film/>

⁸ Naing. Q.G, *Light The Queer Tragedy Trope: How Media Punishes Queerness*, 2023, <https://spheresofinfluence.ca/the-queer-tragedy-trope-how-media-punishes-queerness/>

when questioned about a lack of proper representation.

In the primary research the highly impactful film, '*Brokeback Mountain*' was analysed in order to find what tropes and thematics were used in order to garner sympathy from a heteronormative audience. From this it was found that due to the guilt and distress both men felt about their relationship, the audience both sympathised and pitied their struggle and as the film was set in the 60s, they also felt the film was distanced from society due to the implication that homosexuality was regressive and that homosexuals were a victim of their sexuality rather than a predator to watch out for⁹.

These two different ways of approaching the integration of queer people into film have perpetuated stereotypes and created key themes in Queer film, heavily affecting the way in which all films focusing on queer people, specifically gay men have been received and represented. These stereotypes in film have not only affected the way in which the heteronormative society views queer individuals but has caused the community to form a subconscious belief in how they are supposed to be 'queer', forcing themselves and others into clear-cut categories despite the communities efforts in not conforming to societies demand of labelling and beliefs in static gender and sexual identity. This creates a harmful environment within the group where people are viewed as 'not gay enough' or 'faking it' if they do not conform to others' views of how they should act, dress and what they believe in based upon what they have chosen to identify. Many of these judgments upon other members of the community are a result of an internalised 'normal', much like the ones often seen in feminist groups and many men's approach to traditionally masculine behaviours and activities¹⁰.

It's important to note that these negatives have been looked at from a wholly modern perspective and that the majority of the films referred to come from a time when bad representation was better than none at all. Representation, no matter if it creates negative or positive stereotypes is important for creating tolerance and normalising the existence of a community or culture¹¹.

⁹ Primary Research, Content analysis

¹⁰ Primary Research, Personal Reflection

¹¹ Kaur, T, '*Queer representation in media: the good, the bad, and the ugly*', Heckin' Unicorn, 2021, <https://heckinunicorn.com/blogs/heckin-unicorn-blog/queer-representation-in-media-comprehensive-list-breakdown-lgbt>

Comedy and Tragedy were and will always be important in Queer film thematics, and will always be a defining part of LGBT+ cinema, but the tropes were used with the aim of creating tolerance, something that is no longer needed as it was two decades ago. People today are able to relate and empathise with queer characters because of these genres and film has played an extensive role in this societal change. Without the use of Comedy and Tragedy, Queer film and community would not have been able to reach the place it is today.

Chapter 2: *Milkshakes and Monetization*

In order to address the commodification of LGBT+ Film, it is necessary to know that due to the capitalist nature of the modern world, consumer culture is bigger than ever before. It is a key part of everyday life, from trending fashion to the most popular brand of shoes. This isn't isolated to everyday products, as the commodification of cultures and minority groups has been a recurring theme of film since its widespread commercialisation. In modern society, our rapid consumption of film, a lot of the time without the criticism that existed in the past, means that our value in the well-produced film has decreased, and so has our appreciation for complex and original storytelling.

Commodification is the act of turning an 'item' into a 'product', to be sold and marketed with the intention of profit¹². It is an inevitable part of any popular culture and exists on a larger scale today than ever seen before. This, in relation to film, is usually done by taking stereotypes from differing cultures, ideologies, and belief systems. Unfortunately for these groups, the communities represented through commodification are often shed in a negative and/or shallow light, as the Films take the perspective of what is deemed correct by 'normal people' known as the white cisgender, heteronormative majority, leading to a compulsion to behave in a way that conforms with society's expectations, regardless of whether that is what you genuinely believe or want to act.

In the last century, there have been two main ways the Film industry has capitalised on queer culture in order to boost profit. First, is through the villainisation of LGBT+ expressions, with the most well-known example being the early animated Disney Films, which take the mannerisms, dress and subversion of gender in the Queer community in order to create antagonists based on them. The other main way is through 'infantilization', where queer characters are portrayed as naive and innocent, without any inclination to wanting anything sexual, like Nick and Charlie from *Heartstopper*.

¹² K.Bruseker, L.Dark, A.Emo & E.Howard, 'Cambridge Society and Culture Stage 6', p.291, 2022

Within the LGBT+ community it's a well-known fact that the villain Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* was actually based on a prominent and popular drag queen called Divine, the alter ego of Harris Glenn Milstead¹³. However, she isn't the only villain in the franchise like this as characters such as Scar (*The Lion King*) and Jafar (*Aladdin*) also clearly draw influence from the drag scene and the stereotyped behaviours of gay men. Female villains in Disney are a little more elusive than their male counterparts (Ursula aside). Maleficent is an original Disney villainess, her sharp features and volatile personality are the antitheses of the heroine's softness and naivety. Her queer coding is far more subtle than her peers, but she is a true representation of society at that time's stories of wicked 'spinsters', women who never marry and are mad for it¹⁴. The term and depiction of Maleficent reflect attitudes towards women and queerness, as well as the double standards presented of what is acceptable for women and men in regard to pride and power.

On the opposite side of the spectrum is a far more recent presentation of queer identity in film. Every queer person is proud of themselves, have zero issues around their identity and often have no inclination towards anything beyond the act of chaste kissing. *That's Heart Stopper*, which while a lovely feel-good story about teenage boys and finding happiness with yourself, isn't realistic and extremely idealised. Like Video Essay YouTuber Verity Ritchie asks "is there any meat to the bones of his story?...at the end of the day, you need more than just a milkshake to fill you up"¹⁵. Using her analogy, media like *"The Bisexual"* and *"Call me By Your Name"* are filling meals, with complex characterisation and a realistic understanding of the relationships that satisfy the need for something like real life where not everything is perfect.

Despite the more fulfilling role authentic representation in Queer film plays, the funding needed to produce these types of films is notoriously hard to procure, and the majority of it is funded by grants. This is because the largest market of people consuming film are cis-gender heterosexuals, and large film-producing companies prefer to focus on creating movies that cater to the largest

¹³Carrasco, I, 'Who was Divine, the Drag Queen Who Inspired Ursula in "The Little Mermaid?"', 2023, <https://culturacolectiva.com/en/entertainment/movies/divine-drag-queen-inspiration-ursula-the-little-mermaid/>

¹⁴Kogod, T 'Maleficent & 9 More Disney Characters You Never Knew Were Queer-Coded', 2020, <https://screenrant.com/disney-villains-maleficent-queer-coded-lgbtq-gay/>

¹⁵Ritchie, V. , 'Why Queer TV is getting worse', 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQY6iVJIAH0>

audience possible, which is how we end up with 'gay-streaming'. One such example of this is the fetishization of Men-Loving Men(MLM) relationships by straight women and Women-Loving-Women(WLW) by straight men. These are also the market groups for major companies of Queer film and so stereotyping such as 'twinks' and masculine lesbians just needing to find the right guy and become bisexual end up becoming popular tropes within queer films.

Chapter 3: It's a Queer inomenon!

By having looked at queer themes and the commodification of the queer identity it is clear that stereotyping in Film can be beneficial and harmful to the community. Through connecting the information about queer themes and the commodification of queer film it is now possible to effectively create an analysis of the authenticity of the LGBT+ community within film.

At the beginning of queer people's positive introduction into film, directors and scriptwriters focused on a handful of things to encourage audience tolerance. Characterising queer people only by pre-existing stereotypes that were considered “harmless”, such as acting dramatically, highly focused on hygiene and doing the ‘woman’s’ job, or portraying them as deeply tragic and ashamed of themselves. At the time such stereotyping was extremely effective and regarded by the queer community, while not wholly positive, as an incredible step forward in their acceptance¹⁶.

This didn’t last, however. As time progressed and LGBT+ were more accepted in society these stereotypes and storylines persisted in and outside of film and only some people were accepted to represent the Queer community: White, skinny, and most importantly with a sob story. Larger heteronormative society doesn’t want a character with depth; they want someone who is only one or two steps to the left of them¹⁷. And so, that is largely the demographic seen in films' portrayal of queer characters much to the detriment of the Queer community.

In Verity Ritchie’s video essay *‘Why Queer TV is getting worse’* they state the difference between authentic representation and representation that is heavily stereotyped, “Good art has a polysemic quality to it, there can be many different readings, each of us will take away something different”¹⁸. She goes on further to speak about how authentic queer media doesn’t “Hold your hand”, and instead forces its audience to look at the community as a multifaceted

¹⁶ Primary Research, Content Analysis

¹⁷ Primary Research, Personal Reflection

¹⁸ Verity, R. , ‘Why Queer TV is getting worse’, 2022,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQY6iVJIAH0>

group that, like greater society, is more accepting of those who conform to idealised behaviours of how a queer person should behave. Ritchie then shows an example of this in modern media, a 1 season series called *'The Bisexual'* created by and starring Desiree Akhavan. The series explores the difficulty of being bisexual in the queer community and the stigma surrounding sexuality, such as whether the main character is faking it for attention, that she sleeps around a lot and cheats on her partners. Akhavan also explores and provides insight into how the Queer Community sometimes weaponises progressiveness, and her choice to create no right or wrong decisions shows that these are just people, with flaws and biases that impact the people around them.

Taking this into consideration, it has become apparent that the authenticity queer individuals are looking for in Film can be brutal, and perhaps this is why streaming companies are able to profit off the stereotyped, morally-correct films in which everything works out well and every villain learns their lesson. Still, this trend is likely to last only a little while longer. In fact, the creation of films in which LGBT+ people play a central role has potentially already peaked or may be in the process of doing so, outside of the niche studios that focus their attention on adhering to the minority.

That doesn't mean the production of films with queer characters will cease to exist, only that true authenticity simply isn't something that streaming companies will ever aim to achieve, and they are the ones who mostly produce it, due to their profit-motivated nature. In fact, the main reason there is such a high quantity of film and television production with a queer focus is due to something known as the 'Streaming Wars', which at its most basic form is a competition between every main streaming company, Netflix, Disney +, Binge, etc, to dominate the industry and have the most people subscribed. This might not seem to have anything to do with the production of queer films at first, but in actuality, it is the main reason we have seen a boom in quantity in recent years¹⁹. The unfortunate side effect of this, however, is that it lulls minority groups into a false sense of security in the belief that they are being adequately represented by large companies through the media when in all actuality the market is becoming oversaturated

¹⁹ Verity, R. , 'Why Queer TV is getting worse' 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQY6iVJIAH0>

with thoughtless stereotypes²⁰. This will lead to a decline in all queer representation in film, not just those produced by small-time directors and reliant on government grants as people see less of a need to support communities they believe have already moved forward²¹.

²⁰ Primary Research, Personal Reflection

²¹ Nast, C. *There's Never Been More Queer Representation. So Why Don't I Love It?*, 2022, <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2022/08/theres-never-been-more-queer-representation-so-why-dont-i-love-it>

Conclusion

There has never been more queer representation in film, and yet it feels hollow, lacking substance. I love a generic love story as much as the next person, but authenticity in film is priceless considering the substantial impact of film on our perceptions of others. My PIP allowed me to realise the conflicting natures of authenticity within film and our society's consumeristic ideals, and that while we may claim to want authentic examples of queer individuals, we often struggle to realise the difficulty in that creating a legitimate portrayal of the Queer community in a world run by money.

My first chapter '*Woeful Ranchers and Clownish Queens*' was vital in understanding and evaluating the key genres used in Queer film. I related tragedy and comedy in earlier films depicting queer characters to the building of tolerance towards the Queer community in a time when the majority of people would have likely been homophobic. However, the majority of society feels that more recent films do not accurately portray queer individuals and can perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

In '*Milkshakes and Monetization*' I focused on how now having achieved tolerance from most of greater society, queer culture is commodified and commercialised through the production of Film. This is seen in large streaming companies, and their representation of LGBT+ individuals is often shallow and overly stereotyped. However, because the bulk of directors interested in showcasing queer authenticity rely on grants this is unlikely to change.

My final chapter '*It's a Queerinomenon!*' looked at what the present and future of Queer film is and are likely to be. I explored how authentic representation can be brutal, but also its importance, as it allows people to create their own understanding of the Queer community. I also

ventured into how streaming companies control the market on queer representation, and how it affects the quality and quantity of Queer film in the future.

Investigating the authentic representation of the Queer community in film is crucial. Poor representation leads to stereotyping and prejudice against people who are already disadvantaged by not conforming to society's ideals. My research into this confirms the insufficient authenticity and delves into its impact on the perception of the LGBT+ community, internal and external.

My 3 primary research methods were invaluable and suited to the data I needed for my PIP. My Content Analysis gave me insight into the thematics used in queer representation and my Personal Reflection allowed me to consolidate my thoughts and contemplate my bias on my chosen topic. Both provided qualitative data and my Questionnaire provided a diverse range of opinions with its quantitative focus.

From this, I am able to say that commodification has played a negative role in the authenticity of queer representation in film and that it is unlikely to get better. Not every film needs to be realistic to be good, but the severe lack of authenticity can only be detrimental to LGBT+ people. Without proactiveness in this area, all we'll have is meaningless meet-cutes.

Bibliography

Primary Research Annotations

Questionnaire

An analysis into the perspectives surrounding LGBT+ representation in Film

The questionnaire created was highly useful in its aim to collect information on perspectives surrounding the representation of the LGBT+ community and suited the need for different perspectives within my topic area. It collected both quantitative and qualitative data specifically in regard to the amount of increasing or decreasing representation in film and what respondents felt was the overall quality of the authenticity of that representation. It contained a range of 16 open and closed answer questions such as “*Do you think there has been an increase or decrease in "Queerbaiting" in recent film?"*”, “*Why is that*” and “*Based on your prior answers, how do you feel about the authenticity of LGBT+ representation in Film?*” for example. The questionnaire's credibility is verified by the lengthy responses from participants and the depth of secondary research used to formulate the questions in the way that they would best produce information. The responses were particularly useful in the first and second chapters of my PIP and while the Questionnaire offers valuable insights into public opinion of queer film, it's limited by the diversity of responses, as there is a larger demographic of heterosexual female participants than any other group, something that may have created a gender bias. From there I had to further research into what gave people the impression of inauthentic representation and relate it to the other key factors of my chosen topic.

Personal Reflection

Due to the cross-cultural nature of my PIP, a Personal Reflection was useful in regarding my identity as an LGBT+ individual and its effect on my PIP. I used this reflection to outline my experiences and to note how my perceptions have shifted after conducting research towards my topic. I employed my worries about the future of queer film as a representation of the Queer community and attempted to negate what bias I could. This in turn was incredibly useful to my first and third chapters. Despite its inherently biased nature, using a Personal reflection was critical because of the subjectiveness of authenticity, but because of my limited experience as a young person, it is not accurate to a universal experience. In order to confirm the accuracy of the results, they were compared to other primary and secondary sources as a personal reflection contains too much bias as a stand-alone research method.

Content Analysis

Film and How Stereotyping Affects it's Perception

A Content Analysis was crucial to my research due to the central nature of film in my PIP. I analysed six films, *The Birdcage*, *But I'm A Cheerleader*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *Clueless*, *Love, Simon* and *Call Me By Your Name*, all from the early 90s to the late 2010s, as that time period was when the representation of queer people in film had its most significant growth. I looked at the stereotypes used in the films, the role of the characters, other characters' reactions to them, the goal of the Film and the public perceptions of the films. To create reliability within the analysis, each film was researched prior to viewing and notes were taken as the films were watched. However, it's important to note that this method was incredibly time-consuming and may have been impacted by bias due to the personal nature of considering authenticity. This methodology was useful to every chapter of my PIP, but some films were better suited to my topic than others and so were referenced more. Additionally, each film had to be researched

separately in order to gain context from the time period it was created and produced, as well as the effect that would have had on public opinion. From there, the data I gathered from my research allowed me to expand on my secondary research and look into new sources.

Secondary Research

Avila, A. (2020). *How Comedies are Changing LGBT+ Representation*. [online] YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xstq_uRU9ok [Accessed 15 Jan. 2024].

- Avila's video essay is about the effect of comedy on queer representation. He begins by addressing the major increase in the number of queer characters but also remarks on how the poor representation that the majority of it is, is slowly changing into shows with substance and multifaceted characters. He then goes on to explain that the majority of the authentic portrayals are cisgender white men. Alvia then uses the show 'Its Always Sunny in Philadelphia' as an example of where queer film could be headed, addressing the character Mac's identity as a gay man, which subverted the homophobic jokes he had previously made. Alvia then explains queer film and art history to signify the importance of this. He references Salome (1923) as how many queer people viewed their existence as a 'fantasy' due to not having the space for expression in the real world. Alvia addresses The Hay's Code, Disney, and circles back to "Its always Sunny". This Video essay played a large part in how I chose to portray comedy as a thematic device in queer film, which was essential towards the creation of my Chapter 1. Unfortunately, I am unable to use "It's always Sunny" as an example in my research but I was able to use it as a reference when watching comedic film in my content analysis, making this source integral to my PIP.

Bruseker, K., Dark, L., Emo, A. and Howard, E. (2022). *Cambridge Society and Culture Stage 6*. Cambridge University Press, p.291.

- A source used to provide a correct definition and outline of commodification but has not been used past that purpose. It is highly credible and valid.

Carrasco, I. (2023). *Who was Divine, the Drag Queen Who Inspired Ursula in 'The Little Mermaid?'* [online] Available at:

<https://culturacolectiva.com/en/entertainment/movies/divine-drag-queen-inspiration-ursula-the-little-mermaid/> [Accessed 24 May 2024].

- An Article illustrating the life and Career of the Drag Queen Divine, as well as her role as the inspiration for Ursula. This was useful, particularly in Chapter Two of my PIP but had limited applications due to the specific nature of the article. The source is fairly credible.

Deyo, N. (2023). *A messy era of gay comedies is finally paying off*. [online] Polygon. Available at: <https://www.polygon.com/23552517/good-gay-comedies-then-now> [Accessed 20 Feb. 2024].

- Deyo discusses the role of queer men and comedy, and how the last three decades have changed queer representation forever. He begins in the 1990s, in a freshly post-aids world called the “golden era” of queer cinema using examples such as *The Birdcage*, *In & Out*, and *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar*. Deyo goes on to explain that these first examples of openly gay comedies have taken the weight off new films, allowing them to portray a rougher, more realistic experience of what it means to be a gay man. This article had an informative viewpoint on the transition from queer cult classics to modern films, but a portion of the middle segment did not relate and it was particularly focused on white gay men making its overall use limited.

Gomillion, S.C. and Giuliano, T.A. (2011). The Influence of Media Role Models on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identity. *Journal of Homosexuality*, [online] 58(3), pp.330–354. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2011.546729>. [Accessed 20 Feb. 2024].

- This article from the Journal of Homosexuality focuses on how media has influenced the LGBT+ identity. From its two studies, one survey and the interview of 15 people the article suggests that people use role models in media as a source of pride and that having more of these role models has the potential to significantly positively influence the LGBT+ community's perception of identity. This was an extremely credible source with invaluable information due to its nature as a research paper with similarities to my own topic. The article gave insight into how queer characters can be role models for the community and the importance of having someone to relate to when discovering identity. Similarly, I could apply this notion to the importance of authentic representation in Film, tying it in even more to my topic.

Greig, A. (2022). *Queer Tragedy: 'Happy Never Afters' in Film Media*. [online] The Daily Utah Chronicle. Available at: <https://dailyutahchronicle.com/2022/02/26/queer-tragedy-happy-never-afters-film/> [Accessed 27 Feb. 2024].

- Greig explains in her article the recurring theme of tragedy in Films surrounding queer characters. She notes how many relationships ended just before they began, or when a character finally accepted who they were. This trope is colloquially known amongst the queer community as “Bury Your Gays” and is a key part of my chapter. However her later specific examples of where this occurs were not useful to my topic and so only the first section of this article was able to be utilised.

Henry, S., Bryan, A. and Neary, A. (2023). ‘Laughing ourselves out of the closet’: comedy as a queer pedagogical form. *Ethics and Education*, [online] 18(1), pp.151–166. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2023.2188744>. [Accessed 16 Nov. 2023]

- This source aimed to explain the link between the growth in acceptance of the queer community and how comedies have been used to teach greater society about the positive side of LGBT+ individuals. They state that comedies are a great way to teach people about queerness. This Chapter of *Ethics and education* looks at how Comedy (both humour and laughter) is a potentially useful tool in order to introduce controversial

topics, using queer representation as an example. I found this source especially informative, as it allowed me to realise what made comedy such a powerful tool in the age of New Queer Cinema. This Chapter of Ethics and Education played a crucial role in my Chapter 1 and solidified multiple other secondary sources.

Kaur, T. (2021). *Queer representation in media: the good, the bad, and the ugly*. [online] Heckin' Unicorn. Available at:

<https://heckinunicorn.com/blogs/heckin-unicorn-blog/queer-representation-in-media-comprehensive-list-breakdown-lgbt> [Accessed 17 Feb. 2024].

- This article highlights why representation is important, and how well-written queer characters destigmatise the community. This article played a key role in highlighting why a diversity of representation was important and was highly useful towards my topic. This source is reliable due to its investment in the queer community and its role as a queer-run brand for queer people.

Kogod, T. (2020). *Maleficent & 9 More Disney Characters You Never Knew Were Queer-Coded*. [online] ScreenRant. Available at:

<https://screenrant.com/disney-villains-maleficent-queer-coded-lgbtq-gay/> [Accessed 24 May 2024].

- Here, Kogod remarks on 10 notable Disney villains that play into queer stereotyping. He remarks on Urasla's Drag inspiration, Scar's classically limp wrist and hip sway and Maleficent's aggressive nature and brutal lack of femininity make her 'other' in the audience's eyes. These examples of queer-coding villains from Disney illustrate how the company profited off of the widespread homophobia that existed at the time, providing me with key examples of the commodification of queer people in a way that perpetuated negative stereotypes.

Le Beau, D. (2023). *12 Pivotal Queer-Coded Moments in Movie History*. [online] W Magazine. Available at:

<https://www.wmagazine.com/culture/queer-cinema-archive-interview-coded-movie-film#:~:text=Queer%2Dcoded%20villains%20are%20fairly> [Accessed 16 Nov. 2023].

- Le Beau writes about iconic queer-coded Characters from films in the 20th century, including notable films such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Mulan*. The article was highly informative of the queer-coding of characters in older films, and the reaction to those characters as well as why they were presented that way. I would not say it is highly reliable but it is well written and mentions credible films/actors. I do believe there is an information bias but that it is not significant outside of the tone of the text. Overall this source was moderately useful in parts.

Mannion-Krase , G. (2020). *You're allowed to still hate Love, Simon*. [online]

www.queerbookbox.com. Available at:

<https://www.queerbookbox.com/blog/youre-allowed-to-still-hate-love-simon-1> [Accessed 29 Jul. 2024].

- Mannion-Krase addresses some of the issues surrounding *Love, Simon* and that you don't have to enjoy the book or film to respect the author's identity. She explains that Queer people can also represent themselves in a flawed manner and that the author portrayed many stereotypes in her work that could negatively affect younger queer individuals discovering their identity. While this article was mostly about opinions, it had useful points about how queer individuals can also perpetuate negative stereotypes about the community. This source was mostly used in Chapter 1.

Maskell, E. (2021). *The Birdcage at 25: a gay comedy that broke boundaries*. [online]

www.bbc.com. Available at:

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20210310-the-birdcage-at-25-a-pioneering-moment-in-main-stream-cinema> [Accessed 20 Feb. 2014].

- Maskell illustrates why *The Birdcage* was so important to the queer community. She explains how the film created a safe space for LGBT+ individuals after a decade of fearing disease and allowed them to laugh again. It pokes fun at traditional views of masculinity and homophobia. She goes on to talk about how the film was a celebration of queer identity and gave many people hope for the future. This source provided much-needed context for the film, as it plays a large role in explaining the importance of comedy in my first chapter.

Monteil, A. (2022). *A history of LGBTQ+ representation in film*. [online] Stacker. Available at: <https://stacker.com/movies/history-lgbtq-representation-film> [Accessed 21 Oct. 2023].

- This article provides information about the origin of queer characters in film history and a list of notable queer films from 1894-2021, illuminating over a century of queer presence in film. It was however ever brief and only assisted in validating the nature of my topic.

Naing, Q.G., Light (2023). *The Queer Tragedy Trope: How Media Punishes Queerness*. [online] Spheres of Influence. Available at: <https://spheresofinfluence.ca/the-queer-tragedy-trope-how-media-punishes-queerness/> [Accessed 6 Apr. 2024].

- Naing investigates the why of queer tragedies and how they are used to punish the queer community. He relates the use of tragedy to Hay's Code, and how many portrayals of gay men were presented as a psychological disorder as well as sexual predators. From there he explains the 'dead lesbian syndrome' and how over 230 queer women have been killed in film, almost always in ways that portray them as weak. This article provided a wealth of information and examples about the effect of tragedy as a main theme in queer media supporting the idea that authentic representation can exist without being tragic.

Nast, C. (2022). *There's Never Been More Queer Representation. So Why Don't I Love It?* [online] Vanity Fair. Available at: <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2022/08/theres-never-been-more-queer-representation-so-why-dont-i-love-it> [Accessed 17 Mar. 2024].

- This opinion article aims to explain why despite the increase in the volume of queer films it doesn't feel like enough. Nast states the reason for this is due to a lack of genuine representation, and that all these new shows and movies focus almost exclusively on cis men. A key point he mentions is “ [it's] close enough to the real thing...that slight differences register all the more glaringly” and that the more content exists the more there is to pick apart. This article had several key points that I agreed with, and while there is a large chunk unable to be utilised in my PIP, this source deepened my understanding of the importance of authentic queer representation.

Phanford, C. (2018). *Where 'Love, Simon' Went Wrong*. [online] www.34st.com. Available at: <https://www.34st.com/article/2018/04/love-simon-movie-film-queer-representation-cinema-lgbtq#:~:text=I%20found%20the%20movie%20a> [Accessed 29 Jul. 2024].

- This article covers the issues in *Love, Simon*, noting its issues with making it seem like it was Simon's fault he was gay. It explains the villainization of Simon's identity and that his friends were in the right for abandoning him, and then proceeds to end in a performative kiss in front of a large group. The article explains the problems with this and how it could negatively impact younger queer people. Due to it being an opinion piece, this source was incredibly useful towards my PIP and allowed me to realise the more specific issues I needed to look for in my Content Analysis of the film.

Ritchie, V. (2022). *Why Queer TV is Getting Worse*. [online] Youtube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQY6iVJIAH0> [Accessed 11 May 2024]

- The aim of the video was to explore why Queer Tv and Media appears to be declining in quality. Ritchie goes on to analyse the difference between the media 'Heart Stopper' and 'The Bisexual' citing that the first representation is more akin to having a milkshake than having a meal. She then explains the importance of having not-for-profit groups like the BBC's Channel 4 that cater to minority groups and the negative effects streaming companies have on queer authenticity because of their profit motive. While not all of the content they used was able to be linked to my PIP, it was highly credible from its use of

sourcing and clear understanding of the intricacies of queer culture. Overall this source was central to my line of research and invaluable.

Yaksich, M.J. (2005). Consuming Queer: The Commodification of Culture and its Effects on Social Acceptance. *Elements*, 1(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.6017/eurj.v1i1.8856>. [Accessed 18 May 2024]

- This source's purpose was to link the commodification of culture to social acceptance through the example of a TV series called 'Queer Eye'. It gave insight into how queer representation can reinforce stereotypes such as gay men being obsessed with their appearance and very feminine, but it had a broader focus on 'Metrosexuals', straight men who appear gay to society. Its study into the commodification of queer men and the negative effects provided excellent guidance in what I should be looking for in my Content analysis, but its focus on metrosexuals made the source invalid when considering its greater use for my PIP. In the end, I just focused on its viewpoint surrounding commodification as that was a key factor in my topic.