QUEER & TRANS ASIAN LOVE THROUGH MEDIA & LITERATURE



By Taylor Gall, Elyse Denzler, and Connor Tran

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

1 Self-Love

2 Romantic Love

3 Familial Love

Conclusion

Reflection

INTRODUCTION

This zine will focus on different themes of Queer Asian (American) love through representations in media and literature. Throughout this zine, you will see examples from:

FILMS

- *Everything Everywhere All At Once*
- *Fire Island*
- *Saving Face*
- *The Half of It*

TELEVISION SHOWS

- *Never Have I Ever*
- *XO Kitty*

BOOKS

- *On Earth, We're Briefly Gorgeous by Ocean Vuong*
- Night Sky With Exit Wounds by Ocean Vuong
- *The Yellow Sparrow by Santa Khurai*

These examples will be used to show how Queer Asian (American) love has been portrayed in media and literature.

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS TO KNOW BEFORE

QUEER

A description of sexual and gender identities that are not cisgender or straight. Queer can be used to express that gender and sexuality can be complicated and change over time, and might not fit neatly into identities like male or female, or gay or straight.

TRANS

A description of sexual and gender identities that are not cisgender or straight.

REPRESENTATION

How the media portrays groups of people, communities, or experiences, and the aspects of society they present to an audience.

INTERSECTIONALITY

The study of how social categories like race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability intersect to create complex systems of oppression and discrimination (source)

CONCEPTS CONTINUED

GAY

Describes a person who is primarily or exclusively attracted to people of the same sex or gender identity. Can apply to all gender identities.

LESBIAN

Describes someone who identifies as a woman and is romantically or sexually attracted to primarily or exclusively to women.

BISEXUAL

Describes someone who is attracted to more than one gender.

QUESTIONING

Individuals who are in the process of exploring and understanding their sexualities and identities. People can question their sexualities at any point in their lives

Warm Up

Using your knowledge now, answer the following questions in your head.

What are some films, TV shows, and books that have Queer representations?

What about films, TV shows, and books with Asian American representations?

And finally, can you think of any films that feature Queer Asian American love?

Authors' Note

After completing this activity, the authors and I could only compile a list of a few pieces of media that fit under these themes. As a result, it is evident that there is not much Asian American representation in the media, let alone Queer Asian (American) representation.



DID YOU KNOW?

A study examining the top 100 titles on streaming platforms in 2022 by Gold House and USC Annenberg found:

6% of all identified Asian Characters were in **leading** roles

68% of Asian Characters never spoke to another Asian Character

1 Queer Asian American character in their study

16% of speaking characters were Asian

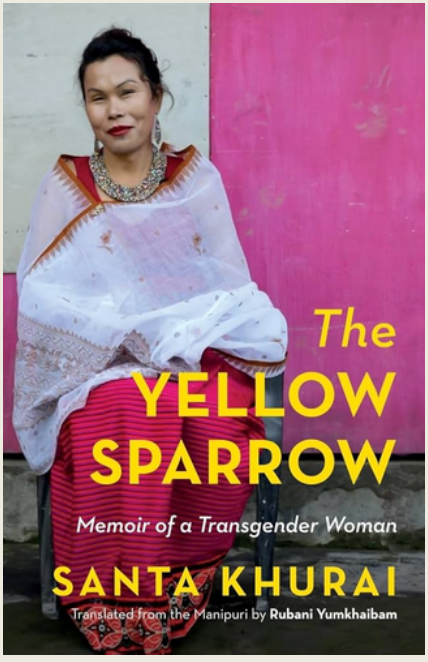
Although there is an increasing amount of Asian representation in the media from 3.4% (2007) to 16% (2022), there are still gaps in the types of identities represented. Notably, Queer Asian identities.

Purpose

The purpose of this zine is to analyze representations of queer Asian (Americans) through media and literature to help understand some of the many ways love can be perceived. This zine will have readers explore how concepts such as intersectionality, immigration, and heteronormativity influence the kinds love queer Asian (Americans) experience in the **individual**, **interpersonal**, and **familial** domains.

CHAPTER 1

Asian Queer





Love



Self





WHAT IS QUEER SELF LOVE?

Queer Self Love Definition:

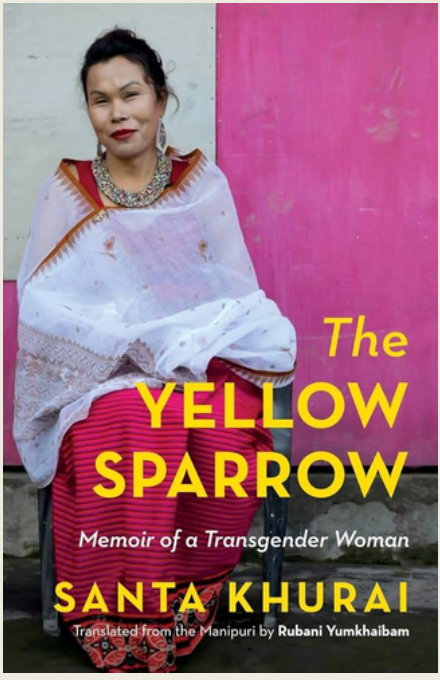
- a regard for one's own well-being and happiness
- the process of accepting one's queer identity
- surrounding yourself with people who love you for who you are

Queer self-love plays an important part in the process of coming to terms with your queer identity. Practicing self-love allows you to get a better understanding of who you are as a person and gets you closer to your sense of identity.

Close Reading 1

"THE YELLOW SPARROW"

-Memoir of a Transgender Woman by Santa Khurai | 2023



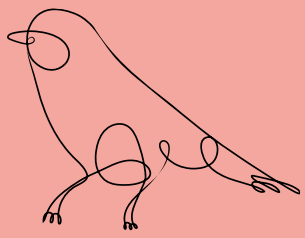


Meet the Author

Queer self-love is often a very long and hard process. Accepting one's queer identity is a journey that looks different for everyone. Let's take a look at a poem written by Santa Khurai in their memoir, "The Yellow Sparrow." Khurai addresses themes of identity and her journey of accepting herself as transgender when people around her might not have liked it. As a result, this poem is about Khurai blossoming into the person she once hid.







"*The yellow sparrow fell in love*

With his own molten loveliness,

The yellow feathers that were shunned by the world

Golden and glorious

A breath of joy escaped from his beak,



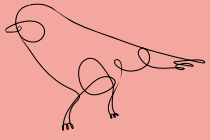
And he broke into a happy song

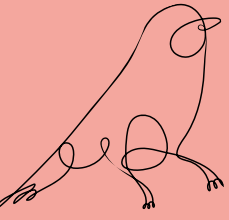
My feathers are the Yellow Gold

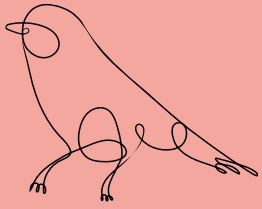
I am the Yellow Sparrow

Whoever saw him called 'The Yellow Sparrow',

The colour yellow became his identity."







Discussion Questions

What phrases/words does Khurai use to show self-love?

What metaphor is Khurai using to convey her love for her queer identity? How does she show that?

ANALYSIS

As a result, Khurai's poem examines how a young sparrow is finally able to love and accept himself. The young sparrow learned to accept his differences and embraced them out to the world. Therefore, this poem is a good example of showing Queer self-love as you might not be able to hide your queer identity. So learning how to love that part of yourself is essential to your happiness. This not only applies to Queer identities but also, all different kinds of identities that you may resonate with.

Reflection Questions

What identities do you resonate with? Are there any other identities you want to explore?

List some of your personal goals. What do you hope to learn more about yourself through these goals?

CHAPTER 2

Asian American Queer Romantic Love



"Night Sky With Exit Wounds." 2016, Copper Canyon Press, www.coppercanyonpress.org/books/night-sky-with-exit-wounds-by-ocean-vuong/.



"XO, Kitty." 2023, *IMDB*, www.imdb.com/title/tt14490706/



"Saving Face." 2004, *Just Watch*, www.justwatch.com/us/movie/saving-face-2004

Definitions

Let's take a look at some key terms that will help you understand this chapter.

ROMANTIC LOVE

Mutual, ongoing and voluntary interactions between two or more partners that is characterized by specific expressions of affection and intimacy. It can include commitments to a long-term relationship, a sense of attachment or bonding, passion, or a desire for a multifaceted connection

QUEER ROMANTIC LOVE

A romantic relationship between individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. Queer romantic love defies traditional gender norms and expectations of what is considered "love" and challenges societal definitions of what a romantic relationship should look like. It encompasses different identities and experiences within the queer community and allows for non-heteronormative expressions of affection and intimacy

Definitions Cont.

HETERONORMATIVITY

The idea that heterosexual (straight) relationships are the norm in our society. Societies that are heteronormative usually default people's sexualities as heterosexual, limiting sexual identity and expression. It also reinforces homophobia and transphobia by pushing the idea that there is a "normal" type of romantic relationship and all relationships that exist outside of heterosexual ones are not "normal".

HOMONORMATIVITY

The adoption of heteronormative values and ideas by the LGBTQ+ community. Homonormativity often puts heterosexual gender norms onto queer relationships. For example, expecting one person in the relationship to take the role of the "man" and one person to take the role of the "woman" even though it is a queer relationship

Examining Queer Romantic Love

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

What are some examples that you have seen of queer romantic relationships in literature or media?

What are some examples, if any, of queer Asian American romantic relationships? Were they depicted positively? Negatively? Both?

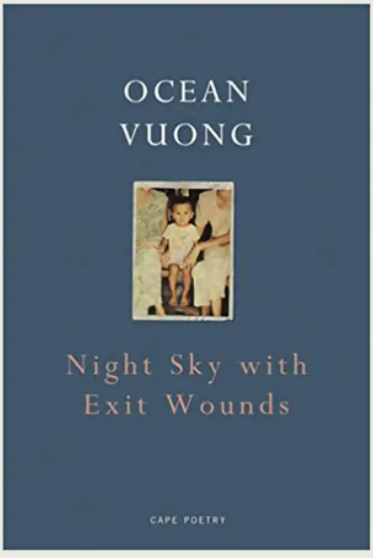
OVERVIEW

Queer Asian American romantic relationships are partially shaped by their intersectional identities, familial relationships, and their sense of self. Concentrating on intersectionality, queer Asian Americans must navigate their multiple identities, including race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. The intersection of these identities creates a unique understanding of how the world is perceived and how queer Asian Americans understand romantic relationships. They may feel ostracized from their ethnic communities and families for being queer. They might also be excluded from certain queer spaces that revolve around whiteness. Thus, the ways in which queer Asian Americans navigate their romantic relationships depends on their sense of self in relation to all of these intersecting identities and how the dominant cultures and social structures affect these identities. We will explore different examples of queer romantic love and analyze the ways in which they are depicted in both media and literature.

Close Reading 1

"ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS"

-Night Sky With Exit Wounds
By Ocean Vuong | 2016





"Night Sky With Exit Wounds." 2016, Copper Canyon Press, www.coppercanyonpress.org/books/night-sky-with-exit-wounds-by-ocean-vuong/.

Pope, Adrian. "My Precarious History." www.theguardian.com/books/2017/oct/03/ocean-vuong-forward-prize-vietnam-war-saigon-night-sky-with-exit-wounds

MEET THE AUTHOR

Ocean Vuong is a Queer Vietnamese American poet, known for his novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, as well as his two poetry books, *Night Sky With Exit Wounds* and *Time is a Mother*. Vuong's writing often addresses what is means to be both queer and Vietnamese American, focusing often on his relationship with his mother and his first romantic relationship. Vuong is currently a writer, poet, and professor at NYU.

You will analyze "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous," a poem from *Night Sky With Exit Wounds* that the novel with the same title is based on.



© Gioncarlo Valentine, 2024

PRE-READ ACTIVITY

First loves can be complicated and messy, but beautiful and transformative at the same time. Think about your first understanding of romantic love, whether it be from your own life, observations from other people's lives, or things you've seen in media and literature. How would you describe this love? Was it mostly positive? Negative? Both? What did you learn about observing this experience?

Let's read the excerpt from Vuong's poem "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous," which details Vuong's first experience with romantic love. Pay attention to the diction, tone, metaphors, and contrasting imagery he uses to detail his experience.

It's not too late. Our heads haloed
with gnats & summer too early
to leave any marks.
Your hand under my shirt as static
intensifies on the radio.
Your other hand pointing
your daddy's revolver
to the sky. Stars falling one
by one in the cross hairs.
This means I won't be
afraid if we're already
here. Already more
than skin can hold. That a body
beside a body
must make a field
full of ticking. That your name
is only the sound of clocks
being set back another hour
& morning
finds our clothes
on your mother's front porch, shed
like week-old lilies.

POEM ANALYSIS

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

What words, phrases, and metaphors does Vuong use to describe love?

What is the overall tone of the excerpt? Is it positive? Negative? Both? Explain why Vuong might contrast love in this way.

Questions Cont.

How might Vuong's intersectional identities of being queer and Asian American affect how he perceives romantic love?

HETERONORMATIVITY

Heteronormativity shapes the ways in which queer Asian Americans are allowed to understand their queer identities. In a study of queer Vietnamese Americans, Masequesmay finds that Asian Americans face cultural, familial, and social barriers that prevent them from understanding their sexualities and identities until later in life. Masequesmay suggests that heteronormative "socialization affects the development process differently for queer" Asian Americans in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts (119). Thus, the experiences of queer Asian Americans are ultimately different from straight Asian Americans and must be looked at through an intersectional lens.





COMING OUT

Masequesmay also notes that there are several phenomena that result in a later or more complicated “coming out” that Asian Americans face. Such phenomena include the concept of “late bloomers,” in which queer Asian Americans do not understand their sexuality until later in life due to social and familial pressures. Asian Americans also face gendered childhoods, where they are expected to be in heterosexual relationships. Finally, Masequesmay argues that Asian Americans face a “second coming out,” illustrating the differences in how families react to queer identity and how mainstream US culture understands queer identity. Ultimately, queer Asian Americans may take longer to understand their queer identities in comparison to white queer people and often face different familial and social pressures.

Close Reading 2



"Saving Face." 2005, *Flipscreen*, flipscreened.com/2019/06/29/saving-face-in-a-heterosexual-world-a-review-of-alice-wus-film/

SAVING FACE

Alice Wu | 2004



"Saving Face." 2005, *The IHS Tattler*, www.justwatch.com/us/movie/saving-face-2004

MEET THE DIRECTOR

Alice Wu is best known for her two films, *Saving Face* and *The Half of It*. Originally a computer scientist, Wu eventually left her stem background and began to make films. Both of her films feature queer Chinese American women and cover themes of identity, romantic love, cultural community, and family.

Saving Face tells the story of Wil, a closeted lesbian, and her relationship with Vivian, and openly gay dancer. Wil struggles with her identity as both Asian American and queer, and throughout the movie, must come to terms with what will happen if her family finds out about her and Vivian's relationship. This movie expands on the concept of "coming out," emphasizing that being "out" can mean different things, and how queer romantic love can thrive in the Asian American community.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY

Next, let's take a look at a clip from Saving Face, and analyze the ways in which queer Asian Americans navigate love under familial and social pressures.

In the clip, Wil and Vivian discuss their relationship and what it means to be closeted within their ethnic communities. At this point in the movie, Wil and Vivian have developed a romantic relationship and are getting serious about their feelings towards each other. Pay attention to both Wil and Vivian's perspectives and why each of them have different opinions about being openly in a romantic relationship.

Let's watch a clip from the movie: Clip from Saving Face

VIDEO ANALYSIS

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

What is happening in this scene between Wil and Vivian?

What may be preventing Wil from “coming out?”

Questions Cont.

In what ways does heteronormativity play a role in this scene?

How do familial pressures affect how queer Asian Americans perceive their romantic relationships?

Close Reading 3



XO Kitty. 2022, *Netflix*, about.netflix.com/en/news/xo-kitty-starts-production-and-adds-cast

XO KITTY

Pamela Romanovsky | 2023



XO Kitty. 2022, TV Line, yahoo.com

XO, KITTY

XO, Kitty, directed by Pamela Romanowsky, is a spin-off of the To All the Boys movies. It looks at the story of Kitty, Lara Jean's younger sister, and her romantic encounters at her boarding school in South Korea. Throughout the show, Kitty navigates her sexuality on top of learning more about her mother's past and her new friendships.

Let's take a look at a clip from XO Kitty, and how queer Asian Americans navigate their romantic feelings for others. The clip details a dream Kitty has about kissing Yuri in a dream, a closeted lesbian that fake-dated Kitty's long distance boyfriend, Dae, in order to maintain parental and societal expectations. In this scene, we see how Kitty, although at first hateful of Yuri, starts to develop romantic feelings for her even though she has committed to dating Dae. We see how Kitty starts to understand how her sexuality and identity as an Asian American intersects with each other.

Let's watch the clip: Clip from XO Kitty

VIDEO ANALYSIS

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

What is happening in this scene between Kitty and Yuri?

How does heteronormativity affect Kitty's perception of her sexuality? What about intersectionality?

Questions Cont.

Kitty starts off the season hating Yuri, but later starts to develop romantic feelings towards her as she navigates and starts to understand her sexuality. How do queer romantic feelings connect to heteronormativity? How do they connect to intersectionality?

CONCLUSION

Queer romantic love is complicated in many ways. Intersectionality and heteronormativity create oppressions that queer Asian Americans constantly face, such as anxiety about coming out or difficulty navigating both their queer identities and their ethnic and racial identities.

Queer Asian American romantic love can also be beautiful. Ocean Vuong shows us how integral one's first love is to their experience as people. Television shows and movies show us the jittery feeling of developing romantic feelings towards someone, or the risks someone is willing to take to be their true authentic selves.

Overall, queer Asian Americans have a unique perspective of love, relationships, and identity.

CHAPTER 3



Everything Everywhere All at Once. 2022, IMDb,
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6710474/mediaviewer/rm87437825/



Fire Island. 2022, IMDb, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt15218000/mediaviewer/rm2668827393/

Asian American Queer Romantic Love

Definitions

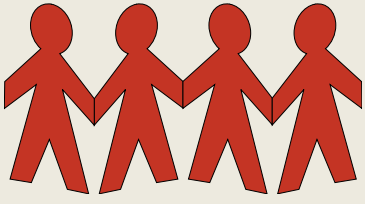
Let's take a look at some key terms that will help you understand this chapter.

FAMILY

A socially recognized group (usually joined by blood, marriage, cohabitation, or adoption) that forms an emotional connection among its members and that serves as an economic unit of society (source)

FOUND/CHOSEN FAMILY

A found family is a group of individuals who create deep emotional connections and form strong social support systems. This is especially common in queer communities as individuals may often face rejection and ostracization from their biological family due to their sexuality or gender identity.



Definitions (cont.)

FIRST-GENERATION IMMIGRANT

An individual born outside of the United States

SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANT

An individual who was born in the United States but has parents who were born abroad and immigrated to the US

FAMILY SHAME

Negative feelings connected to a perceived failure to meet the expectations of one's family

CULTURAL VALUES

Shared beliefs, norms, customs, and attitudes that guide a group of people. They influence an individual's morals, interactions with others, and how they perceive themselves and the world around them

EXAMINING FAMILY

Family is defined as a socially recognized group of people related by blood, marriage, cohabitation, or adoption. The members of this group form an emotional connection among themselves and serve as an economic unit of society (source). Although this is the commonly recognized definition of family, in reality, family can look different for everyone.

ACTIVITY

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

What words come to mind when you think about family?

In your own words, how would you define family?

What factors can influence familial relationships? Turn and talk with your neighbor for two minutes.

EXAMINING FAMILY

At the basic level, queer Asian American individuals' relationships to their identities are shaped by their familial experiences and home life. Asian American households, particularly households with immigrant parents, are further influenced by the lasting impacts of their immigration as well as their cultural values. It is sometimes the case that queer Asian Americans feel as though they cannot live as their true self because of familial reasons.

They may feel a sense of obligation to their family and that being queer would bring shame. Or, they may feel like their family doesn't understand their identity, which can often lead to their family ostracizing them. When, for whatever reason, queer individuals feel isolated from their families, they may create what is known as a chosen family. We will explore chosen families later in this chapter.

EXAMINING FAMILY

At the basic level, queer Asian American individuals' relationships to their identities are shaped by their familial experiences and home life. Asian American households, particularly households with immigrant parents, are further influenced by the lasting impacts of their immigration as well as their cultural values. It is sometimes the case that queer Asian Americans feel as though they cannot live as their true self because of familial reasons.

They may feel a sense of obligation to their family and that being queer would bring shame. Or, they may feel like their family doesn't understand their identity, which can often lead to their family ostracizing them. When, for whatever reason, queer individuals feel isolated from their families, they may create what is known as a chosen family. We will explore chosen families later in this chapter.

Let's examine family and culture through the lens of the 2022 film Everything Everywhere All at Once!



Close Reading 1



EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE

Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert | 2022



ABOUT THE PLOT

Everything Everywhere All at Once (2022) is a film written and directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert. It blends a variety of genres from drama to comedy to science fiction.

Evelyn Wang (Michelle Yeoh) is a Chinese-American immigrant who is struggling to balance her strained relationships with her daughter Joy (Stephanie Hsu), her husband Waymond (Key Huy Quan), and her father (James Hong) with her incoming tax audit on her and Waymond's laundromat. At their appointment with the IRS, Evelyn discovers she must travel the multiverse to save herself and others from a powerful, multiversal being. As Evelyn experiences many different parallel universes, will she be able to save herself and heal her broken relationships?



EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE



Everything Everywhere All at Once Wiki. 2022, IMDb, https://everythingeverywhere.fandom.com/wiki/Evelyn_Wang

EVELYN

Let's analyze a scene from “Everything Everywhere All at Once” to explore the relationship between Evelyn, a Chinese immigrant mother, and her daughter, Joy, who is a lesbian.

Evelyn knows that her daughter is a lesbian and has a girlfriend that she’d like to introduce to her grandfather (Gong Gong), but Evelyn rejects Joy’s sexuality and wishes.



Everything Everywhere All at Once Wiki. 2022, IMDb, https://everythingeverywhere.fandom.com/wiki/Jobu_Tupaki

JOY

Watch the clip below ...

...And perform a close reading of the scene, then complete the following discussion question.

Evelyn is hosting a Chinese New Year celebration at her laundromat and Joy would like to bring her girlfriend, Becky, to the party.



VIDEO ANALYSIS

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. What do you notice in this scene? Observe Evelyn. What does she say, and what does she leave unsaid?

2. How do you think this makes Joy feel? How does she react?

3. Why do you think Evelyn shut Joy down, despite knowing Joy wanted to introduce her girlfriend to Gong Gong?

Who is your family?

Think about how your family looks, who do you see? Take five minutes to draw a family tree based on how you experience your family, regardless of biological connection. Identify each person and include their relationship to you.

CULTURAL VALUES

Queer family can be complicated even further by cultural values and the struggles suffered by immigrant parents. It's important to look deeper into these aspects to gain a better understanding of the issues queer Asian American individuals face within their intersecting identities.

CULTURAL VALUES

Cultural values and their receptivity to queerness vary across Asia, as the various cultures and societies are very diverse.



First-generation immigrants' actions and views are likely to be greatly influenced by their cultural values.

It is safe to say that across many cultures, heterosexuality is seen as vital to maintaining patriarchy. Queerness is believed to undermine this structure in its shifting of gender crossing and disruption of reproductivity and traditional gender roles. As a result, it is perceived as a threat in many patriarchal and heteronormative societies (Newton 2019). This sets the foundation for homophobia rooted in cultural values.

CULTURAL VALUES

In *Everything Everywhere all at Once*, the protagonists are a Chinese immigrant family. Chinese culture is influenced in part by Confucianism and Western Christianity, which has contributed to creating a heteronormative, patriarchal culture. Additionally, within Chinese culture and some other Asian cultures, collectivism is practiced over individualism. Collectivism implies an obligation people feel to their family and an expectation to maintain harmony.

Discussion Question

What culture(s) do you identify with? What are some of your cultural values?

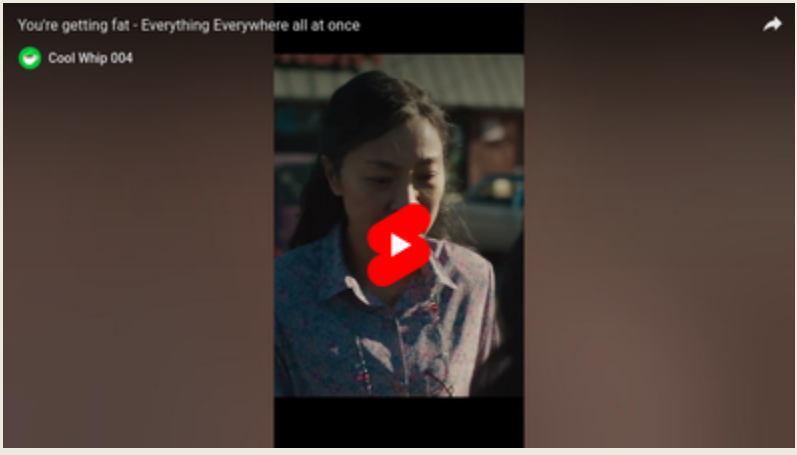
FIRST-GEN PARENTS COPE WITH CHANGE

When parents immigrate to the US, they typically hold onto their cultural values more. However, as they raise their children in the US, they will quickly adapt to American culture, which can create a cultural and linguistic divide. This divide poses a challenge to parental authority and can also cause different understandings of love and expressions of other feelings between parents and their children. A linguistic divide can also make it difficult for parents and children to communicate effectively with one another and find ways to understand each other.

Parents often struggle with their children acculturating because they fear they are going to lose their children to America. With queerness being widely regarded as a Western phenomenon, this can make them feel even more like they have “lost” their child.

Watch the clip below ...

...And perform a close reading of the scene, then complete the following discussion question.

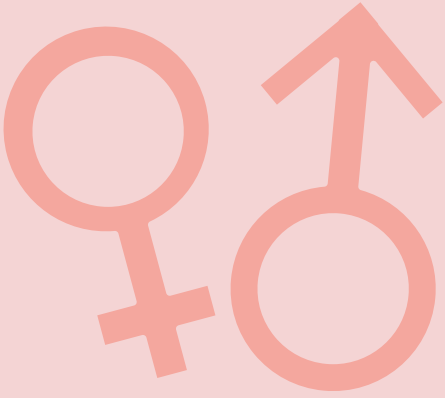


This appears to be a moment where Evelyn almost softens to tell Joy that she cares, but can only express it in this way. Joy receives this as criticism and yet another reminder that her mother doesn't and cannot understand her.

Discussion

When have you felt misunderstood by someone close to you? How did it make you feel?

Let's take a look at gender roles and expectations in Ocean Vuong's novel, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*!



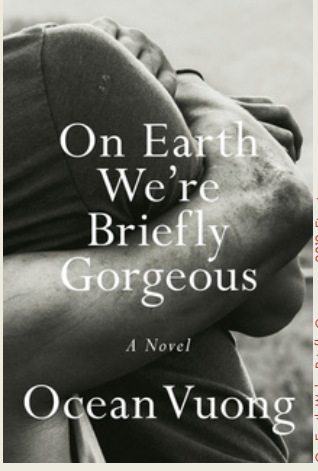
Close Reading 2

ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS





Ocean Vuong | 2019



On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous. 2019. Firestorm, https://firestorm.coop/products/13079-on-earth-were-briefly-gorgeous.html

ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS



Let's analyze a scene from the novel (not to be confused with the poem from Ch. 2) "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous" to explore the relationship between Little Dog and his mother, Rose, who is an immigrant from Vietnam.

This novel is a letter from Little Dog to his mother, who cannot read, as he reckons with loss, trauma, and his familial history.

In this upcoming scene, Little Dog's mother encourages him to start drinking a lot of milk. She does this after he told her that the boys at school bullied him the day before.



Read the excerpt below...

The next morning, in the kitchen, I watched as you poured the milk into a glass tall as my head.

"Drink," you said, your lips pouted with pride. "This is American milk so you're gonna grow a lot. No doubt about it."

I drank so much of that cold milk it grew tasteless on my numbed tongue. Each morning after that, we'd repeat this ritual: the milk poured with a thick white braid, I'd drink it down, gulping, making sure you could see, both of us hoping the whiteness vanishing into me would make more of a yellow boy.

I'm drinking light, I thought. I'm filling myself with light. The milk would erase all the dark inside me with a flood of brightness. "A little more," you said, rapping the counter. "I know it's a lot. But it's worth it."

I clanked the glass down on the counter, beaming. "See?" you said, arms crossed. "You already look like Superman!"

I grinned, milk bubbling between my lips.

Discussion

What do you think the milk represents? Why does Ma want Little Dog to drink milk?

ANALYSIS

Drinking milk was popular in the 1900s because people believed it would strengthen their bones and help them grow. According to traditional masculinity, men are supposed to be big and strong, so drinking milk would help them achieve that. When they do gain that strength, they become powerful, respectable men who can fulfill traditionally masculine roles of protecting and providing.

Discussion

Ma wants Little Dog to step into a masculine role as a provider and protector. This is a traditionally patriarchal view that has been cultivated over time and instilled in Ma's values. If she values traditional masculinity, how can Little Dog's queerness be a point of contention between them?

Discussion

How do gender norms influence perceptions of queerness?

CHOSEN FAMILY

These factors that we have examined can cause a strain on a queer individual's family. Possible outcomes are feelings of ostracization, the severing of relationships, mental health issues, and a search for a new community. It is common in the queer community for individuals to seek the emotional support they are lacking in their biological family elsewhere in the form of a chosen family.

Let's take a look at chosen family in the 2022 film *Fire Island*!

Close Reading 3

FIRE ISLAND



Fire Island. 2022, IMDb, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt15218000/mediaviewer/rm2584941313/

Andrew Ahn | 2022



Fire Island. 2023, Yahoo, https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/fire-island-underrated-amazing-romantic-200458572.html?guccounter=1

ABOUT THE PLOT

Fire Island (2022) is a romantic comedy film directed by Andrew Ahn, written by and starring Joel Kim Booster. This film also stars Bowen Yang, Conrad Ricamora, James Scully, and Margaret Cho.

Fire Island follows a group of friends as they go on their annual vacation to Fire Island, New York. Paying homage to Jane Austen's iconic novel *Pride and Prejudice*, this film explores the complexities of chosen family and friendship dynamics and the pursuit of romantic love as a queer person.



Check out where the film takes place!

FIRE ISLAND

HOWIE



Fire Island. 2022, IMDb, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt15218000/mediaviewer/rm2584941313/

NOAH

The main characters Howie and Noah's relationships with their friends show the idea of a chosen family. In their group, they have a mother figure, Erin, who they all look up to as if she were their own mother.

Not only does she get them food and supplies for their house, she is also a queer elder who the rest of the group goes to for advice. These queer individuals are united by their queerness and have formed deep emotional bonds with one another, offering advice and support throughout their daily lives.



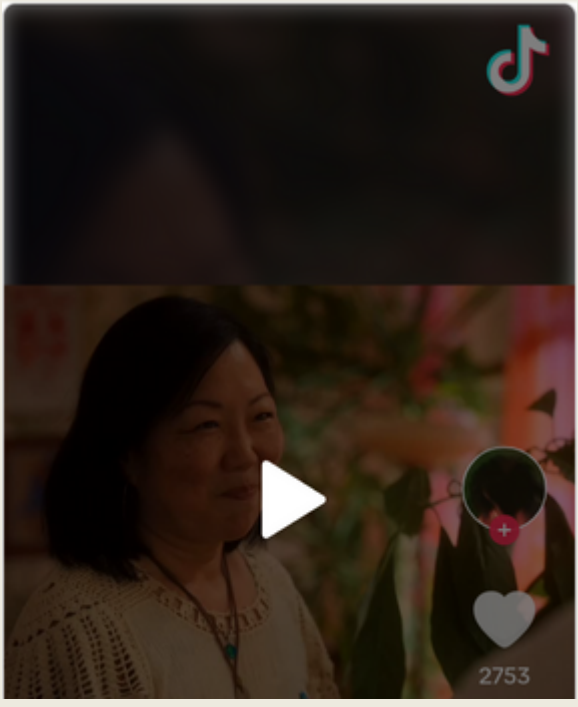
Fire Island. 2022, IMDb, https://vaguevisages.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Fire-Island-Cast-Hulu-Movie-Margaret-Cho-Erin.jpg

ERIN

Watch the clip below ...

...And perform a close reading of the scene, then complete the following discussion question.

A conversation between Erin and Noah about Howie.



Discussion

What is happening in this scene?

Can you observe a certain dynamic between the three characters?

How does their relationship portray a chosen family?

CONCLUSION

Family can be an extremely complex structure for many people for so many different reasons. Everyone's familial experience is unique, but there are ways to organize and understand certain patterns and phenomena. Queer Asian American individuals stand at the intersection of multiple identities, including but not limited to ethnicity and sexuality. Their family is informed by immigration experiences, cultural values, and experiencing life in the US as a racialized other, which impacts their relationship with their family as a queer individual. Seeing these representations in film, TV, and literature is incredibly important for queer individuals and their families to understand the complexities unique to their status as Asian Americans.



FINAL NOTES


EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE


SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES
FIRE ISLAND
ORIGINAL FILM
JUNE 2 ONLY ON hulu


THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER
OCEAN VUONG
On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous
'A MASTERPIECE' MAX PORTER


FROM JENNY HAN, A NEW
TO ALL THE BOYS I'VE LOVED BEFORE
STORY BOARD...
XO, Kitty
A NETFLIX SERIES
ONLY ON NETFLIX | MAY 18


from Alice Wu, director of Saving Face
a different kind of love story
the half of it
MAY 1 | NETFLIX


JOAN CHEN LYNN CHEN MICHELLE KRUSIEC
SavingFace
A New Comedy
SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL
TORONTO FILM FESTIVAL


N
Never Have I Ever


The YELLOW SPARROW
Memoir of a Transgender
SANTA KHURAI


SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES
FIRE ISLAND
ORIGINAL FILM
JUNE 2 ONLY ON hulu


FROM JENNY HAN, A NEW
TO ALL THE BOYS I'VE LOVED BEFORE
STORY BOARD...
XO, Kitty
A NETFLIX SERIES
ONLY ON NETFLIX | MAY 18


EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE


THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER
OCEAN VUONG
On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous
'A MASTERPIECE' MAX PORTER

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How does the concept of romantic and familial love shape your sense of identity?

Can you think of any other parts of your identity that also shape your perceptions of self?

How can what you learned throughout this zine shape your future life? Your future goals?

What was the one concept/idea/piece of media you will take from this zine? Why?

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Yellow Chair Collective

Yellow Chair Collective

Provides culturally sensitive mental health care, specializing in serving Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and other marginalized communities, fostering healing and resilience through connection and understanding.

Asian Pride Project

asian pride project

Celebrates and empowers LGBTQ+ Asians and their families by sharing stories of love, acceptance, and resilience within the Asian diaspora.

Desi LGBTQ+ Helpline

DeQH

Dedicated to providing confidential, culturally competent support, resources, and a safe space for South Asian LGBTQ+ individuals and their families.

Asian Mental Health Collective

asian mental health professional

Normalize and de-stigmatize mental health within the Asian community by creating safe spaces, providing resources, and fostering a global support network.

WORKS CITED

"Alice Wu." *Gold House*, 1 May 2022, goldhouse.org/people/alice-wu/.

Cho, Jennifer. "'We Were Born from Beauty': Dis/Inheriting Genealogies of Refugee and Queer Shame in Ocean Vuong's On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous." Melus, vol. 47, no. 1, 2022, pp. 130–53, https://doi.org/10.1093/melus/mlac024.

Everything Everywhere All at Once. Directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, A24, 2022. Amazon Prime, https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/0M4L6A7GLV1EN3QHWM4CGV6O8B/ref=atv_plr_detail_play.

Fire Island. Directed by Andrew Ahn, Hulu, 2022, https://press.hulu.com/shows/fire-island/.

Kha, Doua. "For Queer Asian American Youth Who Are Resilient & Tenacious." HKS Student Policy Review, 25 Oct. 2023, studentreview.hks.harvard.edu/for-queer-asian-american-youth-who-are-resilient-tenacious/.

Khurai, Santa. *The Yellow Sparrow: Memoir of a Transgender*. Tiger Speaking Books, 2023.

Masequesmay, Gina. "Emergence of Queer Vietnamese America." *Amerasia Journal*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2003, pp. 116–34, https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.29.1.l15512728mj65738.

Saving Face. Directed by Alice Wu, 2005.

Vuong, Ocean. "About." *Oceanvuong*, www.oceanvuong.com/about.

Vuong, Ocean. Night Sky with Exit Wounds. Copper Canyon Press, 2016.

Vuong, Ocean. On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous: A Novel. [New York], Random House Large Print, 2019.

Zhang, Hanwen, and Kiara Manosalvas. Queer Asian American Belonging and Narrative in Everything Everywhere All at Once (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022) and Sewing Patches through Performance (D'Lo, 2021), 10 Feb. 2024, https://doi.org/10.58445/rars.864.

© 2024. This work is openly licensed via CC BY 4.0