Queeritage: LGBTQ Family Legacy in American Dramatic Narratives 1979 - 2021

Queeritage: LGBTQ Family Legacy in American Dramatic Narratives 1979 - 2021

Eric Swanholm Rasmussen

A Thesis in the Field of Dramatic Arts

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

May 2022

Abstract

This thesis examines the long-ignored theme of intergenerational queer family legacy in American dramatic narratives. It analyzes the ramifications of a queer character's interacting with, discovering, or excavating the history of another queer character in their own biological or adoptive family in plays, films, and television series of the past forty plus years. This analysis calls for the creation of a new term to differentiate this type of relationship from other, more often explored, forms of queer intergenerationality. This is particularly necessary as terms such as "family" and "kinship" have, over the years, assumed different meanings in a queer context thereby complicating scholarly research. To this end, the use of the word "queeritage," an amalgam of the words "queer" and "heritage," is proposed. This thesis examines the ways in which queeritage has functioned in twelve dramatic narratives from its first iteration, in Martin Sherman's 1979 play *Bent,* through its most recent, in Jane Campion's 2021 film *The Power of the Dog*. The opening sections of this thesis explicate why queer people came to be thought of as existing exclusively outside of a traditional family structure. It then examines dramatic narratives which invoke queeritage within such a structure, organized and discussed in the context of four historical periods in which they were created. Queeritage first appears in the post-Stonewall era of sexual liberation, followed by iterations during the HIV/AIDS crisis, then again in another period of sexual liberation, and subsequently after the legalization of same sex marriage, an event which spurred a proliferation of queeritage narratives. The role of autobiography, in the creation

of several of these narratives, as well as in the creation of this thesis, is described. An argument is made for the importance of queeritage as a critical lens for exploring both dramatic narratives as well as personal lives in view of the profound effects that it might have in combatting suicide and poor mental health outcomes in queer youth. This is especially true of those who are rejected by their families of origin, and more broadly in serving to dispel the myth believed by many queer people and their straight relatives alike, that 'nobody in this family was ever like that.' This myth—further perpetuated by scholarship's oversight of queeritage—leads to an othering of queer people that makes repressive policies by governments, which claim that queer people are alien to their culture, possible.

Author’s Biographical Sketch

Eric Swanholm Rasmussen is an actor and director. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy from The City College of New York. He trained as an actor at The Neighborhood Playhouse, HB Studio, RADA's summer Shakespeare program and with the theater companies Complicité and Double Edge. He has created roles in the original U.S. productions of plays by Jean-Claude van Itallie, Yoko Ono and Hanoch Levin, among others. He was a member of the Workhouse, Monkey Wrench, and Mint theater companies and with Tina Ruan and the late Robbie McCauley, founded ALL THREE, a performance trio based on autobiographical storytelling. Excerpts of his autobiographical work have been read at Second Stage Theater's New Works Series, the 92nd Street Y, Denniston Hill and the Wild Project.

Dedication

To the memory of my mother, Barbara Berzin Rasmussen, who wanted a fairer world.

And to all the queer people whose families never got to know them.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis director, Michael Bronski, for not only agreeing to direct this thesis, but for sharing his knowledge, time, and insights so generously and with an abundance of patience and grace. I would also like to thank my research advisor, Richard Martin, who so excellently guided me through the process of writing my research proposal and the thesis; and my advisor during its prework phase, Talaya Adrienne Delaney, who introduced me to the process and whose acuity and enthusiasm was instrumental in helping me formulate and clarify my initial ideas.

Many people contributed to the development of this thesis: the incomparable staff at the Harvard Library, especially research librarian Steve Kuehler; and friends old and new, Zach Adam, Carmel Bar-Hanan, Maria Alba Brunetti, Amy Frey, Jason Friedman, Allison Plamondon, and Harvard Hillel's rabbinic intern Emily Rogal.

Lastly, I am forever grateful to all three of my families for their love and support: my two families of origin, the Tobias-Berzin(sky) family in which I grew up in New York; the Swanholm-Rasmussen family that I have come to know in Scandinavia; and my chosen family of friends, lovers, and others.

.

Table of Contents

Chapter I.

Introduction

American dramatic narratives have uniquely and overwhelmingly revolved around the family as the primary locus of storytelling. Throughout American history, as in the larger world, most queer people have been forced to lead lives of secrecy due to pervasive homophobia embedded in laws that criminalized "sodomy," “cross-dressing,” and even meeting in public. Those who were found out by, or came out to, their families of origin were routinely rejected and exiled. As a result, queer family history—the story of those members of our families who were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender—was erased. Queer people came to be thought of as existing apart from, what was traditionally considered, immediate and extended family life. Most depictions of queer dramatic characters have indeed posited them as outsiders to their entirely heteronormative families. Thus, most queer people have grown up, not only unaware of the queer history within *their own* families, but also, without having seen dramatic representations of queer history within *any* family.

It is, with rare exception, only in the past two, post-Stonewall, generations that the antecedent queer members of certain families have been able to be discussed in American society. Today it is possible for some queer people to learn about their queer relatives. In this sense, we are at the beginning of queer family history. This thesis addresses the role and implications of such an intergenerational legacy in dramatic narratives. I believe this to be the first scholarship that investigates what happens when a queer character in a

dramatic narrative becomes aware of, interacts with, learns about, or excavates the history of another queer person in a prior generation of their own family.

Despite this lack of attention, intergenerational queer family legacy is appearing with greater and greater frequency on stage, film, and television. In this thesis, I analyze the ways in which the theme has been addressed in the past 40 odd years, between 1979, the year of its first iteration in a dramatic narrative (that I have thus far encountered), and today. The works I examine are the stage plays, *Bent* (1979), and *Fun Home* (2015); the films, *The Lost Language of Cranes* (1991), *The Hours* (2002), *Call Me By Your Name* (2017), *Uncle Frank* (2020), and *The Power of the Dog* (2021); the television movie, *Man in an Orange Shirt* (2017) and the television series, *Queer as Folk* (2000-2005), *Will & Grace* (1998-2006 and 2017-2020), *Transparent* (2014-2019) and *Vida* (2018 - 2020). Rather than grouping these narratives together by mediums, I discuss them, in relative chronological order, in chapters which reflect the importance of the profound changes that were taking place for queer people during this time period. Here, the way in which intergenerational queer family legacy is treated may be seen in the context of the historical moment in which these narratives were created. I proceed by providing a brief history and plot summary of each work and then describing how the viewer and the narrative's characters come to discover their queer intergenerational family legacy.

Queer theory has explored the way in which many stories about queer people, who have been historically marginalized, utilize temporality and intertextuality in unique ways to tell the story of its characters. Similarly, queer narratives, like queer lives, often find themselves navigating the tension that exists between assimilation and liberation. In each section I describe the ways in which a particular work engages with these issues

before proceeding to delineate the effects of intergenerational queer family legacy on its plot and character development.

This thesis assumes that every family has a queer history. While this claim may sound highly exaggerated, statistically this must be the case. According to the Gallup polling organization, the number of Americans who answered "yes" to the question, "Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?" increased from 3.5% in 2012 to 5.6% in 2020. Moreover, amongst generation Z adult respondents (those born between 1997 and 2002) the figure rises to 15.9%. The rising figure in each generation's response (only 1.3% of those born before 1946 answered affirmatively) speaks not to an increase in the percentage of the population that is queer, but rather to an increased willingness to so identify oneself in a poll. Yet even amongst generation Z's adult respondents, 5.2% do not answer the question about their sexual orientation (Jones), due in part, no doubt, to the persistence of homophobia.

Nonetheless, this increasing willingness to identify oneself as queer, provides us with a better understanding of what percentage of the population actually is, has always been, and what portion it must comprise of each and every family. Yet the de facto position in both narratives about queer people, and the scholarship about them, has been rooted in the belief that any particular queer person is the *only queer person to have ever existed in a particular family*. Due to this, I devote a chapter to the role that autobiographical[1] knowledge of intergenerational queer family legacy has played in the

[1] While it is outside the scope of this thesis, it is interesting to note that so much of the work which engages queeritage, has been created by people who, like myself, are Jewish, and/or takes place within a Jewish context. This preponderance of work stems from, I would propose, the Jewish concern, as an exiled people, for family dovetailing with arriving in a multi-ethnic America (Krassner); the widespread exploration of queer themes by Jewish playwrights as discussed, for example, by Alisa Solomon in "Performance:

development, not only of some the narratives this thesis discusses but to the creation of this thesis itself. In my conclusion I discuss the important roles that the portrayal of intergenerational queer family legacy in dramatic narratives may play in the developing identities of queer youth. Here I argue that it may increase their acceptance by their straight family members as well as undermine the false othering of queer people upon which so much homophobic rhetoric and action is based throughout the world. Additionally, I suggest that the implications of the recognition of intergenerational queer family legacy may include thinking about the binary of assimilation vs. liberation in a new way.

Before moving on to a deeper discussion of how queer people came to be conceptualized as existing apart from family, it is necessary to define some terms.

Dramatic Narratives: This term is used to include stage plays, films and television shows which are meant to be performed by actors and viewed by an audience. It is not used here to describe the technique of writing that one might employ in, for example, a novel or poem. It is used in place of the term for the literary genre "Drama" in its broadest sense whether the narrative unfolds within the style of tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy or melodrama.

Queer: This term is simply used to refer to people who are identified as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (as would be included in the acronyms LGBT, LGBTQ+ and LGBTQQ). It is used to refer to all those people and

---

Queerly Jewish/Jewishly Queer in the American Theater" in *The Cambridge History of Jewish American Literature*; and the importance of memory in Jewish tradition as both an exiled people prior to the Holocaust and a people having survived a genocide thereafter.

characters in dramatic narratives who do not conform to heteronormative expectations of sexuality and/or gender regardless of whether these characters and individuals would have used it to refer to themselves. While its origin was as a pejorative epithet, it is a word that has been reclaimed and embraced by academia in its use in queer theory and queer studies, in the mainstream media—as in *Queer Eye for the Straight* Guy—as well as by many individuals who use it to broadly describe their identity. Historian Michael Bronski recounts the political origin of the term's adoption by activists in the wake of the AIDS crisis: "During this time, many LGBT people began using the word 'queer' to describe themselves and their culture. This was partly an act of reclaiming language that could change [its] political meaning...Just as 'queer' had been angrily shouted at lesbians and gay men in past decades, ACT UP and other activists now shouted the word as a declaration of difference and strength" (*Queer History* 232). At times this thesis uses more specific words, i.e. homosexual, gay, lesbian, transgender, gender nonconforming, or non-binary, to describe particular individuals or to limit what is being articulated to refer to that subset of queer people.

Queeritage[2]: This thesis coins "queeritage" to describe the type of queer family history that will be its subject. Thinking about queer people and family, the first thing that comes to mind, for most, is that queer people create their own. These families of choice, have in all their variety, flourished and functioned as mainstays of queer culture, be it the circle of friends and lovers with whom queer people have spent Thanksgiving; the vital web of social support gay men created to care for each other during the AIDS

[2] This word was first proposed to me, to define the kind of intergenerational queer family legacy that this thesis addresses, by my friend, the musician, songwriter and recording artist, Zach Adam, who has a way with words.

crisis of the 1980s and 90s; the drag ball culture populated with house "mothers," "fathers" and "children;" the surrogate families created by queer women in prison; or the alliances forged, between gay men, lesbians and transgender people. It is in the forming of political advocacy and social support organizations as diverse as The Mattachine Society, The Daughters of Bilitis, The Radical Faeries, ACT UP, Gay Men's Health Crisis, God's Love We Deliver, Human Rights Campaign and GLAAD. Queer people have redefined what is meant by "family" by both blurring its lines and re-appropriating its terminology.

Anthropologist Kath Weston argued, in her pioneering 1991 work, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship,* that lesbians and gay men had been so successful at finding ways to provide all the nurturing and support traditionally offered by the heteronormative family structure that what is meant by the very concept of "kinship" had been redefined. Such a redefinition of what is meant by similar terms like "family," "legacy," "ancestry" and "heritage," when used in a queer context, has resulted in their employment in scholarship describing the ways in which queer people choose their own family. It also explains a genealogy in which, for example, Oscar Wilde may be considered our queer "ancestor." To distinguish intergenerational queer legacy within a family where 'family' is understood to mean, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it, a "group of people connected by blood, marriage [or] adoption," I propose the word "queeritage," an amalgam of the words queer and heritage, as the term to define it.

To understand the vital importance of queeritage it is necessary to appreciate the role that the family plays in American dramatic narratives. From the rise of drama on Broadway, to the Hollywood film, to the development of the situation comedy genre on

television, American storytelling has been preoccupied with the family. Arthur Miller, one of America's most iconic playwrights, proclaimed its thematic preeminence in his 1956 essay in the *Atlantic* monthly, "The Family in Modern Drama." Scholar Tom Scanlan, in his 1978 study, *Family, Drama and American Dreams,* called it "the crucial subject of American drama" (Scanlan 3). Echoing them, Thadeus Wakefield, begins his 2003 monograph on the topic by asserting that it is "*the* central subject of American Drama" (Wakefield 1; emphasis added). As theater critic Alisa Solomon has observed:

> If the United States were to declare a national dramaturgy — akin to the bald eagle and the rose as its emblematic bird and flower — it would be the family-based problem play. From Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) to Tracy Letts's *August: Osage County* (2007), numerous oft-produced works build their action on the domestic squabbles, misfortunes, or conflicts that unwind within the four walls of a single household (Solomon 551).

While American dramatic narratives have been centered around the family, queer scholarship has described the ways in which queer people, being by and large excluded from its traditional constructs, have redefined the meaning of concepts like kinship and marriage (Weston; Koontz; Murray).

Looking at the family through a queer lens can redefine its meaning, so too have queer studies scholars explored the ways in which concepts like memory, temporality and futurity can be challenged and reformulated by queer experience. Jack Halberstam, for example, in his 2005 monograph, *In a Queer Time and Place,* employs among others, the lens of the transgender body to argue that "there is such a thing as 'queer time' and 'queer space'" and that they exist "in opposition" to the institutions of "family, heterosexuality and reproduction" (Halberstam 1). José Muñoz makes use of gay male memory, engaging topics such as public sex, to offer a call to "look beyond the here and

now" (Muñoz 189) and toward a utopian queer futurity. Whereas scholars such as Lee Edelman, writing in 1998, argued that queer people "choosing to stand, as many of us do, outside the cycles of reproduction, choosing to stand, as we also do, by the side of those living and dying each day with the complications of AIDS, we know the deception of the societal lie that endlessly looks toward a future whose promise is always a day away" (Edelman 29).

What these re-framings of time and space have in common is their debt to the giants of postmodernist deconstruction Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. But times have changed. Groundbreaking theater director Anne Bogart, in her 2015 address, "The Role of Storytelling in the Theater of the Twenty-First Century," at the Humana Festival of New American Plays at the Actors Theater of Louisville, spoke of being "a child of postmodernism":

> It means that I grew up taking things apart; I am the biggest deconstructor in the world. Postmodernism is actually about knocking down classical, pre-classical—all other forms of storytelling and then picking them up again and looking at them separately. So I grew up doing this, but what happened is the twenty-first century happened, 9/11 happened, a lot of things happened, and suddenly we came to the end of deconstruction, where we've deconstructed so much, that nothing means anything anymore. And faced then [sic] you have to ask what comes after postmodernism? The clues have something to do with stories—it has something to do with asking the question whose stories? Who are they for? How do we tell them? (Bogart)

Times have changed, yet it is predominantly through these postmodernist rubrics that scholarship has examined the narratives that this thesis analyzes. Meghan C. Fox, for example, discusses *Fun Home* in terms of futurity while Linda M. Hess investigates temporality in *Transparent*. This thesis' contention is that the stories of multigenerational queer family history analyzed here must be viewed as separate instances, in which they

may or may not, reflect a queer sensibility in their narratives. As important, by grouping them together they can be seen as a corpus of work that is telling a new story. It is the story of queer people within a family knowing about each other's existence.

Some dramatic narratives I discuss have generated a large body of scholarship. They are also landmarks of queer representation; *Bent* being the first narrative to tell the story of queer people during the Holocaust; *Will & Grace*, the first prime time TV series with an openly gay main character; *Queer As Folk* breaking ground as a TV series about a group of gay male friends; *Fun Home* as a popular graphic novel and Broadway musical with a lesbian protagonist; and *Transparent*, a milestone in transgender representation. In Michael Cunningham's *The Hours,* the narrative revolves around Virginia Woolf, an important figure in the literary canon. The remaining narratives have received little or no scholarship.

There has been almost no scholarship on the effect of one queer character's discovery that another family member is queer on how the plot develops in these works. This is despite the fact that, for example, queeritage is the primary theme in *Man in an Orange Shirt* (a work on which there exists no scholarship), and a salient one in the majority of the other eleven. The way in which scholarship, like society, has tended to imagine queer lives as existing apart from families accounts for this lack of research and why these dramatic narratives have never been analyzed as a distinct, fully realized genre. It is as if queer people sprang from the neck of Medusa, like Pegasus and Chrysaor and were raised by the Muses.

Transparent is the narrative in which queeritage is the most thoroughly explored. The family connections extend to not merely two, but three generations of the same

family. Scholars such as Anamarija Horvat universalize the queer experience of this particular family to discuss issues like “post memory” and “queer futurity.” Horvat identifies that the narrative “eschews expectations by depicting its main character not as a lone queer individual in an otherwise heterosexual family, but rather by showing several generations of LGBTQ-identified women within the same familial unit” (Horvat 399). Yet in her analysis she focuses on the “unacknowledged trauma” and “affective cost of silence” (401) of this hidden history rather than on the fact that it is indeed being revealed and excavated and the ramifications of that discovery.

In the scant scholarship that mentions more than one of the sources in my analysis, a similar universalizing takes place. In Monica B. Pearl’s discussion of the graphic novel *Fun Home* (the source of the stage play), she describes it as a "coming out narrative that involves the gay protagonist's discovery of a gay father;" and refers to a similar narrative structure in David Leavitt's novel, *The Lost Language of Cranes,* (the source of the film). However, Pearl, writing in 2008[3], sees the intergenerational element of these two narratives as nothing more than "suggest[ing] that homosexuality has always been around...[but that] different generations of men and women [have] experienced it different[ly] depending on societal mores at the time." She asserts that "gay identity...is not passed down...as a legacy from generation to generation" (Pearl 290). This thesis interprets these narratives as instances of what precisely is 'legacy.' Pearl describes the protagonist of *Fun Home*’s discovery that her father is also queer as “a spin on the typical coming out tale” (Pearl, 286). This thesis argues, by discussing *Fun Home*, not only with

[3]A time in which there were far fewer queeritage narratives. Eight of the twelve discussed in this thesis appear after 2008.

The Lost Language of Cranes, but also with *Transparent* (2014), and *Call Me By Your Name* (2017), that these narratives, wherein a person coming out learns that a parent is also queer, represent more than merely 'a spin.' They are, taken with the discoveries of queer uncles, aunts and grandparents that occur in the other narratives, an emerging and proliferating body of work that explores an entirely new theme. In her 2013 thesis McMaster University scholar Kimberley Griffiths aptly compares the uses of intertexuality in Bechdel's graphic novel *Fun Home* with that in Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours* to explore the ways in which each work disrupts normative notions of temporality. What happens when these narratives engaging the theme of queeritage and also utilizing "queering time" are placed in conversation with queeritage narratives, such as *Will & Grace,* which are told in the most normative of styles*?*

Anna M. Dempsey discusses the repeated presence of a pearl ring in *Transparent* as an object connecting the queer characters of different generations. She argues, citing Walter Benjamin, that it has "become, in Benjamin's words, an allegorical embodiment of the 'destruction' of the knowledge and traditions that had once 'passe[d] like a ring from generation to generation'" (Dempsey 809). I will not only discuss the role played by the ring in *Transparent* but by the portrait which plays a similar signifying role in *Man In an Orange Shirt.*

The issue of queeritage in dramatic narratives exists within the context of queer representation broadly. There is a long history surrounding who and what queer people are allowed to be seen as in dramatic narratives. For example, Vito Russo described and chronicled, in his landmark 1987 work *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the*

Movies, how queer characters moved from being represented as "sissy," to invisibility to victim to criminal (Russo). Queeritage enables them to also be seen as family members.

How will these increasing representations of queeritage in dramatic narratives effect the lives of queer youth who struggle with their identity and those families which reject them? We must not underestimate the possibilities. Bronski, in his landmark 2011 *A Queer History of the United States,* discusses his "realization...that entertainment...has not only been a primary mode of expression of LGBT identity, but one of the most effective means of social change" (xix). In a 2012 interview on NBC's *Meet The Press,* then Vice President Joe Biden, explaining his coming to support gay marriage, said, "I think *Will and Grace* probably did more to educate the American public than almost anything anybody has ever done so far" (Little). As Bronski points out, in the context of television, "*Will and Grace*, in 1999, was the first time that homosexuality became integral to a show's narrative" (237).

The stories we tell are important. In a 2015 interview with the public historian Christopher Gioia, queer author Felice Picano related that when he published his 1995 novel *Like People In History*, that he "chose that title very specifically because it was the story of two gay cousins over a period of thirty years. And one of the things [he] was trying to show was that in fact gay men and women were in American history and world history" (Gioia). So too were they in family history.

The dramatic works I discuss here are American with the exception of the British BBC television movie *Man in an Orange Shirt* and the British film *The Lost Language of Cranes* (based on an American novel). I have included these works because they so directly explore queeritage. Along with *Cranes'* American roots, is also a tremendous

cross-pollination in dramatic narratives between England and the United States. *Bent*, by American playwright Martin Sherman, premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London and the Canadian American television series *Queer As Folk,* set in Pittsburgh, is a remake of the British series set in Manchester.

This is not an inclusive list of dramatic narratives that contain multiple queer characters in the same family. In Terrance McNally's play *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (1997) twin brothers John and James are both gay. The plot of the Italian comedic film, *Loose Cannons* (2010), revolves around two gay brothers' decision of whether to come out to their conservative father, the owner of a pasta company. These relatives, like the lesbian character Debbie Gallagher and her half-brother/cousin Ian Gallagher in the American television series *Shameless* are queer family members *in the same generation* and are therefore not instances of what I call queeritage which necessarily involves an *intergenerational* heritage.

There are also works that deal with would-be intergenerational queer family members which are not included here. In both the stage play and film versions of Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy* (1982), the queer protagonist Arnold and his partner Alan plan to foster a gay male teenager named David. Immediately after Alan is murdered, David arrives and Arnold functions as his foster parent as he awaits approval to adopt him. At the narrative's end there is still one month to go before Arnold can legally adopt David, thus while he is functioning *in loco parentis,* he is not yet David's parent. Here also, the element of intentional design has been introduced. Arnold and Alan sought to create a family with a queer person in another generation as opposed to simply finding themselves in one.

Intentional design is also a determinative element of queeritage in the stage play and film iterations of Harvard alumnus Jonathan Tolins *Twilight of the Golds*. In the play (1993), a heterosexual woman with a gay brother becomes pregnant and learns through genetic testing that her unborn son has a 90 percent chance of being gay. She decides to abort the child. Here, the prospective mother has by design chosen *not* to have the child. In the subsequent film (1997), the mother decides to have the baby, but divorce her husband. Here again, there is a decision that is made which determines queeritage. While the film version of *Twilight* comes closest to fitting into this thesis, as at film's end there is a boy born with a gay uncle, we do not know this boy's future life as the narrative ends in the child's infancy.

The plot of *Twilight*, written when some scientists postulated that a "gay gene" could potentially predict sexual orientation is predicated on a premise that this would be possible in the near future. As science has discovered the genetic basis for sexual orientation is more complex, that scenario has not become possible. This renders the plot of the play and film entirely hypothetical even a generation later. In this way, *Twilight* fundamentally differs from all the other narratives explored in this thesis which involve possible events.

The list of works analyzed in this thesis is not an exhaustive one, including all of those which engage with queeritage. As there are at least 45 fringe theater festivals held in the world and some 140 queer film festivals annually, it is impossible to know how many dramatic narratives may touch upon or revolve around intergenerational queer family legacy in a meaningful way. This is especially the case when the nomenclature one might use to search for such content does not function when used in a queer context.

Words like "family," "kinship," "legacy," "ancestors," or "heritage," when used in combination with the word "queer," the abbreviation "LGBTQ," or any of its constituent parts, yields results that are far afield from the topic of our discussion. Thus, the need for a term like queeritage[4].

The same problem would exist in trying to find instances of queeritage in other types of literature. There are short stories and novels, besides those adapted into dramatic narratives I analyze, that involve queeritage. Michael Lowenthal's 1996 essay "Saying Kadish for Peter," in which he relates imagining that an uncle who perished in the Holocaust was gay, and his 1998 novel *The Same Embrace* whose gay protagonist Jacob discovers the history of his gay uncle Josef, who met the same fate, are poignant examples.

The limited scope of this thesis precludes the inclusion of the contributions made by those literary works toward the development of the theme. In many disciplines and contexts, the role of queeritage has been little discussed. The poet Mark Doty has described the influence of the legacy of queer visual artist Eric Rhein's queer uncle, the LGBT rights activist Lige Clarke, on Rhein's work (Doty 21). All of which points again, to the need for scholarship to start looking at intergenerational queer family legacy. This is especially true in our time, when the legal definition of families has changed to include those created by queer people through marriage, childbirth, surrogacy and/or adoption

[4] The crowdsourced wiki website tvtropes.org identifies "hereditary homosexuality" as a trope and includes several of the narratives discussed in this thesis as examples of it. Whether sexual orientation is biological ('hereditary,' as tvtropes.org is using the word), or environmental, or a combination of the two, is irrelevant to this thesis' claim that there have always been queer people in all families.

and when it is now, and will become increasingly, possible for families to discuss their queer history.

In her 2018 thesis, *Nobody's Baby: Queer Intergenerational Thinking Across Oral History. Archives, and Visual Culture,* University of North Carolina American Studies scholar, Rachel Gelfand, has articulated the problem with the current nomenclature. She suggests that "*Queer intergenerationality*, a term used to describe a kind of mentorship or connection between older and younger queer individuals, must be expanded to reflect dialogue between gay relatives of different biological generations" (102). Additionally needed, is a term, such as queeritage, which is limited in meaning to describe a certain type of queer intergenerationality. Such a term would allow this discussion to be held in tandem with as well as in comparison to other forms of queer intergenerationality. Tracking the development of how queeritage is treated in dramatic narratives is also obviously limited by only being able to access those which are written in or translated into the English language. There is no doubt queeritage is being portrayed in dramatic narratives throughout the world. For example, in the second episode of the first season of the Israeli television series *Sisters* (2016), one of its protagonists, Orit, tries to avoid, what she believes to be her more traditional grandmother, Lea, from learning about her relationship with another woman, Karen, only to discover that her grandmother is also in a lesbian relationship.

If it is the case, as Alison Bechdel comments, that Michael Bronski's *A Queer History of the United States* reveals "that queer lives are and always have been, woven into the very fabric of this country" (Bechdel, cover endorsement), then it also must be true that they have been a thread in the history of each and every family, in Bechdel's,

mine and in yours; my thesis discusses the way that this truth has been explored in the stories that are told about them.

.

Chapter II.

In a Time of Liberation: The Beginning of Queeritage in American Dramatic Narratives

Following World War II, the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were periods of profound social, cultural and political change. Informed by the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s as well as the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, queer people, in the late 1960s transformed the way in which they thought about their identity and after Stonewall in 1969 a new era of queer liberation began. It is in this context that the first iteration of queeritage in a dramatic narrative appeared.

Bent (1979).

Martin Sherman's landmark 1979 play *Bent* is the first dramatic narrative to portray the treatment of homosexuals during the Holocaust. It is also the first dramatic narrative in which an intergenerational queer familial relationship is established. That the play's queer protagonist Max has a queer uncle is simply taken for granted demonstrates how the play was stunningly ahead of its time. The relationship between Max and his uncle Freddie, not only delineates the generational changes that have taken place for queer people in Weimar Germany, but more important, can be viewed as the fulcrum which facilitates Max's journey in the play, wherein, he comes to learn that he is capable of love.

Bent premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1979 after its 1978 staged reading at the National Playwrights Conference of the Eugene O'Neill Theater

Center in Waterford, Connecticut. Sherman, an American playwright, had been working throughout the 1970s with London's Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company for whom he had originally written *Bent* (Weinert-Kendt). The play's West End premiere starred Ian McKellen as Max, a role that would be played later that year on Broadway by Richard Gere. In the 1997 film adaptation, directed by Sean Mathias, for which Sherman would write the screenplay, Clive Owen plays Max and in a full circle turn, his uncle Freddie is played by Ian McKellen.

The impact of *Bent* on the popular understanding of the treatment of homosexuals during the Holocaust and its continuing influence on queer culture cannot be overestimated. *Bent* was the first work of fiction in any genre, on the topic. The play vitally contributed to the publication of the first comprehensive scholarship on the subject, Richard Plant's history, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals*, found a publisher only after the play's success demonstrated its marketability (Gordon). At the play's climax, Max dons a pink triangle, in a defiant act whereby he embraces his identity, presaging the popularization of the use of this symbol. Eight years later, with the triangle now inverted, it was potently used by ACT-UP in its 1987 Silence = Death[5] campaign (Waxman). *Queeritage* is clear in *Bent*, both to the audience and its intergenerationally related queer characters from the first time they are seen interacting with each other.

The action in *Bent* begins in 1934, on the Night of the Long Knives, when Ernst Röhm, a known homosexual, and many brown-shirted storm troopers (SA) under his

[5] A comprehensive history of the use of the pink triangle by queer activists can be found in W. Jake Newsom's soon to be released monograph *Pink Triangle Legacies: Coming Out in the Shadow of the Holocaust,* Cornell University Press.

command, were executed by order of Hitler. With the SA losing this internecine Nazi power struggle to the SS, the situation changes for homosexual men in Germany and a legal and political crackdown against them begins. Thirty-four-year-old Max and his thirty-year-old partner Rudy must flee their home when the SS arrives searching for Wolfgang Granz who Max had picked up the previous night for a night of sex with the couple. Unbeknownst to Max, Granz, was the boyfriend of Karl Ernst, the deputy to the head of Berlin's Storm Troopers and connected to Ernst Röhm. The straight drag performer Greta tells Max, "You picked up the wrong guy, that's all" (Sherman 20). When Rudy and Max plan to explain to the SS that they did not know Wolfgang Granz. Greta replies: “Sure. Explain it all to the SS. You don't explain. Not anymore. you know, you queers are not very popular anyhow. It was just Röhm keeping you all safe. Now you're like Jews. Unloved, baby, unloved" (21).

Max and Rudy flee and, after two years living in a forest outside Cologne, Max arranges to meet his uncle Freddie in a park. Freddie has obtained false identity papers and a ticket to Amsterdam for Max but has failed to do so for Rudy. At this meeting the audience learns that Freddie is also queer and is the only member of the family from whom Max is not estranged. Max says that he will not abandon Rudy. Freddie promises to ask Max's father about a document for Rudy and tells Max to call him "on Friday" (26). Max is never able to make the call because, that night, he and Rudy are found by the SS and put on a train to Dachau.

On the train the SS take Rudy into another car and beat him. A fellow prisoner, Horst, warns Max not to intervene, and explains that queers must wear a pink triangle and that "[p]ink's the lowest" (33). Max denies knowing Rudy when asked by the SS, who

then force him to participate in beating Rudy to death. Max, now claiming to be Jewish, is forced to have intercourse with a dead girl to prove that he is not queer. In the concentration camp, Max bribes a guard to get Horst to be assigned to work with him moving piles of rocks from one location to another and back again. The prisoners are allowed three-minute work breaks during which they must stand at attention and not face each other. During these breaks the two men discover that they can imagine having sex with each other, verbalize doing so, and climax. Horst develops a cough and needs medicine. Max, pretending to be ill himself, performs fellatio on an SS Captain so that he can procure the medicine for Horst. When the SS Captain discovers that it is Horst who was sick, not Max, he forces Horst to electrocute himself by making him retrieve his hat from an electrified fence. The SS Captain tells Max to dispose of Horst's body in a pit. Max does so, but then retrieves Horst's jacket with the pink triangle on it, puts it on, and walks into the electrified fence.

Bent effectively portrays the brutality and sadism of the Nazi regime. Walter Kerr wrote, in his 1979 *New York Times* review, "The sound of dismay that washed across the auditorium on the night I saw 'Bent' was one I have never quite heard before — belief, disbelief, shock and half-understanding all mixed together." Within the power of this exploration and the magnitude of its effect nobody seemed to notice the novelty that this play presented, a queer character who had a queer relative. Forty years later with *Bent* established as canonical to queer and holocaust literature, we must also ask what purpose intergenerational queer family legacy serves in the play.

Having two queer characters of different generations discuss how to be queer and survive, as Max and his Uncle Freddie do in the park, provides a glimpse into the

generational difference that exists in how queer men adapt to their worlds. In *Bent*, this manifests itself in language. Max laughs repeatedly at Freddie's use of the outdated term "fluff" for homosexual men (23 - 25), as well as in what each deems appropriate behavior. That Max and Freddie are from the same family controls for socio-economic and cultural differences within the society, and highlights their generational approaches to being out. Freddie advises Max:

> The family takes care of me. But you. Throwing it in everyone's face. No wonder they don't want anything to do with you. Why couldn't you have been quiet about it? Settled down, gotten married, paid for a few boys on the side. No one would have known. Ach! Take this ticket. (24)

This speech reveals that Freddie, described in the stage directions as "middle-aged" in 1934, is still in the pre-Weimar nineteenth century mindset of sexual secrecy. His advice is to live a lie. Max, on the other hand, would have been nineteen years old when Magnus Hirschfeld opened the Institute for Sexual Science; twenty-one when Berlin's "Eros Theater, the first homosexual theater was established;" and twenty-eight when the "Reichstag Committee approved The Penal Reform Bill" which would have decriminalized homosexuality (78-79). Max comes of age in the Roaring Twenties in Weimar Berlin where queer people are testing the boundaries of liberation. When *Bent* opened on Broadway, queer life in New York City was reveling in the sexual liberation that was made possible during the first decade after Stonewall. A time when, as Bronski, has noted "[S]exual experimentation and permissiveness were praised. Promiscuity was seen as a form of personal liberation and social revolt and a vehicle for change" (*Pleasure* 69). When Rudy reminds Max, in the play's opening scene, "You were drunk. And high on coke" (Sherman 13), and describes the man Max brought home as wearing, "[a]ll that leather, all those chains" (12), it is dialogue that might just have easily been spoken in the

post-Stonewall West Village of New York in 1979, as in 1934 Berlin.[6] *Bent*, like many plays discussed in this thesis, navigates the tension between liberation and assimilation in the lives of queer people and the stories told about them. Queeritage provides a way in which to explore how this tension is navigated by queer people in different generations of the same family.

While Freddie's admonitions to Max to seek survival through the closet sound like a member of a 1950s pre-Stonewall homophile group talking to a sexual liberationist, what both men have in common, despite their differing lexicons, is an inability to experience love. For Freddie, who desires to remain in the good graces of his family and reap the financial benefits of so doing, the only option is secrecy, and as he puts it, 'paying for a few boys on the side.' Thus, he recommends that Max save himself and abandon Rudy. Yet, for Max, the inability to acknowledge love is a spiritual one. Uncle Freddie asks Max if he is in love with Rudy, to which Max replies, "Don't be stupid. What's love? Bullshit. I'm a grown-up now I just feel responsible" (24). When Rudy told Max, "I love you" (9) in Scene 1, Max threatens to kill his houseplants, and in Scene 4, when Rudy says, "I really love you," Max responds, "DON'T" (30).

In Dachau when Horst tells Max that he loves him, Max protests, repeatedly telling Horst, "Don’t love me," and "I don’t want anybody to love me," and "I can't love

[6] Martin Sherman, speaking of this relationship, remarked, in a telephone interview conducted by the current editor of *American Theater,* in connection with *Bent*'s revival by Center Theater Group in 2015, “The gay world then was somewhat brutalized—it was enormously sexualized...New York was absolutely wild. People were just [having sex] all over the place, literally. But nobody was actually free; it was all an illusion. The laws were terrible. I did not see a society that was progressing. It was extremely commercial; people were making a lot of money out of it. It was in its way not dissimilar, I thought, to what Germany was like in the Weimar era” (Weinert-Kendt).

anybody back." When Horst replies, "Who's asking you to?" Max's response expresses his internalized homophobia and describes the origin of it:

> Queers aren't meant to love. I know. I thought I loved someone once. He worked in my father's factory. My father paid him to go away. He went. Queers aren't meant to love. They don't want us to. You know who loved me? That boy. That dancer. I don't remember his name. But I killed him. See—queers aren't meant to love. I'll kill you to. Hate me. That's better. Hate me. Don't love me. (60 - 61)

At its core *Bent* is about the triumph of the spiritual over the physical. Max and Horst discover that they can have sexual communion without even physically touching. As the passage after they orgasm makes clear, despite the Nazis attempt to deprive them of their humanity, they have found a way for it to survive:

> HORST: Did you?
>
> MAX: Yes. You*?*
>
> HORST: Yes.
>
> [*Silence.*]
>
> MAX: You're a good lay.
>
> HORST: So are you.
>
> [*Silence.*]
>
> MAX: It's awfully sticky.
>
> [*Silence.*]
>
> HORST: Max?
>
> MAX: What?
>
> HORST: We did it. How about that—fucking guards, fucking camp, we did it.
>
> MAX: Don't shout.

> HORST: O.K. But I'm shouting inside. We did it. They're not going to kill us. We made love. We were real. We were human. We made love. They're not going to kill us. (57 - 58)

The importance of the relationship between Max and Freddie here is revealed when Max explains to Horst how he got him to be transferred to work with him.

> MAX: I spent money getting you here.
>
> HORST: Money?
>
> MAX: Yes. I bribed the guard.
>
> HORST: Where'd you get money?
>
> MAX: My uncle sent me some. First letter I ever got from him. He didn't sign it, but it had money in it. (48-49)

What are we to make of these details? If we think of the letter as communication, money as something of value, and not signing it as being uncredited, it seems to resonate with the way in which having a queer uncle is a vital part of Max's transformation. What is intergenerationally transmitted by Uncle Freddie is something valuable. This use of a letter as a link from one queer generation to another which brings about a greater acceptance in the younger queer person appears throughout queeritage narratives.

Uncle Freddie is not able to procure travel documents that save Max and Rudy, but the money Uncle Freddie sends Max in Dachau which enables him to bribe the guard allows him, through his relationship with Horst, to articulate in the final speech of the play, that he can indeed love and is worthy of it.

Queeritage in *Bent* facilitates the contrasting of two different adjustments to being queer (controlling for socioeconomic and cultural differences) through two views expressed by members of the same family. What being queer and having a queer uncle affords Max is an advocate in his heteronormative and homophobic family. While Uncle

Freddie does not *physically* save Max and Rudy, his action makes possible Max's *spiritual* survival. Speaking to Horst as he holds his dead body Max has an epiphany:

> You know what? [Silence.] Horst? [Silence.] You know what? [Silence.] I think . . . [Silence.] I think I love you. [Silence.] Shh! Don't tell anyone. I think I loved . . . I can't remember his name. A dancer, I think I loved him too. Don't be jealous. I think I loved . . . some boy a long time ago. In my father's factory. Hans. That was his name. But the dancer. I don't remember. [Silence.] I love you. [Silence.] What's wrong with that? [Silence.] What's wrong with that? (75 - 76)

Remarkable, in this first instance of queeritage in a dramatic narrative, is the utter normalcy with which *Bent* presents a queer man existing in a family with a queer uncle. However the characters discovered that they were both queer has already transpired. Queeritage is simply taken for granted, a non-issue. A similar matter of fact treatment of queeritage in a dramatic narrative will not take place again until the American incarnation of the television series *Queer As Folk* some twenty-one years later. Amongst the twelve discussed, only three narratives exist wherein the characters and/or the audience are not meant to be shocked by the revelation of queeritage. Sherman's avoiding this potential dramatic cliché may be due to the ethos of the Gay Sweatshop Theatre for whom he had originally written *Bent.* Simon Callow, said of his experience acting for the Gay Sweatshop, in its production of an earlier Sherman play, *Passing By*:

> I don't believe I've done anything more rewarding or more emotionally overpowering on any stage or in any medium. But it was just a beginning for Gay Sweatshop. The women and men who ran it were no slouches when it came to personally fostering the sexual revolution, but their work was not indulgent or frivolous: it reached out in many directions – historically, theatrically, politically – in a determination to affirm the place and existence of gay people within society, that we're here and we're queer and we've been here and been queer for a very long time – since records began. We've made astonishing contributions to this civilisation, but more importantly, we're right at the heart of ordinary life – we're mothers, we're brothers, we're teachers, we're soldiers, we're

> good and we’re bad, but we exist, as we are, with our desires, our dreams, our folly and our majesty. Not enough gay people knew these things of themselves. Once they started to wake up to all of that, then the rest of society did too, and we began to approach the better world (for gays) in which we now live. (Callow)

It is this establishment of queer people, as Callow puts it, 'within society,' and 'at the heart of ordinary life' that is accomplished in the domain of the family by queeritage in *Bent*. That a queer character has a queer uncle is treated as being completely ordinary, even though we had never seen queeritage depicted in a dramatic narrative before. This everyday treatment of queeritage proclaims its ordinariness. In a play about the victory of the spiritual over the physical, Max transforms from a person who goes from saying, "What's love? Bullshit" (24), to someone who says, at the play's end, "I love you. What's wrong with that? (75 - 76). While Max's queer uncle does not provide spiritual guidance, his physical support, in the form of the money he sends Max to have Horst relocated is a crucial link in the chain of events that brings about Max's acceptance of himself.

Chapter III.

During the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

HIV/AIDS would profoundly change all aspects of queer life. Government inaction to combat a disease, that was seen as primarily affecting gay men, led gay men to organize politically and provide social support in new ways, to renegotiate their sexual lives and to form new coalitions with lesbians and feminists. From the disease's first appearance in the United States in 1981 until the precipitous decline of deaths from AIDS once effective treatments were found in the mid 1990s the crisis would color queer creative output including dramatic narratives.

The Lost Language of Cranes (1991).

Nigel Finch's 1991 television movie *The Lost Language of Cranes*, based on American author David Leavitt's 1986 novel of the same name, and adapted by Sean Mathias, was regarded as a "milestone" for its candid presentation of gay sex and full-frontal male nudity on mainstream prime time television (O'Connor). It is the story of a young man, Philip Benjamin (Angus McFadyen), whose coming out to his parents, is the catalyst for his father, Owen (Brian Cox), to reassess his own closeted life and ultimately come out to his wife, Rose (Eileen Atkins), and son. The relationship between Philip and his father elucidates what late twentieth century societal changes had made increasingly possible for the way in which queer people could live their lives and demonstrates the profound personal change that can come about through one queer family member's knowledge of another. A second instance of queeritage appears in the narrative with the

arrival of the parents of Philip's boyfriend, Elliot (Corey Parker), Derek (John Schlesinger) and his partner, Geoffrey (René Auberjonois), who, after his biological parents were killed in a car crash, adopt and raise Elliot, since he was a small boy. *Cranes* doubles down on queeritage presenting us with two instances of it.

Produced in 1991, *Cranes* premiered in the United Kingdom in February of 1992 on BBC Screen Two. It aired in the United States, having been co-produced by WNET, on the PBS Great Performances series in June of the same year. That version of the film was edited so that the depictions of sex were less graphic, and the protagonist's full-frontal nudity was removed. Nonetheless, as *New York Times* critic John J. O'Connor observed, on the day of the film's airing on PBS:

> Some passing sex scenes would be considered fairly standard television arrangements of entwined torsos and heavy kissing, except, of course, that these involve same-sex partners. Like most prime-time milestones, this one is sure to trigger applause in some quarters, rage in others. In the long run, one hopes television will have taken another small step towards growing up.

Cranes was a remarkable break from the culture wars that had begun in 1977 with Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign.[7] These battles raged through the Reagan administration and were then centered on National Endowment for the Arts grants awarded to Robert Mapplethorpe's homoerotic photography and performance artists Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes and Tim Miller (who became known as the "NEA four"). They reflected, as Michael Bronski has articulated, an attack on gay visibility and the advances made by gay culture as [much as] it was on specific artists and

[7] A backlash against the political progress made by a 1977 Dade County, Florida ordinance that banned discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, Anita Bryant, a former beauty pageant contestant and the spokesperson for The Florida Orange Juice Council waged organized political opposition which sought to demonize the LGBT community with its very name "Save Our Children."

works" (*Pleasure* 107). The work of these artists pushed boundaries that were considered shocking by cultural conservatives and next to which the sex scenes in *Cranes* are tender and intimate. Perhaps this made them more shocking to people who expected not to recognize anything from their own experience in them. In either case, after executives from the oil company, Texaco, screened *Cranes*, prior to its airing on PBS *Great Performances*, they decided to discontinue their sponsorship of the series. As *Entertainment Weekly* reported at the time, Texaco and PBS both denied that the sponsorship decision was because of *Cranes,* but Scott Robbe, the co-founder of Out In Film, an activist group that sought positive queer representation, claimed that "a number of sources told us a Texaco executive came out of the screening [for *Lost Language*] and told another member of his party, 'Well, we won't be funding any more of this'" (Benatar, Schulman). Indeed, as Bronski has pointed out, [t]he emergence of the sexualized male body—particularly the gay male body—had become identified by political conservatives and the religious right wing as a primary threat to the social and moral order" (*Pleasure 107*).

Bent contrasted the modes of being that two queer characters, out to each other, from the same family employ in order to survive. *Cranes* compares two queer characters from the same family, who, at the narrative's start, are closeted vis-à-vis each other. Unlike *Bent*, in which the audience is made immediately aware of queeritage, in *Cranes*, the audience knows that both father and son are queer as soon as it becomes clear that Philip is the son of the man that we have seen, in the film's opening scene, who visited "The Fantasy" gay porn cinema. Neither character knows, at that point, about the queerness of the other. After Philip comes out to his parents, Owen, like the omniscient

viewer, is made aware of queeritage. It is not until the end of the film, when Owen comes out, that Philip will be. As *Bent* did, *Cranes* raises issues about heteronormativity in its positioning of finding romantic love as its protagonist's main objective. *Cranes*, like many queer narratives, flirts with queer conceptions of temporality and memory, but also directly engages with the content of what is remembered and what is not. *Cranes*, as in *Bent*, utilizes queeritage to explore generational differences but complicates this by contrasting closeted Owen, and his and Rose's dysfunctional marriage, with the very out and compatible queer parents of Philip's boyfriend Elliot. In *Bent* the queer character in the older generation, Freddie, is instrumental in bringing about its younger queer character, Max's growth; in *Cranes*, these roles are reversed as it is Philip's coming out which prompts his father's acceptance of himself.

The narrative of *Cranes* moves as quickly as it is complex. At the outset, Cranes' protagonist Philip, in a relationship with the mercurial Elliot, is out to his friends but not to his parents. Owen on the other hand, circumscribes his queer life to Sundays, the one day a week when he furtively visits a gay pornographic cinema and to trying to chat up his attractive straight younger colleague Winston (Nigel Whitmey). After meeting Elliot's adoptive parents, and subsequently quarrelling and then making up with Elliot, Philip comes out to his parents. Owen, who has been making small moves toward attempting intimacy with another man, is now catapulted into trying to do so; he meets a man his age in a gay bar and has intimate sex with him. Meanwhile, Philip's boyfriend abandons him and moves to France. Philip then rekindles his platonic friendship with Robin and over time they become romantically involved. Rose resumes an affair with her colleague Nick (Nicholas Le Prevost). Owen takes Philip to dinner and peppers him with questions about

being queer and asks him to come to dinner with him and Rose to which he will also invite Winston.

At the dinner, moving to the dramatic climax, Owen fawns over Winston and, in an attempt to learn his sexual orientation brings up, apropos of nothing, Proust, and then Mykonos, leading Rose to realize that Owen too is queer. Owen and Rose argue; Owen goes to Philip's house and comes out to him. Philip lets his father stay at his house, while he goes back to Robin's. From the window Owen watches Philip and Robin happily walk off arm in arm.

Throughout the film we are presented with scenes of a boy in a crib who looks out his window and mimics the building cranes he sees outside; we learn the significance of these sequences as the film progresses from Elliot's flat mate, Jerene (Cathy Tyson), who is writing a dissertation about the private language that a pair of twin girls developed between themselves. *Cranes* is a film about communication and the resources, including language, that one has available to them that make communication possible. It is about the human need for intimacy, be that between a parent and a child, between spouses or between lovers. *Cranes* communicates by way of contrast.

The narrative constantly contrasts Philip and Owen's differing queer realities by interspersing the sequences of what they are each doing, jumping back and forth from one character's storyline to the other.

Cranes opens with Owen Benjamin's visit to the gay porn cinema; a man (Edmund Kente) sits down beside him. Owen reaches over and runs his hand up the man's thigh in an attempt at initiating sexual contact, but the man says, "Please, not here.

Please. Couldn't we go somewhere else? I live nearby, we could go there" (03:26 - 03:38). Owen ignores the man while staring straight ahead at the movie screen. The man gets up and exits leaving behind a piece of paper with a name and phone number written on it; Owen believes the man has left it for him. Owen takes the paper and returns home to his wife, Rose, who is waiting for Owen at the window of their apartment.

Owen's refusal to go home with the would-be paramour is contrasted with the sequence of Philip and his boyfriend Elliot waking up in bed together. The camera pans past a vitrine in Philip's bedroom, through the glass doors of which, we see numerous windup clocks until it comes to rest on a waking Philip, who glances at the time on the illuminated digital clock on the nightstand, and as he wakes his boyfriend Elliot, says to him, "It's five-o'clock, we've slept all day." Philip gets out of bed naked and draws the curtain letting in sunlight. He looks out the window as we hear a passing ice cream truck playing a tinny recording of "Greensleeves." The sunlight streams across Elliot's face as he tries to entice Philip to "come back to bed." Philip nonchalantly collects the dishes, presumably left from the night before, as he turns towards the camera and takes them to the sink. Elliot asks him twice more to return to bed and finally, Philip enthusiastically leaps, still naked, back into bed to the arms of the waiting Elliot.

While Owen has spent all of Sunday out looking for sex, Philip has spent it sleeping in the arms of his lover, to which he once again returns. The ease with which Philip and Elliot interact, the naturalness of their nakedness as Philip stands by the bed looking out the window is contrasted with the complete disconnection of Rose and Owen as she stands peering out the window into the darkened street watching Owen as he returns from the cinema. The collection of vintage windup clocks, seen through the glass

doors of the vitrine in Philip's bedroom, contrast with the digital clock that Philip looks at above his bed when he wakes, just as that clock does with the antique mantel clock which appears in the mis-en-scène directly between Owen and Rose when she offers to take his coat while he quickly rummages in its pocket to retrieve the scrap of paper with the man from the porn cinema's phone number on it before handing it to her. Similarly, the sunlight, which streams through the window when the curtain is drawn by Philip illuminating the face of Elliot, contrasts with the darkness of night and shadow through which Rose and Owen see each other as she stands in the window awaiting his return.

In preparation for meeting Elliot's adoptive parents, Derek Moulthorpe, a children's book author, and his partner Geoffrey, Philip goes to his parents' house to peruse his childhood collection of Moulthorpe's books. Again, contrasting the lives of the two queer characters from the same family, the film alternates between this sequence and that of Owen while also exploring queer temporality. Owen, not at an admissions board meeting, as he had told Rose, is alone in his office. While Owen stares at the phone number, which he believes is of the man from the cinema, deciding whether to call it, Philip opens the door to a room in his parent's flat, the house that he has grown up in, a life-sized human skeletal model is hanging on it. In this family, it seems, the skeletons aren't just 'in the closet' but hung on the door to the room. As Philip thumbs through Moulthorpe's books, we see that one, entitled *Mrs. Olliphant's Orphanage,* was dedicated "To the Memory of Julia and Allan Abrams" (Elliot's biological parents) and that the dedication for another, *The Wish Portal*, reads "For Elliot if he wants it." We hear Moulthorpe's voice narrating as Philip reads its opening lines:

> What, you may ask, is a wish portal? A wish portal is a door between places you thought were real and places you assumed were imaginary. On one side of every wish portal is someplace that seems ordinary, school, the backyard, your bedroom, on the other side is a gateway to an unknown world. Now imagine a house built right on the line between two time zones. This means that when it is one o'clock in the bedroom, it's two o'clock in the kitchen, easy to miss lunch. What happens to the hour that you lose when you walk across the house to get a sandwich? A house like that is exactly the sort of place where you should expect to find a wish portal. A place where time is broken. (19:40 - 20:31)

And 'time is broken' for the Benjamins, an upper middle-class family, urbane members of the intelligentsia, who yet live in 'two time zones,' that of Philip's somewhat liberated present, and that of Owen's closeted 1950s past. Owen is first seen standing in his darkened office, framed by its large window, which looks out on the nineteenth century English Greek revival Wilkins Building of the University College of London with its Corinthian columns and iconic statues of Capitoline Antinous and Discophorus. The camera lingers on the illuminated torso of the latter nude athlete in an exterior shot before the interior shot reveals Owen at the window. This sequence suggests then a break in time, that is not only familial, between the times in which Owen and Philip came of age, but also societal, between the classical Greek age and the English Greek revival which saw a renewed interest in all things Greek, and continued through the Victorian period, while at the same time often expunging or ignoring the homoerotic. The narration of *The Wish Portal* is continuous and heard over the shot of Philip falling asleep on the floor of the room as well as the shot of Owen in his office at the telephone. Similarly, the sound of Owen dialing the number on the rotary phone is heard over the subsequent shot of Philip asleep.

The first of Moulthorpe's books that Phillip opens is dedicated 'to the memory of' Elliot's biological and heterosexual parents. Also referencing memory, the title of that

book, *Mrs. Olliphant's Orphanage,* calls to mind the pachyderm with a legendary ability for recall. And what is an orphan, like Elliot, if not someone who has lost the link to their own history? The dedication of the *Wish Portal*, 'for Elliot if he wants it' can be read as an invitation to learn one's queer history. The physical remains of humans endure like the skeleton hanging on the door, the 'portal' to the room Philip is in. Owen calls the phone number on the slip of paper from the man at the cinema and reaches someone who identifies himself as Alex Meltra (Frank Middlemass), a theatrical agent. He tells Owen that while the phone number is his, it was on a slip of paper that he had given to an actor that he fancied, Bob Dooley. Alex mishears Owen's name and peculiarly keeps calling him "Bowen." Owen repeats this to himself after the phone call, as he splashes water on his face, saying "Bowen" five times as he looks in the mirror. Like the skeleton behind the door, Owen is bone without flesh. The sculpted torsos of the statues of Greek athletes, seen outside through the 'portal' of his office window are more incarnate.

The contrast between the way Philip and his father adjust to being queer is partly a function of the time in which they grew up. However, Alex (Frank Middlemass), the man whom Owen reaches on the other end of the phone is older than him and yet has no problem speaking frankly about his sexuality. Clearly one's adjustment to being queer is not solely a function of time. It is this man who advises Owen, "I really wouldn't recommend Bob Dooley; he's such a closet case" (22:16 - 22:21), having no idea, of course, of how deeply in the closet the person to whom he is speaking is. Speaking of someone else to Owen, when what is said so aptly describes Owen's situation, presages the ultimate expression of this that takes place several scenes later when Philip comes out

to his parents. Rose will suggest that Philip's homosexuality was best kept a secret. Philip in response will say:

> So you'd rather that I marry a woman, so that I can feel anxiety every time I don't feel something sexual. Or maybe we can have sex now and then if I think about a man while I'm doing it. Do you think that's fair? So I can wake up in thirty years and look back and see that I've wasted my life? And it, it would be awful, a tragedy. (40:08 - 40:30)

Philip of course has no idea that this describes his father's life.

Before coming out to his parents, Philip spends Sunday in the park with Elliot, and his parents, Derek and Geoffrey. Philip shares that he grew up reading Derek's books. Derek gives him a copy of his latest book which he is in town to promote. Derek signs Philip's copy with the inscription "For Philip, if he wants it." Derek and Geoffrey are portrayed as happily partnered, intimately and playfully teasing each other, like the old couple that they are.

Philip comes out to his parents in a sequence wherein we see flashbacks of Phillip and Elliot making love the night before. It ends when Phillip blurts out to his parents, "I am gay." Rose says that she wishes he had kept it to himself. Owen is visibly shaken but silent, finally saying he thinks "that it is OK [and that he] is sorry that he hasn't said anything." Philip says he should be getting home, as he leaves, Rose asks, "Are you healthy? I read the papers, I watch television, I know about AIDS."

When Rose and Owen are left alone, Rose goes to make tea as a stunned Owen sobs openly. Rose tries to hug and console him telling him that "it will be all right" and that "it doesn't have to be the end of the world" to which Owen replies, "It is the end of the world," then locks himself in the bathroom weeping. And for Owen, of course, it is

the end of the world. It is then that we see the boy looking out the window at cranes being taken out of his crib by social workers who carry him away as he screams. We hear a voiceover of Jerene reading an article about the child entitled "Language Transference in the Crane Child, a case study on how an infant, abandoned and left in isolation developed its own language in order to survive," the boy's mother was so severely mentally ill that she was not able to communicate with the child and left him almost entirely to his own devices. The language that Owen has developed in order to survive, which was based on what his vision of reality was, has, like the child who is pulled away from the window with the cranes, come to an end.

Owen, drinking again at his office, dials Philip, in an attempt to come out to him, but only reaches an answering machine. He speaks to it before being recorded and refers to himself repeatedly, revealing his internalized homophobia, with the epithet "poofta," "your father's a poofta," then hangs up. None of this is recorded as a drunken Owen says it all during Philip's outgoing message. Owen takes Philip to dinner and asks him questions about his sexual life and how it began, Philip recalls fooling around with one of his childhood friends but describes his "first adult experience" as taking place at a porn cinema and describes it as a "grope with a much older man" when he was seventeen, and also mentions a boyfriend at university. Owen asks Philip if he still went to the porn cinema. Philip replies that he had not been back since. What was one stop in the journey of Philip's sexual life, it would seem has become the totality of Owen's. Owen offers that it "seems to [him] that fundamentally everyone is bisexual don't you think?" Philip responds that that may be so for some people but that most people are "one way or another" and that "this whole bisexual thing can become an excuse a way of avoiding

commitment or avoiding the truth. Most pointedly Owen asks his son, "Can you always tell when someone is gay?" Phillip responds that he can't always, but that gay people give off signals to other gay people.

It appears that the effect of queeritage, of learning that his son is queer, has prompted Owen to take action to find emotional intimacy with another man. We see him for the first time enter a gay bar, and the man that he meets there, is not, like his colleague Winston, unattainable. While Rose is at home editing a romance novel, Owen goes to the The Piano Bar where a man his age, Frank (Richard Warwick), who is also married, buys Owen a drink and invites him to a friend's house that he has the use of nearby. Owen agrees to go with him. The two men make love and afterwards Frank asks Owen to call him at his work telephone number. Even though he didn't come out to Philip, it seems as if communicating with Philip over dinner gave him the courage to risk emotional intimacy with Frank. Owen, like the crane child, ripped away from the familiar, is learning a new language. When Owen returns home, Rose says she does not want to know where he has been but that he should call her so that she doesn't worry.

As soon as we realized that Philip is Owen's son we were aware of queeritage in the Benjamin family. But unlike *Bent*, where our awareness of queeritage is the same as the characters, in *Cranes*, neither Philip nor Owen at the outset are aware that the other is queer. Once Philip comes out to his parents, the entire dramatic action of the film is about simply waiting to see if the other shoe will drop. Will Owen come out as well? This does happen at the very end of the film. When Owen comes out to Philip, and shares with him that he has met someone, the film's final image of Owen watching through the window as Philip and Robin walk off arm in arm seems to offer a glimmer of hope. It is more

hopeful than the early scene it echoes of Owen's walking towards his house returning to the lie of his Marriage, as Rose looks out the window awaiting his return. Perhaps Owen, even this late in his life, may find intimacy and love with another man.

Many times in its narrative *Cranes* asserts that the ideal way for a queer person to live their life is to be in a long-term monogamous relationship. This is what Elliot's queer adoptive parents, Derek and Geoffrey have. If you have access to a language that makes intimacy possible, the film suggests, you too will be able to achieve it. If you are not taught such a language, you will, like the crane boy, create your own. This language will allow one to survive, as it does the crane boy and as it did for Owen, but if the world which necessitated that self-created language changes, a new language must be found, and finding it may bring fulfillment. It all depends upon what one sees out the window through which they view the world. The boy sees construction cranes out his window and, like the twin girls Jerene is researching, creates his own language with them. This long-term monogamy that the film espouses can be seen as heteronormative. Tellingly, the only happily paired couple in a long-term relationship were introduced to each other many years ago by Philip's biological parents. Derek and Geoffrey meet neither at a porn cinema nor at a gay bar but were introduced to each other by heterosexuals. Philip and Elliot have a sexually fulfilling relationship, so much so that it is scenes of sex with Elliot that flash through Philip's mind when he comes out to his parents. But Elliot, despite being the adoptive child of two queer men in a long-term relationship, does not seem interested in being in one and abandons Philip. Despite Derek's dedication of his book *The Wish Portal, "*for Elliot, if he wants it;" it is Philip, for whom Derek offers the same phrase as inscription, that 'wants it,' if we are to understand 'it' here as queer legacy

providing a language that makes intimacy possible. At the end of *Cranes,* we are led to believe that Philip may have found intimacy with Robin.

Just as the coming out plot is inverted in *Cranes*, in which we wait for the father to come out rather than for the son to do so, who learns what from whom and the ordinary roles of parent and child are reversed. It is Philip's example by coming out which provokes Owen to do so. It is Philip from whom Owen attempts to understand how gaydar works. It is Philip to whom Owen turns for shelter at the film's end, and it is the vision of the life that Philip is making, seen through the window, that gives Owen, and us, hope for his own future. At the same time, Owen had already been moving toward an attempt at finding intimacy prior to Philip's announcement; he decided to call the number on the paper from the man in the porn theater. But as he, and we, learn the phone number was not left for him, that was just "The Fantasy" of what could happen in a porn theater.

There is only one mention of AIDS in *Cranes,* but its specter seems to haunt the film. When Rose asks, "Are you healthy...I know about AIDS." Philip responds to his mother that he is healthy and knows how to be careful but there is an overriding sense of impending doom in *Cranes*, and its score is filled with foreboding music. Strangely, this is not a topic that she revisits, after Owen's coming out to her, with him despite that she may now be concerned about her own health. Everyone in *Cranes* seems trapped, like the laboratory mice, who are momentarily set free when the truck carrying them is in an accident. These elements, coupled with the film's ambivalent and conflicting treatment of gay sex, can best be explained by the course of the HIV epidemic, a time in which being 'careful,' at least for Leavitt, may be part of *Crane*'s heteronormative embrace of long-term monogamy. According to AMFAR, at the end of 1986, the year in which the novel

Cranes was published, there had been 28,712 cases of AIDS reported in the United States. By the end of 1992, when the film was released, those numbers had increased to 254,147 cases and 194,476 deaths (AMFAR).

As a short 1984 profile by Herbert Mitgang in the *New York Times* points out, David Leavitt achieved success very early in his career having had a short story published in *The New Yorker,* three years earlier, when he was merely twenty years old. Mitgang asserts that Leavitt is "especially interested in writing about [what Leavitt calls] 'scary subjects' such as homosexuality and divided families." He is quoted, referring to his debut collection of nine short stories, *Family Dancing*, as saying, "'That's the most political part of my book—its pushiness. By that I mean when you're writing about the breakdown of the family, it's easy to fall into stereotypes. you've got to push yourself to face the ugliest, most unpleasant aspects of life.'" In his first novel, two years later, Leavitt certainly defies stereotypes and confronts the ugliness of the fact that someone like Owen in *The Lost Language of Cranes* felt forced to live a life as secretly and tragically repressed and conflicted as his was. Describing his own "political consciousness" Leavitt said, "Grace Paley, the most activist writer...put it best: 'The most political thing you can do is tell the truth'" (Mitgang). Countless queer people, prior to the generation liberated post-Stonewall, lived desperate, lonely lives like Owen's. To tell his story in the context of a young person's coming out story certainly defies stereotypes. The only reviewer, critic or scholar who grasped the significance of queeritage in the novel *The Lost Language of Cranes*, was Christopher Lehman-Haupt, who writing in the *New York Times* in 1986 said that "Philip comes to dinner and reveals, in what may be a scene unique in literature, that he is struggling with exactly the same sexual difficulty that is troubling his father."

While Lehman-Haupt's use of the phrase 'sexual difficulty'[8] in 1986 to describe Philip's being queer is cringeworthy as is the review's premise that "the old debate over whether or not homosexual art is inherently limited" (Lehmann-Haupt) is a legitimate one, he grasps the uniqueness in the storytelling, of two queer people, in this case, parent and child, an iteration of queeritage, that will be repeated in four other narratives that this thesis will discuss.

The vast majority of people who died from AIDS during this period were in the prime of their lives, the average age at death being 37.9 years in 1987 and approximately 42.5 years in 2002 (CDC). AIDS at this time primarily affected men who had sex with men resulting in years of inaction by the federal government. It was only when the queer community mobilized itself that progress in managing the epidemic began to be made. In light of this grim reality, it is unsurprising that there is an oppressive atmosphere that seems to subsume all of the characters in *Cranes*. There is nothing presented as celebratory about Philip's coming out nor about Owen's, which is propelled by queeritage, but with Owen looking out the window and seeing his son walk off arm in arm with another man, Owen seems to at least glimpse what living an authentic life can make possible.

The Hours (2002).

Stephen Daldry's 2002 film *The Hours* is based on Michael Cunningham's 1998 novel of the same name and adapted by the playwright, David Hare. Cunningham's novel,

[8] The use of this phrase may have simply been a politically cautious move to align with the *New York Times'* editorial standards which prohibited synonyms for homosexual, such as "gay" between 1975 and 1987. For this history, see former *New York Times* reporter, David W. Dunlap's, "How The Times Gave Gay Its Own Voice (Again)" *The New York Times*, 19, June 2017.

which won the 1999 Pulitzer Prize, was inspired by Virginia Woolf's 1923 novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. As in *Cranes,* the queeritage in *The Hours* is that of a parent and son but in this case, it is the mother, Laura Brown (Julianne Moore), and her adult son, Richard Brown (Ed Harris), thus, being the first iteration of the theme in which the queer relatives are of different genders.

That the novel *The Hours* would become a major motion picture in which Nicole Kidman would win her first Oscar for best actress, and garner eight other academy award nominations, making Michael Cunningham a household name, was to some critics quite surprising. *The New Yorker* film critic David Denby called the film in a 2003 discussion of it:

> a triple miracle...[f]irst that the thing exists at all as a movie, because after all, it's based on a novel with an experimental structure, which in turn springs out of a modernist classic. Not everyone in the movie audience knows who Virginia Woolf is or gives damn, and one of the things that's remarkable about the movie is that it doesn't waste a lot of dramatic time in ordinary exposition, explaining who this woman is, or for that matter what the connection among these three women is, what they're all doing in the same movie. In other words, it assumes a willingness to make nonliteral connections.

While Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* tells the story of one day in one woman's life as she prepares for a party, Cunningham's *The Hours* tells the story, apart from one scene depicting Virginia Woolf's suicide in Sussex in 1941, of one day in the life of three different queer women. These stories are separated by time and space. Virginia Woolf is in Richmond, England in 1923 where she is writing *Mrs. Dalloway* which she had tentatively titled *The Hours*; Laura Brown, is in Los Angeles in 1951 where she is reading *Mrs. Dalloway* and considering suicide while preparing to celebrate her husband's birthday; and Clarissa Vaughan, is in 2001 in the West Village of Manhattan,

where she is preparing for a party to celebrate her friend Richard Brown's receipt of a literary award. The party which will be ruined by Richard's suicide.

The Hours attempts, for each of these three women, to tell the story, as Virginia Woolf is portrayed thinking while writing *Mrs. Dalloway*, of "a woman's whole life in a single day. Just one day, and in that day, her whole life" (16:44 - 17:08). What connects Laura Brown in 1951 Los Angeles to Virginia Woolf in 1923 Richmond is the fact that she is reading Woolf's novel. What connects Clarissa Vaughan in 2001 New York to Virginia Woolf is the fact that she shares the same first name as Woolf's protagonist Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway. But what connects Laura Brown and Clarissa Vaughan? They are connected by queeritage; Laura Brown, it is revealed, is the mother of Clarissa's friend Richard Brown. All three women in *The Hours* are queer and all three face differing challenges because of their gender and their sexual orientation due to the heteronormative gender roles that are expected of them. The film moves forwards and backwards in time, telling the three women's stories which are continuously paralleled from the moment we are introduced to each of them as their respective clocks sound telling them it is time to start the day (6:21 - 6:39).

Queeritage in *The Hours* is one of the literal "connections" that, as Denby observed, the film is not particularly concerned with "explaining." Laura Brown, unlike *Cranes'* parent Owen Benjamin, does not choose to live a double life remaining in a heterosexual marriage until long after one's child is grown. In complete opposition to societal expectations for women in 1950s America, she abandons her family while her son is a small child and is thereafter estranged from him, only reentering the picture after his death by suicide. The moment at which viewers become aware of queeritage in *The*

Hours is not fixed, it depends upon observational skills. Some observant viewers, searching for connections between the three stories, might realize that the man in a wheelchair dying of an AIDS related illness that we meet in 2001 when Clarissa lets herself into his apartment and says, "Richard. It's a beautiful morning" (18:22 -18:26), is the same person as the young son of Laura Brown in 1951 who after calling him pet names, "bug," "sweet pea," and "baby", is finally greeted with an enthusiastic, "Hi Richie" (36:12 - 36:15), in 1951 when Laura's friend Kitty (Toni Collette) drops by. Others might not pick up on these connections until the connection is made literal when we see Richard in 2001, staring at his mother's black and white wedding picture, and then turning to look out the window as we hear a car with a siren pass as well as little Richie's voice screaming, "Mommy." Then there is a brief flashback of little Richie looking out the window of the babysitter's suburban house where he was left in 1951 as his mother drove off, before we are returned to adult Richard tearful and pensive as more sirens pass his house (1:28:22 - 1:29:15). Other viewers might still not be aware of queeritage until after Richard's suicide when opening the door to her apartment the buzzer of which has just rung, Clarissa says to the woman standing in the hall, "You're Laura Brown," and the woman says, "Yes, I'm Richard's mother," to which Clarissa replies, "Of course," before ushering her in. (1:40:08 - 1:40:21). Similarly, it is difficult to gauge when or even if Laura and Richard become aware of queeritage. Does little Richie remember that he saw his mother embrace and then romantically kiss Kitty, after saying, referring to Kitty's husband, "forget about Ray, Just forget about Ray" (41:03 - 41:28)? After Laura abandons her family, we do not know what contact she and Richard have had over the course of the past fifty years. Beyond knowing that Clarissa contacted Laura after

Richard's death because she "found [her] number in [Richard's] phone book" to which Laura responded, "Yes, he had it. We didn't speak often" (1:40:58 - 1:41:08). We do not know how much either character knew about each other nor how much contact they have had. Did Laura know that Richard was queer? Did Richard know that Laura was?

As Halberstam has argued, "[q]ueer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (1). Queer people, according to Halberstam organize time in ways that "lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death," and that "these new temporal logics have emerged most obviously in the literatures produced in relation to the AIDS epidemic." The example Halberstam offers of this is the novel, *The Hours*, wherein according to Halberstam, "Cunningham takes the temporal frame of Woolf's novel (life in a day) and emphasizes its new, but also queer rendering of time and space" (2). As a disoriented Richard responds to Clarissa, when she tells him that he has not yet received the prize he has been awarded and that the ceremony won't take place until that night, "I remember the ceremony perfectly. I seem to have fallen out of time" (20:57 - 21:06). The book for which Richard is being given an award is entitled *The Goodness of Time*.

The Hours, like many queer narratives, including those which engage queeritage, explores temporality as well as intertextuality. In addition to the obvious intertextuality of Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, appearing within *The Hours*, there is Richard's novel, *The Goodness of Time*, as well. *The Hours* is the narrative that this thesis analyzes in which queeritage is the least developed and yet it is a vital part of the connective tissue which links the stories of the three queer women that the film tells.

Chapter IV.

In a Time of Liberation, Again

There is no way to quantify the losses to the queer community brought about by HIV/AIDS. Not only the number of lives cut short in the prime of life, the trauma of those who survived the period, but especially the loss of intergenerational role models. As Matilda Bernstein Sycamore observes in the recently released, *Between Certain Death and a Possible Future: Queer Writing on Growing Up with the AIDS Crisis*:

> Usually we hear about two generations—the first, coming of age in the era of gay liberation, and then watching entire circles of friends die of a mysterious illness as the government did nothing to intervene. And now...younger people growing up with effective treatment and prevention available, unable to comprehend the magnitude of the loss. But there is another generation between these two, one that came of age in the midst of the epidemic with the belief that desire intrinsically led to death, and internalized this trauma as part of becoming queer. (Sycamore 13 - 14)

During the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis queer dramatic narratives were primarily concerned with the effects of this tragedy. The advent of protease inhibitors in 1995 and their combination with AZT in what became known as "the cocktail" was a turning point. Deaths from AIDS, while continuing, would rapidly decrease. HIV was no longer necessarily a death sentence. Queer imagination was liberated to discuss other topics.

Queer As Folk (2000 - 2005).

In the 1999 - 2000 British TV series *Queer As Folk,* by Russell T. Davies, neither HIV nor AIDS are ever mentioned. Like its British inspiration, the American incarnation of *Queer As Folk* produced for Showtime and developed by Ron Cowen and Daniel

Lipman, erupts on the scene with a celebration of sexuality. The series' very first words, heard over the pulsing music of the gay dance club Babylon, as we see a room filled with shirtless dancing men and underwear-clad go-go boys, are: "The thing you need to know is, it's all about sex. It's true. In fact, they say men think about sex every twenty-eight seconds. Of course, that's straight men. With gay men, it's every nine" (1/1, 01:58 - 02:08)[9].

Unlike its British predecessor however, American *Folk* addresses the reality of HIV in gay life from its first sex scene in the same episode, wherein the seventeen-year-old Justin, a virgin, says as he is about to have anal sex for the first time with the sexually promiscuous, Brian, "Wait, in school we had this lecture about safe sex." Brian, with a condom at the ready, replies, as he opens the wrapper, "And now we're going to have a demonstration, put it on me," and continues, as he hands it to Justin, "Go on, slip it on my dick" (32:45 - 33:05).

Groundbreaking for its much more graphic depictions of sex between men than had previously been seen on American television, its critics were not the usual suspects. In a 2015 interview with *Out* magazine, Ron Cowen revealed, "We thought we were going to have a problem with right wing religious people, but the people who objected to it the most were our gay audience, which surprised us" (Panisch). Some gay men were concerned with the image that was being presented by this show and its five young gay male central characters who had a lot of casual sex. Another surprise for the show's

[9] As this thesis explores narratives which include multiple television series comprising hundreds of episodes, when particular episodes are parenthetically cited they are identified with Arabic numerals indicating season/episode prior to the time range.

creators was the role that heterosexual women would play in making it Showtime's most watched series:

> No one had expected that the show would have the enormous crossover audience it has and still does…It took us several years to appreciate that our female audience was even more important than the gay audience was. It occurred to us that a lot of those women are mothers or were going to be mothers and if they are in any way sensitized to what it is to have a gay child and what gay children have to grow up with, and if they are a little more sensitive and aware because of having watched *Queer as Folk*, that's really important that they pass that on to their children. (Panisch)

Folk revolves around the friendship of late twenty-something year old, Michael Novotny (Hal Sparks), who provides the show's opening narration, and Brian Kinney (Gale Harold). Brian becomes romantically involved with the seventeen-year-old, Justin Taylor (Randy Harrison). Michael, Brian and their friends, Emmett Honeycutt (Peter Paige) and Ted Schmidt (Scott Lowell), along with Justin form the nucleus of the show. Rounding out the series regulars are: Michael's mother, Debbie Novotny (Sharon Gless); his gay uncle, Vic Grassi (Jack Wetherall); Brian's lesbian friend, Lindsay Peterson (Thea Gill), her partner, Melanie Marcus (Michelle Clunie); and Michael's boyfriends, in season one, Dr. David Cameron (Chris Potter) and from season two onwards, Ben Bruckner (Robert Grant).

While *Folk,* does not explore queer temporality by moving backwards and forwards in time, as in *The Hours*, and other narratives this thesis addresses, the idea of temporality being different for queer people is directly explored. It is first shown in this interchange in the series' first episode between Michael and Brian who is smoking on a terrace of the hospital where, Lindsay, his lesbian friend, has just given birth to the child

to be raised by her and her partner Melanie, that Brian agreed to father by artificial insemination:

> MICHAEL: It's kind of weird, your having a kid. Still, it's exciting isn't it?
>
> BRIAN: What, having some wrinkled little time clock ticking away? Reminding you that you're getting older by the minute, by the second? (23:00 - (23:11)

Returning home from the hospital, while high on ecstasy and making out with Justin, in the back seat of his jeep, as Michael drives it, Brian returns to this theme:

> BRIAN: Tick, Tick, Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.
>
> JUSTIN: What are you doing?
>
> BRIAN: I'm just repeating the first words my sonny-boy said to me. It wasn't 'Da-Da,' it was tick, tick, tick, tick. Smart little fucker. He can already tell time. (29:16 - 29:41)

It is the heteronormativity of parenthood that Brian fears will change his conception of time, having referred to himself as "Peter Pan," and Lindsay as "Wendy" while briefly lying in the hospital bed with her.

Nor does *Folk* shy away from intertextuality as when Michael, having arrived home, after his own sexual liaison was cancelled by Lindsay's going into labor, confesses to his roommate, Emmet:

> MICHAEL: God, I am so horny.
>
> EMMETT: Poor baby. Well, I have just the thing. A new porn video. It all takes place in a prisoner of war camp. Hot horny men starved for action.
>
> MICHAEL: I can relate to that.
>
> EMMETT: (*As he hands the video to Michael.*) Guaranteed to make your privates stand up and salute.
>
> MICHAEL: (*Reading the video's title.*) *Schindler's Fist*?

> EMMETT: (*Handing Michael the remote.*) Here. I will leave you two alone. I'm sure you are going to have a deep meaningful relationship. (As *Emmet Exits, shutting the door to his room behind him*) Good night. (*Michael presses play and eagerly watches as the video begins.*)
>
> MAN 1 (*Voice on the TV.*)*:* OK, Private, Drop trou and bend over.
>
> MAN 2: (*In a British accent.*) For my physical, Sir?
>
> MAN 1: No, Target practice. (*Michael rolls his eyes.*)
>
> MAN 2: (*Enthusiastically.*) Oh, yes Sir!
>
> (*Michael switches off the TV.*). (31:41 - 32:27)

While not as highbrow as Proust in *Cranes* or Virginia Woolf in *The Hours*, this is one of the *many* instances of intertextuality, here a video within a video, our watching someone on TV watching a TV, that queer narratives are fond of utilizing. That it is a queer narrative unfolding in a prisoner of war camp, during the Holocaust, and further intertextualizing *Schindler's List*, we cannot help but also recall *Bent* and its scene of sexual climax between Max and Horst in Dachau.

Like most of these narratives of queeritage, *Folk* also navigates the tension between queer assimilation and liberation. This occurs most graphically in the sequence in which Michael searches for casual sex in the back room of the club Babylon, while Brian, knocks on the door of Lindsay and Melanie's house to visit his infant son Gus (1/5). The two scenes are interspersed as we move back and forth between them, Michael's wandering through the crowded back room, where a man's exposed buttocks and another man with nipple rings are featured, is contrasted with Brian's laying on the couch, his infant son on his chest. The sounds of the men in the backroom moaning in pleasure, with that of the baby cooing, as the soundtrack of the music being played in the back room with the lyrics "I just wanna...erotica...take me higher" underscoring both

sequences and further connecting them, cutting between Brian horizontal, eyes closed on the couch falling asleep holding the infant and Michael vertical, eyes open, standing in the backroom receiving fellatio (44:21 - 47:10). Juxtaposed here, are the pleasure of fatherhood, with the pleasure of sex and at the same time our expectations of the characters are confounded, as it would ordinarily be Brian in the back room and Michael who would seem like the person to be more interested in parenthood.

Folk is the second dramatic narrative in which queeritage is established, as in *Bent*, through the existence of a queer primary character who has a queer uncle and, is simply taken for granted. Here Michael Novotny has a queer uncle, Vic Grassi. Michael and Vic's intergenerational relationship demonstrates a variety of ways in which queeritage benefits each character as well as their straight relative, Michael's mother and Vic's sister, Debbie Novotny. In later episodes, *Folk* goes on to explore other iterations of queeritage through the narrative of Lindsay Peterson and her deceased grandmother. These both serves to describe, as several later iterations of queeritage narratives will do, the profound change that has taken place for queer people within two generations. Lastly, the theme of queeritage is complicated in *Folk* by Michael Novotny's discovery of his queer biological father, Danny Devore (Gary Beach), an instance that demonstrates how, even in the presence of queeritage, combatting the internalization of heteronormative expectations proves difficult.

Queeritage was not an element of the original British series. In it, the character on whom Michael Novotny is based (Vince Tyler) has a mother (Hazel Tyler) who similarly lives with a gay man (Bernard Thomas), but this man is not, as in the American series,

her brother, rather he is simply a lodger. Thus, the American version, by creating queeritage, speaks also to the continuing power of the family drama in America.

Queeritage in *Folk* becomes evident in its second episode when Uncle Vic is at home with Debbie and a visiting Michael. As we witness their relationship unfold throughout the series, we see the ways in which Vic, being queer, is uniquely able to help Michael. When Debbie is overeager about Michael's budding relationship with David the chiropractor because he is a "doctor" and urging Michael to move in with him, Vic tries to temper her enthusiasm offering his opinion that it is "not so easy for two men to be a couple" (1/10, 14:43 - 14:45). Vic is instrumental in getting Debbie to overcome her fear about Michael's dating someone who is HIV positive when he starts seeing Ben Bruckner, the man he will ultimately marry (2/16); serving as a go-between between Michael and Debbie when Ben is hospitalized with pancreatitis (2/18); helping Michael manage Debbie's intruding upon his and Ben's boundaries and getting Debbie to see that she was doing so because she was lonely once Vic had moved out of her house (4/4). Just as any non-queeritage relative is not always helpful, queeritage in *Folk* does not mean that Vic never does something that his nephew does not like, as when Vic gives Justin his card to gain entry to Babylon to search for Brian at a time when Justin was a rival to Michael for Brian's attention.

In *Folk*, queeritage is not a one-way street; Vic also benefits from it. After Debbie collapses at work (1/8), Vic is guilt ridden that it is all his fault, as he believes, she is working double shifts because of him, and Michael consoles him. As a result of this, Michael becomes determined to get a promotion at the Big Q, the supermarket where he is an assistant manager, and in the closet, as he says, because it is a place where they

"laugh at faggots." To that end he participates in a subterfuge, going on a date with a female co-worker, in the hope that he will be considered a "family man" and win the promotion. Explored here is an interesting intersection of queerness and family, as the employer preferences men for promotion who, it is assumed, will one day start a family, and would therefore need greater income. Michael tries to impersonate a straight man with a girlfriend, all the while being a person who needs more income precisely because of the needs of his actual family, his mother, and his queer uncle. Michael will urge Vic to live his own life and not deprive himself of a loving relationship with another man because of his concern for Debbie (4/3). When Michael delivers the eulogy at Vic's funeral, he says, "My Uncle Vic was the first person I ever told that I was gay. He laughed and said, 'Thank God now your grandmother will have someone else's soul to pray for' (4/10, 6:17 - 6:29). Here, Michael simply reveals the reciprocal nature of his and his uncle's relationship. Imagine how much easier knowing a queer relative makes it for a young queer person to come out, and Michael's coming out, as humorously as uncle Vic may have put it, reveals an underlying truth that it made it easier for Uncle Vic in the context of their family as well.

Queeritage is explored in *Folk* in the context of its Italian American characters, Michael, Debbie and Uncle Vic Grassi, it is a family in which, after all, as Michael relates, his mother "always told [him], 'Blood is thicker than marinara sauce' (4/6 5:46 - 5:50). *Folk*'s second iteration of queeritage takes place in the very different, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, family of Lindsay Peterson. When Lindsay Peterson and her long-term partner Melanie Marcus decide to get married. Lindsay's wealthy parents are opposed to contributing to the cost of the wedding, despite having paid for three for her straight

sister; in their eyes, the wedding is not "real." Lindsay's mother is particularly hostile to the notion and refuses to allow her to wear her grandmother's heirloom wedding dress despite the fact, as Lindsay reminds her on the telephone, that Granny Faye "left it to me, she wanted me to wear it" and explains to her that the wedding is "real to me Mom" (2/10, 14:36 - 15:06). After the phone call Lindsay relates to Melanie that her mother said, "If Granny Faye knew a lesbian was getting married in her dress, she'd die" (15:04 - 15:08). Undeterred, Lindsay resolves to search for Granny Faye's wedding dress herself in the attic of the family home. While her parents are out, Lindsay and Melanie having let themselves in with Lindsay's key, enter the house's attic where the following dialogue ensues when she cannot find the dress:

> LINDSAY: I remember it's in an old wooden trunk.
>
> MELANIE: The one your ancestor had when they landed on Plymouth Rock?
>
> LINDSAY: Well, Granny Faye's family did come over on the Mayflower.
>
> MELANIE: In my family Mayflower's a moving van. Ooh, lookie what I found.
>
> LINDSAY: That's it! (*Lindsay opens and rummages through the trunk.*) It's gone.Vanished!
>
> MELANIE: Any chance Granny Faye is related to Houdini?
>
> LINDSAY: She used to show me that dress, when I was a little girl and she always put it back in here.
>
> MELANIE: All that's left is this pile of papers and linens, and these letters. (*Reading one of the letters aloud.*) "July 28, 1943. Dear Faye, What a glorious day lying with you on the shore of Lakeview Beach, feeling the sun on my back as we both fell asleep. With Harry off somewhere in the Pacific, all I do is worry. The only time I feel safe is when I'm with you. Love always, Vera."
>
> LINDSAY: Love always, Vera?

> MELANIE (*Reading the back of the envelope.*) Vera Carmichael. (*Perusing the bundle of letters.*) All of them.
>
> LINDSAY: Granny never mentioned any Vera. (*Reading another letter.*) "December 24,1943. Dear Faye, I'm sitting here, in front of the fire, listening to Kate Smith singing Christmas Carols on the radio, like a good little housewife, waiting for my husband to come back from the war. It's like the *Saturday Evening Post*, a perfect picture, except it's a lie. I don't belong here or with Harry. All I want is to be with you, to talk with you, to be held by you..."
>
> MELANIE: Be held by you? That sounds like a hell of a friend.
>
> LINDSAY: Well, that's how they talked back then. (*Returning to the letter.*) "To talk with you, to be held by you, kiss you, to make love with you"
>
> MELANIE: Holy shit! Granny Faye was a...
>
> LINDSAY: Dyke. (21:22 - 24:07)

The complexity of queeritage is the essence of this scene. That it is something that has been hidden away, in an attic in 'an old wooden trunk' and yet, is as basic to our history as 'the Mayflower' or 'Plymouth Rock;' and that it is the idealized heteronormative family depicted in the *Saturday Evening Post* that never really existed.

Later, reading another letter, Lindsay and Melanie learn how Granny Faye and Vera Carmichael's relationship came to an end:

> LINDSAY: "May 8, 1945. Dear Faye, I'm looking out my window and I see children running down the street waving little flags. In the distance I can hear car horns. I guess it must be true, the day we've all hoped and prayed for is finally here. The war is over. Our boys won. But we've lost. Soon Harry will be coming home. He wrote me that he wants to move to Fresno, plenty of cheap land for G.I.s to build houses and raise their families. I know I said that when the time came, I would tell him about us... But I can't. Please understand it's not because I don't love you, but I'm not as brave as you. Forgive me, Vera." She left Granny and went back to her husband.
>
> MELANIE: Times were different then. It's what women had to do. They had no choice. (28:33 - 29:58)

Prior to reading these letters, Lindsay and Melanie had been squabbling about their wedding arrangements, the 'Cornucopia D'or' menu being the 'surf and turf' option, the most expensive of those presented to the couple at the tasting they attended that Melanie called a "rip off" (3:32 - 3:34). Several scenes later, now back in their own home, where Lindsay and Melanie have taken the letters, they read the last one:

> LINDSAY: There's one more letter.
>
> MELANIE: It's never been opened. (*Melanie opens the letter and reads aloud.*) "Dear Faye, I know it's been many years since I've written you. Harry died last week. We were married for almost fifty years. It was a good marriage. We shared many things. But at the funeral, I kept thinking how different my life would have been if...I had the courage to be honest to express what I truly felt the way that we did that day on the shore of Lakeview Beach. I've always loved you Faye, and even though it has been a lifetime I want you to know I still do. You always were and always will be my true love, Vera."
>
> LINDSAY: It's dated March 10, 1994
>
> MELANIE: So?
>
> LINDSAY: Granny Faye died 1992.
>
> MELANIE: She never got to read it.
>
> LINDSAY: Or know that Vera always loved her.
>
> MELANIE: You know I'm suddenly in the mood for surf and turf.
>
> LINDSAY: You are?
>
> MELANIE: I say we go for the Cornucopia D'or.
>
> LINDSAY: It's wildly extravagant it will probably land us in the poorhouse.
>
> MELANIE: It's our special day. Besides Granny Faye would have wanted us to. (36:59 - 38:57)

Learning the story of Lindsay's grandmother, Faye and Vera, and its tragic ending, a poignant reminder of the difficulty of life for women like she and Lindsay some

fifty years prior, is reason enough for Melanie to have a change of heart prompting her to say, 'I say we go for the Cornucopia D'Or.' In its own way, *Folk*, plays with a queer sense of temporality here as Lindsay adopts the vernacular of the 1940s calling such a choice 'wildly extravagant' and using the phrase 'land us in the poor house,' in some sense, thus, embodying her grandmother in the present. Lindsay and Melanie's wedding then, celebrates not only their love for each other but Granny Faye and Vera's as well.

Opening a dusty wooden trunk, resembling what in prior times might have held a lady's trousseau, Lindsay finds the family treasure to take with her into marriage. It is not the expected heteronormative wedding dress handed down from one generation to the next, but the treasure of her family's queer history.

Queeritage in *Folk* does not only benefit its queer characters. Much of our understanding of why Michael Novotny's mother, Debbie Novotny is the only parent of a queer person who is consistently supportive of their child, is predicated on her years of caring for her HIV positive queer brother, Vic. We learn that Vic was in a coma for ten days and Debbie explains to her son Michael, "[I] couldn't have told your grandmother it was AIDS at the time because she couldn't have dealt with it" (1/4, 17:00 - 17:02). This understanding of why Debbie is such an ally to Michael and the show's other queer characters is complicated when we learn that a famous queer drag performer is coming to town who turns out to be Michael's biological father. The story that Michael had been led to believe was that his father John Michael Novotny, whose picture sits in the Novotny living room, adorned, shrine like, died in Vietnam while heroically saving the lives of his comrades, a decorated hero. This is a complete fiction made up by Debbie to, in her mind, protect her son from the truth that his father was a queer drag performer. This

juxtaposition of the fallen warrior fantasy with the queer drag performer reality offers a stark, and telling, contrast between possible gender roles for a father. Debbie's explanation is clearly one that Michael has not believed, as he confided to Emmett, "I don't know where my father was born or even who he is" (1/4 28:02 - 28:08). We will learn that "Lieutenant John Michael Novotny, [who] died in Vietnam, April 10, 1970" was a name she "picked...out of the newspaper from a list of the dead" (2/13 28:33 - 28:36).

When Michael, Ted and Emmet are organizing a fundraiser for a charity called Angels Over Pittsburgh, which, like God's Love We Deliver in New York, delivered food each day to homebound AIDS patients, they are having trouble selling tickets until Emmett has the idea of trying to enlist the drag performer, Divina, to perform at the event. Emmett informs us, she "is a legend, she's performed before presidents" (1:44 - 1:48). Divina, a Pittsburgh native, is back in town doing her show. The trio of Michael Ted and Emmett catch her backstage, but Divina refuses their appeal. When Michael discusses Divina with his uncle, Vic blurts out that he had gone to high school with Divina. This inadvertently revealed information leads Michael to learn of the true identity of his father. When Michael approaches Divina again about performing he mentions the connection with his uncle. Divina reveals to Michael that not only had he gone to high school with Uncle Vic but that he had also dated Michael's mother. Michael finds Divina, then Danny Devore's, picture in his mother's high school yearbook and immediately notices the uncanny resemblance. While Michael is trying to pump Uncle Vic about Danny and his mother's relationship, Debbie comes home, and he confronts her. Debbie denies that Danny Devore is Michael's father:

DEBBIE: Are you asking me if some old drag queen that I once knew in high school is your father? You know who your father is. This is your father (*Picking up the photograph from the shrine to him over the mantlepiece.*) John Michael Novotny. Lieutenant in the U.S. army...

BOTH: Died in Vietnam, April 10th, 1970, two weeks after you / I was born.

MICHAEL: I know. You told me a million times that this guy in this picture, who doesn't even look like me, is my dad but that's all you've told me...So, he was just a war hero?

DEBBIE: 'Just?' They awarded him the purple heart. (*She picks it up from the mantlepiece.)* He was on a rescue mission, carving his way through the jungle when a land mine exploded.

MICHAEL: You said it was a jeep accident.

DEBBIE: He was carving his way in a jeep... When it ran over a land mine...

MICHAEL: You can't even keep the goddamn story straight!

DEBBIE: Stop confusing me!

UNCLE VIC: Look it was a long time ago. It doesn't matter now.

MICHAEL: I just want to know the truth.

DEBBIE: Are you calling me a liar? Your own mother? I told you who your father was, and I expect you to believe me. (22:16 - 23:47)

Distraught that Michael will never forgive her for lying to him his whole life, Debbie goes to see Danny. Debbie never told Danny she was pregnant, and he never learned of Michael's existence. Debbie confides that she created a fictitious father for Michael so that he could have a hero of whom he could be proud. Her motivation was not that Danny was gay, but that Danny had lied to her. Now, how could she admit to Michael that she had been lying to him his whole life? Michael also appears ashamed of the identity of his actual father, having internalized the gender expectations of his mother. This changes when he sees Divina's performance at the Angel Ball fundraiser and

appreciates the artistry with which she, dressed as an angel, sings the Irving Berlin song "Cheek to Cheek" as, she ascends into the rafters of the Babylon dance club. Michael visits Divina in her dressing room and, as he helps her unzip her gown, asks if she is his father. Clearly Michael knows it to be the case, but Divina too denies the truth saying, emerging from the bathroom as Danny Devore (the first time we have seen him dressed in heteronormative male attire):

> DANNY: Michael may I tell you the one truth that I have learned in all my years? The truth... (*Emerging from the bathroom now dressed in "male" attire.*) is what you choose to believe. When I'm onstage people believe I'm Devina Devore. Not because I'm a great female impersonator, but because they want to.
>
> MICHAEL: What does that have to do with whether you're my father or if my mother lied to me?
>
> DANNY: Your mother gave you something to believe in. A hero. A father you could be proud of, because she loves you. That's the truth. Whether you choose to believe it or not is up to you. (39:00 - 40:00)

Michael returns home to find his mother dismantling the shrine to his fictitious father. He protests and now recites the catechism, "My father, John Michael Novotny," incorporating in it Debbie's latest embellishment about a land mine:

> died in Vietnam, April 10, 1970, he was killed just two weeks after [he] was born when the jeep he was driving ran over a land mine while he was carving a path through the jungle on a mission to save his troops...for which he was posthumously awarded the purple heart." (44:42 - 45:21)

Just as the first iteration of queeritage in *Folk*, the matter-of-fact existence of Michael as a queer character who happens to have a queer uncle, is natural, it's third, seems contrived, melodramatic, and akin to soap opera. Nonetheless, the juxtaposition of the father figures, the fabricated combat soldier who dies in Vietnam, with the reality of the queer drag performer is an interesting exploration of Debbie's need to cling to

heteronormative gender role expectations. She transmits these to Michael in spite of her immersion into queer culture, having a gay brother, a gay son, running a PFLAG chapter and working in the hub of queer life in Pittsburgh's Liberty Avenue gayborhood. The scene between Michael and his mother also demonstrates the great lengths that people have gone to, the questions that are not supposed to be asked, to erase queer family history.

Queer As Folk is the first dramatic narrative to explore multiple iterations of queeritage and portrays the benefits it bestows to its characters. It is significant that Debbie's understanding is so great that says at one point, "gay teens have a very high suicide rate" (1/4 34:18 - 34:21). Yet, the simple knowledge of queeritage is not a cure-all for societal homophobia. Lindsay never confronts her mother about her grandmother and the letters she found in the attic even when her mother persists in trying to set her up with a man (5/7). While having a queer brother no doubt made it easier for Debbie to accept that her son was queer, it did not prevent her from wondering, like Justin's mother Jennifer, if she had done something wrong. When Jennifer (Sherry Miller) seeks Debbie's advice at the diner and over a cup of herbal tea they have the following exchange:

> JENNIFER: I just keep thinking it's my-
>
> DEBBIE: It's not.
>
> JENNIFER: That I was-
>
> DEBBIE: You didn't.
>
> JENNIFER: You don't even know what I was going to say.
>
> DEBBIE: Yeah, I do. 'Cause I asked myself all the same things.
>
> JENNIFER: So, you don't think it was because I-

> DEBBIE: Smothered him? You smother a pork chop, not a son. People are what they are. (1/5 20:48 - 21:13)

Similarly, having a queer uncle, who shares that he "remember[s his] first march after the Stonewall Riots...there were no more than twenty-five of us that year...you think coming out's tough now, you should've been around back then" (2/4 17:48 - 17:59), does not prevent it from taking until the fourth episode of the second season for Michael to accompany his mother in the Pride march. Up until then he had been afraid that doing so might out him at work.

What *Queer As Folk* does most effectively, in terms of queeritage, is to portray a world in which queer people create families of choice and at the same time exist or can be discovered within their families of origin. In its final episode, Michael is asked to deliver a speech at a press conference opposing an anti gay rights bill. A congressperson's staff has written a speech for him, and the room has been arranged to feature the married LGBT folks with children like him. Michael starts to deliver the speech and gets to the line, "I have a loving partner and two wonderful kids, a home, a small business; the truth is I'm just like you" (22:31 - 22:39), at which point he decides to deviate from the speech that was prepared for him and extemporaneously continues:

> Actually, that's not the truth. Sure, in a lot of ways I am just like you. I want to be happy. I want some security, a little extra money in my pocket, but in many ways my life is nothing like yours. Why should it be? Do we all have to have the same lives to have the same rights? I thought that diversity was what this country was all about. In the gay community we have drag queens, leather daddies, and trannies and couples with children, every color of the rainbow. My mother, who is standing way in the back, with some friends, my friends, once told me that people are like snowflakes, every one special and unique and in the morning, you have to shovel them off the driveway. But being different is what makes us all the same. It's what makes us... family. (22:44 - 24:13)

'Being different is what makes us all the same,' or in the words of the colloquial Yorkshire saying from which the TV series takes its name, "there's nowt so queer as folk."

Will & Grace (1998 - 2006).

Queer As Folk pushed boundaries in the period of renewed liberation following the HIV/AIDS crisis. It was another TV show that was subverting expectations in the sitcom genre on network television. *Will & Grace* created by Max Muchnik and David Kohan, ran for eight seasons on NBC. It won eighteen Emmy awards and was nominated eighty-three times. As popular as it was critically acclaimed, on average over the course of its original run, each episode was seen by fourteen and a half million viewers (Framke). *Will & Grace* revolves around the friendship of the titular characters Will, a queer white Anglo-Saxon Protestant corporate lawyer, and his best friend Grace, a straight Jewish interior designer. They, along with Grace's employee Karen, who is a wealthy socialite, and her friend Jack, a queer actor who is more flamboyant than Will, comprise the two "couples" resonant with sitcoms such as *The Honeymooners* or *I Love Lucy* but subverting the genre by being friends rather than romantic partners.

In the ninth episode of its final season (prior to its 2017 reboot), entitled ("A Little Christmas Queer," December 8, 2005), Will, Grace, Jack and Karen travel to Connecticut to spend Christmas with Will's mother, Marilyn (Blythe Danner), brother Sam (Steven Weber), niece Casey (Kyla Dang) and queer nephew Jordan (Reed Alexander). Will &

Grace is the third narrative (after *Bent* and *Queer As Folk)* to explore queeritage through an uncle. It is the first narrative to address queeritage between a child and an adult.

Among the criticisms leveled at *Will & Grace*, by some members of the queer community, were the exaggerated mannerisms stereotypically associated with gay men used by the character Jack, and the lack of portrayals of gay male sexuality in the series. In this episode it is precisely Jordan's mannerisms and interests which convince Will, Jack and Grace that he is queer. Jordan is prepubescent, and this is the first dramatic narrative invoking queeritage which portrays queerness as an identity independent of sexual experiences. Queeritage here allows Will to revisit his own childhood experience of being queer thus aiding him to better understand his mother.

From the moment it begins with the four friends traveling in Will's car, it is clear that queeritage is the subject of the episode. As Will drives, Jack offers from the back seat:

> JACK: Oh, I can't wait to meet your gay nephew.
>
> GRACE: You guys think everyone is gay. Jordy's only nine. It's no big deal that he went as Wonder Woman on Halloween.
>
> WILL: He didn't go as Wonder Woman, Grace. He went as Lynda Carter. (1:13 - 1:29)

The foursome arrives at Will's mother's house before Will's brother and nephew. As soon as Jack sees them coming, Will is worried about how his mother will take to queeritage:

> JACK: Hey Will, your brother just got here. Oh, and look what he's got with him. A little Christmas queer.
>
> WILL: Just... can it with the queer stuff in front of my mom. I don't think she can handle having another gay kid in the family. I remember one

> Christmas, she was so excited when I asked for two G.I. Joes 'cause she thought I was building an army. She freaked when she realized I was really building a home. (2:33 - 3:04)

Grace is still skeptical that Jordan is queer commenting, "Guys, really. We don't even know if he's gay," but as soon as Jordy enters the house, greets his uncle, and offers excitedly, apropos of nothing, "Guess what, I invented a new cologne it's called 'Scoundrel,'" Grace adds emphatically, "And we know!' (3:05 - 3:17).

When Jordan reveals his plan to perform a Christmas show, Will tries to dissuade him claiming that it makes his mother "uncomfortable" He explains that "she'd rather see little boys playing in the snow than... than 'singin' in the rain.'" (6:56 - 7:02). When Jack challenges Will's lack of support for Jordan it becomes clear that Will is trying to protect Jordan from what he believes, based on his own experience, his mother's reaction will be:

> WILL: I know my mother. You have no idea how many of my little plays she ruined. Talking and fidgeting and doing anything to distract the family from watching her gay son do fan kicks in the beanbag chair...I just don't want to see Jordy humiliated like I was. I used to be so upset, I'd spend the rest of the night scarfing down butter cookies and pretending that the crinkling of the wrappers was applause. (7:21 - 7:50)

When Will sees that Jordy is sitting and eating a tin of butter cookies, he comments, "It's like looking at myself thirty years ago" (9:58 - 10:04) and has a change of heart. He and Jack assist in facilitating the show. With everyone assembled in the living room Jordy, wearing a Santa Claus hat and white jazz gloves, performs "Mr. Santa Claus" to the tune of *Chicago*'s "Mr. Cellophane," and a finale "All That Claus" to the tune of "All That Jazz," complete with a final head toss. His grandmother gives him a standing ovation cheering "Bravo, bravo." This, being so far from what Will expected her reaction to be, he becomes angry and confronts his mother:

> WILL: OK, That is it! How dare you enjoy your grandson's Christmas show right in front of me?

> MARILYN: Well, William what is your problem?
>
> WILL: I don't know. Maybe it's that you ruined every single Christmas play I ever did. You give him a standing ovation but for me you'd be fidgeting, looking at your watch. (16:56 - 17:20)

Will runs out to the kitchen where Marilyn joins him, and it becomes evident what queeritage has taught her:

> MARILYN: Oh, Will.
>
> WILL: I don't get it. How could you be so encouraging to Jordy when you were always so awful to me?
>
> MARILYN: Oh, darling, I think when you were a child... I think I... I just handled everything badly. You know I wasn't prepared to raise a gay son...Darling, because of who you are and what you've become I realize that I... I just should have done things differently. I learned from you Will.
>
> WILL: You did?
>
> MARILYN: Yeah. And even though I can't change the past, I can try to be better with Jordy, you know?
>
> WILL: Wow. Thank you, Mom. That means a lot to me. (*They embrace*.) (17:40 - 18:39)

This iteration of queeritage portrays Will's desire to protect Jordan, while also revealing his jealousy that things are easier for Jordan than they were for him. Queeritage here provides an opportunity for Will to revisit his childhood and to learn that by his very existence in the family he has made the path easier for the next generation.

Chapter V.

In the Time of Same Sex Marriage: A Proliferation of Queeritage

Marriage figured largely in the story lines of *Queer As Folk*'s Lindsay and Melanie, and Michael and Ben. While the first couple married ceremoniously, and the second legally in Canada (same-sex marriage was not legal in the U.S.) discussion of the meaning of marriage as a choice became integral to questions about queer life:

> LINDSAY: Married legally.
>
> MELANIE: At least in Canada.
>
> LINDSAY: Someday here.
>
> MELANIE: That's when gay people find out be careful what you wish for it might come true.
>
> LINDSAY: That's for sure! What makes them think they'll be any better at it than those long-suffering straight people?
>
> MELANIE: The only people who'll profit from it are divorce lawyers. They'll have a whole new clientele to bill.
>
> LINDSAY: I guess that's one good thing about not being allowed to marry.
>
> MELANIE: Not having to get a divorce? (4/14 2:47 - 3:17)

The ramifications of the legalization of same sex marriage would prove to have profound consequences for queer people regardless of whether they had any interest in ever being married. It would be some nine more years before the United States Supreme Court, would legally validate such marriages in its June 2013 decision, *United States v. Windsor*, declaring the Defense of Marriage ACT (DOMA) unconstitutional and upholding the full force of, the similarly wed in Ontario, Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer.

The legalization of same sex marriage in the United States is partly responsible for the explosion of dramatic narratives which explore queeritage.

The eight remaining narratives explored in this thesis occur when same-sex marriage is legal in some states. The first of these, the musical *Fun Home*, would open off-Broadway, when same sex marriage had been legalized in ten states, including New York as well as the District of Columbia. Five of these eight narratives are created after the subsequent 2015 *Obergefell vs. Hodges* Supreme Court decision which legalized same sex marriage in all fifty states. The legitimization of same-sex relationships provided an imprimatur for an exploration of queer people and their history in families generally. It is conjecture to claim that the proliferation of narratives that deal with queeritage was primarily a product these decisions. There was, however, a major shift in thinking about queer people and whether they belong in families. Gallup polling revealed that popular support for same-sex marriage steadily increased from 27% in 1997 to 70% in 2021 becoming a majority point of view for the first time in 2012 (Gallup; 2021). Whether such a substantial shift allowed producers to imagine that a story about queer people in a family, as opposed to exiled from one, was marketable, is an interesting question but is beyond the purview of this thesis. Let us explore the first of these post same-sex marriage dramatic narratives.

Fun Home (2013).

Fun Home, by Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori, based on the 2006 graphic novel by Alison Bechdel, is the third dramatic narrative where queeritage is established by the existence of a queer character with a closeted queer parent. It is the first one in which the queer characters are of different genders.

Bechdel's best-selling 2006 memoir challenged gender expectations within the graphic novel genre. Its adaptation for the stage by Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori became the first Broadway musical featuring a lesbian protagonist. The musical opened off-Broadway at the Public Theater in 2013 garnering multiple awards and award nominations, including being a finalist for the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The production moved to Broadway in 2015 and garnered five Tony Awards including best musical. A movie musical adaptation is currently in development which would star Jake Gyllenhaal in the role of Alison's father.

Fun Home tells the story of the lesbian cartoonist Alison Bechdel as she revisits her childhood, being raised by a closeted gay man who ran the town's funeral home, which the Bechdel family ironically refer to as "Fun Home"

In *The Lost Language of Cranes,* Philip's coming out was the catalyst for his father Owen's doing so. What it meant to be queer and to know that one has a queer parent however was not explored as the narrative ended with Owen's coming out. In the second parent/child queeritage narrative, *The Hours,* it was not even made clear in the storytelling that Richard, was aware that his mother, Laura, was also queer, nor she, that he was. In *Fun Home*, we are certain from the onset that both the protagonist and her

father are queer. The show's opening musical number and establishing scene introduces us to the protagonist Alison, a forty-three-year-old cartoonist and her childhood family, Small Alison, around nine; her father Bruce, her mother Helen, and her two brothers Christian, ten, and John, six. Alison then, while captioning the family photograph that has just been taken of the Bechdel family in their Victorian home announces:

> Caption: My Dad and I both grew up in the same small
> Pennsylvania Town.
> And he was gay.
> And I was gay.
> And he killed himself.
> And I...became a lesbian cartoonist. (Kron 17)

The ensuing action follows current day Alison's search to understand what the implications of queeritage are for her. The play explores the question of what it meant for Alison that her father was queer and closeted while raising her. Alison revisits her own past as she tries to make sense of and reframe, figuratively and literally, as she captions the panels in her graphic novel memoir, her childhood. *Fun Home* is the first dramatic narrative whose protagonist consciously examines queeritage in an effort to understand its meaning in their life.

The Hours explored queer temporality through three different queer women living in three different time periods. *Fun Home* plays with temporality by telling the story of one queer woman's life by simultaneously inhabiting the stage with the same person at three different ages: Alison, the cartoonist at age 43; Medium Alison, the undergraduate student English major at 19; and Little Alison, 9 years old. In the graphic

novel the voice of Alison the cartoonist finds its expression in the captions for each frame of the story. Lisa Kron, in creating Alison as a character onstage in front of us, furthers the subversion of temporality of the graphic novel. As Kron says, of the graphic novel, in the foreword to the play:

> It feels like a traditional narrative that starts with her childhood and progresses through a linear story; but a closer reading reveals that the book is actually a recursive meditation, circling around and around the four months between when Alison came out to her parents and her father's suicide. And yet the graphic novel makes us feel like we're moving forward in time. (7)

The play's innovation of turning the current day Alison into a character onstage enhances the way in which heteronormative temporality is subverted in the dramatic narrative iteration of *Fun Home*.

Bruce is a high school English teacher and Alison will major in English in college and then become a writer. Therefore, amongst narratives about queeritage, intertextuality is most prominent in *Fun Home*. It is through books that Alison and Bruce communicate most effectively.

While a queer sense of temporality and intertextuality are employed in *Fun Home*, they are used to tell a story of queeritage. In the plays' opening scene Bruce carries in two carboard boxes of stuff he has picked up at a yard sale and sorts through it with Small Alison while singing about a teapot he has found. Present day Alison takes out the same teapot from a box of things she has kept and sings:

> *But God this thing is ghastly!*
>
> *You were so ecstatic when you found it at a yard sale*
>
> *No, no, wait-*

In Mr. Gibbons barn

It all comes back, it all comes back, it all comes back

There's you

And there's me

But now I'm the one who's forty-three

and stuck

I can't find my way through

Just like you

Am I just like you? (11)

Alison seeks to understand whether her being 'stuck,' her inability to 'find [her] way through,' is because she 'just like' her father is queer. At the end of the song Bruce, lying on his back, pushes small Alison into the air so that she can fly like Superman. Alison calls this game "airplane." This is the only example of intimacy with her father outside of communicating by way of books. The following dialogue ensues:

ALISON: Caption: My dad and I were exactly alike.

SMALL ALISON: I see everything!

ALISON: Caption: My dad and I were *nothing* alike.

SMALL ALISON: I'm Superman!

ALISON: My dad and I... My dad and I...(12)

Fun Home is also concerned with the impact of one queer character's knowledge of another in the same family. Alison fears that her own coming out may have been the trigger that caused her father's death. Did Alison's coming out to her father Bruce provoke a crisis similar to what Philip's coming out to his father Owen did? A crisis which, for Owen, led to the dissolution of his marriage but the hope of an authentic

future, but for Bruce leads to suicide? In the middle of the play Medium Alison informs her parents that she is a lesbian in a letter sent from college. Telling her college girlfriend Joan that she came out to her parents, Joan asks her, "How are they taking it? What do they say?" Medium Alison responds, "Oh. Nothing. I just put it in the mailbox just now" (38). One song later, a number about Medium Alison's infatuation with Joan, Alison will caption the drawing she has made of the recollection, "Caption: I leapt out of the closet - and four months later my father killed himself by stepping in front of a truck" (41). In her father's belated response, also by letter, he writes that he does not "see the point of putting a label on yourself. There have been a few times in my life when I thought of taking a stand. But I am not a hero. Is that a cop out?" After Medium Alison reads this aloud to Joan, she proclaims: "He has to be the expert. Lots of wisdom about and advice about things he doesn't know anything about! I'm gay. Which means I'm not like him, and I've *never* been like him, and he can't deal with that" (55).

This is immediately followed by a scene in which Small Alison sits with her father in a diner as Bruce reads the paper:

> BRUCE: Bill Smoot's running for town council. He didn't mention it at Rotary. Hey. Where's your barrette? *(Small Alison grudgingly pulls it out of her pocket*.) Put it back in. It keeps the hair out of your eyes.
>
> SMALL ALISON: (*Under her breath as she puts it back in.*) So would a crew cut.
>
> BRUCE: If I see you without it again, I'll wale you. Go find Lorna. I need coffee. (56)

As Small Alison goes to get Lorna, an "old school butch" enters the diner; Alison is instantly fascinated by this person as expressed in the chorus of the song she now sings about her:

Your swagger and your bearing

and the just-right clothes your wearing

Your short hair and your dungarees and your lace up boots

And your keys

Oh, your ring of keys (57)

As the song's verse: "*It's probably conceited to say / but I think we're alike in a certain way"* makes clear, Alison recognizes herself in this stranger (56 - 57).

Present day Alison, in the narrative she is constructing, connects Medium Alison's nascent lesbianism in college with Small Alison's aversion to wearing dresses. She places a scene, in which Little Alison tries to wear sneakers and a tee shirt on top of her party dress only to be thwarted by Bruce, immediately before Medium Alison's writing a letter to come out to her parents. Here, Bruce is the parent who was the enforcer of gender norms.

The setting of the "diner," a vestige of the repressed 1950s in the liberated 1970s, when the scene is set, and in which queer Bruce discusses what happened at the Rotary Club[10], reflect Bruce's internalization of heteronormativity. Any fissure in his and his family's appearance of normality provokes an angry reaction, thus his threatening to 'wale' Small Alison. Already understanding himself to be in a precarious position, Bruce threatens to beat the gay out of Small Alison. It is clear to present day Alison, that it is Bruce's internal conflict with his own queerness that dictated so much of his behavior toward her.

[10] The Rotary Club was such a bastion of patriarchal norms that it did not admit women worldwide until 1989.

Alison calls home from college and asks her mother why she has not responded to her coming out letter. Her mother informs her that her "father has had affairs with men" (58). Knowing this, when Medium Alison returns home from college, she asks her father if "[he] knew what he was doing when [he] gave her that Colette book?" Bruce responds only with "I don't know" and asks Alison if she is ready to go on a drive with him. Medium Alison wants to know if her father, being queer, could recognize that she was. Tragically this is a conversation that she, Medium Alison and Bruce are unable to have. While it is Medium Alison whom Bruce asks to go for a drive with him, in a climactic shift, it is present day Alison, heretofore an observer of the memories, who steps into the car. As the stage direction informs us, "*She's not remembering this, she's living it again*." On the last evening that they would spend together, they sit, while Bruce drives, as the stage directions inform us, in "painful silence," but we hear their internal thoughts as they sing them. The song is a conversation that does not take place between them; neither Medium Alison nor her father are able to initiate it. It is only present-day Alison and we who are privy to the communion of Alison and her father as a result of her revisiting her childhood.

BRUCE: *Fourteen years old*
In Swensen's barn
It was cold
Lots of boys messed around, you know
For them, it was a game they outgrew
But I always knew
ALISON: *Dad me too!*
Since, like five, I guess

I preferred to wear boys' shirts and pants

I felt absurd in a dress

I really tried to deny my feelings for girls

But I was like you

Dad, me too. (69)

In its second act, *Fun Home* juxtaposes a scene of Bruce and Helen arguing about Bruce keeping his psychiatric appointment that the court has ordered as a result of his "furnishing a malt beverage to a minor," with Little Alison watching a *Partridge Family*-esque TV show; it points out the difference between the idealized heteronormative representation of family on television and the reality.

Since Bruce, in *Fun Home*, probably commits suicide, we are left with the unanswerable questions that suicide often leaves behind. Alison asks: "What did it feel like to step in front of a truck, Dad? What did it feel like to see it coming right at you and not move? And just let it hit you? Why? Was it because of me? Did it have *nothing* to do with me? *What Happened?*" (71). These questions are of course unanswerable; we do not know if queeritage played a role in Bruce's suicide. What we can say is that Bruce's queerness and his maladjustment to it has much to do with who Alison is and *Fun Home* is her attempt to understand the role that queeritage played in her and her father's lives. *Fun Home* provides us with the unique vantage point of seeing the characters in a family who are unaware of queeritage through the lens of one of those characters who is now aware of it.

Transparent (2014 - 2019).

Transparent was created for Amazon Studios by Joey Soloway and was the first television series featuring a transgender central character. It is also the dramatic narrative which most thoroughly explores queeritage. It does so by looking at three generations of the Pfefferman family. Maura Pfefferman (Jeffrey Tambor), formerly known as Mort, is a trans woman and the biological father of Sarah (Amy Landecker), Josh (Jay Duplass) and Ali (Gaby Hoffman). Although Maura's eldest daughter Sarah is married to a man, she reunites and reenters a relationship with her college girlfriend, Tammy (Melora Hardin), providing the first instance of queeritage in the series. Maura's youngest child whom we first meet as Ali, a young woman sexually experimenting, journeys, over the course of the series, to consider herself a lesbian, and ultimately as non-binary, changing their name to Ari. It is through Ari that we will come to learn the history of Maura's aunt, Gittel, and that it will be revealed that she, like Maura, was a trans woman. Ali/Ari and Gittel provide us with the series' second and third instances of queeritage within the same family. *Transparent* contrasts the experience of Maura, who lives most of her life in the closet, unaware of her queeritage and repressing her true self, to conform to society's expectations, with Ali, who learns of her queeritage as a young person as soon as Maura comes out to them. Both Ali and Maura journey to self-acceptance as the series progresses; one has the benefit of the knowledge of queeritage, the other does not.

In its first season, *Transparent* won the 2014 Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series in the Musical or Comedy category. Despite criticism of the casting of a cisgender male actor as the central trans character by some members of the queer

community, the series was a milestone in transgender representation. As the literary critic Stephanie Burt observed, on *New York* magazine's site, *Vulture*, "this kind of representation matters. *Transparent* taught many cisgender people what transgender meant, and taught some closeted trans viewers, too" (Burt).

Transparent tells the story of Maura's coming out as a trans woman and the ripple effects of this on her three children, Sarah, Ali and Josh, and ex-wife, Shelley, but queeritage is not the only family legacy that the series excavates. The Pfefferman's are Jewish and their ethnicity and religion figure largely in the series. Eric Thurm, writing for *Esquire,* wrote that it was "the most Jewish show on television" (Thurm), and, Isaac Butler, in *Slate,* claimed it was the most profoundly Jewish show in TV history" (Butler). In addition, the Pfefferman's are descended from Holocaust survivors and the series explores the intergenerational trauma endured because of the historical persecution of both identities.

Viewers are aware of queeritage in *Transparent* before any of its characters are. In the first episode, Sarah runs into Tammy while dropping her children off for school; their actions indicate that the two had had a sexual relationship in the past (4:55 - 6:02). This is made clear a few minutes later when Sarah's sister Ali describes it: "[Sarah and Tammy] spent their entire college years lezzing it up together" (8:40 - 8:42). When we see Sarah's biological father, who had first been presented to us as "Mort," at a trans support group meeting at the Los Angeles LGBT center, where she is referred to as "Maura," we now understand that Maura is trans, making us then aware of the queeritage of the Pfefferman family (22:44 - 23:07). But it will only be later that day, when Maura returns home unexpectedly and walks in on her daughter Sarah making out with Tammy,

that Maura and Sarah will be aware of their queeritage (29:46). This mutual recognition of queeritage is revealed as the camera alternates between shots of the shocked faces of Sarah and Tammy, and of Maura, as Sarah says, "Dad?" and Maura responds, "Hi girls," climactically ending the series' first episode (29:46 - 29:55).

The discovery of queeritage in its first instance is portrayed as shocking, its next iteration, the gender identity journey that Ali will take in the series, is foreshadowed in this same episode using the language of the familiar. When we first see Mort and Ali speak privately, Mort comments, "You know, out of all my kids, you're the one, you can see me most clearly. Probably because we share the depressive gene" (14:26 - 14:42). In the scene which immediately follows Maura at the trans support group meeting, we see Ali arriving home to her apartment where she disrobes and observes her naked body in the mirror (23:12 - 23:47). This exploration of gender presentation continues in subsequent episodes with Ali getting a haircut at a traditional men's barber shop and then reclining in the tub while removing the makeup from her face with a washcloth (1/4 22:13 - 22:41). As Maura tries to come out to each of her children she confides to her friend, Davina (Alexandra Billings), "I have to come out to Ali, nothing feels right until I do that (1/3 20:09 - 20:13). When Maura does come out to Ali, Ali's response, "You finally make sense to me...I see you completely it's like I've never seen you before" speaks to their special connection that, they and we will learn, is being queer and non-cisgender.

It is often the case that queer narratives, especially those dealing with queeritage, investigate queer temporalities. *Transparent* does this as well. After being discovered by Sarah and Tammy for the first time dressed as a woman the following exchange occurs:

> MAURA: When I was a kid, ever since I was five, I- I felt that something was- was not right. And uh, I couldn't tell anybody about my feminine side. It was a different time you know. Very different time. And uh, pretty girl, I just um, I had to keep all of those feelings to myself and-
>
> SARAH: Look Dad-
>
> MAURA: No, no let me do this, just please, God let me do this. People led secret lives and people led very lonely lives. And then, of course, the internet was invented-
>
> TAMMY: The internet, can't hate on that internet, it's magic.
>
> SARAH: I'm sorry I, I'm sorry, Dad, I'm sorry, I'm just trying- Can you just help me out here? Are- Are you saying that you're going to start dressing up like a lady all the time?
>
> MAURA: No, honey, all my life- My whole life I've been dressing up like a man. This is me. (1/2 1:24 - 2:37)

That the word 'time,' appears here three times and has two meanings seems to reflect the way that its passage may be experienced differently in a trans body.

In another exploration of queer temporality, that night, Sarah sneaks away from her husband Len, and the children they have together, and Tammy from her girlfriend Barb, and Barb's children, to have sex in Sarah's car; in the midst of which they have the following exchange:

> TAMMY: Feels so good I'm going to keep kissing you and see if we can make this van levitate.
>
> SARAH: Yeah,
>
> TAMMY: Just hang there in the sky.
>
> SARAH: Yeah,
>
> TAMMY: I'll make time stop!
>
> SARAH: Time, Oh my God, we need so much fucking time.
>
> TAMMY: I need to fuck you every day of your life.

This queer time, in which 'time stop[s],' is contrasted with chronological time, that spoken of by Maura regarding the past, as when we next see Sarah together with her husband Len. While arguing about the proper placement of their children's car seats, Len says, "Now we are going to be super late, I already looked at the time" (1/2 13:15 - 13:18). As in *Folk*, the narrative navigates the tension between assimilation and liberation that its queer characters experience by contrasting sexual bliss with parenthood and monogamy.

Sarah leaves Len, and Tammy leaves Barbara, move in with each other and get married. Significantly it is at their wedding reception that we will catch the first glimpse of queeritage's third iteration in the Pfefferman family and begin to learn the history of great-aunt Gittel. The most complex way in which *Transparent* engages queer temporality is introduced by tracking the history of a family heirloom referred to as "Tante Gittel's ring." This narrative is situated at the nexus of queeritage and Jewish heritage in the series and also raises questions of navigating the tension of liberation versus assimilation. *Transparent* uses queer temporality to elucidate the family's queeritage. The ring, thematically and physically linking the three generations of queer women in the family, first appears when Ali retrieves it from her mother Shelley's jewelry box, and placing it on her finger says, in a spooky voice, as if telling a ghost story while unknowingly foreshadowing Gittel's haunting of the narrative, "The legend of Tante Gittel's ring..." As she admires it on her finger she asks:

> ALI: What is the story with this thing again? Who was Tante Gittel? Is that Grandma Rose's sister who was in Treblinka?
>
> JOSH: Did we really have somebody in Treblinka?

> ALI: Wasn't it like she was waiting in line going to her death and handed it to somebody right before she went into the gas chambers?
>
> SHELLEY: Put that thing away, your father tried to propose to me with that farkakteh thing. And I says, I says, "no way Sir," and I made him get me another.

Left alone in the room, Josh eyes the ring as it sits in the rear corner of the jewelry box (1/2 20.36 - 21:22). At the end of the episode Josh will get down on one knee and propose to his pregnant girlfriend, Kaya (Alison Sudal), while holding up the ring, which we then realize he took without permission:

> JOSH: We should get married.
>
> KAYA: What is that?
>
> JOSH: It's my Tante Gittel's ring. I'm pretty sure she died in the Holocaust.
>
> KAYA: Ew.
>
> JOSH: Ew? Ew to what?
>
> KAYA: The Holocuast?
>
> JOSH: Ew to the Holocaust?
>
> KAYA: I mean no girl wants to get proposed to with a ring that came from the Holocaust. (26:32 - 26:57)

Josh is unaware of the true story of Gittel's ring and the transgender legacy that it represents. Also ignorant of this history is Maura, who in the following scene, in flashback as Mort at his academic office, throws away the ladies' blouse which earlier in the episode, and in the privacy of the office, he had furtively flirted with putting on (3:50 - 4:20)[11]. The transgender legacy of the ring has been tossed, like Mort/Maura's blouse,

[11] This secret foray into queerness by an academic in their office is of course reminiscent of *The Lost Language of Cranes*' Owen attempting to call a would-be paramour from his office.

into the dustbin by history. Viewers will soon learn more when, at Sarah and Tammy's wedding reception, the assembled dance the hora. A singer performs "Hava Nagila" as a man steps into the center of the circle removes his jacket and, as he dances, spins it over his head, an action which transports us to Berlin 1933 where a man similarly dances with abandon twirling his jacket above his head to an instrumental song, "Dance of the Lillies," in the same key, same tempo and with a similar harmonic effect featuring a violin as in Jewish klezmer (2/1 18:28 - 18:52). When a young woman (Hari Nef), in a red crushed velvet cape and green dress, is revealed the pearl ring hanging from the chain around her neck is briefly evident, as she is joyously reveling amidst the dancers (19:22 - 19:34) some of whom are same sex couples and many of whom are gender non-conforming. At the episode's end, as the camera pans the exterior revealing the inhabitants of each hotel room: Josh and his girlfriend Rabbi Raquel (Kathryn Hahn); Sarah and Tammy; Maura and Shelley; Ali emerges from her room alone, walks onto the balcony and looks out as the camera moves from a close-up on her face to a wider shot. In a moment of magical realism, the woman we will come to learn is young Aunt Gittel, wearing her red cape and green dress is seen sitting in a chair, which had just been empty, on the balcony behind Ali, while we hear the lyrics to the Alice Bowman song, as it finishes, "Are you coming back, are you coming back, I'm waiting" (26:44 - 28:13).

The past is 'coming back' and Ali will serve as our conduit to it. After establishing this connection through the ring, the series' following episode clarifies it when, as Ali swims under the water in a pool, we see images from 1933 Berlin appearing as if they are in Ali's imagination: the people dancing at the party, Gittel's pearl ring, and now additionally a Nazi soldier, and an armband with a swastika (2/2). Using intertextual

images, the ring's entire history will be gradually revealed. When Ali goes to visit her grandmother in the nursing home she asks her, ""Rose do you remember me?" (2/4 8:30 - 8:38) Grandma Rose (Shannon Welles), suffering from dementia, mistakes Ali for her own brother, calling her by his name, and replying "Gershon, you're here." Neither we nor Ali know at this point that the people Rose refers to as Gershon and Gittel are the same person. Later in this episode, Ali goes to the library to do research for her paper, and in another flashback, we see Young Rose (Emily Robinson) in 1933 Berlin entering Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Research where she finds her sibling whom she calls "Gershon." Rose tells Gittel that they need money because their father has abandoned them. This is interspersed with Ali in the library talking about "inherited trauma in your actual DNA" and describing a study on epigenetics to her girlfriend Syd (Carrie Brownstein). Meanwhile, Ali's brother Josh has given Gittel's ring to his current girlfriend Rabbi Raquel, and when he comes home to discover that she has left him, he finds that she has left the ring on the center of the bed (2/6).

In subsequent episodes we will learn that the ring was given to Grandma Rose by her sister Gittel on the day that Gittel gave her mother Yetta (Michaela Watkins) money to purchase visas and tickets to leave Germany. Yetta prepares for their departure and takes all their jewelry, including Gittel's ring, and conceals it in bars of chocolate that she prepares for their journey (2/8). Gittel refuses to leave Germany because the visa that her mother has procured for her bears the name Gershon not Gittel and tells her mother, "I am not leaving Magnus [Hirschfeld]." The Nazis raid Hirschfeld's institute, remove the books and drag Gittel away (2/9). When we see Yetta and Rose crossing the Atlantic in steerage Yetta hands Young Rose one of the bars of chocolate that she prepared which

Young Rose snaps in half revealing Gittel's ring (2:26 - 3:13). Later in the episode, Ali finds Gittel's ring on the nightstand in Josh's house, asks Josh if she can have it, and proceeds to add it to the chain around her neck, wearing it now, as Gittel did in 1933 (10:40 - 11:04). Gittel's ring, having thrice been attempted to be given in the context of heterosexual marriage, finally seems to have arrived in its rightful place hanging again from a chain around a queer woman's neck as opposed to encircling a straight woman's finger.

When Maura visits her mother Rose, she introduces herself as "Morty" then adds, "they call me Maura now." Rose does not seem to take this in, but leans over and reaches for the ring, now dangling from the chain around Ali's neck, holds it up and looks at it as if looking into a crystal ball. It turns out to be one which reveals the past rather than the future. We see a flashback to Boyle Heights in 1934 when Yetta takes Young Rose with her to the address she has for her husband, Chaim (Michael Stuhlbarg), only to discover that he has taken a new wife with whom he has a child (20:43 - 23:50). The episode ends with another flashback. As Rose in a wheelchair stares out at the sea with Ali, Maura, and Maura's sister Bryna (Jenny O'Hara) standing beside her, we are transported again to Boyle Heights where we see Young Rose giving birth to Maura, while her mother Yetta and husband, Moshe Pfefferman (Moshe Kasher), wait in the waiting room discussing what the baby should be named. Moshe suggests the name Faye. Yetta asks, "What makes you so sure it's a girl, huh?" To which Moshe responds, "Well, a father knows these things." The baby is delivered, and the doctor (Casey E. Lewis) says to Young Rose, "Congratulations, it's a boy" as we hear queer vocalist Mike Hadreas singing the chorus of Perfume Genius' "Learning," "No one will answer your prayers until you take

off that dress, no one will hear all your crying until you take your last breath" (28:18 - 29:22).

In flashbacks throughout the series, we learn of the difficulties that Maura, being trans, has had to endure. In a departure for the series, an entire episode takes place in flashback. It reveals the way in which queeritage, and Gittel's tragic fate, came to be concealed from Maura. It is again the character of Ali who will connect us to this past. The only actor to appear from the contemporary Pfefferman family story, which we have been watching unfold, in this episode is Gaby Hoffman who ordinarily plays Ali and is now playing Younger Maura's mother, Young Rose (the character previously played by Emily Robinson.) In these sequences, set it 1958 in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles, we see that Younger Maura's grandfather, Chaim, has returned to Yetta, but that her father Moshe Pfefferman is now out of the picture. We discover that Younger Maura (Sophie Giannamore) spends a good deal of time living in her imagination. Being forced to play baseball, she squats in the outfield playing with an anthill and the environment she has fashioned for its residents out of leaves and twigs. We see her as she imagines herself, in a mohair sweater with a red barrette in her hair, until we hear the crack of a ball hitting a bat, which snaps us and a reluctant Maura back into reality. We hear a man's voice yelling from a distance, "Mort! Young man, wake up! Mort, get the ball! Right there next to you the ball. Get the ball! Mort!" We discover that Maura is actually wearing an ill-fitting baseball uniform and the voice we hear is that of Mort/Maura's grandfather Chaim, who is the coach of the boys' little league team and who continues, irately screaming, "What is wrong with you! Get in here! Hit the bench, Mort. I can't believe that *faygeleh* is my grandson" (02:16 - 02:59). A dejected Younger Maura leaves the ballfield and returns

home. We and Yetta, who is hanging up the laundry, hear the 1956 Joni James pop cover, of the Frank Loesser song "If I Were a Bell," from the 1950 musical *Guys and Dolls,* wafting up through the ventilation pipe of the fallout shelter in the front yard. Yetta confronts Young Rose as she returns home from work:

> YOUNGER YETTA: Rose. You hear that?
>
> YOUNG ROSE: Yes, I do.
>
> YOUNGER YETTA: (*As Rose approaches the front door of the house.*) So where are you going?
>
> YOUNG ROSE: Inside. I'm exhausted. I'm going to lie down.
>
> YOUNGER YETTA: You know what he's doing down there?
>
> YOUNG ROSE: So what? Can't anyone be happy?
>
> YOUNGER YETTA: It brings down God's judgement. Go talk some sense into that boy before it's too late. If you don't, I will.

When we discover Younger Maura, she is dancing in what she imagines to be a ballroom, wearing pink ballet flats, white bobby socks and twirling delightedly in a pink sequined tulle dress in front of velvet curtains on a polished floor underneath a crystal chandelier. When Young Rose snaps off the radio, and the music stops we see the bomb shelter as it is, in its industrial utility, with bunk beds and canned goods and that Younger Maura actually wears what looks like a ladies' nightgown. As the music stops, Younger Maura freezes an extended arm in mid-swing on the index finger of the extended hand of which we see that she is wearing Aunt Gittel's pearl ring. Young Rose attempts to intercede:

> YOUNG ROSE: Morty, we talked about this. Huh? Get dressed. (*Handing Younger Maura the baseball uniform.*). You have to get upstairs before your zayde comes home. Listen to me, he can never ever know about this. Understand? (*Losing her temper.)* Understand? (Recovering.) You're a

very pretty dancer. (*As she takes Younger Maura's hand and notices the ring.*) your Tante Gittel gave me this ring.

YOUNGER MAURA: Is Gittel Gershon's wife?

YOUNG ROSE: (*Staring at Younger Maura's face then ignoring the question and rushing out.*) Get dressed. Quickly (07:25 - 09:32)

The following day we find Younger Maura, back in the bomb shelter, listening to the Sarah Vaughan recording of Bob Merrill's "Make Yourself Comfortable." When a civil defense siren goes off (14:54), Chaim stops watering his suburban lawn and rushes to shepherd everyone in the house into the fallout shelter where we see Maura trying to put on pants as her sister Bryna, the first to climb down the ladder into the shelter, asks "Why are you wearing Mama's nightie?" which a now arriving, and panicked by what they see Maura wearing, Younger Yetta and Young Rose try to help remove. They are not fast enough and when Chaim arrives, he sees what they have been keeping secret from him:

CHAIM: What the fuck is wrong with you Mort?

YOUNGER MAURA: Mom said it was OK.

YOUNG ROSE: Shhh.

CHAIM: What you let your little *faygeleh* wear a dress?

YETTA: Stop yelling, OK. It's not her fault.

YOUNG ROSE: Oh, for God's sake, I don't let him go to school like this. He's-- He's down here, he's playing, it's nothing.

CHAIM: Oh, he's playing? What kind-- What is he playing at? What is this? He needs to see a doctor. And this-- (*Indicating a ladies' hat box filled with accessories diaphanous scarves and jewelry.*) Is this-- Hey, is this yours too? What the hell is all this, huh? (*Going through the box's contents.*) What is this?...(*To Younger Maura.*) You want to get thrown in the loony bin?

YETTA: (*Trying to calm Chaim.*) All the Boymelgreen men, they want to be women. This-- this family is cursed is what.

YOUNG ROSE: It's not a curse on our family. This is our family.

CHAIM: Family? Oh, Family? You don't know anything about being in a family. You're gone all night. You sleep all day. This is my house. It's my rules. You don't pay for shit, my child. You do nothing, you get to say nothing. This-- This is all your fault. you want him to end up like Gershon?...Morty, come here. Come to me. Look at me. (*Grabbing him.*)

YOUNGER MAURA: Ow!

CHAIM: Come here. It's OK. Sweetheart, come here.

YOUNGER MAURA: Help me!

YETTA: Leave him alone. Leave the boy alone.

YOUNGER MAURA: Mom!

CHAIM: Come here. You want to know what happened to your Uncle Gershon? Do you?

YETTA: Stop that.

CHAIM: Morton?

YETTA: Stop that, you're being a *schmuck*, stop that.

CHAIM: You want to know? He burned to death in the oven...You want to know why? Because your mother and your grandmother let him run around in a skirt!

YOUNGER ROSE: He only does it when he's alone. (*Crying.*) It's just-- It makes him happy. It's nothing.

CHAIM: Is Gershon happy? You make him stop this or you get out of my house. (*The shelter drill over, he exits*.)

YETTA: It's the sirens you know, they make him crazy. They make him crazy.

YOUNGER ROSE: You do what your *zayde* says, OK?

YOUNGER MAURA: (*Through tears.*) I will. I promise. Don't listen to him please don't leave.

> YOUNGER ROSE: OK. You put your clothes on now, OK. Go get dressed.

The first thing that Younger Maura removes is her Aunt Gittel's pearl ring[12], and after admiring it for moment, places it on the concrete floor of the bunker on which it bounces (14:55 - 18:28). As Maura dresses in male attire, removing the barrette from her hair, the camera closes in and lingers on the contents of a shelf in the shelter, a collection of gender normative boys' items: Hardy Boys Mysteries and a toy tractor.

While Maura learns from her grandfather in the bomb shelter that her uncle, "Gershon," was allowed to 'run around in a skirt,' the trauma of being discovered by Chaim must have caused Maura to forget this detail because queeritage does not become clear to Maura until the series' fourth season when she travels to Israel. Maura is asked to present at a conference on gender and Judaism. There Maura discovers that her father, Moshe (Jerry Adler), is still alive. Maura and Ali go to see Moshe and explain that Maura is transgender. Octogenarian Moshe seems to take this in stride. Maura asks Moshe about the past:

> MAURA: I have one last question before we go. What about Mom? how could you leave her?
>
> MOSHE: Aye, Rose. Rose never loved me. She was like a depressed person.
>
> ALI: Why? Why was she so depressed?
>
> MOSHE: Why? 'Cause of the fuckin' Holocaust. you ever heard of it. I'm trying to explain to you. Some families...got out. But no family ever got

[12] While we see Maura remove the pearl ring and place it on the floor (18:23 - 18:28), in the following shot, where Maura has already put on pants and is putting on an undershirt, we catch sight of the ring again on her index finger as she then makes a move to remove it (18:32 - 18:34). Similarly, immediately preceding the ring's removal (the first time) we see a seated crying Maura being consoled by her mother with the ring on her index finger (18:00 - 18:02) and then without the ring on her finger (18:13 - 18:17) until it emerges again on the finger at 18:22. Whether this is a continuity problem in the film or done deliberately to impart something is unclear.

out clean. You know what I mean? Like your mother, you can't blame her because of the death of her brother...uh... er... her sister...she uh..

ALI: What do you... What do you mean?

MAURA: What are you talking about?

MOSHE: Gershon/Gittel, Gittel/Gershon,

ALI: What do you mean?

MAURA: (*To Ali.*) Gershon was Gittel's husband.

MOSHE: No, no, no. No, no, no no.

MAURA: They were married.

MOSHE: Gershon and Gittel were the same person

MAURA: No they...

ALI: That's impossible.

MOSHE: I'm telling you, it's like what you are, Gittel was, the same thing. Trans, what do you call that? A trans something?

ALI: I'm sorry, you're saying that Gittel was transgender?

MOSHE: Transgender. Yeah.

ALI: (*To Maura.*) What? Is this?

MAURA: They never said..

MOSHE: Yeah.

MAURA: (*Shaking her head.*) They nev... They never said.

MOSHE: Rose never told you this?

At this point there is a flashback to the scene in Season Episode when Ali accompanied Maura to visit Rose in the nursing home where Rose clasped the ring hanging from Ali's neck, and Maura, noticing Rose's interest in the ring says, "What is it, Mom?"

MOSHE: Nobody ever told you?

ALI: Oh my God. Is it p.. Is it possible?

MAURA: I can't. I can't. I have to go.

MOSHE: Wh, why? What?

MAURA: I can't, um.

ALI: Okay, Okay.

MOSHE: (*To Maura.*) Are you alright? (*To Ali.*) Is he alright, or is he?

ALI: She, she. She's... no, she's...

MOSHE: Is she alright?

ALI: Uh, no. (*Shaking Moshe's hand*.) Thank you. Sorry.

MOSHE: You're welcome.

ALI: Thank you.

Ali joins Maura, who has already exited Moshe's house and is now sitting by the sea nearby, and asks:

ALI: You OK?

MAURA: (*Shaking her head no*.) Why didn't they tell me? My whole life I thought I was alone in this. Imagine if I'd known. (4/4 22:25 - 25:20)

Throughout her childhood and into adulthood Maura, without the knowledge of queeritage, has had to endure many hardships alone. In the episode which follows her learning about her trans aunt, these struggles are portrayed. A flashback shows how Maura's analyst conflated crossdressing with homosexuality and encouraged then "Mort" to explore that side of himself in the hope that this would end the crossdressing. We then see how Maura punished herself, thinking that Ali's being born with complications was God's doing because of who Maura was, an idea put into her head, no doubt, by her

grandmother Yetta's saying things about Maura's dressing up in the bomb shelter like, 'It brings down God's judgement.'

In this episode, while Maura is in Israel, an entire scene between Maura's friend, Davina, and Davina's partner, Sal (Ray Abruzzo) takes place with a poster for the 2015 revival of *Bent* centered in the frame (11:41 - 13:19). This nod to the first dramatic queeritage narrative is significant not only because it takes place in *Transparent*, the narrative in which the theme is the most explored, but also as it occurs in the midst of Maura learning about the queeritage of the Pfefferman family. The question of why Maura never put together for herself the fact that Gershon and Gittel were the same person is important. Is it because she was so young and traumatized by her grandfather discovering her in the bomb shelter that she suppressed the knowledge that Gershon used to, in her grandfather's words "wear a skirt?" Living in a society in which, she was told, that queer people are anathema to families, was she unable to imagine that perhaps Gershon and Gittel were the same trans person? The issue of how Maura's life would have been if she had known about her queeritage, known about her transgender aunt, in the same way that *Bent*'s queer Max knew about his queer uncle Freddie, is brought to mind as we see the scenes of Maura's past, we, like Maura,"imagine if [she]'d know."

On the other hand, Ali, has been supported by queeritage ever since Maura came out to them. The way in which this has benefitted Ali is made explicit in the series beginning with when Ali decides to go back to school for "women's studies and gender studies" and reveals to Maura:

> ALI: It's all totally thanks to you. So, thank you.

> ...MAURA: I'm very proud of you. I always told you, you... you have the brain. you have books in you, young lady. You know, it's good. You have a big intelligence.
>
> ALI: Well, I don't know about books, I mean it's the gender stuff, you know, that I am really excited by and...
>
> MAURA: I am so excited for you.
>
> ALI: Um, thanks.
>
> MAURA: Really, you know I saw so much of myself in you when you were, when you were just young and growing up and experimenting in your gender confusion.
>
> ALI: What do you mean 'my gender confusion?'
>
> MAURA: Oh, you know, you were such a tomboy, *nisht ahir* (sic)*, nisht aher*, you know, neither here nor there. Some people say it runs in the blood. (1/6 6:10 - 7:23)

Maura here picks up on, in the series' first season, what Ali will only enunciate towards the end of its fourth when they come out as non-binary. In *Transparent*, we witness Ali's journey to this realization while at the same time learning about the other iteration of queeritage in the Pfefferman family by way of the history of Maura's trans aunt, Gittel. This conversation between Ali and Maura is vitally different from the painful silence that *Fun* Home's Alison and her father endured in their car ride after each of them knew that the other was queer. The crucial difference being that Maura has chosen to come out to her children as trans, whereas Bruce was forced out and it was not he, but his wife, who told Alison he was queer. Yet there are similarities between the two biological fathers; as *Transparent* progresses, we learn that, in the past, the conflicted Mort, like *Fun* Home's conflicted Bruce, was the gender norm enforcer regarding the style of clothing that one's daughter should wear. In one flashback sequence, Young Ali (Emily Robinson), protests about the dress she is supposed to wear for her bat mitzvah:

> YOUNG ALI: Look at this (*Holding up the dress.*) it's torture! It's... it's torture in a dress. Like, I just wanna... I... like... Just bring me out there in a noose. I'm not doing my bat mitzvah.
>
> MORT: What are you talking about? That... that's a beautiful dress.
>
> YOUNG ALI: It's a terrible dress.
>
> MORT: I disagree with you. (1/7 1:13 - 1:28)

As the series progresses, Maura's exploration and manifestation of the stereotypically conceived "feminine" is juxtaposed with Ali's exploration of the "masculine" as when a shot of Maura offering her wrists for Davina to daub them with perfume and then rubbing them together is immediately followed by Ali donning a tie as each separately prepares for Ed's (Lawrence Pressman) funeral (1/10).

Transparent directly addresses the way in which the lack of knowledge of queeritage in a family makes a queer person feel as if they are on their own in their struggle to accept themself and to be accepted by an often-hostile heteronormative world. By contrasting Maura's experience with Ari's, *Transparent* portrays the ways in which knowledge of queeritage can make a person's exploration of their identity less fraught. When asked what she is studying, by her newly discovered Israeli relatives, Ali replies, "It's in a gender studies program, but I think I'm heading towards a transition so who knows (4/6 6:12 - 6:17) and when visiting the Wailing Wall, after saying to Sarah, "It's fucking bullshit this divide," Ali peers over the fence that separates the genders at the location from the women's side and observes the men, then crosses over to the men's side, dons a yarmulke and with hair up and wearing a man's sport jacket is unnoticed by the men (19:39 - 21:18). Aware of the turmoil that Ali has been experiencing while in Israel, Maura offers support:

MAURA: What's going on?

ALI: I don't know. I don't know, I just, I don't, I don't feel right. I don't feel good.

MAURA: I understand. I felt that way. Agitated. I'd be invited places I didn't know if I would show up. I didn't know.. if someone else.. I understand.

ALI: I just don't feel good in my body. I don't feel.. I don't feel in my body.

MAURA: Do you think your trans?

ALI: I.. I.. I don't know. I don't know that I feel like a woman. Whatever that means. (4/7 7:22 - 8:48)

It is in the season's penultimate episode that the connection between Tante Gittel, Maura and Ali, three generations of Pfefferman's is made explicit. We see the way in which queeritage makes the road easier for Ali through Maura's intercession on her behalf. While bathing in the Dead Sea the family discusses Ali's absence:

JOSH: Guys I can't believe Ali is missing this.

MAURA: Uh, I think I know why she's not here.

SARAH: Why?

MAURA: Do you know what Moshe told me?

SHELLEY: What?

MAURA: Well, remember how we thought that Gershon was killed in the war? And he was married to Gittel?...Not true...Gershon was... Gershon was Gittel.

SHELLEY: Tante Gittel?

JOSH: What?

MAURA: Gittel was trans.

SARAH: Gershon is Gittel?

JOSH: Tante Gittel of the old ring fame?

SHELLEY: That's unbelievable. How does this happen? What are the chances of this?

JOSH: My God.

MAURA: Maybe it runs in the family.

BRYNA: It's like dyslexia. You're born with it. You can't help it.

MAURA: It's not like dyslexia.

BRYNA: I'm sorry. You're right. I'm sorry, you're right.

SHELLEY: You know if it runs in the family, I might be trans.

BRYNA: Shel.

SHELLEY: What?

BRYNA: You're not related.

SHELLEY: Oh, right.

MAURA: Alright, alright, the point is, I think we need to give Ali some space. She's kinda going through it right now; you know?

JOSH: Going through what?

SARAH: What?

MAURA: You know, like I was when I was her age, you know. Some days you just didn't know who was gonna show up.

SARAH: Well if anyone got the trans gene, it's Ali.

SHELLEY: Well, she could figure things out...

MAURA: She's not trans.

SHELLEY: ...in California.

MAURA: Guys, guys, she's not trans, she's just not comfortable being a woman and we have to give her the space...

SARAH: Wait, wait a second, she's a they. She's... no she's... gender non-conforming, like non-binary, androgenous.

LEN: Oh my God.

SARAH: No, she's gonna be a "they."

LEN: You are so up on your terms.

SARAH: She's gonna be a they, that's kinda fucking cool.

MAURA: It's not really cool that we're actually having this, and I've already said too much.

SARAH: Oh boy.

MAURA: And it's not cool to talk about people's gender.

SARAH: I totally get it.

JOSH: So wait, we're saying that Ali's not here, or maybe ditching us because of their gender, which would be very they.

SARAH: It's so them.

JOSH: It's so them.

LEN: They's up to they same old tricks.

JOSH: They haven't changed at all, really.

SARAH: They were always they way.

SHELLEY: No, Ali was not like you two. She was a floppy baby.

SARAH: She was floppy, so she was, she was..

JOSH: Yeah, I think clinical studies have shown that floppiness leads to trans-ness.

SARAH: They are not trans.

JOSH: They are they.

SARAH: They are they.

MAURA: They said that she's not entirely comfortable sharing with anybody yet...

SARAH OK.

MAURA: So everyone, just put a sock in it.

SARAH: Consider us socked. (4/9 17:22 - 19:54)

Thus, *Transparent* with this episode, the title of which is "They is on the Way," becomes not only the first dramatic narrative to explore queeritage amongst trans people, but also the first to include a non-binary character. In the one-episode finale of the series that constitutes Season 5, Shelley is still struggling with the right words to use for Ali, who we now learn is called Ari's, gender identity at the funeral home after Maura's sudden death:

> SHELLEY: Anybody heard from your sister?
>
> SARAH: Sibling.
>
> SHELLEY: At a time like this, does it matter?
>
> JOSH: It's not about you, Mom.
>
> SHELLEY: Can you believe they want us to call them Ari
>
> DAVINA: Ali is non-binary now?
>
> BRYNA: Ari is a very cute name.
>
> SARAH: Ari.
>
> JOSH: Ari.
>
> SHELLEY: It's not what I named her. I named her Ali.
>
> BRYNA: It means lion in Hebrew.
>
> SHELLEY: I like Ali. (5/1 06:36 - 06:52)

A few seconds later Ari arrives. Shelley jumps up and embraces them:

> SHELLEY: Ah, Ali, Ali, Ali, Ari, Ali, uh, uh, whoever you are, thank God you're here. (07:00 - 07:08)

There is no doubt that the Pfefferman queeritage has made Shelley's embrace of Ari possible, so that she can say about her child, what so many parents still have difficulty doing: 'whoever you are, thank God you're here.'

Man in an Orange Shirt (2017).

Man in an Orange Shirt is a two-part British television movie.[13] The Patrick Gale screenplay was directed by Michael Samuels. It premiered on BBC in July of 2017. It was in the Gay Britannia series, which marked the 50th anniversary of the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 (legislation which partially decriminalized sex between men). *Shirt* aired in the United States on PBS in 2018 and won the International Emmy Award for best movie/miniseries. Part One tells the story of Michael Berryman (Oliver Jackson-Cohen), a closeted gay banker in London during the decade following WWII, whose pursuit of bourgeoise respectability and marriage to Flora (Joanna Vanderham) prevent him from pursuing a relationship with the love of his life, Thomas March (James McArdle). Part Two tells the contemporary story of Michael's grandson, Adam (Julian Morris), a veterinarian, who has been raised by his grandmother, Flora (now played by Vanessa Redgrave), and his attempt to begin a relationship with Steve (David Gyasi), which he is only able to accomplish after he learns about his family's queeritage. Following *Queer As Folk's* Lindsay discovering her grandmother's letters, *Shirt* is the second dramatic narrative which establishes queeritage through a grandparent and the first to do so through a grandfather.

Shirt's Part One depicts the way in which many gay men, like its central character, Captain Michael Berryman, in post WWII England—subject to arrest for "gross

[13] *Man in an Orange Shirt* was co-produced by BBC Two and Kudos for Masterpiece for PBS.

indecency" if caught engaging in sexual acts—were forced to live lives of secrecy. Their spouses, left to lead sexually unfulfilling lives, often, like Flora, simply shut down. *Shirt* explores issues of temporality as well as assimilation versus liberation in Part One and Part Two but queeritage only comes into play at the start of Part Two when we learn that Michael's grandson Adam is also queer.

Part One introduces us to Michael, serving in southern Italy during WWII, encountering an old school acquaintance, Thomas March, now a war artist, who has been wounded. In the field hospital Michael watches over Thomas, who recovers. As Michael's unit is about to move on, which will separate the two men, they kiss, and Thomas asks Michael to look him up when he returns to London. Michael is engaged to be married to Flora, whom he has known since childhood. While he writes to her from the front, when the war ends and he is demobilized, it is the address of Thomas' flat in London that Michael first visits. There, he is startled by a middle-aged queer man, Lucian (Adrian Schiller), the proprietor of the lampshade shop, above which, Lucien tells him, Thomas lives, cheekily adding, "I don't bite, unless you pay extra." Michael finds Thomas, painting in his studio; the two men make love. Michael confesses that he wrote Thomas letters from Italy but never mailed them. Thomas tells Michael that he wrote him every day. Michael assumes that the letters never got through to him, but Thomas explains he never said he mailed them and hands him the stack of unmailed letters. They then set off for the countryside cottage that Michael has inherited from his parents who, like Flora's, were killed in the blitz. The two men spend a romantic weekend, sharing meals outdoors, in bed, and making love. Thomas sketches Michael, who is in an orange shirt, framed by the cottage's doorway. This idyll is disturbed when Michael makes it

clear he is going to marry Flora, and adding insult to injury, asks Thomas to be his best man. Michael tells a shocked and angry Thomas, "You surely didn't think that we could set up house together like man and wife" (24:20 - 24:24). Despite this being precisely what Thomas expected, Thomas does show up at the wedding, serves as the best man at the civil ceremony, where Flora's sister is the only other witness, and brings along a wedding gift, a painting depicting Michael's cottage, which Flora has yet to visit.

Months later, a now pregnant Flora rummages through Michael's desk over which hangs Thomas' painting of the cottage. She discovers the stack of Thomas' love letters to Michael and burns them. When Michael returns home he discovers that Flora has taken down Thomas' painting of the cottage. Michael suggests taking it to the actual cottage if Flora doesn't like it. Flora responds that she has been tidying up his desk and Michael immediately goes to search for the letters. Finding them gone, he and Flora argue. Flora yells, "I mean what are you? Are you safe around children? What were you thinking marrying me?" (31:38 - 31:42).

When Flora goes into labor the midwife tells Michael that he should go out. Michael goes to Thomas' house and peers in through the window of the downstairs lampshade shop but cannot bring himself to knock on the door. He goes to a public restroom where a man in a stall grabs his own crotch as a suggestive come-on, but Michael hurriedly exits the restroom and returns home early in the morning with a bouquet of white roses for Flora. He meets his newborn son, whom Flora demands that he pick up and hold. This juxtaposition of searching for sex for pleasure or ur-liberation with procreative domesticity or ur-heteronormativity is reminiscent of *Queer As Folk*'s Season 1, Episode 5 which ended with the interspersed scenes of Michael having sex in

the backroom of Club Babylon while Brian laid on the couch at Lindsay and Melanie's house with his infant son on his chest. But *Queer As Folk* treated these options as two ends of a spectrum, both pleasurable for different reasons, both being available options for queer men at the dawn of the twenty-first century in the United States. In contrast, *Shirt*'s Part One depicts a mid-twentieth century British reality where sexual liaisons between men transpire under the shadow of the danger of imprisonment and fatherhood is only possible within the confines of heterosexual marriage.

Michael has no contact with Thomas until one day Lucian seeks out Michael at his workplace and the two sit down at a nearby pub. Michael asks Lucian how he found him:

> LUCIAN: Your boss and I go back a long, long way.
>
> MICHAEL: But he's...
>
> LUCIAN: He's married with children. There's a lot of it about. Thomas is in prison.
>
> MICHAEL: Why?
>
> LUCIAN: The usual. Cottaging. (*Michael stares at him blankly and thinking Michael doesn't understand.*) Oh, Christ, He really can pick 'em. Gross indecency, dear. One year. You must visit him.
>
> MICHAEL: But...
>
> LUCIAN: No buts. He needs you. What lies you tell are up to you. I'm told dentistry usually works.
>
> MICHAEL: Why me?
>
> LUCIAN: Because you could fornicate, understand him, and meet the mother. You got under his skin. He loves you. Truly. (36:40 - 38:02)

Michael is startled to see how sickly Thomas looks when he visits him. He tells Thomas that he and Flora have had a son. Cutting to the heart of the matter, Thomas says,

"Don't visit again...it's upsetting," but asks Michael to "do something for [him]" (40:29 - 40:39). Michael visits Thomas' mother, we assume at Thomas' behest. There, he is surprised to learn that she understands the true nature of their relationship. She suggests when Thomas gets out of prison that he and Michael decamp to France, where she has a cottage that the two could live in; Thomas could paint and Michael could write. Michael informs her that he has a wife and child. She offers Michael a painting that Thomas did of him, despite it being faceless, she's realized it is of Michael. She explains that it must be a study and that the finished work must be elsewhere. He declines but asks if he may take a sketch book instead, the one Thomas had on him in Italy when they met, a bullet hole in it, it was responsible for saving Thomas' life.

Michael writes to Thomas in prison; we assume it is to propose that the two of them live together in France as Thomas' mother suggested:

> My darling Thomas. You refuse my visits, so you're probably tearing up my letters too, but there's nothing else I can do but keep trying. It's beyond my control, do you see? All those months ago, when I had nothing to lose, really, I wrote to you in my head but was too cowardly to set more than lies on paper. And now I find I no longer care. The love I feel for you runs through me like grain through wood. I love you, Thomas. I love you. Your face, your voice, your touch, enter my mind at the least opportune moments, and I find I have no power to withstand them. No desire to. I want us to be together as we were in the cottage. Only forever, not just a weekend. I want it to go on so long that it feels normal. I want to do all the ordinary un-bedroomy things we never got around to doing. Making toast. Raking leaves. Sitting in silence. I love you, Thomas. I've always loved you. I see that now. Tell me I'm not too late. (44:47 - 46:21)

On the day Thomas is to be released from prison, Michael stands across the street with his packed bag, passport and two train tickets to France in hand, waiting for Thomas to walk out. When Thomas emerges a group of people surround him delightedly and whisk him away in a waiting car as Thomas exchanges glances with a dejected Michael

who remains standing on the opposite side of the street. It appears to us as if Thomas has decided to decline the offer that Michael made in his letter.

Michael returns home sobbing as he climbs the stairs. The scene which ensues reveals the bargain that so many women who were married to queer men made in this period. As Lucien explained to Michael, and reminds the viewer, 'There's [was] a lot of it about.' This way in which homophobia also made victims of straight women, here in 1940s England is similarly explored in 1990s England in *The Lost Language of Cranes* and 1970s America by *Fun Home*. Michael comes to an understanding with Flora:

> MICHAEL: I'll tell you anything you...
>
> FLORA: I'd rather you didn't.
>
> MICHAEL: I don't want a divorce.
>
> FLORA: Please, Michael.
>
> MICHAEL: It wouldn't be fair to Robert. But I... I don't want to make you wretched.
>
> FLORA: I never want details. You must never get caught. We will never speak of it.
>
> MICHAEL: But darling, I...
>
> FLORA: Please, don't you love me at all?
>
> MICHAEL: Of course I do.
>
> FLORA: (*Crying.*) I'm just the sister who happened to bear your child. (*Resigning herself to it.*) I can live with that. (50:07 - 51:17)

Several years later, Michael and Flora are at a department store where they have gone to outfit their son, Robert, with clothing for school. There, Michael has an assignation in the men's room, with a salesperson, while Flora and Robert wait for him. When Michael returns, they run into Thomas who gives Robert a box of pastels as a gift.

In the final image of Part One we see Flora glancing back at Thomas on the sidewalk as the bus carrying her and Michael pulls away, Thomas blows her a kiss as if to say, "he's all yours."

Issues of temporality figure largely in *Shirt*. They explore the way in which the past, and what is and is not remembered from it, influences the present as well as how history repeats itself. As in *The Lost Language of Cranes*, queer temporality vis-à-vis classical antiquity is referenced visually but *Shirt* intersperses this with a textual reference as well. When we first meet young Flora in Part One, we hear the narration of the letter that Michael has sent her containing his photograph and informing her about how things are going where he is stationed. We see Flora, a schoolteacher, reading the letter while observing the students in her classroom. When in Italy we see a group soldiers divided into shirts and skins playing soccer in front of the columned facade of the villa that is being used as a field hospital, we are reminded of the homoerotic aspect of the homosocial environment they find themselves in.

As we see a man operating an outdoor shower, by pulling a rope to release the water from above, the rest of the soldiers disrobe revealing the homoeroticism of this homosocial environment. Michael introduces Thomas to the men:

> MICHAEL: Listen up, men. This is captain March. He's an official war artist. Now, you're not to mind him drawing you. His work is good for morale.
>
> BATES: Sir? (*Removing his shirt.*) Sir, is it true that the Hun lay on tarts for their soldiers?
>
> ANOTHER SOLDIER: Yeah, how come they get tarts and we get artists?

MICHAEL: It's the morale back home that art can raise. It's for your wives and girlfriends. Your children. (*Softly to Thomas*.) Don't let them cheek you.

BATES: Sir? Go on Sir, paint me (*As he drops his trousers and stands at attention saluting with his arm as the other men cheer.*).

VOICE OF ANOTHER SOLDIER: Put it away, Bates.

BATES: But he's raising my morale, Sir. (04:45 - 06:06)

While the Greek columns and shirtless men visually call to mind the homoeroticism of classical antiquity, as with the statues in front of the columns outside of Owen's office in *The Lost Language of Cranes*, *Shirt* also makes this connection textually. Back in England, Flora is teaching a room full of boys when one starts laughing:

FLORA: What's so amusing Travis?

TRAVIS: Patroclus. Patroclus and Achilles. I don't understand.

FLORA: Your closest friend is butchered in a battle in which he wore your armor because you disdained to fight. You lament. Perfectly understandable.

TRAVIS: But they're not just friends, are they? (*He giggles.*)

FLORA: Greek for friendship? (*Calling on another pupil.*) Wykeham.

WYKEHAM: (Stammering.) A..Agape Miss?

FLORA: Love between heroes was regarded as surpassing the love within marriage. But in Spartan... (08:22 - 08:54)

A knock on the door interrupts Flora and the headmaster enters to announce that Germany has surrendered. Just as Discophorus and Antinuos are on the steps of the Corinthian columned Wilkins Building of University College of London in *The Lost Language of Cranes*, the camera lingering on the torso of the latter, the vestiges of Greek

homoeroticism are once again contrasted in *Shirt* with the homophobia of post WWII England.

We are introduced briefly to Adam and his elderly grandmother Flora at the very top of Part One. We do not know then that Adam is queer. Part One's first line, is spoken by Adam while playing gin with Flora, "I didn't know you owned a cottage" (00:13 - 00:21). We will come to learn that this is not the only secret Flora has been keeping from Adam. After their card game, Flora retires and, while combing out her hair, stares at the framed picture of Michael by her bed. At this point, the viewer is transported, for the remainder of Part One, to the past. Queeritage is not introduced in *Shirt* until the opening shots of Part Two when Adam is revealed looking at profiles of men on a gay dating application on his phone. It is clear then that he, like his grandfather before him, is queer.[14]

Part One's of *Shirt* documents the life of mid-twentieth-century queer protagonist Michael. That is contrasted, in Part Two, with Michael's queer grandson Adam. Just as Flora's husband Michael was not out to her at the start of Part One, so too her grandson Adam is hiding his sexual identity from her at the start of Part Two. At the start of Part Two, Steve brings his ailing, aged cat to Adam's veterinary practice where Adam advises him to put the cat to sleep. From there Adam hooks up with a man from the Scruff-like gay dating application "Gruff" and they have anonymous, aggressive, and uninhibited sex. Presumably to make up for arriving late to dinner, Adam brings his grandmother

[14] In retrospect the fact that this would be a story about not one but two queer men in the same family is hinted at in Part One's establishing shot of the queen of hearts playing card on top of the discard pile. It is Flora's turn. Rather than taking that card, she draws a card from the stock pile, turns it up, revealing it to be the queen of diamonds. Flora does not need "queens" but that is all she is getting.

flowers. She informs him that he should take his coat to be dry cleaned as there is something on its shoulder, no doubt the semen of the man with whom he had just had sex. Flora confides, "my bridge cronies, always asking me, 'When is he going to settle down?' And I say to them, 'You know, some of us prefer our own company.' That's what I tell them" (06:08 - 06:26). After dinner Michael showers, furiously scrubbing himself.

Adam goes to Steve's address so that he might deliver the cat's ashes to him. Just as Michael was met by Lucian when he first went searching for Thomas March in Part One, now Adam, searching for Steve, is met by a middle-aged queer man, Caspar, who directs him as Lucian did, to go inside. We learn that Steve trained as an architect.

Adam goes out to a bar with some straight friends, one of whom tries to set him up with her gay American friend with whom Adam finds nothing in common. Adam finds someone he is attracted to on Gruff and abandons his friends to hook up with them. After having sex with the handsome, seemingly intelligent, and emotionally available Bruno, Adam balks at conversation and dashes home to shower. The following day he calls Steve and asks him if, given his architectural expertise, he would like to accompany Adam to have a look at the cottage he has just been given.

At the cottage, Adam and Steve find the painting that Thomas March did of it. Adam brings it back to London. Flora asks Adam about Steve and just as it was she, who confronted her husband Michael, when she realized that he was queer, it will be she who confronts her grandson Adam:

> ADAM: Steve has a real vision for how we can...
>
> FLORA: Now doesn't he have a life in London?

ADAM: Uh, no... Well, well it's complicated. He has Caspar. (*Flora looks confused.*) Uh, an art dealer, but they're what Steve calls semi-detached so... (*Adam laughs nervously, as does Flora.*)

ADAM: (*Jumping up as he remembers.*) Mm, I have to show you this. (*Fetching the painting.*) We found it in the uh, in the cupboard. I thought it was really rather lovely, you know? It might have been...

FLORA: (*Staring intently at the painting as Adam holds it up*.) I don't remember, that must have belonged to the Brewers.

ADAM: Well, it's addressed to you and grandpa. (*Reading an inscription on the back of the painting.*) "To Flora and Michael in the hope the enclosed might one day hang in your drawing room. -Thomas." Who was Thomas?

FLORA: Oh, he was a friend of your grandfather. But we didn't like the picture, and um... we put it away. Chucked it out.

ADAM: (*Putting down the painting.*) Why did you just pretend that you...

FLORA: I can forgive... mmm... It's how you're made. I wish you would be discreet, but of course that's my age.

ADAM: What?

FLORA: You and the man...

ADAM: There's nothing between... there's nothing...

FLORA: Well, I never expected when I gave you the cottage that you'd turn it into somewhere that you'd bring your latest-

ADAM: Stop!

FLORA: Pickup!

ADAM: Just stop right there.

FLORA: You're using your father's money.

ADAM: Just stop! I'm 34 years old and I'm still hiding in your basement. Is it any wonder... It's no business of yours... who I...

FLORA: I don't need to hear this.

ADAM: I'm sorry, silly of me to forget that anything below the neck disgusts you. I mean, do you ever lose control?...All right, you win. I've been ashamed all my life. And I wonder why that was.

FLORA: Yes, you should be ashamed. Because it is terrible, it's disgusting, to live with other people as if you were animals.

ADAM: Animals?

FLORA: Yes! Animals! (*At this, Adam runs out, left alone now, to herself.*) I always feel as if I'm in the wrong. It's not fair. (30:26 - 33:31)

Adam tries to reach Steve on the telephone; unable to do so, he goes to a gay bar where he makes several attempts to pick up someone, and having no success finds a man in the alley on whom he performs fellatio. Adam then drives to the cottage in the middle of the night where Steve has been staying while working on its renovations. Adam wants to take a shower but, as it is not yet working, tries to bathe from the kitchen sink. When Steve sees him frantically scrubbing the same part of his forearm repeatedly with a scrub brush, he walks up behind him and towels off the now shivering Adam and tries to soothe him:

STEVE: It is okay.

ADAM: It's not okay.

STEVE: It will be okay. Here. (*He removes his own bathrobe and wraps Adam in it and embraces him from behind.*) Don't you want to talk?

ADAM: I wouldn't know where to start.

STEVE: Okay. (*Adam turns around, they embrace and kiss, then softly, taking in how distraught Adam is.*) Bloody hell. Bloody hell.

ADAM: I'm sorry I...

STEVE: Shh.

ADAM: I don't think I can... Could you just hold me? Until I sleep?

STEVE: Sure. Sure.

In the morning they discuss the future. Steve tells Adam that he wants to be with him but that he needs to tell Caspar and that he doesn't want a casual relationship, he tells

Adam that he doesn't want to share him with others. Adam takes out his phone and deletes Gruff, the gay dating app, telling Steve that he has done so and showing him his phone to prove it..

In the apartment that they share Steve tells Caspar that their relationship has come to an end:

> CASPAR: The trouble with open relationships is they don't end with a satisfying plate smashing row. They just become about coffee beans and cat litter. Yeah.
>
> STEVE: He is so inexperienced.
>
> CASPAR: Oh, is that what they call it nowadays?
>
> STEVE: You know what I mean.
>
> CASPAR: Just promise me you don't think you can save him from himself.
>
> STEVE: You saved me.
>
> CASPAR: You just needed pointing in the right direction. (42:24 - 43:17)

Flora, rethinking her life and what she has said, travels out to the cottage to apologize to Adam. She brings with her the painting of the cottage. Adam and Steve are eating al fresco with Adam's straight friends from the bar and with Caspar. Flora meets Steve and confides to Adam's friend "I... I'm trying to adjust, Claudie I can't turn overnight into a liberal," as Caspar, looks at the painting with the eye of an art dealer:

> CASPAR: This is rather good, you know. March has become very collectible.
>
> FLORA: Oh, I see. I wish I hadn't told Michael to throw away his painting.
>
> CASPAR: So how well did you know Thomas March?
>
> FLORA: Not at all well. They were at school together and in the army.

CASPAR: (*Reading the inscription on the back of the painting.*) "To Flora and Michael with the hope that one day the enclosed might hang in your drawing room. What was enclosed with it?

FLORA: Oh, Thomas was probably drunk. He must have meant the painting. (*To Adam*.) Can I have some wine?

CASPAR: Would you mind? I think there is something peculiar about the frame.

FLORA: There is?

CASPAR: (*Cutting into the backing paper of the frame.*) Something odd going on. It's just a hunch.

FLORA: Oh my goodness.

CASPAR: Yes, there's definitely a second painting under there. (*He pulls out the completed portrait of Michael in an orange shirt.*)

ADAM: It's grandpa isn't it. (*Flora nods yes, then buries her head in her hands and cries. Adam embraces her.*) Hey it's okay. Hey. (46:36 - 48:10)

Inside the cottage, Adam fixes Flora a cup of tea and Flora tells Adam about Michael and Thomas' relationship:

FLORA: I thought I had won.

ADAM: Won what?

FLORA: His love. But Thomas March loved Michael and Michael loved Thomas March.

ADAM: Grandpa was gay?

FLORA: Yes. Grandpa was gay. He loved me but he married me to be like everybody else.

ADAM: How did you find out?

FLORA: Oh, his love letters were beautiful, and I found them and burned them.

ADAM: You burned them?

FLORA: I was angry and scared that Michael would be sent to prison. Thomas was. I thought I'd won. I've ruined both of their lives.

ADAM: They hurt you too.

FLORA: (*Whispering*.) Yeah. (48:11 - 50:07)

That night after all the guests have gone, Adam is talking with Steve when his phone signals a message has been received on the gay dating app. They quarrel and Steve leaves. A very distraught Adam returns to London where Flora comforts him and advises him that he should fight for Steve. She searches for something as she counsels Adam:

> FLORA: When I thought I was losing Michael, oh I fought like a tigress to get him back.I was all ferocity. Oh, I was... There is no pride. Now this is a letter your grandfather Michael wrote. He never sent it. I found it after he died. Well, you see I want you to keep it. Keep everything. And you know whatever happens, I know that your grandfather Michael, and Thomas would have been very, very, proud of you. (52:53 - 53:31)

Along with the letter, which is in the empty box from the pastels that Thomas had given Michael's son Robert the last time Michael presumably saw him, are photographs of Thomas and Michael. As Adam begins silently reading the letter, we hear Michael's voice and realize it is the same letter we heard in Part One, wherein Michael declares his love to Thomas and tells him he wants to spend his life with him. We see Michael, heading to the post box to mail the letter, but now we see that rather than doing so, Michael approached the mailbox and then turning away put the letter into his coat. This sequence and the narration are interspersed with those of Adam reading the letter as he showers and heads out the door of his building and goes to Steve's house, Michael's words now being the same as those that Adam wishes to express to Steve. We see Adam and Steve sitting on a bench along the Thames, Steve now reading the letter as Adam clasps Steve's hand and bringing it to his lips kisses it. The film ends with a close up of Adam and Steve's clasped hands as they rest on Adam's thigh their respective thumbs caressing each other.

Both Michael Berryman and, two generations later, his grandson, Adam, suffer from shame about their sexuality. Michael foregoes love for bourgeoise respectability and a career in banking. In contemporary London, Adam is portrayed as a sex addict who meets men for anonymous sex but can bear neither kissing nor conversing with them. He hurries home from these assignations to the house he shares with his grandmother, where he showers obsessively trying to wash himself clean. We spend most of Part Two of *Shirt* waiting for queeritage to be discovered by Flora and by Adam, waiting for Adam to tell Flora that he is gay and waiting for Flora to tell Adam that his grandfather was. While there has been enormous societal change over decades, it is the discovery that his grandfather was gay—evidenced in the love letter from Michael to Thomas—that enables him to attempt a committed relationship with Steve. Knowledge of queeritage allows Adam to make a different choice than Michael.

Shirt explores the way in which history repeats itself. Both Michael and Adam have lost their parents; Michael's, as we are told, both died in the blitz, and we know that Adam has lost his parents as he has been raised by his grandmother Flora, who refers to this saying, "I was lucky, fate gave me a second chance" (6:04 - 6:06). The first time that Michael and Thomas kiss it is after Thomas has gone behind a tree to urinate. Thomas, with one arm in a sling, asks Michael to help him button the fly of his trousers and as Michael does so, Thomas brings his face close to Michael's. Once they have made eye contact, they furtively kiss until they are interrupted by Bates calling to them that their convoy is ready to depart. When Adam and Steve first kiss, Steve has stepped to the edge of the field adjacent to the cottage to urinate. Returning to the middle of the yard he asks Adam, "Do you mind kissing me?" As the two men begin to kiss, Adam forcefully grabs

Steve's crotch (18:34 - 19:27), the two instances conjoining as well as inverting the order of the points of contact between the men.

When Michael first goes looking for Thomas in London, he is startled at the address by a middle-aged queer man, Lucian (Adrian Schiller), the proprietor of the lampshade shop, above which, Lucien tells him, Thomas lives. When Adam first goes to Steve's address, the door is opened by Steve's partner, Caspar, another middle-aged queer man.

Michael brings Flora flowers after she has given birth to their child while he was out cruising for sex. Adam brings Flora flowers after he is delayed going home by the hook-up he had with someone he found on Gruff. Michael is revolted after cruising a men's room for sex and a man in one of the stalls grabs his own crotch. Adam vomits after performing fellatio on a man behind a dumpster in an alley outside a gay bar.

Like *Bent* before it, *Man in an Orange Shirt* critiques the availability of casual sex that the relative liberation of the time its young protagonist is living in provides. Adam, in twenty-first century London, does not have to chance arrest, as his grandfather did, cruising a public toilet, to find sexual partners. These anonymous meetings were often the only outlets for men of his grandfather's generation to find physical intimacy, yet for Adam, the ease with which he can find sexual partners on Gruff is portrayed as preventing him from finding emotional intimacy. *Shirt* can be seen to be preaching going from cottaging, to the cottage.

Shirt complicates this binary with its presentation of Steve and Caspar who, when they first appear, are in a committed but distanced relationship. Caspar sees other men,

something which Steve cannot abide. Steve and Caspar end their romantic relationship, nonetheless they remain friends and Caspar visits Steve and Adam at the cottage. It is significant that it is the older queer character, Caspar, who discovers the hidden portrait prompting Flora to reveal the family's queeritage. Dorothy Rabinowitz, in the *Wall Street* Journal, dismissed *Man in an Orange Shirt,* calling it "awash in sermonizing on the necessity of finding true love." Yet, it is a far more complicated narrative.

The symmetry in the queer lives of Michael and Adam does not end with what has already been outlined. Considering that part of the reason that Michael Berryman was unable to express his love for Thomas might have been because he had no role models for doing so in 1940s London. Is Adam, raised by his grandmother with the attitudes of that time period, while living in a time when his generation of queer men suffers from the loss of so many men from the prior generation due to AIDS who might have served as role models, any better off? Moreover, the monogamous relationship that Steve desires to have with Adam at this point of their relationship may not always remain what he wants or what they decide upon together. When asked by Tom Ue in a 2020 interview in the journal *New Writing*, "Are you optimistic for Adam and Steve?" Patrick Gale responded, "Yes. Adam will find it very hard to change his behaviour but Steve is much stronger and will help him. I predict they'll end up with an open relationship with very strong rules. I also think Steve will get broody and want to have children" (Ue 8).

Queeritage, being intergenerational, naturally depicts the ways in which society changes, from one generation to the next, in *Shirt* from one living before the passage of the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 to one living after it, thus enabling us to see how these changes offer queer people greater latitude to live fulfilling lives. Narratives such as

Shirt also demonstrate the ways in which societal conditions are not necessarily determinative. They do this by offering counterexamples from the same generation. Michael and Thomas are queer men living in the same place and time, yet Michael chooses to live a lie while Thomas does not. This is also true of Thomas' older friend Lucien who represents an even earlier generation. *Bent*'s pre-Weimar Uncle Freddie and his liberated nephew Max both suffered from believing that love was not possible for them, yet both of Max's contemporaneous romantic partners, Rudy and Horst believed that it was. Similarly, both Michael and his grandson Adam suffer from shame, but neither of their queer partners, Thomas nor Steve, do. *The Lost Language of Cranes*' Owen can barely call the phone number on the slip of paper he retrieved from the porno theater, but the older man who answers the phone call has no problem speaking candidly about being queer. Societal change alone is not enough to counteract the repression that homophobia has wrought.

Queeritage in *Shirt* reveals the complexity of the relationship between change, that which takes place within a society, within a family, and within individual liberation. Queeritage is what makes it possible for Adam to overcome his shame. His knowledge of queeritage is dependent upon Flora, a straight woman, transmitting it to him. Societal change alone has not made it possible for Flora to do this. Her interpersonal relationship with another queer person *in her family*, her queer grandson, has, and her transmission of queeritage has enabled her to accept him. Societal change alone has not made it possible for Adam to live without being ashamed of being queer, especially when the person who raised him, uses words like 'disgusting' and 'animals' to discuss his sexuality, but his learning about queeritage, the intergenerational history of another queer person *in his*

family, has. *Shirt*, like the other narratives in this chapter, emerges in a time of great societal change. Same sex marriage was legalized in England in 2013.

Since the advent of same sex marriage, the number of stories in which queeritage plays a role has ballooned. In *Transparent*, Tante Gittel's pearl ring is bound up in the complexity of the Pfefferman's Jewish and queer history. Disguised by being hidden within a bar of chocolate, a means of survival for Yetta and Rose as Jews fleeing the Holocaust, the ring transmits the family's queer heritage from one generation to the next. The portrait of *Shirt*'s Part One protagonist, Michael, wearing an orange shirt is similarly hidden. It is found within the frame of the painting of the cottage, the painting which hung in the family sitting room until Flora took it down. As Caspar says viewing the painting of the cottage, 'I think there is something peculiar about the frame.' What queeritage reveals is that, enclosed within the frame of the heteronormative cottage, is hidden the existence of its queer individuals who, like Michael, have always been there. Because of societal change, we have reached the "one day" where their portraits, "the enclosed may," as Thomas inscribed on the painting, "hang in [all our] drawing rooms."

Will & Grace '17 (2017 - 2020).

Will & Grace '17 which ran for three seasons from 2017 until 2020 on NBC was a reboot of the original eight season long 1998 - 2006 television series and comprised its ninth, tenth and eleventh seasons.

Season 1, Episode 4 of *Will & Grace '17* is the first iteration of queeritage in the popular series' reboot. Entitled "Grandpa Jack," the episode revolves around Jack's discovery that he has a queer grandson. *Will & Grace '17* is the third dramatic narrative,

after *Queer As Folk* and *Man in an Orange Shirt,* to explore queeritage by way of a grandparent. In each of those precursors the grandparents were deceased by the time their queerness was discovered by their queer grandchild, but its discovery nonetheless assisted their queer descendent. In *Will & Grace,* Jack is very much alive and directly intervenes to assist his queer grandson.

Jack discovers that his son, Elliot (Michael Angarano), the product of Jack's teenage gig as a sperm donor, whom Jack has been estranged from since Elliot married Emma (Natalie Dreyfuss), a conservative woman in Texas, has a son named Skip. Jack and Will realize that Skip is queer and learn that his parents are sending him to a summer camp for conversion therapy. Jack and Will intervene and visit the camp. There, Jack encounters his son Elliot with whom he argues and then has a heart-to-heart talk with his grandson Skip. Elliot reconsiders and, hearing about what Jack said to Skip, decides to remove Skip from the camp. Elliot apologizes to Jack and asks Jack to take Skip to see his first Broadway musical.

We learn about queeritage in the episode in the same way and at the same time as Jack. At Will's apartment, Will is ribbing Grace about the man she went on a date with the previous week being "blatantly gay" because when Will came home, he found the man, "sitting on the couch in the pajama party position," which Will has Jack demonstrate for her. As Jack models the pose, he remarks, "no heterosexual man has ever sat this way." Will elaborates, "if a sitting position could have a lisp if would be that one" (01:01 - 01:33). After Grace and Karen leave, Will and Jack's usual banter is interrupted by a knock at the door. Jack opens the door; a boy about the age of 12 is standing there and the two converse:

SKIP: Hi!

JACK: Oh, I'm sorry dear but I can't give you any money. I don't support arts and music in schools. I don't need the competition. (*He tries to shut the door.*)

SKIP: No, (*Blocking the door*.) I'm looking for Jack McFarland.

JACK: I'm Jack McFarland.

SKIP: You have a son named Elliott, right?

JACK: Technically, although like my friend Will and his hair, we had a falling out years ago. Why do you ask?

SKIP: I found some of the letters you wrote him and since I'm in New York with my parents I wanted to meet you.

JACK: I'm sorry who exactly are you?

SKIP: Oh, I'm Elliot's son, Skip.

JACK: (*Bending over like an elderly man as he feigns being hard of hearing.*) One more time dear, I'm a trifle 'deef' in my upstage ear.

SKIP: (*Yelling and over-enunciating*.) I'm your grandson. (*To a now shocked and standing Jack.*) Can I call you grandpa? (*Jack, dazed does not reply.*)

WILL: Oh my God, you have too! (02:07 - 02:59)

As in *Queer As Folk*, where Lindsay finds the love letters her grandmother received, and in *Man in an Orange Shirt*, where Flora gives Adam the unmailed letter his grandfather had written to Thomas, letters seem to figure largely in the discovery of a queer grandparent. Letters also play a role in these narratives in directly effecting the psychological well-being of their younger generation's queer characters. The first letter that Max ever got from his Uncle Freddie in *Bent*, provides him with the money to have Horst moved near him and thereby Max discovers his capacity to love. Once Adam has his grandfather's letter in *Man in an Orange Shirt* it enables him to pursue intimacy with Steve. Here too, letters function to provide Skip (Jet Jurgensmeyer) with Jack's address so

that he can discover him, at what will turn out to be, a critical time of need for the benefit of his psychological health.[15]

Jack's initial reaction to having a grandson is to busy himself on the terrace, trimming the potted plants, so as not to engage with Skip, while Will contacts the boy's parents at the hotel they are staying at. Finding Jack on the terrace, Will encourages him to come inside. Jack is reluctant:

> JACK: I didn't even know he existed. How could Elliot not tell me this?
>
> WILL: You haven't spoken to him in years.
>
> JACK: Because he moved to Texas, married someone super conservative and he didn't even invite me to his wedding.
>
> WILL: And you got your feelings hurt and cut him out of your life...This is your chance to patch things up. Elliot and his wife are coming over. Your grandson is in there. Go talk to him.
>
> JACK: How am I supposed to connect with a kid from Texas? I can't fish or hunt or tell a woman what to do with her fetus. (03:27 - 04:03)

Jack and Will return to the living room; Jack learns that he has more in common with Skip than he assumed. When Will, trying to help Jack break the ice, asks, "Are you having fun in New York?" Skip, leaps onto the couch, just as Jack had done, assuming the telltale 'pajama party position' and replies, "Yeah, I love it," as Jack and Will exchange startled and knowing glances (04:17 - 04:25). As in the original series' iteration of queeritage, in Season 8, Episode 9 ("A Little Christmas Queer"), that created by Will

[15] While Skip has knocked on the door of apartment 9C, which is Will's apartment, one can assume that it's being across the hall from Jack's apartment (9A), Skip was resourceful enough to ask a neighbor if they knew where Jack was and thus knock on the door of 9C. Alternatively, the doorman could have told Skip to try Will's apartment for Jack if he wasn't in his own.

and his queer nephew Jordy, the child's queer identity is revealed by way of his mannerisms and interests. Will and Jack huddle together near the kitchen and confer:

> WILL: Don't get too excited. We can't know for sure.
>
> JACK: Really? The pajama party position? Is that not enough evidence to convict Miss-demeanor over there?
>
> WILL: Take it easy. We are not doing an episode of *Law and Order: LGBTQ*. (04:27 - 04:42)

Jack's suspicions are confirmed when an awed Skip responds to the grand entrance of Karen's return to retrieve her forgotten "Birkin,"[16] As she grandly exits, he exclaims, "Jesse Tyler Ferguson, she's fabulous!" (04:43 - 05:01). It would seem as though, if there is a gay gene, the aptly named, "Skip," demonstrates that, as in this instance, it can 'skip' a generation. If any further confirmation was needed, Skip relates:

> SKIP: For Halloween last year I went as my favorite singer, Lady Gaga. Do you guys know who she is?
>
> JACK: Know who she is? Excuse me, I sewed my own meat dress. I went as Lady & Gaga last Halloween.
>
> WILL: And the one before that, and the one before that and- And sometimes not Halloween. (06:49 - 07:09)

When Skip is asked why he and his parents are in town he reveals that he is going to a camp in Upstate New York. Jack responds, "The best theater camps are upstate, French Woods, Stage Door, let me go to my apartment and get some props for you to take with you..." (07:16 - 7:23). In both iterations of queeritage in *Will & Grace*, despite being written over a decade apart, what constitutes the telltale signs of queerness in its prepubescent male characters is the same. Both Will's nephew Jordy and Jack's grandson

[16] A luxury tote bag line manufactured by Hermès.

Skip dressed as iconic female celebrities for Halloween, and both are interested in musical theater, positing queerness as something that constitutes an identity that is identifiable independent of sexual attraction.

While Jack is out, Skip's parents arrive, relieved but angered that Skip surreptitiously ran off without them. They are just in time for Jack to return wearing a feather boa and a thick, vertically divided half white, half black shoulder length, blunt cut wig, the bangs of which cover his eyes, so that he is not alerted to the presence of the newcomers. He pronounces, "A good wig is all about versatility. Okay? This one could be Sia or Cruella de Vil, or an indecisive Anna Wintour" (08:10 - 08:25).

Now that the whole family is assembled the situation to be resolved in the episode becomes clear. Elliot says they must get going so that Skip won't be late for camp. Skip stays behind to say goodbye and his parents go to wait in the lobby for him.

> JACK: Okay, yeah, hey what's the name of that camp so I can write you?
>
> SKIP: Camp Straighten Arrow.
>
> WILL: Straighten Arrow?
>
> JACK: Is that a new theater camp? I never heard of it.
>
> SKIP: (*Backing into the elevator.*) No it's a camp- my parents found to fix me.
>
> JACK: Fix you?
>
> SKIP: So I can be normal. (*Waving tepidly as the elevator door closes.*) Bye. (08:42 - 09:37)

Jack and Will decide to intervene and go to the camp; and once again queeritage comes to Skip's rescue. Although a comic touch, a poster of Mike Pence, the then Vice President of the United States, which hangs behind the camp counselors as they absurdly

carry on, reminds us of the serious consequences of the homophobia on display. Jack and Will peer through a window and find all the campers at a singalong presided over by a pair of counselors, Reggie (Andrew Rannells) and Roberta (Jane Lynch). While the conversion "camp" is supposed to change one's identity from queer to straight, its aesthetic is pure 'camp.' The girls wear pink tee shirts, and the boys wear blue ones, emblazoned across the backs of all of which are the words, "It's not always best to be yourself." The camp counselors, Roberta playing guitar and Reggie clapping as percussive accompaniment, sing:

> REGGIE AND ROBERTA: (Singing an absurd lyrical adaptation of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands")
>
> *He's got boys being boys in his hand*
>
> *He's got girls being girls in his hand*

As the song progresses the counselors ridiculously accelerate their singing as they attempt to suit the contrafactum to the measure:

> *He's got boys-only-marryin'-girls in his hand*
>
> *He's got girls-only-marryin'-boys in his hand*
>
> *He's got the whole-natural-order-of things-where-people-act-like-the-lord-intended in his hand.*
>
> *He's got suits and dresses, on the right person*
>
> *He's got boys chasing girls, appropriately*
>
> *He's got boys... (11:39 - 12:04)*

Jack encounters his son, Elliot, who has also come to check on Skip:

> ELLIOT: Jack? What- What are you doing here?
>
> JACK: What are you doing here bringing Skip to a place like this? What happened to you Elliot? What happened to us?

ELLIOT: You know what happened. You never approved of me being with someone like Emma. I'm sorry if we have certain beliefs that you don't.

JACK: Because they're terrible beliefs.

ELLIOT: Oh, well that's really open-minded. It's who we are Jack. You can't judge someone for who they are.

JACK: Are you honestly saying that here? I have never been one hundred percent clear what irony is, but I'm pretty sure that's it.

ELLIOT: Uh, we just... don't want him to...

JACK: Turn out like me?

ELLIOT: We're his mom and dad. Go home, Jack. (13:08 - 13:58)

Meanwhile, Reggie and Roberta, despite the stereotypical mannerisms of gay men and lesbians, announce that they are straight and have been married for ten months. Reggie and Roberta try to provide what they call a "re-orientation orientation" in which Reggie demonstrates how much conversion therapy has advanced, as they used to use a shock collar, which he places around his own neck. Will, claiming to be the "director of the new conversion camp across the lake, 'Camp Kick-a-mo'," creates a distraction by flirting with Reggie so Skip can sneak outside and speak privately with Jack. Their poignant exchange is the heart of the episode and demonstrates the incredibly affirming force that queeritage can provide to a young person like Skip:

JACK: The point is, this place can't fix you because you're not broken

SKIP: I'm confused.

JACK: Of course you're confused. So, let me tell you a story about another young man who was once confused. A young man who grew up to be a model citizen and today is proud of who and what he is. People adore this man, not only because of his good looks, and dynamic personality, but because of his open, loving heart...I'm talking about me. It was hard for me once too, but believe me, it gets better.

SKIP: I don't see how.

JACK: Ugh. Skip... You are going to be invited to so many good dinner parties. And there's something else. When you get older, you'll understand that there's the family that you were born into, and the family that you choose, and the family I chose... well it doesn't get any better than that.

SKIP: But what do I do now?

JACK: I don't know...You're just gonna have to be really strong.

SKIP: It's hard being me sometimes.

JACK: I know, but I'm going to be there for you as much as I can, and when I'm not, I want you to picture me in your head, looking at you like I am right now, and saying (*Jack takes Skip's face in his hands.*) 'You are exactly who you're supposed to be.' (17:37 - 19:25)

Jack's affirming words effect not only Skip. That night, Jack is at Will's apartment, and there is a knock at the door; it is Elliot who has had a change of heart:

ELLIOT: I spoke to Skip, and he told me what you said. Then I looked around and I saw the camp for the first time through his eyes. Made me sick. I had to get him out of there.

JACK: Thank God.

ELLIOT: And then... In the car on the way back to the city, Emma and I got into a pretty big fight, and she said, 'Do you really want Skip to end up like Jack?' And I said, 'You mean someone who'd drop everything to help someone he cares for live their truth? Yeah, I do.' Anyway, um... Emma let Skip leave the camp. So... I guess that's a first step. Jack, I know we haven't been close over the last few years, but you really do mean a lot to me. You're my dad.

JACK: That means so much. But in public you're my brother. (*They embrace.*)

ELLIOT: So, uh, Skip and I are gonna hang around the city for the next few days. I was wondering if you wanna take your grandson to his first Broadway show.

JACK: (*Overcome with emotion at the prospect and unable to contain himself.*) Please look away. (*Turning his head away from Elliot to weep into his handkerchief.*) I don't think a boy should ever see his father cry. I mean brother. (19:39 - 21:24)

This instance of queeritage, on a mainstream network TV situation comedy, deals with the major societal problem of parents whose religious beliefs lead them to subject their children to harmful conversion therapy. The seriousness of this is not mitigated by it being remedied in one twenty-five-minute episode, amicably rectifying the situation for all its characters. As simplistic as this narrative may appear, it does embody an optimism in people's ability to change and here it is queeritage which brings about that change.

Imagine what the world would be like if every queer youth whose parents rejected them had a queer relative like Jack who could intervene on their behalf or provide words of encouragement. As Jack tells Skip, "When you get older, you'll understand that there's the family that you were born into, and the family that you choose," the crucial phrase being, 'when you get older.' One must be old enough to be able to choose their own family and until that time they may suffer in silence. It is queeritage, in the form of a family member from an older generation talking to his grandson, which provides this information about how queer people can queer the family by choosing their own. At the same time, it is queeritage that changes the attitudes of those in the family whose original homophobic attitudes would have made queering the family necessary in the first place.

Queeritage returns in *Will & Grace '17* in Season 2, Episode 3, entitled, "Tex and the City," when Jack and Will head to Texas to see Skip sing in a church concert. Here it is the older queer character, Jack, who benefits from what he learns about being queer from the younger queer character in his family. This is an effect of queeritage reminiscent of Owen deciding to try to live an authentic life after Phillip came out in *The Lost Language of Cranes.*

As soon as we see Jack and Will in Texas, in the lobby of their hotel, where they have arranged to meet Skip,[17] Jack is uncomfortable in the environment:

> JACK: (*Hushed and emphatic.*) Keep your voice down Mary Ellen!
>
> WILL: What is wrong with you? You've been acting strange since we landed.
>
> JACK: I didn't know the real Texas would be so Texas-y. I feel a suffocating cloud of homophobia following us...Does this place seem homo-friendly to you? A guy outside looked at me and spit on the ground.
>
> WILL: He's chewing tobacco; you're not supposed to swallow it.
>
> JACK: See homophobic! (03:54 - 04:43)

Jack and Will are interrupted by Skip's entrance and as soon as they sit down with him Jack discovers more to worry about:

> WILL: So, a, Skip what church song are you going to sing?
>
> SKIP: It's not that kind of concert. It's a talent show and the song I'm doing is a secret, but you're going to love it. (*Excitedly.*) Who am I kidding? I have to tell you! I'm doing "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend."
>
> WILL: That's so great!
>
> JACK: (*Feigning enthusiasm.*) That's so great! (*Turning to Will, he silently mouths the words:* Oh - my - God!).
>
> WILL: That's a great song.
>
> JACK: -To sing in Texas! (*Again, mouthing the words to Will:* No its not. *Then, turning back to Skip.*) It's so exciting. Say, tell me is there an exit from the backstage area to the street in case of an emergency? (04:54 - 05:59)

When they are alone, Jack shares his fears with Will:

> JACK Skip can't sing a song that gay in a Texas church. He'll be scarred for life...What am I going to do?

[17] In this episode, the role of Skip, previously played by Jet Jurgensmeyer, is undertaken by Samuel Faraci.

> WILL: What are you talking about? You're the one who rescued him from that conversion camp and gave him the courage to be who he is.
>
> JACK: In New York! Not in Texas. They beat up gay kids for sport here. Haven't you ever seen *Friday Night Lights?*...Learning how not to be a target is just as much a part of being gay as learning to do this (*He performs a Rockette's style high kick.*) See what you made me do. You know I always high kick when I'm emotional. (10:00 - 10:43)

Will then shares his own childhood talent show story with Jack:

> WILL: It was the fall of 1980, and a young Will Truman was crying into his Perry Ellis sheets because his mother wouldn't let him do the talent contest dressed as Freddie Mercury from Queen. She said it was my own fault if I got beat up. And when I signed up anyway, she hid my moustache and fake teeth...This is my origin story, me, alone singing "Bohemian Rhapsody" to my GI Joes, who met while on leave and fell in love. Do you know how that felt? Trying to be a queen, and not being supported by someone I love. It left a mark that I've never completely gotten over.
>
> JACK: He'll get bullied.
>
> WILL: Maybe. And that would be horrible. But he needs to live his truth and you need to support him.
>
> JACK: That all makes sense, in America. But this is Texas! (10:55 - 12:05)

When they arrive for the talent show at the church, the woman at the door describes Skip, the last boy singing, as "the sensitive one with the fancy haircut" (18:15 - 18:18). Jack and Will rush into the chapel for Skip's finale. He is dressed in a long, pale red, tee shirt over slim, pale red, dance pants, with white basketball sneakers.[18] Skip does not sport a diamond choker, nor dangling earrings, but he does, à la Marilyn, wear long, over the elbow, satin evening gloves with large rhinestone bracelets on each wrist. As the number comes to an end, a frightened Jack turns around and shields his eyes with his

[18] An improvised and androgenous take on Marilyn Monroe's shocking carnation pink gown designed by William Travilla in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

hands. As the crowd applauds, Jack says, "Oh my God, they're all slapping him." Will reassures him, "You don't recognize that sound because it's applause. Jack? Open your eyes. They love him." An overjoyed Jack runs onto the stage and proudly declares, "That's my grandson. He's related to me!" Skip says, I want to thank my Grandpa Jack, for teaching me to always be true to myself, no matter what." When the pastor emceeing the talent show, Donald (Scott Beehner), interjects, "Sounds like he's a great role model" (18:43 - 19:33), Jack is compelled to confess:

> JACK: No, I'm not, but now's not the time to make some dramatic confession. (*Screaming.*) I AM THE WORST ROLE MODEL IN THE WORLD...Skip, I've been a terrible grandpa. I came here to actually stop you from performing.
>
> SKIP: Well, why would you want to stop me?
>
> JACK: Because I... I thought that they wouldn't accept you as you are. I just assumed they'd be homophobic, but it turns out I was Texa-phobic...Skip it's important to see people for who they are, not who you expect them to be...Please, don't let anyone ever talk you out of being you.
>
> SKIP: Even if it's you?
>
> JACK: Even if it's me. (*They embrace.*) Although Marilyn did have cleaner lines and a stronger turnout. (*He demonstrates a staccato second position èntendre.*) But we got time for that. And I just want to say to my friend Will that I should have listened to him. And I wish that he had the chance to let out his inner "Queen."
>
> WILL: (*Bursting through the chapel doors dressed as Freddie Mercury and singing the Queen song "Ay-Oh!"*) Ay, ay-ay-ay-ay-ay Oh. Ay Oh!
>
> SKIP: Grandpa Jack, can something be too gay?
>
> JACK: Yes it can, Skip. (19:34 - 21:25)

While the final lines are a sophomoric joke at Will's expense, they also playfully point to the fact that even queeritage does not make one immune to internalized homophobia.

Of the three narratives that explore queeritage through the relationship of a grandparent to a grandchild, *Will & Grace '17* is the only one with a living grandparent. While Lindsay is psychologically buttressed by discovering her grandmother's love letters in *Queer As Folk*, and Adam is able to risk being emotionally available with Steve after learning about his queer grandfather Michael's love letter, Jack is the only grandparent who is able to directly intercede on their grandchild's behalf.

Call Me by Your Name (2017).

Call Me By Your Name, directed by Luca Guadagnino, with a screenplay by James Ivory, is based on André Aciman's 2007 eponymous novel. Set in the summer of 1983, *Name* tells the story of the love affair between Elio (Timothée Chalomet), the seventeen-year-old son of, Samuel Perlman (Michael Stuhlbarg), an American academic living in Italy, and Oliver (Armie Hammer), a twenty-four-year-old graduate student who visits for the summer to serve as Samuel's assistant. Near the end of the film, Oliver returns to the United States leaving Elio devastated by the loss of his first love. Elio's father attempts to comfort him and in his final speech, most interpretations of the film conclude, confides that he too is queer. *Name* is the fifth narrative where queeritage is established through a queer parent.

Name bears thematic similarities to the other narratives which engage queeritage. *Name* explores queer temporality, as *The Lost Language of Cranes* and *Man in an Orange Shirt* do, through the connection of its modern-day queer characters with images or allusions to the homoeroticism and homosexuality of classical antiquity. These references are explicit in *Name* as Samuel and Oliver are archaeologists. Like *Bent* and

Transparent, *Name* identifies similarities between queer and Jewish experience in their shared qualities of otherness, history of oppression and the fact that neither identity is necessarily apparent. A key difference between *Name* and similar narratives is the ambiguity of queeritage in the story. Despite this ambiguity, the interpretation of queeritage in *Name* by general audiences, demonstrates that by 2017 audiences were already used to the idea that queer people have existed in families with other queer relatives, and that these relative's histories have often been hidden in the past. Seeing queeritage in the film, for the contemporary audience, was natural and added to the film's poignancy.

Professor Perlman's and his wife, Annella (Anisa Casar), and son Elio summer and spend Christmas at their villa and fruit orchard. From the first time Elio, from his bedroom window, spies Oliver, arriving for the summer he is fascinated by him. Oliver is genial, outgoing, and confident, Elio, moody, introverted, and shy. Elio is intrigued by the casualness of Oliver, a person who can make himself at home anywhere. Elio is captivated by the gold Star of David pendant that Oliver wears on a chain around his neck. Like Tante Gittel's ring in *Transparent*, which Gittel and Ali/Ari wore on a chain as a necklace, the Star of David pendant in *Name* is connected both to Jewish and queer identity but here it is also specifically erotic. When Elio tells Oliver, "Besides my family, you're probably the only other Jew to set foot in this town," Oliver responds, "I'm from a small town in New England. I know what it's like to be the odd Jew out" (10:32 - 10:41). Later in the film, when Elio finally fingers the necklace dangling from Oliver's neck as Oliver massages Elio's feet, they discuss it:

ELIO: I used to have one of these.

OLIVER: You used to?

ELIO: Yeah.

OLIVER: How come you never wear it?

ELIO: My mother says we are Jews of discretion. (01:01:01 - 01:01:13)

After Elio and Oliver make love, Elio returns to wearing his star of David necklace, embracing his Jewish identity in a public way. At the end of the film, Elio and Oliver speak on the telephone:

ELIO: They know about us.

OLIVER: I figured.

ELIO: How?

OLIVER: Well, from the way your dad spoke to me. He made me feel like I was part of the family. Almost like a son-in-law. You're so lucky. My father would have carted me off to a correctional facility. (02:06:02 - 02:06:29)

Over the course of the film Elio overcomes his mother's reticence about his expressing his Jewish identity, in contrast Oliver cannot overcome his father's homophobia.

Elio takes Oliver to the town center to show him around. Oliver quickly acclimates to the town and makes himself at home at a local bar where he plays poker with the men, prompting Elio to ask, "How do you know about this place?" (14:31 - 14:33) The question is unanswered, but presumably is related to Oliver's charismatic mystique. Elio and Oliver are inverses of each other, just as the vowels in their names are the same but their order reversed. *Name* beautifully portrays the long slow tortured feeling of desire that Elio feels for Oliver and the intensity of first love. This is a feeling that we learn at the end of the film that Elio's father never experienced. Is he, like Owen Benjamin in *The Lost Language of Cranes* (another Jewish academic) living an

unfulfilled closeted life? This is not something that surfaces until the end of the film, as there is no reason to suspect that Samuel might be queer. Yet it is Samuel as an archaeologist of classical antiquity who is intimately connected with the homoeroticism of the past and *Name's* complex exploration of queer temporality. Does *Name* also dig up Samuel's past revealing queeritage in the Pearlman family?

When Samuel goes to see an ancient bronze statue, which we are told is one of a set made after the fourth century BC master Praxiteles', that has been recovered from Lake Garda, he asks Oliver to accompany him. Elio tags along. Immediately before departing, Oliver and Elio have a spat, prompted by developments in their respective romantic relations with Chiara (Victoire du Bois) and Marzia (Esther Garrel), two young women in the town. Arriving at the archaeological site, the first object brought ashore is an arm from the statue which, while Oliver holds it, Elio extends his own arm toward, making an offer of a handshake, as he says "truce?" in Italian; Oliver reciprocates using the statue's arm to shake Elio's hand. This connects Elio, the modern-day youth, with the classical youth after whom the statue is modeled.

As they pull ashore the rubber raft bearing the rest of the statue, Samuel describes its history:

> The ship went down in 1827 on the way to Isola del Garda. Gossip has it this statue was a gift from Count Lechi to his lover contralto Adelaide Mallanotte. There are four known sets after the Praxiteles originals. This fellow's at number three. The Emperor Hadrian had a pair, dug up at Tivoli, but one of the more Philistine of Farnese Popes melted them down and had them recast as a particularly voluptuous Venus. (35:25 - 36:07)

As the statue surfaces from the water, we see that it is fully intact except for the missing arm. Its history is apt, the androgyny of the contralto voice, the illicit nature of

the lovers, Hadrian who loved Antinous having owned two of them, all reflect the connection between the statue and the relationship that develops between Elio and Oliver. When the statue, of a young male, bearing a resemblance to Elio is first set on shore, we see Oliver running his fingers over the statue's face, tracing the outline of its lips, his index finger lingering on its mouth (36:11 -36:16). This is exactly what Oliver will do, on another day, when, laying in the grass together on their backs (Elio in the same position as the statue with his right arm raised with a bent elbow above his head, and left arm cut out of the frame), Oliver reaches over, and with his index finger traces Elio's lips as Elio opens his mouth and sits up prompting their first kiss (55:24 - 56:24).

The Lost Language of Cranes, with its statues of Discophorus and Antinuos, linked its modern-day characters with the homoeroticism of antiquity visually. *Man in an Orange Shirt* did so visually, in the scene with its shirtless soldiers gathered in front of the columned facade that Michael and Thomas sit at, and then textually in the scene where Flora discusses Patroclus and Achilles with a pupil. In *Name* this connection is made visually and textually at the same time. This linkage occurs again in the middle of the film when Samuel asks Oliver to help him catalogue the "several hundred color slides of our boxer and others like him [that] arrived yesterday from Berlin" (01:11:01 - 01:11:07). This passing reference to Berlin, calls to mind the flowering of queer culture and relative liberation that took place there, as we have seen portrayed in *Bent* and *Transparent*, during the Weimar period.

The two men discuss the ancient statuary—images of male nude torsos—as Samuel advances the slides while smoking:

SAMUEL: Beautiful, aren't they?

> OLIVER: They're all so incredibly sensual.
>
> SAMUEL: Because these are more Hellenistic than fifth century Athenian. Most likely sculpted under the influence of Praxiteles. Greatest sculptor in antiquity.

This scene of Samuel and Oliver's viewing of the slides is interspersed with shots of Elio finding a note from Oliver, on the desk in his room, which reads, as we hear it narrated in Oliver's voice, "Grow up, I'll see you at midnight." Elio spins and sits down on his bed, sniffs the letter and we hear Elio's voice repeating the words as if divining their meaning, "Grow up, I'll see you at midnight," a communication Elio takes to mean that it is then that a liaison will consummate their relationship. Elio looks at his watch, flops down onto his back on the bed as we hear Samuel's speech resume:

> SAMUEL: Muscles are firm. Look at his stomach for example. Not a straight body in these statues.

At this point we are returned to the room with Samuel and Oliver, where Oliver sits on the couch, one elbow raised above his head, as he supports it with the hand of that arm as Samuel continues:

> SAMUEL: They're all curved. Sometimes impossibly curved and so nonchalant. Hence their ageless ambiguity. As if they're daring you to desire them. (01:11:13 - 01:12:40)

At the end of this last line, 'As if they are daring you to desire them,' Oliver glances at Samuel in a way that conveys perhaps that he is wondering, whether Samuel realizes that Oliver desires his son, or, if Samuel is expressing his own queer desire, for the images, or for Oliver.

Elio and Oliver make love, and then share the time remaining before Oliver is due to depart. This time is passionate and intense. At one point Elio, in the attic of the house,

masturbates, ejaculating into a peach which Oliver, having come to the attic to make love to Elio, discovers. Understanding what has transpired he proceeds to eat it, against Elio's protestations, until Elio, crying, collapses into Oliver's arms.

When Samuel tells Annella, "Oliver has to go to Bergamo for a few days...Research at the university. Then he'll fly home from Linate." It is Annella who asks, "Oh, but what about Elio? I mean maybe it could be nice for the two of them to get away for a couple of days, no? What do you think? (01:43:09 - 01:43:31). Elio joins Oliver. They hike in Bergamo amidst breathtaking waterfalls and wander the streets of Rome together, they make love passionately.

When Oliver departs by train for his flight, Elio, paralyzed with emotion, calls his mother to come and collect him rather than making his own way home. After Elio arrives home and skips dinner, Samuel, sensing Elio's anguish attempts to console him:

> SAMUEL: And when you least expect it, nature has cunning ways of finding our weakest spots. Just remember, I am here. Right now, you may not want to feel anything. Maybe you never wanted to feel anything. And, ah, maybe it's not to me you want to speak about these things but, feel something, you obviously did. Look, you had a beautiful friendship. Maybe more than a friendship. And I envy you. In my place, most parents would hope the whole thing goes away.Pray their sons land on their feet, but, I am not such a parent. We rip out so much of ourselves to be cured of things faster, that we go bankrupt by the age of thirty. And have less to offer, each time we start with someone new. But to make yourself feel nothing, so as not to feel anything... What a waste. Have I spoken out of turn? (*Elio nods no.*) And I'll say one more thing (*Reaching for his glass of scotch.*) It'll clear the air. I may have come close... But I never had what you two have... Something always held me back, or stood in the way. How you live your life is your business. Just remember, our hearts and our bodies are given to us only once, and before you know it, your heart's worn out. And, as for your body, there comes a point when no one looks at it, much less wants to come near it. Right now, there's sorrow, pain. Don't kill it, and with it, the joy you felt.
>
> ELIO: (*Almost whispering.*) Does Mom know?

SAMUEL: I don't think she does. (01:58:55 - 02:02:18)

It is the portion of Samuel's speech 'And I'll say one more thing. It'll clear the air. I may have come close... But I never had what you two have... Something always held me back, or stood in the way. How you live your life is your business,' coupled with the actor's delivery of the lines, which lead us to believe that we are intended to understand that Samuel is queer, but perhaps, never acted upon it. When Elio asks, 'Does Mom know?' it would seem to us that Elio is asking whether or not his mother knows that Samuel is queer. In the novel, Samuel's speech is almost identical, but as the novel is written in the first person, we are privy to Elio's thoughts as his father speaks. Therein, Elio relates:

> I wanted to ask him how he knew. But then how could he not have known? "Does mother know?" I asked. I was going to say *suspect* but corrected myself. " I don't think she does." His voice meant, *But even if she did, I am sure her attitude would be no different than mine.* (Aciman 225)

From this context, it is clear in the novel, that what Elio is asking with the words, 'Does Mother know?' is whether she knows that he and Oliver's relationship was a romantic one and not just a friendship. In both the novel and the film, Elio and Oliver spend three passionate days together by themselves, visiting Bergamo and Rome before Oliver departs for the United States. In the novel, Elio journeys home thereafter, alone on the train, and is then picked up by the groundskeeper, Anchise (played in the film by Antonio Rimoldi), at the station. In the film, a distraught Elio calls his mother from a pay phone at the train station and has her come and fetch him as he weeps; there is no way that she cannot intuit what has transpired between Elio and Oliver.

The novel creates its own ambiguity about Samuel's possible queerness when, in the paragraphs which follow, Elio muses:

> We said good night. On my way upstairs I vowed to ask him about his life. We'd all heard about his women when he was young, but I'd never even had an inkling of anything else. Was my father someone else? And if he was someone else, who was I? (225)

André Aciman, the author of the novel, asserts that it was not his intention in the novel for Samuel to be perceived of as queer. At a 2019 event promoting the novel's sequel, *Find Me*, with Aciman and Michael Stuhlbarg (the actor who played Samuel) Aciman discussed the film's interpretation of Samuel's speech:

> [W]hen I saw the film, the speech was exactly, I think almost exactly, ninety-five percent as it is in the book, so James Ivory didn't change anything. But the language was the same, however the inflection was slightly different, and it was, when I wrote the scene it was actually a very easy scene to write, for me, because I was channeling my father, and that was easy, I was just basically quoting him from memory, almost. But when you [Stuhlbarg] gave the scene, spoke the scene, it was extremely moving, and I think the camera work was also fantastic because it focused on you and on him and on his reaction to you and so on, so it was absolutely fantastic. And then there comes this moment, when, in the book, the father says, "You know I could've had what you had, but it never happened and blah, blah, blah, and that was it. But when you say it, it, it signaled to everybody in the audience something far different. It said, I could have had a relationship with a man, I almost did, it never happened, and I regret it. That was the message that came from you and that's how everybody now interprets the book and I always say "No, that's not how I wrote it." It doesn't matter, the language is exactly the same, it's just that the inflection is different[19]. ("Author André Aciman" 4:20 - 5:44)

Later, in response to an audience member's comment, Aciman elaborated:

> [I]t's amazing what the audience does...an audience gives you something that you never knew you had put in the book, and it's there, except you're not seeing it because you, you're worried about commas and that sort of thing. And what is the editor going to say is he going to mind the fact that

[19] My transcriptions of this video are verbatim except for some repeated words, and vocal fillers which have been omitted for clarity.

> there is a peach scene, or not, should I cut it, or not, or should I show him this? I mean, this is where your mind is and at the same time there are very emotive moments, that somehow, you kind of, yeah, yeah, I wrote it, fine, but you don't focus on it as much as an audience can. And you see it in the reaction when people go to the movie, you go to see the movie, in a movie theater, ah, you can hear people sniveling all around you...and I can hear everybody sniveling, and I'm saying, "Why is everybody crying?" And people get very upset with me because they don't understand, "How could you ask that question?" Because my mind was not altogether there. I was somewhere else, I was just worried about finishing this book, getting the father's speech, and moving on. And, um, and, of course, the father's speech comes at the very end of the movie which is exactly how it should have been. (9:39 - 10:54)

It is clear that in 2017 audiences were prepared to interpret Samuel's speech to Elio as his own coming out. This is the first dramatic narrative in which queeritage was not a conscious choice on the part of the author of the dramatic narrative's source. Rather it was a result of the director and the actor's choices in the dramatic adaptation, choices which still did not make queeritage explicit. More important, the fact that *Name's* audiences understood queeritage to be what was evoked in Samuel's monologue speaks to the societal shift taking place in which audiences no longer assume that a queer person is necessarily the only queer person in their biological family..

Chapter VI.

Queeritage and its Descendants

This chapter discusses recent iterations of queeritage in dramatic narratives. It is, of course, difficult to define the zeitgeist of a contemporary moment. What may prove to be defining about this moment for queer people is the uncertainty brought about by the election of a president who would appoint justices to the Supreme Court who might roll back recent progress toward greater enfranchisement. Despite political instability, the COVID-19 pandemic, and an attempted coup of the federal government the theme of queeritage continues to be explored in dramatic narratives. Moreover, this period found it being disseminated in stories about families as disparate as Mexican Americans in contemporary Boyle Heights, Los Angeles; rural South Carolinians in the 1970s; and Montana ranchers in the 1920s.

Vida (2018 - 2020).

Vida is a television series created by Tanya Saracho. It was inspired by the short story "Pour Vida" by Richard Villegas, Jr. who served as one of the producers of the series. *Vida* aired on the premium cable network Starz and ran for three seasons from 2018 - 2010. It is the first narrative that explores queeritage between a mother and a daughter. It is also the first narrative to explore the theme in a non-white family. Saracho was also the showrunner for the series. She exercised complete creative control, a still rare position in mainstream American English language television for those identifying as Queer and Latinx. In a case study of the series, published in the *International Journal of*

Communication, María-José Higueras-Ruiz et al, discuss, "the limited inclusion of Latinx professionals in the audiovisual industry," and argues that "these professionals find more opportunities thanks to premium cable channels [such as Starz] and streaming platforms, which allow for better representation of Latinxs on television." *Vida* was the recipient of the 2019 GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Comedy Series winning over nine other nominees including *Will & Grace*.

Vida tells the story of the Mexican American Hernandez sisters, Emma (Mishel Prada), and Lyn (Melissa Barrera) who return to their childhood neighborhood of Boyle Heights, Los Angeles after the death of their mother, Vidalia (Rose Portillo). It is revealed that, in the final two years of her life, Vidalia, also called "Vida" was married to another woman, Eddy (Ser Anzoategui), and that Emma is also queer. *Vida* is the seventh narrative in which queeritage is established due to a queer parent and child and the first in which the parent is the biological mother of a woman.

The Hernandez sisters could not be more different, one queer, one straight, one a successful lawyer, living in Chicago, the other a ne'er-do-well hipster drifting around California. Estranged from each other, their mother's death has thrown them together and forced them to revisit their roots in the Mexican American neighborhood of their childhood. Whether they will be able to work with each other and their mother's widow Eddy to make a success of the bar that has been left to all three, along with its debts, or whether they will sell the property, contributing to the gentrification of the neighborhood, is the question that the series revolves around. Over the course of twenty-two episodes, the series explores many issues relating to Los Angeles Mexican American, female and

queer identities, including predatory mortgages and gentrification, queer bashing, stereotypes, and what should be done about each of these issues.

Vida also explores queer temporality and, like *Transparent,* does so by engaging magical realism. Just as *Transparent*'s queer Ali/Ari is haunted by her queer great aunt Gittel, *Vida*'s Emma is haunted by her queer mother Vidalia who appears to her in the form of a little girl in a pink dress.

While the script makes clear in the series' first episode that Vida was queer, we are not certain that Emma is, until the third episode when she is shown having fetishistic sex on a hookup with someone she has met on a dating app. Like Adam in *Man in an Orange Shirt*, who we first see having sex under similar circumstances, Emma is incapable of intimate conversation with her lovers and hurries home after sex. Once Emma understands her family's queeritage she, like Alison in *Fun Home,* reconsiders her childhood and makes peace with her queer parent. After she sees her sister's reaction to their mother being queer, Emma is able to come out to her bringing them closer together. Over the course of the series, after learning about her family's queeritage, Emma, like Adam, develops the ability to risk emotional intimacy with her partners.

Vidalia's queerness is gradually revealed over the course of the first episode, Emma's over three. As soon as Emma, arrives at her mother's house in Episode 1 and finds her sister waiting there for her, along with another person, we know that something is up:

> EMMA: (*After greeting Lyn at the door and entering the dining room she sees Eddy*.) Hello.
>
> EDDY: Hi I'm Eddy.

> LYN: (*Overlapping*.) Emma, this is Eddy. (*Awkwardly*.) Um, she's the one that... Uh, she helped mami run the bar and was, like, her roommate.
>
> EMMA I'm sorry. Vidalia had a "roommate?"
>
> EDDY: Hey, it's so good to finally meet you. I mean not under these circumstances, pero... Yeah. I'd gotten a chance to meet Lyn here when she visited.
>
> EMMA: Oh, is that right?
>
> EDDY: Yeah, Pero tú me faltabas. Your amá wouldn't shut up about you.
>
> EMMA: I doubt that.
>
> EDDY: So... We're all set for the funeral. It's gonna be at Evergreen of course. Afterwards we're all gonna come back here for the reception downstairs en el bar. That's what made the most sense. Everybody knew your ma from La Chinita so...
>
> EMMA: You made that decision? (04:25 - 05:26)

Between Eddy's masculine presenting appearance and her having made the funeral arrangements, it is easy to surmise that Eddy was not merely, as Lyn describes, Vidalia's "roommate." When left alone, Emma and Lyn are still processing who Eddy was to their mother:

> EMMA: Who the hell's that person?
>
> LYN: She just told you.
>
> EMMA: Yeah, she just told me... because I can't count on you to tell me shit. Like, by the way, Vidalia has a 'roommate.'
>
> LYN: When exactly am I supposed to give you all these roommate updates? All those times you never call me? (06:16 - 06:31)

Eddy’s visible bereavement at the funeral and the reception thereafter makes it clear, if unstated, that she was Vidalia's romantic partner, but this is not yet made explicit. During the reception Lyn re-connects with her old flame from the neighborhood, Johnny (Carlos Miranda). Lyn and Johnny have fast, passionate, and surreptitious sex on the

outdoor steps leading to the cellar while his fiancée, Karla (Erika Soto), who is pregnant with his child, is inside the bar. When Lyn refers to Karla as Johnny's "baby mama," he takes offense and the two quarrel:

> LYN: Don't play the games. Come on. we can both be grown-ups about this. You came here looking to see me. And you found me-
>
> JOHNNY: You still think everything is all about you, don't you? I came because Eddy is good people and her wife just died. That's why I came.
>
> LYN: Her What? (16:34 - 16:56)

Lyn immediately goes and finding Emma smoking in front of the bar, interrupts her conversation with, Nelson (Luis Bordonada), a local real estate developer who is the major force behind the neighborhood's gentrification, and tells her "I think we might need to talk" (18:28 - 18:30). We are not privy to the talk that Lyn and Emma have, but back at the apartment, Emma confronts Eddy:

> EMMA: How long?
>
> EDDY: Full-on married? Just two years.
>
> EMMA: That fucking hypocrite!
>
> EDDY: No, we're not going to say filthy things about your Amá, Okay?
>
> EMMA: (*To Lyn.*) Wait a minute... You knew, didn't you?
>
> LYN: I didn't know. But I didn't not... know. You know what I mean?
>
> EMMA: Fucking Lyn!
>
> LYN: Emma, I mean I come home and mami's got a random roommate. It was a little weird. I just figured, it wasn't any of my business, you know? (18:31 - 19:00)

Here, Lyn's explanation, that she knew but didn't know, captures the reaction that is so often the case when one has surmised that a family member is queer but simply

hasn't processed that reality. For Emma, on the other hand, this news is as much of a shock as it was for *Fun Home*'s Alison and, like her, doubly so since she is also queer.

It takes longer in the series for it to become clear that Emma is queer. Emma learns that her mother's will instructs that the building and the bar are to be left to Emma, Lyn and Eddy in equal shares. All three of them must determine what is to be done with it. Upon learning this, Emma storms out of the house with Lyn in tow and the two, now in the street discuss what just transpired:

> LYN: I'm so not mentally prepared to be dealing with adult shit like a will.
>
> EMMA: This whole time that liar was married... and to a woman. What a fucking cunt.
>
> LYN: Hey, hey! I... I'm sorry but you're going to have to stop being such an unbelievable bitch about mami.
>
> EMMA: Okay listen to this, Vidalia has left us the building. But we have to split it three ways.
>
> LYN: Three ways? With the wife?
>
> EMMA: Yeah.
>
> LYN: I mean... I guess that makes sense.
>
> EMMA: Over my dead body. I'll take that carpet muncher to all the courts. before I-
>
> LYN: Emma-
>
> EMMA: -let that happen.
>
> LYN: You're sounding really homophobic right now.
>
> EMMA: Please understand that I give zero fucks that Vidalia was batting for the tortilleras. It's not even about that... It's about... What a hypocrite!
>
> LYN: I don't understand. Why, "a hypocrite?" (19:47 - 20:44)

Emma's sexuality is not revealed here. In Episode 1, Cruz (Maria-Elena Yaas), a young woman, a few years older than Emma pays her condolences to Emma at the reception, the camera lingers on the way in which she clasps Emma's hand when saying goodbye. In Episode 2, Cruz runs into Emma at a local, now gentrified, panederia and sits down with her, having taken it upon herself to buy her a sweet as she used to when they were children. Cruz's attentiveness and the way in which now Emma, clasps Cruz's hand when they part intimate or indicate that there is a romantic attraction between them. However, the fact that Emma is queer is not made explicit until Episode 3 which opens with Emma having fetishistic and anonymous sex with, Sam (Michelle Badillo), a young non-binary, or masculine presenting woman she has met online. Afterwards, a still topless Sam, sitting up in bed, tries to engage Emma—who is already putting on her coat—in conversation. Sam sweetly tells Emma about a band that she likes:

> SAM: They're beyond amazing. they were substitute teachers, like basically, last year, and now they're playing Coachella.
>
> EMMA: Yeah, I haven't heard of them yet.
>
> SAM: Do you want me to share their playlist with you? I mean if you don't mind me knowing your profile name and stuff."
>
> EMMA: No need. Got it. (*She snaps a picture of the playlist on Sam's laptop with the phone*.) Got it. (*Responding to Sam's dejected look.*) thanks for the recommendation... and everything else.
>
> SAM: (*Flatly*) I hope it did the trick for you. (*Emma awkwardly smiles, nods yes, turns and leaves*). (01:59 - 02:32)

Like Adam, Emma is portrayed as being incapable of emotional intimacy. Unlike Adam, she does not seem to be tormented, feeling dirty after these liaisons; she does not run home to shower, she just runs home. When she arrives home, Lyn asks her where she has been. Emma responds by handing her phone, open to the picture of Sam's profile on

the dating application "Eros Meet," to Lyn. As Emma awaits a response to this information, Lyn looks up with an excited surprised expression from the phone and finally says, beaming:

> LYN: I knew it.
>
> EMMA: Okay.
>
> LYN: I totally knew it.
>
> EMMA: Then, why didn’t you say anything?
>
> LYN: Why didn't you say anything?
>
> EMMA: When do we ever say anything?
>
> LYN: God, that's so true. That's sad, we should say stuff. (*After an awkward silence*.) You know, for a while, I was a little fluid myself. I mean, who isn't, right? I guess it runs in the family.
>
> EMMA: Don't.
>
> LYN: Mm... I'm just saying... I support any way you want to identify.
>
> EMMA: I don't identify as anything. I’m just me.
>
> LYN: No, I hear you. I'm just saying... Your sister supports you. So, did you have fun tonight? Are you going to see that Sam again?
>
> EMMA: I don't do that.
>
> LYN: You don't do what?
>
> EMMA: See people again.
>
> LYN: See, that's sad, too. (1/3 6:49 -

It is now patently clear that queeritage is explored in this narrative as is one of its effects. Emma only feels comfortable to reveal her own sexual orientation to her sister after seeing the relaxed way in which her sister dealt with learning about their mother's. As Lyn offers, 'it runs in the family.' It is not until the following episode that we come to understand why Emma, unlike Lyn, was so angry upon learning that her mother was

queer. This is revealed in Episode 4, when Emma goes out dancing with Cruz and a group of her queer friends at a popular neighborhood bar and gets drunk:

> CRUZ: You're having a good time, huh? See? Things aren't so bad around here.
>
> EMMA: Hey... You think that I don't like it here? That I hate where I grew up?
>
> CRUZ: Yeah, that's what I've deduced from all the years you've stayed away, yeah.
>
> EMMA: I never wanted to leave. Vidalia sent me away. Do you know that? One day she found me with Lucy, this little girl that lived in the building... and we were... ah... I don't know, touching, I guess...ah... kissing. And we were, like, 11, and Vida freaked the fuck out, and then I went to live with abuelita in South Texas.
>
> CRUZ: You never told me that.
>
> EMMA: No, because that's the kind of shit I had to put together later... After I figured out why she sent me back that second time. That time she found fucking poems and journal entries. Why the fuck did I ever keep a journal? It was just so stupid. They were all about you. And there went Vida freaking the fuck out again. By then, it was undeniable what she was freaking out about.
>
> CRUZ: Emma, bebita, I'm so sorry.
>
> EMMA: Why sorry? Because that pinche hypocrite was still in the closet back then? Had to work out her own fucking gay shame by sending me away? Don't be. I lived happily ever after.
>
> CRUZ: Hey. (21:18 - 23:01)

Emma goes home with Cruz and the two begin to make out, Emma attempts, in her characteristic manner, to be the person in control. When Cruz resists and inserts her finger into Emma's mouth, Emma falls to the floor and has what seems to be an anxiety attack. Cruz offers her water and Emma returns home. Despite how the evening ends, queeritage is portrayed as making it possible for Emma to confide in Cruz, albeit drunkenly, and to risk emotional intimacy by going home with her.

In Episode 6, Emma continues to struggle with the meaning of her family's queeritage and with intimacy. She goes to Cruz's house after having ignored her texts for some time. She spends the night and when she wakes up in Cruz's arms, she says, "I can't believe I fell asleep. I never fall asleep." Cruz responds, "Well, you did, and it was so peaceful" (07:51 - 08:00). Emma prepares to leave and prepare the bar for a perspective buyer. Cruz asks her:

> CRUZ: So you're still thinking of getting rid of the building?
>
> EMMA: Yeah, of course. I think I found this buyer who will let us break even so that we don't have to sell the building at a loss.
>
> CRUZ: And you're not feeling conflicted at all about selling? I mean, that building is sort of your legacy, Emma. It's what your family built.
>
> EMMA: What exactly did my family build? It's a fucking dive bar.
>
> CRUZ: It's not just a dive bar. It's the only place in the neighborhood where mujeres like me, girls like us can go.
>
> EMMA: Please, a few days ago, you and your squad of queers were turning up at a neighborhood place. I don't want to hear it.
>
> CRUZ: They tolerate us, that's about it. I know when I walk into your mom's bar I feel safe.
>
> EMMA: It's so insane to me that the woman who sent me away for being who she turned out to be... It's crazy that she made the bar into what it is. It doesn't even compute.
>
> CRUZ: I know. But she did it. And now you can't take that away from us.
>
> EMMA: You see this is exactly why I don't do the whole 'morning after thing,' because then people think they have a right to say what you can and can't do.
>
> CRUZ: What people? I'm not just 'people.'
>
> EMMA: Cruz, don't get it twisted, okay? Any of this.
>
> CRUZ: I know you want to do that thing where you take off, but you're not doing that. (*As Emma turns to leave.*) Emma, hold up, hold up. I

> overstepped. I'm sorry. Don't leave in a huff. Please. Just... (*Embracing Emma's face in her hands.*) Hey. (*Now kissing Emma.*) Mmm... Okay... See, that's better, right? Okay. It was lovely seeing you. (*Opening the door for Emma*.) I hope we do it again. (*Emma exits, smiling.*) (08:25 -10:55)

After arguing with Emma about the future of the bar, Eddy and a group of queer women leave what was Vida's bar and go to a straight neighborhood bar. There a man, Rocky, tries to come on to one of the women in the group, Femme (Vanessa Giselle). When he ignores her repeated instructions to stop, Eddy comes to her defense. Later in the restroom the man brutally assaults Eddy, knocking her unconscious by smashing a bottle over her head and repeatedly kicking her on the floor. Eddy winds up in the hospital and when Emma and Lyn are informed by Eddy's friends that they were unable to see her. Emma urgently goes to the nurse's desk and says, "Excuse me. Hey, excuse me, hello. We need to see Edwina Martinez." The nurse tell's them that it is "family only" and Lyn interjects, "She's our stepmother. You can check that," and thus, Emma tacitly accepts that indeed Eddy is her stepmother.

Later that night, in their now empty bar, Lyn and Emma discuss its future:

> LYN: I'm confused. You have no love for this place, I don't understand.
>
> EMMA: Don't say I don't love this place. (*Through tears.*) I love this place. I learned to walk on these floors. I have my first memories of abuelo behind that barra... of mama singing to us from the stage. Don't you say I don't love this place. What she made of it. I looked at her broken wife today and I thought, 'God, that must've taken guts walking around this neighborhood together.'
>
> LYN: Emma, what do you want to do with this place.
>
> EMMA: The smart thing to do is to sell it.
>
> LYN: I didn't ask what the smart thing to do was. I asked what you wish you could do with it.
>
> EMMA: I wish we could do it right. But better.

LYN: Then why don't we? I'm serious. Why don't we?

In this episode, Emma, as she makes peace with the fact that her mother was queer, allows herself to be emotionally vulnerable with a romantic partner.

As with *Fun Home*'s Alison, learning that her parent was queer prompts Emma to grapple with that parent's past statements and actions surrounding their child's queerness. In Season 2 Episode 6, Lyn and Emma borrow Eddy's car; Lyn drives and Emma flips through Eddy's CD Album:

> EMMA: These are all my CD's from, like, high school. Le Tigre, M.I.A, Mercedes Sosa... Tracy Chapman, "Fast Car." I made some of these.
>
> LYN: How did we not know about you with that ultra-rainbow flag music?
>
> EMMA: Oh, Vida knew. She banned most of this shit from the house... and then had the gall to keep it and play it in her wife's car. Bitch. (*She inserts a CD in the car's player.*)
>
> LYN: Think of it as a time capsule she kept of you. (*Lumidee's "Never Leave You (Uh Oh)" plays as Lyn and then Emma sing along.*) (04:38 - 5:52)

When Don Fulgencio, an elderly tenant in their building dies, Lyn finds a locket with Vidalia's picture in it in his apartment and believes this is evidence, that he might have had an affair with their mother. The sisters discuss this in terms of female sexuality and its relationship to their mother's queerness informing us about the extent to which they have internalized, what Michael Bronski describes as, homosexuality in Western societies...com[ing] to symbolize intense and forbidden pleasure" (*Pleasure* 26):

> EMMA: How much older than Vida was he? Twenty-something years? That's not a crazy number of years.
>
> LYN: You know what's weird about this thing though? It was like mami wanted us to know.

EMMA: What, about her puteria?

LYN: Emma, shut up! Don't speak of the dead like that!

EMMA: It's true. What? You think we left, and she all of a sudden realized she was a lesbo? I bet that bitch was out there creeping the whole time we were kids. Remember that prayer circle with all the ladies?

LYN: Yeah.

EMMA: I bet those prayer beads weren't the only beads being passed around.

LYN: Emma!

EMMA: (*Laughing.*) I'm just saying, that woman was sketchy as fuck.

LYN: Like mother, like daughters.

EMMA: Ah, what can I say we got the puta in the blood.

Vida is about identity, legacy, and family. It is about what is inherited from whom, and consequently what one owes to their family, their community and themselves. Throughout the series the immature Lyn is always letting her older sister down. She fails to do what she says she will, becomes distracted by her relationships with men, and runs up bills on other people's credit cards. In what Emma views as a final betrayal, Lyn pursues a relationship with their father, Victor (Jesse Borrego). Their mother's queerness is not the only thing that she kept a secret from her daughters. She did not disclose the reason that their father left, as well as the cause of their separation, and led them to believe that he is deceased. Lyn discovers that their father, Victor, is living in Los Angeles. As Lyn discovers more information, she finds that he is now the minister of a homophobic evangelical congregation. Furthermore, Emma learns that as her parents never divorced and are still married and consequently, her father intends to take over the property. She also discovers, from police photographs, that her mother was beaten by her

father. In the series' final episode, Season 3, Episode 6 Emma confronts her father at his church.

> VICTOR: And then I look to your bar and what people do I see? It's clear the perverted spirit of homosexuality that your mother left is still a curse on the place.
>
> EMMA: Oh, not just my mother, Victor. Or did Lyn not tell you? That your daughter, (*raising her voice and announcing it for the benefit of the whole congregation.*) la hija del pastor is a queer! Que soy marimacha. Que soy marimacha.
>
> LYN: Em...
>
> EMMA: But do they also know that their pastor is a deadbeat father who beat his wife? I have a whole photo album of your handiwork to show off in court.
>
> VICTOR: You are your mother's daughter.
>
> EMMA: Yes, I am.

Victor, now speaking in Spanish, calls upon the congregation to pray for his daughter as the congregants gather around Emma encircling her, he asks that the holy spirit intercedes "por su lesbianismo, y su homosexualidad..." and as Lyn approaches Emma:

> LYN: you should go home. I'll handle this I promise. It's Okay, go. (*Emma leaves.*) (15:41 - 17:13)

Throughout the series Lyn has gone to speak with the long-time building resident and spiritual advisor, Doña Lupe. She does so again when Emma, feeling betrayed by Lyn's relationship with their father, stops speaking to her:

> DOÑA LUPE: Emma knew in her gut that your father was no good because it's part of her truth.
>
> LYN: How can there not be just one single truth for everybody?

DOÑA LUPE: Your papá caused real harm for Emma. She was the reason that your mami finally got rid of your father. Her espíritu recognizes that.

LYN: Okay, no more fortune cookie advice. If you have chisme, now's the time to say it.

DOÑA LUPE: (*Turning as if speaking to someone only she can see.*) No. ¿Estas segura?

LYN: Who are you...

DOÑA LUPE: I hadn't wanted to say anything because I didn't know if it would help anyone knowing, but... that last time that Victor beat your mami up, it was because he caught Emma... naked... and playing house with a little neighbor girl. Pero par las pulgas de tu papá... it was a big blow-up. The whole building heard it. Vidalia defended her, of course, y le fue mal. After that, Vidalia called the police and she sent Emma away to protect her.

LYN: Oh my God, poor Emma. All this time thinking that mami just didn't...

DOÑA LUPE: I once told you, when you came back and I read your cards... that your big love is, and always will be here.

Lyn attempts to talk to Emma in the street outside the bar and explain to her what she has learned about why their mother had sent Emma away as a child:

LYN: I should have listened to you because you're my sister. You're my family.

EMMA: Don't! I never belonged to this fucking family. Not as a daughter, not as a sister, I've always been fucking disposable.

LYN: No, Emma, that's not true

EMMA: Lyn, will you just fuck off?

LYN: Mami sent you away because of him, to protect you. Doña Lupe said Victor found you... doing stuff... with that neighbor girl. And things got bad. Those pictures that you saw... That happened when she tried to defend you. She called the cops on him and sent you to abuela's to protect you from him... In case he ever decided to come back. But he never did. Do you see?

LYN: Please don't give up on me Emma. Please don't give up on me. You're the only one that's never given up on me. Not when you were

> trying to get me to understand pre-calculus and not since we opened this place. Even when I fuck up, you've never given up on me. So please, please, don't give up on me now. 'Cause you... you're all I have. (*Their conversation is disturbed by the noise of two unruly bar patrons fighting on the corner.*)
>
> EMMA: I better go check on that. (*She turns and walks away from the weeping Lyn, then stops, turns her head to look back at her.*) Are you coming? (49:32 - 51:38)

Vida explores queeritage within the context of gentrification. A parallel is established between the threat of the erasure of ethnic history in a neighborhood and queer history within a family, dramatizing the struggle against external and internal homogenization. Just as the danger of Mexican American erasure caused by the gentrification of modern-day Boyle Heights resonates with the erasure of pre-American Mexican history of California, so too may we imagine that the generation of Vida's mother was not the only one in the family in which a queer heritage was hidden. Queeritage profoundly effects Emma and Lyn, allowing them to grow closer over the course of the series. After the discovery of queeritage, Emma can come out to Lyn. After coming out, Emma can grow emotionally in her relationships. Lyn discovers and provides information to Emma about their mother that makes it possible for Emma to reconcile with Vida and for Emma to be able to accept Lyn's apology and embrace her. Emma realized that, contrary to what she has felt her entire life, both 'as a daughter' and 'as a sister,' she does indeed, 'belong to this family.'

Uncle Frank (2020).

Uncle Frank, written and directed by Alan Ball, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January of 2020, and was released on Amazon Video that November. It is the story of, Frank Bledsoe (Paul Bettany), a middle-aged college professor from Creekville,

a small town in South Carolina, and the difficulties he encounters being a queer man from an ultra-conservative, religious, rural southern family. At the end of the film, we learn that Frank's homophobic father, Daddy Mac (Stephen Root), had an uncle, Jasper, who was queer, thus making *Uncle Frank,* the third narrative after *Bent*, and *Will & Grace*, which explores queeritage through a queer uncle, albeit here, the uncle is a great-uncle.

On Daddy Mac Bledsoe's birthday, his extended family, including eldest son Frank, has gathered at his home in Creekville, South Carolina. Teenaged Beth (Sophia Lillis), like her Uncle Frank, is an outsider in her parochial family. Frank encourages Beth to escape the small town, go to college and to be whoever she wants to be. She enrolls at NYU where Frank is an English professor. Frank, although not out to his South Carolina family, is queer and has been living with his partner, Wally (Peter Macdissi), for a decade. Shortly after Beth learns this, news arrives that Daddy Mac has died and Frank and Beth drive from New York to Creekville for the funeral. Wally, concerned for recovering-alcoholic Frank's well-being, follows along in a separate car. Frank is haunted by the past, by the relationship he had with another sixteen-year-old schoolboy, Sam (Michael Perez). Their history is revealed over the course of the film through a series of flashbacks. In these, we see their first kiss while swimming together at an idyllic lake, learn that Daddy Mac discovered the two of them in bed and forbade Frank from seeing Sam again, threatening that he would kill them.

When Frank next saw Sam he renounced their relationship and parroted his father's homophobic tirade. Thereafter, Sam took his own life drowning himself in the lake. Frank found Sam's dead body floating and pulled it ashore. Tragically Sam had left

a note for Frank, which Frank read too late to intervene. Frank's guilt over Sam's death is portrayed as contributing to his alcoholism[20].

At the reading of Daddy Mac's will, it is revealed that Frank has been disinherited because he is queer. Frank, who since leaving New York has been drinking again, gets very drunk and takes off for the lake. Meanwhile, a distraught Beth and Wally search for Frank and, finding only his clothes in a pile at the edge of the lake's dock, assume the worst. When Frank returns to the hotel room he quarrels with Wally and punches Wally in the face before running off again. Wally and Beth pursue him and find him crying at the grave of Sam. There, Wally and a now sobering up Frank reconcile. Beth convinces, the now outed, Frank to introduce Wally to the family. Frank's mother, Mawmaw, reveals the family's queeritage when she tells Frank that his great-uncle Jasper, (Daddy Mac's uncle) was gay. Everyone in the family accepts Wally and sits together in the back yard as we hear Beth's final monologue about everyone being just where they belonged.

Uncle Frank explores alternative temporalities. It is framed as a recollection. Two narrated monologues, during the extended familial scenes which start and end the film, are delivered by Frank's niece Beth. It is unclear how much time has passed since the events depicted and Beth's recollection of them. Who is she speaking to? Is this her memoir? Beth, whom we are introduced to as a teenager in high school and then see entering college, remembers her Uncle Frank, a man whom she learned was queer, at this pivotal time of intellectual and sexual maturation in her life. Frank is also remembering his teenage life. Frank is haunted by the memory of his first love, a boy named Sam

[20] Often in dramatic narratives, something as complex as alcohol addiction is portrayed as simply being caused by traumatic events, as it is here for Frank in *Uncle Frank,* or by an external stressor, as is the case for Rose in *The Power of the Dog*.

Lassiter. Beth is straight; she remembers being a teenager and the profound positive effect that her queer Uncle Frank had on her life. Frank is queer and remembers his queer teenage life and its tribulations still unaware until the end of the film that he had had a queer great-uncle.

Hearing that its protagonist had a queer great-uncle, might, at first glance, appear to be queeritage tacked on at the end, in much the same way as it is in *Call Me By Your Name*. But the knowledge of who is and who is not queer has been central to *Uncle Frank* and queeritage figures largely in the storytelling. As in every family there have been and will be queer people in this one. At film's end the viewer realizes that *Uncle Frank* has contrasted the way in which Beth, an outsider, is aided by her uncle Frank, with how Frank as a teenager was left to fend for himself in a much more hostile environment. *Uncle Frank* also explores the dynamic of what keeps Frank in the closet to his family. Once Frank is outed by the reading of his father's will, as Daddy Mac requested at his wake, with all the family present, a series of events are set in motion which, contrary to Daddy Mac's intention of disinheriting Frank, provides him with a different sort of inheritance by informing him of his family's queer legacy and ensuring that going forward everyone will be aware of it.

Unlike the other characters who were in academia, who remained in the closet to their families until middle age (Owen in *The Lost Language of Cranes,* Bruce in *Fun* Home, Maura in *Transparent*, and Samuel in *Call Me By Your Name*), Frank is, outside of his family, living a queer life openly. *Uncle Frank* begins in 1969, the year of the Stonewall Uprising, but Creekville, South Carolina is not New York's Greenwich Village, where Frank now lives. Like Alison in *Fun* Home, who connects with her father

intellectually taking his high school English class and being one of the only students who reads the books, teenaged Beth in *Uncle Frank* reads what Frank recommends to her. The film opens with scenes of patriarchal gender role heteronormativity, all the women prepare food in the kitchen while all the men watch the football game in the living room, but both Frank and Beth are portrayed as not fitting into these stereotypes. We are introduced to Frank—who sits apart from either group—reading on the screened-in porch, by his niece, Beth. She joins him there, as we hear Beth's first narration, which is interspersed with their live dialogue:

> BETH: (*Narrating.*) I was always happy when my Uncle Frank came for one of his rare visits.
>
> FRANK: (*Noticing Beth on the porch.*) Sit down.
>
> BETH: (*Narrating.*) Nobody else in my family ever seemed interested in me.
>
> FRANK: You ever read *Madame Bovary*?
>
> BETH: No, I haven't.
>
> BETH: (*Narrating.*) But Uncle Frank was different. He was a college professor and he lived in New York City. He used aftershave. His fingernails were always clipped. And he wore a gold chain underneath his shirt. I could listen to him talk all day. He was the only adult I knew who looked me in the eye, who was curious about what I had to say and who liked to make me laugh. And in the summer of 1969, when I was fourteen, that was exhilarating. (03:55 - 04:48)

The men and women finally gather to watch Daddy Mac open his birthday presents. As Frank's younger brother, Mike (Steve Zahn), hands Daddy Mac another gift to open, Frank's sister-in-law, Kitty (Judy Greer), comments, "Well, that one is wrapped up so nice, it must be from Frank" (05:23 - 05:27). It is immediately clear from Daddy

Mac's dismissal of the gift, a shoe polishing machine, and the praise he lavishes on Mike's, a mini-screwdriver eyeglass repair kit, that he harbors an antipathy to Frank.

As Beth observes about her grandfather's treatment of her Uncle Frank in her narration, picking up where it had left off:

> I never knew why Daddy Mac was so mean to Uncle Frank, or why nobody else ever said anything about it. I might understand if Uncle Frank was selfish, or rude, or snobby, but he wasn't. He was smart and funny and considerate. He was the kind of person I wanted to be. But he was the one Daddy Mac picked on and belittled in front of everybody. Uncle Frank was good at hiding how much it hurt him, but I could see it. (06:39 - 07:14)

The connection that Beth feels with Frank is a mutual one. He is her confidante and offers her help and advice:

> BETH: Uncle Frank, what's it like living in New York City?
>
> FRANK: Oh, I love it. See, once you get out of a town like Creekville, not only do you see how small your world was you also see how much bigger it could become in ways you never even thought possible...How are your grades, Betty?
>
> BETH: All As.
>
> FRANK: All As huh? No Bs?
>
> BETH: Mm, no.
>
> FRANK: Good. Keep that up. Ace your SAT. You could get a scholarship to just about anywhere you want to go.
>
> BETH: Oh. Probably just go to SC State like most of my class.
>
> FRANK: Oh, come on, now. You gonna be the person you decide to be, or are you gonna be the person everyone else tells you you are? 'Cause you get to choose. You do.
>
> BETH: I wish I wasn't named Betty. It's a lady name and I'm only fourteen.
>
> FRANK: So change it.

BETH: I can't just change my name.

FRANK: You can do anything you want. What about 'Liz?'...No? 'Liza?' 'Betsy?'

BETH: Uh, maybe 'Beth?'

FRANK: Yeah, I like 'Beth.' And there are so many things a Beth can accomplish besides being a majorette.

BETH: My cousin Marsha's a majorette.

FRANK: Yes, she is, and please don't do what your idiot cousin Marsha did. She got herself pregnant and now she's gonna have to marry that imbecilic young man.

BETH: (*Wide-eyed.*) Marsha's pregnant?

FRANK: Shh! (*After a long pause.*) If you ever need me to pretend to be your father so you can get birth control, I will be more than happy to do that. Look at me. And if you do find yourself getting knocked up, you call me first, before you talk to anyone else in this family.

BETH: I promise.

FRANK: Okay. You want me to leave *Madame Bovary* for you?

BETH: Oh, that would be great. Thank you. (07:21 - 10:19)

Uncle Frank illustrates the elaborate subterfuges many queer people were, and are, forced to undertake to keep their queerness secret from their families. In 1973, we find Beth matriculating at NYU. When Frank has Beth and her parents (his brother Mike and sister-in-law Kitty), who are presumably in town to drop Beth off at school, to dinner at his Greenwich Village apartment, he pretends that his platonic friend, Charlotte (Britt Rentschler), is his girlfriend. He also indicates that she is responsible for the Middle Eastern food that is served, which was prepared by Frank's partner, Wally, who is from Saudi Arabia. Kitty, who is excitedly enjoying, this what for her is, exotic food, comments, "Charlotte, it's so good to meet you. I have to say that no one in Frank's family has ever even heard of you." Charlotte's reply, "I know. It's crazy right? Especially

since we've been together almost five years," it prompts Kitty to say, in surprise, "Shut your mouth." Emphatically echoing this, Frank yells from the kitchen, "Yes, Charlotte, shut your mouth!" Charlotte, now speaking sotto voce, confides, "I bet it's because of the Jewish thing." Mike pipes up, "What Jewish thing? and Charlotte answers, "Oh, well Frank probably thought that you would all disapprove of him living in sin with a dirty Jew." Frank runs in from the kitchen with the final course to rescue the situation and prevent Charlotte from further ad-libbing. Changing the subject from "politics and religion," he proposes a toast to Beth. Charlotte raises her glass and says, "Mazel tov!" and Kitty innocently responds, "Mazel top!" (11:30 - 12:48).

When Beth and fellow NYU student, Bruce (Colton Ryan), whom she believes to be her boyfriend, show up uninvited at a party at Frank's house, they are surprised when Frank's partner Wally answers the door. Wally welcomes them in and when Beth asks, "So, um, how do you know Uncle Frank?", Wally responds "Uh, he's my roommate. Why?" Beth says, "Oh, uh, I thought he lived with Charlotte." Attempting to cover his tracks, Wally says, "Yes, he does... We all three live together, because it's a big apartment and uh, and, uh, rent is very expensive" (17:51 - 18:13). The stories that queer people are forced to make up, and the ease with which their straight relatives chose to believe them, collude to make queeritage undiscoverable and resonate with the way in which criticism has failed to explore queeritage as a subject matter.

Wally runs off to warn Frank. Beth, having been left alone by Bruce, drinks too much alcohol. Meanwhile, Bruce finds Frank on the fire escape smoking marijuana with his friend, Bernard (Alan Campbell). When Bernard goes inside, Bruce, after confiding that Beth is not his girlfriend, tries to seduce Frank, and is asked to leave the party. A

now very drunk Beth gets sick, and Frank holds her in the bathroom as she vomits in the toilet. Frank tells Wally where he was. Wally is disturbed that Frank was smoking marijuana as he is sober. Frank relates to Wally sotto voce what happened with Bernard, then speaks aloud, coming out to Beth:

> FRANK: (*After exchanging glances with Wally.*) Uh.. Beth, do you know what um... Wow. Okay, do you know what being gay means? (*Beth nods yes.*) Well... (*Exchanging glances again with Wally.*) I'm gay. And so is Wally. Um, we live together. And we have for ten years. And the reason I freaked out is because... Bruce tried, rather ineptly, to seduce me, and he seemed unwilling to take no for an answer. So, I hope you weren't too invested in him, because he seems a little, um...
>
> WALLY: Gay.
>
> FRANK: ...not worth it.

Frank puts Beth to sleep. At breakfast the following morning he asks her about how she is processing this new information about him:

> FRANK: So, do you feel any different about me?
>
> BETH: Oh, I don't think so. Never known anybody who was gay before.
>
> FRANK: Of course you have. You just weren't aware of it. Choir director at First Baptist Church.
>
> BETH: Mr. Dickerson, but he's so...
>
> FRANK: What?
>
> BETH: Religious.
>
> FRANK: Beth... I'd appreciate it if you didn't tell anyone in the family about me.
>
> BETH: Oh, sure, of course.
>
> FRANK: Um, We're from such different world's now and it... wouldn't really... (27:21 - 27:54)

Of course, if one is not out to one's family there can never be any understanding of queeritage within a family. The conversation between Frank and Wally describes the rationale for this secrecy as Wally completes Frank's sentence:

> WALLY: ...Change anything? You don't see them anyways Frank. Hey Beth, how you feeling?
>
> FRANK: When's the last time you saw your family?
>
> WALLY: Uh, I think August of last year...I go there at least every two years. You know that.
>
> FRANK: He shows them photographs of a phony wife, who's also played by Charlotte, by the way. You want eggs?
>
> WALLY: Yes, please. If I told them I was with a man, it would bring shame on them.
>
> FRANK: Why do you think it wouldn't bring shame on my family?
>
> WALLY: Americans don't care about honor, Frank.
>
> FRANK Ha!
>
> WALLY: I wish I thought my family could get past it, but I don't. I think your family would eventually accept it.
>
> FRANK: (*Serving the food.*) Here you go. (*To Wally.*) Yeah, well you don't know my family.
>
> WALLY: (*Taking a plate.*) Thank you. No, but you came from them so how bad can they be?
>
> FRANK: How 'bout this. How about you tell your family and then I'll tell mine.
>
> WALLY: Are you kidding? In Saudi Arabia, they would behead me. (27:59 - 29:06)

Frank and Wally are not out to their families because of the threat of incipient, even deadly violence. When Beth tries to pursue a relationship with a boy, her uncle and his partner break the news to her that Bruce is gay and then put her to sleep and make her

breakfast. By contrast, when Frank was discovered in bed with a boy, his father's response is terrorizing:

> DADDY MAC: I don't want you seeing that Lassiter boy again. If I find out you are, I'll kill you both. You're gambling with your very soul, son. Opening yourself up to that sickness. You want to be a queer, hm? A faggot? It's perversion. God hisself will turn his back on you. Cast you into the lake of fire. (01:00:53 - 01:01:53)

The connection that Beth and Frank have with each other is not like Alison and her father Bruce in *Fun Home,* about being queer. When they stop, en route to South Carolina, at a roadside diner playing country music, this is made explicit:

> BETH: Did you always know you were gay?
>
> FRANK: (*Motions for Beth to keep her voice down*.) I... I always knew I was different. From day one. But I... I definitely knew by the time I hit puberty. You have to realize it wasn't talked about then the way it is now. I didn't think there was anyone else like me.
>
> BETH: Well, heck, I feel that way.
>
> FRANK: What about you? You ever get a crush on a girl? (*Beth laughs.*)
>
> BETH: Uh, not really. One time, uh, I practiced making out with Becky Eller at a sleepover
>
> FRANK: Oh...
>
> BETH: But I pretended she was a boy.
>
> FRANK: And how...How was it?
>
> BETH: Embarrassing. When was the first time you, um...
>
> FRANK: I was sixteen.
>
> BETH: Who was it with?
>
> FRANK: (*Uncomfortably.*) Just a boy from school. (*Cutting the conversation short as he motions to the server.*) Ma'am, could we get the check?

In flashback we see, Young Frank (Cole Doman), and Sam running through the woods toward an idyllic lake. In the next flashback we see Frank finding, and attempting to pull, Sam's floating, dead body out of the lake. It is only after the reading of Daddy Mac's will, that we learn, in a subsequent flashback, how Sam came to be floating in the lake. While Daddy Mac leaves most of his estate to his wife Mawmaw, he bequeaths $25,000 each to Frank's siblings Mike and Neva (Jane McNeill) and $500 to Aunt Butch. The will, read aloud at the wake, after the funeral and in front of the entire family, which, the lawyer (Dave Blamy), advises was Daddy Mac's wish, includes the following:

> LAWYER: To my oldest, son, Francis MacKenzie Bledsoe, Jr., I leave nothing but disgust with the filthy and unnatural perversion he engages in with other men, and shame that he carries my name. (01:08:59 - 01:09:18)

With that, Frank, although he has been drinking, takes off in his car and drives to the lake where he used to swim with Sam. As he approaches it, we see the penultimate flashback scene in which Sam, who is already at the lake, seeing Frank approach, stands:

> YOUNG FRANK: Stay right there. We can't ever do that stuff again
>
> SAM: Frank...
>
> YOUNG FRANK: We have to stop now. If we want any chance to be normal and not end up perverts. Do you want to be a faggot? A queer? Do you want to go to hell? 'Cause it's a sickness! And God hates it. Don't ever come near me... or talk to me again.

As modern-day Frank walks to the end of the dock there is a final flashback sequence in which Young Frank entering his room with a book in hand, finds a note that was evidently slipped into it which reads, "I'll never be normal. I am a pervert. I am a queer. Forgive me, Sam." Young Frank ran to the lake but got there too late and finds Sam drowned.

When Frank ran out of his family's house, Beth drives to the hotel where he and Wally are staying to tell the latter, what happened. Wally asks Beth if Frank had been drinking and they drive to the lake, because as he says, he knows what happened there. At the lake they find the car that Frank was driving. When they find Frank's clothing in a pile at the end of it, they assume the worst and return to the hotel in despair. When Frank walks in, he is angered that Wally has disposed of the alcohol that Frank had hidden in the room. In Frank's drunken fury, his internalized homophobia is revealed; he yells epithets at Wally, "You motherfucker! You faggot! You pussy! Faggot!" Wally softly says to him, "Frank, it's okay" (01:16:21- 01:16:54), and Frank punches Wally in the face and runs out of the hotel. He staggers through the cemetery, where his father was just buried and removes a bouquet of flowers from his father's grave. He walks over to another grave where he places the flowers and sobbing, holds the tombstone of "Samuel J. Lassiter." Frank, sobbing, says, "What did I do, I... I..." and then calls out, Oh God! Oh God." Then, tracing the engraved letters of the name with his fingers says as he weeps, "Sam. Forgive me. Forgive me. Oh, Samuel, Sam..." (1:17:57 - 01:19:27).

What proceeds marks the beginning of the intersection of Frank's chosen family with his family of origin. Wally appears behind Frank and, placing a hand on his shoulder, says:

> WALLY: Frank. (*He kneels down also crying and holds Frank.*)
>
> FRANK: I have no family.
>
> WALLY: You have me. I'm your family. And you're mine. Till death. You know it, I know it, and God knows it. And that's all that matters.
>
> FRANK: I'm sorry. (*They kiss.)*
>
> WALLY: You should be.

BETH: (*Appearing now behind them*.) Mama made me promise if I found you, I'd bring you back.

FRANK: I don't want to see them, Beth.

BETH: But, so years ago, when you told me I should be what I want to be, not what other people want me to be, that was just bullshit? You know, that conversation changed my life. Now I find out you can't be who you are unless nobody around you disagrees with it. (*She turns and walks off.*)

WALLY: I thought you a... You might want this back. (*Wally places Frank's necklace back around his neck.*)

FRANK: You want to go meet my fucking family?

WALLY: Yeah. If you take a shower first. (1:19:28 - 01:21:56)

Frank brings Wally to meet his family. His brother Mike tells him "I got two words for you. No, Problem. You're my big brother. Whatever you are, no problem." His sister-in-law Kitty says, "I have to tell you something this makes me like you even more," (her hairdresser is gay). His sister Neva, who has long known about Frank and Wally, says, "I am so proud of you." Only Neva's husband, Beau (Burgess Jenkins), is reticent and asks to be excused. And then there is Aunt Butch, who shares her thoughts just before the family's queeritage is revealed by Mawmaw:

AUNT BUTCH: You know, when I was a little girl in Jacksonboro, there was a man in town. He was a dance teacher. He was some kind of dago or Mexican.

FRANK: Oh.

AUNT BUTCH: He had a name like Carlos or Antonio, but everybody called him 'the tissy pretzel.' And he was a backwards bobby like you. You're not the only one. I hear Charleston is just crawling with them these days. You're all going to hell, you know?

FRANK: (*Taking her hand in his.*) Aunt Butch, I know... that that is the very best that you're capable of.

MAWMAW: (*Calling from another room.*) Frank! (*Frank kisses Aunt Butches hand. Rises leaves the kitchen and enters the living room and sits opposite Mawmaw*.)

> MAWMAW: Frank, you are my precious gift from God... and nothing... nothing will ever change that. (*Frank goes to her and they embrace as both cry*.) It's okay. Oh, baby, (*Taking Frank's face in her hands*.) Your daddy was scared of it. Always was. You remember how much he hated your Great-Uncle Jasper?
>
> FRANK: Uncle Jasper was?
>
> MAWMAW: (*Nodding yes.)* Uh huh. He was. I figured that's probably why you were. I mean if being curly-headed is something that gets passed down, why not...
>
> FRANK: You knew?
>
> MAWMAW: Mothers know (01:26:03 - 01:27:25).

In *Uncle Frank*, the comments that have been made about queer people *outside* the family, we learn, could just as well have been made about the queer people *within* their family. Beth's comment, in Frank's apartment, that she had "never known anybody that was gay before" and Frank response, "Of course you have. you just weren't aware of it," is immediately followed by Frank's request of Beth that she not "tell anyone in the family about him." That request prompts Frank and Wally's conversation about their respective rationales for not coming out to their families. Frank's comment in the diner, "I didn't think there was anyone else like me" we come to learn as he does can be said about his own family.

Daddy Mac's wake begins with a closeup shot of women carrying the casserole dishes they have prepared to the house framed in such a way that we do not see their faces, only the dish they are carrying and the middle of their torsos. The first voice we hear is Beth's cousin Marcia (Katie Brewer), who as the camera focuses on her, we see is pregnant, yet again. She stands, smoking a cigarette, under a tree while talking to Beth:

> BETH: So, what about you, how's life?
>
> MARCIA: Mm. Honestly, Beth, I've never been happier.

BETH: That's great Marcia.

MARCIA: Yeah. I love being a mother. I love being pregnant. I love Travis more every day. He's a really good daddy.

BETH: Travis?

MARCIA: Mm, mm. He don't go by Tee Dub no more now that he's a business owner. Yeah. But, oh, we still get it on all the time. He is very blessed in that department.

BETH: That's nice.

MARCIA: (*Calling out to one of her children.*) What's wrong monkey? You want to wear Mama's shoes? (*Removing her shoes and placing her pumps on the ground as her son, a boy of about four or five, happily steps into them and walks briskly off.*) Aw, haw, he loves to do that. I have no idea why. (1:04:26 - 1:05:12)

The heteronormativity of the women arriving with the food and the discussion of procreative heterosexual sex, is juxtaposed here with the queerness of the male child who wants to walk in his mother's shoes.

Before learning that Frank was gay, the never married, Aunt Butch had approached him at the wake:

AUNT BUTCH: Well, hey there, Frank. I've been looking for ya.

FRANK: Aunt Butch, don't you look pretty today.

AUNT BUTCH: Tell me, any news on the female front?

FRANK: Nope.

AUNT BUTCH: Well, how old are you? You must be getting on up there.

FRANK: I'm...I'm forty-six.

AUNT BUTCH: Well, you got to get moving, boy. You're gonna end up like me. Oh. 'Course it's different for men. (1:07:16 - 1:07:46)

Uncle Frank elucidates the complex way in which queer people's rationales (like those of Frank and Wally, for remaining in the closet), unexplored queer potentialities, (as in the case of, the perhaps aptly named, Aunt Butch), obliviousness (of a person like Marcia, to her gender bending son), and the person who knows about everything, but keeps their own confidence, (like Mawmaw) all conspire to keep queeritage secret. What would have changed in this family if queeritage had not been a secret. The film's very name, *Uncle Frank* asks us to do so. What if Frank's queer great-uncle Jasper, had been able to support him in the way that he has functioned as an uncle supporting Beth. What if Jasper had been able to be a confidante or to intervene on Frank's behalf?

Uncle Frank reminds us that the knowledge of queeritage, which clearly both of Frank's parents had, is something that is often not transmitted from those in the family who possess it to its queer members. Daddy Mac's knowledge of the fact that he had a queer uncle does not make him more compassionate toward his queer son; to the contrary, it is most likely what fuels his desire to excise queerness from his family. Mawmaw's knowledge of queeritage, conversely, enables her to accept Frank's queerness. Nonetheless, she too had kept the information that Uncle Jasper was queer a secret from her son, even though she knew he was the one person such knowledge might have benefitted. Now that everyone in the Bledsoe is aware of Frank as a queer relative, and Frank aware of his queer great-uncle, life may prove easier for Kitty's gender bending child, if that child turns out to be queer. Unlike Frank, who did not know that his great-uncle was queer, Kitty's child will know, that their great-uncle Frank, is.

Frank, having introduced Wally to his family and having received his mother's blessing, makes his way through the house to back yard. En route, he overhears a snippet

of his sister Neva and her husband Beau's conversation as they stand in the hallway at the kitchen doorway:

> NEVA: He is my brother.
>
> BEAU: That doesn't make it right.
>
> NEVA: It isn't wrong.
>
> BEAU: Well... (*Noticing Frank as he* passes.) The bible says it's a sin...
>
> NEVA: The bible also says that it's okay to have slaves. And okay to marry, like ten-
>
> BEAU: Oh, so our children ain't reading the Bible anymore?[21] (01:28:42 - 01:29:00)

Buoyed by his mother's acceptance and newfound knowledge that queerness has always belonged in his family Frank ignores Beau as he makes his way outdoors to Beth. There, in the backyard, the film's closing shots depict the family sitting on aluminum folding chairs and clustered around bridge tables, Wally laughing as he converses with Mawmaw, Kitty and Neva talking intently, Marcia and Travis kissing, and Aunt Butch and Mike playing cards. During this montage, bookending the film with her narration, we hear Beth:

> What I remember most about my Granddaddy's funeral is just sitting around the backyard after everybody else had left, and it was just us. The sun was starting to go down. There was a breeze. And I remember thinking...this is where I belong. Not like I belonged with my family. It was bigger than that. Like every single one of us belonged there, in that backyard, on that afternoon. And I realized in that moment, we were all exactly where we were supposed to be. (01:29:07 - 01:29:58)

[21] My transcription of what is heard here differs significantly with that of the film's subtitles which transcribes the line as, "Oh, so what, you don't believe in the Bible no more?"

The Power of The Dog (2021).

The Power of the Dog is a Western film written and directed by New Zealander, Jane Campion, and based on Thomas Savage's 1967 American novel of the same name. It received twelve Academy Award nominations, including best directing, for which it won. *Dog* is the fifth iteration of queeritage where it is established between a character and their uncle, albeit, in this case, a step-uncle. *Dog* represents a diffusion of queeritage, as it explores a more extended familial tie; it is the first narrative where the familial relationship between the queer characters is not one of consanguinity. *Dog* is also an important cultural dissemination of the theme into a genre as quintessentially American as the Western. *Dog*, is the first instance here where queeritage rather than aiding its queer characters, brings about the destruction of one. *Dog* presents us with two queer people who, when we first meet them, are not related and whom we believe to have nothing in common with each other. They become part of the same family and all their similarities are revealed.

Set in Montana in 1925, *Dog* is the story of Peter Gordon (Kodi Smitt-Mcphee), a queer young man whose widowed mother, Rose (Kirsten Dunst), meets a wealthy rancher, George (Jesse Plemons). Much to the dislike of George's brother, Phil (Benedict Cumberbatch), with whom George lives, George marries Rose. Phil torments Rose and Peter, who is on a summer break from his medical studies. Phil’s emotional abuse of Rose is to severe she begins drinking heavily. Peter discovers that Phil is a closeted queer man and, armed with that information, proceeds with an elaborate plan to rescue his mother by murdering Phil.

Dog does not play with temporality in the way that many of the narratives in our discussion have, nonetheless the past is very much present for Phil.

At first Peter and Phil appear as opposites. Peter is a sensitive, talented, and physically awkward young man, and Phil, as a swaggering, masculine, brutish bully. Peter is helping his widowed mother run the Red Mill where George and Peter Burbank stop along with ten ranch hands during their long cattle drive. Peter has skillfully created beautiful paper flowers which his mother Rose suggests could be placed on the tables at dinner.

When George, Phil and the ranch hands are seated, Phil notices the flowers:

> PHIL: (*As he suggestively fingers the center of one of the flowers*.) Well, I wonder what little lady made these.
>
> PETER: Actually, I did Sir. My mother was a florist. So, I made them to look like the ones in our garden.
>
> PHIL: Oh, well, do pardon me. They're just as 'real' as possible. (*He holds one under the nose of the cowhand to is right who sniffs it.*) All right. Now gentlemen, look, see that's what you do with the cloth (*He points at Peter who has a towel draped over his right forearm as he enters to serve a drink.*)
>
> PETER: It's really just for wine drips.
>
> PHIL: Oh. You got that, boys? (*Now mocking Peter, lisping as he repeats*.) "Only for the drips." (*The men all laugh*.) Now get us some food. (11:47 - 12:49)

When Peter re-enters, Phil takes one of the flowers, and setting it on fire with a lit candle on the table, lights his cigarette with it, and then extinguishes it in what remains of the water in the water pitcher. At this, Rose enters and removes the flower arrangements. Finished with serving the men, Peter steps outside and practices with a hula hoop (13:51 - 16:01).

Phil's brother George is taken with Rose and remains behind where he hears her crying in the kitchen and proceeds to try to comfort her. When he returns to the room that he is sharing with Phil, he comments on Phil's behavior at dinner:

> GEORGE: What you said about her boy tonight, Phil, you made her cry.
>
> PHIL: She had her ear to the door?
>
> GEORGE: She was crying Phil.
>
> PHIL: What the hell? I said her boy needed to snap out of it and get human. Pointed it out, that's all. She should damn well know. (21:15 - 21:51)

Phil later intimates that he believes that Rose is only interested in George for his money and uses the epithet "Miss Nancy" to refer to Peter, "Give her half a chance and she'll be after some dollar for Miss Nancy's college fee" (28:14 - 28:23). Despite Phil's objections George and Rose are married, which enrages Phil who proceeds to beat one of his horses. *Dog* is an exploration of toxic masculinity and how it is embedded in iconic myths of the American West. Phil, despite being queer, has internalized the cowboy ideal of masculinity to such a degree that it functions, like his chaps, as an armor that he believes protects him in a hostile world. Anyone like Peter, who does not wear such an armor, represents a threat, and must be destroyed.

While *Dog* does not play with temporality by using flashbacks or invoking magical realism, the past is very much on Phil's mind. Most important is his relationship with an older man when he was in his youth. George and Rose take Peter to the school where he is going to study medicine, and then travel together to the ranch. Upon being left alone with Phil for the first time, Rose offers, "Well, brother Phil, we had such a nice trip-" but Phil cuts her off, declaring, "I'm not your brother, you're a cheap schemer"

(38:58 - 39:07). When George and Rose turn in for the night, Phil's anguish and abandonment over losing his brother is evident when he overhears them making love in the adjacent bedroom. Phil heads off to a barn where he has set up a shrine to Bronco Henry, the now deceased cowboy who taught him and his brother how to ranch and whom he idolizes. The shrine includes a plaque which reads: "In Loving Memory / Bronco Henry / Friend / 1854 - 1904" (41:43 - 41:55). Phil removes a saddle from the shrine which he proceeds to lovingly polish. He then goes to his secret swimming hole, the entrance to which is camouflaged by bramble and branches, and dives in. It becomes apparent that Phil might be queer.

Phil's personal queer history with Bronco Henry, is fleshed out as the film progresses This is augmented, as in *The Lost Language of Cranes*, *Man in an Orange Shirt*, and *Call Me By Your Name,* by invoking the homoeroticism of classical antiquity when cowboy Phil's academic past is revealed. George invites his parents, as well as the Governor and his wife, to the ranch so that he may regale them with his wife's piano playing. Here it is revealed that Phil, has an unexpected personal history. In conversation between the governor and George it is revealed that Phil was "Phi Beta Kappa at Yale" where he studied "classics" (54:00 - 54:08). Under pressure, Rose is unable to perform and Phil, who has been employing psychological tactics to undermine her, takes a sadistic pleasure in her failure. The pressure of living with Phil's campaign against her drives Rose to drink, and she begins hiding liquor in different locations.

When Peter and Phil interact, now that they are related to each other and must do so, the film's presentation them as opposites changes. When Peter arrives to spend his

summer break at the ranch, Phil creates a hostile environment for him. Over the course of Peter's time at the ranch we will come to learn that Peter and Phil have much in common.

Seeing a car arriving, a ranch hand asks:

> RANCH HAND: Who's that?
>
> PHIL: Miss Nancy.
>
> ANOTHER RANCH HAND: Our waiter?
>
> PHIL: Yup, that's him. You're gonna see him creeping all over the place now. Big eyes googling. Little Lord Fauntleroy." (1:02:21 - 1:02:45)

Phil's history at Yale renders his calling Peter, 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' strangely self-referential.

After this, Peter sets a trap to catch a rabbit which he brings home and presents to his mother. Soon thereafter he kills the rabbit and dissects it as an aspect of his surgical medical training. This happens immediately following his being ridiculed by the ranch hands and recalls Phil's senseless beating of the horse when he is angered by his brother's decision to marry. Both are indifferent to the suffering of the animal.

Their similarity is even more evident when Phil, again at his secret swimming hole, lays on the shore smelling, caressing and then masturbating with a large men's handkerchief bearing the monogram "BH," for Bronco Henry. Immediately following this, Peter has stumbled upon the entrance to the watering hole; he removes the branches which conceal it, crawls through its tunnel like entrance and into a shed like structure wherein he discovers a box. Peter opens the box which he finds contains magazines with photographs of nude men. On the top of the pile, is a 1900 issue of *Physical Culture*, an American bodybuilding magazine of the period, whose motto "Weakness is a crime.

Don't be a criminal." is seen on the masthead. Its former owner, Bronco Henry, has signed his name on the upper right-hand corner of the cover. Perusing the magazine, Peter opens to a page with a photograph of the rear of a standing nude male and on the following page a frontal picture, the man's genitalia covered only by a fig leaf. He sees similar pictures on the following pages as he hears splashing water. Hurriedly he replaces the magazines, crawls out of the structure into the open and, following the sound, spies Phil's horse tied to a tree. He then sees Phil, his back to Peter, fully naked in the water, with Bronco Henry's handkerchief wrapped around his neck. Sensing someone watching him, Phil turns toward the shore and sees Peter who runs, with Phil in pursuit yelling, "Get outta here! You little bitch! You hear me? Get out of here" (1:16:30 - 1:16:47). Queeritage has now been established in the narrative.

After this encounter, Peter's attitude towards Phil changes. As Peter, following the call of a bird, makes his way through a large group of ranch hands who are at leisure, eating as they recline on blankets or sit under pup tents, we hear the men's many whistles and catcalls directed at Peter, "Little faggot," "Little Nancy." Observing this, Phil calls out to him:

> PHIL: Pete. Hey Pete. Peter!
>
> PETER: You want me, Mr. Burbank?
>
> PHIL: Well, I don't see any Mr. Burbank here, I'm Phil.
>
> PETER: Yes, Mr. Burbank.
>
> PHIL: I guess it's hard for a young'un like you to call an old fella like me just plain Phil, at first. (*As he braids a rope.*) Now come and take a look at this. Have you done any braiding or plaiting yourself Pete?
>
> PETER: No, I never have, Sir.

PHIL: Peter, we kinda got off on the wrong foot.

PETER: Did we, Sir?

PHIL: Forget the "Sir" stuff. That can happen to people. People who get to be good friends. (*Peter nods affirmatively*.) Well, you know what?

PETER: What? (*Removing his hat and kneeling to sit with Phil*.) What, Phil?

PHIL: Now you see, you did it, you called me "Phil." I'm gonna finish this rope and give it to you and teach you how to use it. It's sort of a lonesome place out here, Pete. Unless you get in the swing of things.

PETER: Thank you... Phil. How long do you expect it would take to finish that rope?

PHIL: I could get it finished before you go back to school.

PETER: (*Rising as he replaces his hat*.) Well, it won't be very long then, Phil. (1:18:17 - 1:21:00)

Phil takes Peter under his wing. As Peter is fetching soil in a wheelbarrow for the flower bed that his mother is planting, Phil whistles to him, Peter abandons the wheelbarrow and follows Phil into the barn where Bronco Phil's saddle is located. He says to Peter:

PHIL: Get on it. You can sit on it, Pete. (*Peter mounts the saddle*) Get yourself used to it. You got any boots?

PETER: Yes.

PHIL: You should wear 'em. Don't let your mom make a sissy of you. (*He walks over to the rope he has been braiding.*)

PETER (*Seeing how long the rope is.*) That's impressive, Phil.

PHIL: Well, just by sitting there, you're soaking up all the riding know-how you'll ever need and then some. That saddle belonged to Bronco Henry. Greatest rider I ever knew. There's a cliff way out back of the ranch with initials and 1805 carved into it. Must of been some fella from the Lewis and Clark Expedition. They were real men in those days. Let's say just you and me go out for a couple of days. Find those trails and

follow them to the end. Wouldn't be surprised if there were gold or precious minerals in them there rocks.

PETER: Do many of the calves die from wolves?

PHIL: There's always a few that get tore up, or hamstrung, or die of anthrax. Call it "blackleg." You know you talk like a Victrola record, You know that?

PETER: No, I didn't know.

PHIL: Yeah, well you do. (*Peter dismounts the saddle and regards it as Phil uses the force of the thrust of his hip to pull the rope he braids taut.*)

PETER: Did Bronco Henry teach you to ride, Phil?

PHIL: Yup. He taught me to use my eyes in ways that other people can't. Take that hill over there. (*He exits the back of the barn looking at the hill in the distance and Peter joins him.*) Most people look at it and they just see a hill. When Bronco looked at it, what do you suppose he saw?

PETER: A barking dog.

PHIL: The hell, you just saw that now?

PETER: No. When I first came here. See, it looks like a dog with its jaw wide open.

PHIL: You... you just saw that?

PETER: (*Matter-of-factly.*) Yeah.

The scene is fraught with sexual tension. Whether Phil imagines that he may now assume the role of Bronco Henry, as merely mentor to the young Peter, or in a similarly erotic and perhaps sexual relationship, it is clear that Peter is now aware of the power he wields over Phil. Phil teaches Peter to ride. Rose notices that Phil is spending time with Peter which disturbs her. Peter sees that Rose is sinking deeper into her alcoholism; he says to her, "Mother, you don't have to do this. I'll see you don't have to do it" (1:27:34 - 1:27:42). Immediately following this, Peter consults his medical books, then rides off on

his own and finds a cow on a trail that has died of anthrax. Wearing rubber gloves, he carefully skins it and brings the contaminated hide home.

Phil and Peter ride off together and Phil asks Peter to help him install some fence posts. As they are doing this, Phil notices a rabbit, throws his hat at it and the scared animal runs under a pile of fence posts. Phil explains that as a child he would play a game where they would see how many logs would have to be removed from the pile before the scared rabbit would run out from under it. Phil has Peter join him in lifting the poles one by one and hurling them aside. In so doing they inadvertently cause the pile of poles to collapse on the rabbit. As Phil attempts to retrieve the rabbit from under the pile, he gauges his hand on the wood. Peter pulls out the rabbit. Seeing that it has a broken leg, Phil tells Peter, who is now holding the rabbit, "Well, put him out of his misery" (1:34:34 - 1:34:36). Peter pets the rabbits head to calm it and then snaps its neck. Peter notices the deep wound on Phil's hand. Prior to this we had only seen each of these men harm animals separately, now they are doing so together.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Native Americans have come to see if they can purchase the many cowhides that are drying in the sun. They are turned away by the staff who tell Rose that Phil won't want to sell them and would prefer to burn them. Rose intervenes and sells the cowhides. When Phil and Peter return, Phil is outraged not least for the fact that he needed the hides to finish the rope he is making for Peter. Peter offers to help:

> PETER: Phil?
>
> PHIL: Huh?
>
> PETER: Phil I've... I've got rawhide to finish the rope.

PHIL: You've got it? What are you doing with rawhide?

PETER: I cut some up. I wanted to be like you. Please take what I've got.

PHIL: Well, that's damn kind of you, Pete. (*Phil places his hand on the back of Peter's neck and stares into his face as if he is about to kiss him.*) Tell you something. Everything's gonna be plain sailing for you from now on in. You know, uh... I'm gonna work. Finish up that rope tonight. You'll watch me do it? (1:45:05 - 1:46:35)

Peter brings Phil strips of the contaminated rawhide which are soaking in a basin and watches as Phil plunges his bare hands into the basin and retrieves strips to work with. As Phil braids the rope, Peter caresses Bronco Henry's saddle and asks:

PETER: How old were you when you met Bronco Henry?

PHIL: About the age you are now.

PETER: Was he your best friend?

PHIL: Yeah... he was. But more than that. Once he saved my life. We were way off up in the hills and the weather turned mean. Bronco kept me alive by... lying body against body in a bed roll. Fell off to sleep that way.

PETER: Naked? (*Phil lets out a nervous laugh but does not answer. Peter lights a cigarette, takes a drag of it and then walks up to Phil and still holding the cigarette places it in front of Phil's face. Phil takes a drag from the cigarette as Peter holds it, then this sequence is repeated.*) (1:48:42 - 1:51:09)

The following morning, Phil is ill. George gets the car to take him to the doctor while Phil feverishly attempts to find Peter to give him the now finished rope that he has made for him. Phil drops it as he stumbles, and George assures him that Peter will get it. At Phil's funeral, the doctor tells George that he thinks the cause of death was anthrax. In the film's final scene, Peter reading the biblical, Psalm 22:20, as we hear his voice say, "Deliver my soul from the sword, my darling from the power of the dog" and then in his room sitting on the bed he holds the rope with gloved hands and caresses it before he carefully slides it under the bed. A dog's bark announces an arriving car. Looking out the

window, Peter sees his mother and George arrive. Peter sees them embrace and kiss and he then turns away from the window smiling.

Peter, the narrative demonstrates is like Phil in multiple ways. They are both portrayed as intellectuals, although Phil hides this aspect of himself. Both are responsible for the suffering of animals after being humiliated, although Peter channels this into a higher purpose. Not only are both gifted with a certain kind of creativity, that is capable of seeing the barking dog in the hills, crafting artificial flowers, or braiding a lasso; but both know how to use a rope. Phil said he would "teach [Peter] how to use it," but Peter already knows how to use a rope, just not in the way that Phil had intended, for Peter uses it to kill Phil. Peter succeeds, as his opening line of the film predicts, in saving his mother and ensuring her happiness. *Dog* employs the old Hollywood tropes of the queer sissy and the queer villain in the character of Peter and at the same time makes sure that a queer character dies[22].

Queeritage narratives have predominantly been positive representations, demonstrating the ways in which living queer members of the same family have been able to intercede on one or another's behalf or how the discovery of queer family members in the past has supported the psychological well-being of a queer character in the present (*Man in an Orange Shirt*, *Queer As Folk*, *Vida*, *Uncle Frank*). Some of these have also portrayed the ways in which a queer, but closeted character, might have, in trying to repress their own sexuality or gender identity, harmed the other queer member

[22] *The Power of the Dog* also calls to mind a similar narrative in the 1963 novel—published four years before Savage's *The Power of the Dog*—by Yukio Mishima, *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea*, and its 1976 film adaptation of the same name, where a fourteen year old boy, whose father has died, drugs and then dissects the pet cat before ultimately doing the same to his mother's new boyfriend.

of their family (*The Hours*, *Fun Home*, *Transparent*, *Vida*). *Dog* presents viewers with something new; one queer character destroys the other, causing their death. Richard's death by suicide in *The Hours* might be in part caused by the early childhood trauma of being abandoned by his queer mother, and, Alison's coming out in *Fun Home* might have set off a chain of events that ultimately results in her father suicide, but it is certainly the case that these deaths were in no way intended consequences of those character's actions, whereas in *Dog*, Peter murders Phil.

Dog is interested in exploring toxic masculinity and in so doing can be interpreted as subverting the Western male hero. Phil, who seems externally strong, whom the men on the ranch look up to, turns out to be the one who will not survive. He is destroyed by Peter, the one other living queer character in the film, who is, in the eyes of the men, externally weak. The *Physical Culture* masthead in Bronco Henry's collection of bodybuilding magazines proclaimed, 'Weakness is a crime. Don't be a criminal.' In *Dog* it is not physical weakness that turns out to *be* the crime but rather *necessitates* a crime to survive. There is a disturbing sadism in *Dog* that is difficult to unpack and embedded in toxic masculinity both of its queer characters have internalized. On one hand, the film's opening line would encourage Peter to be seen as simply saving his mother from a lifetime of being tormented by Phil. Over the opening credits Peter's voice intones: "When my father passed, I wanted nothing more than my mother's happiness. For what kind of man would I be if I did not help my mother? If I did not save her?" (01:02 - 01:22). But Peter relishes the sexual power that he eventually has over Phil. Why else would he seductively offer Phil drags of his own cigarette after he knows Phil's exposure to anthrax is a fait accompli? Alternatively, Phil might be like the scared rabbit hiding

under the wood pile. When pieces of the wood are removed (just as Phil's armor is as he becomes closer to Peter) the rabbit is injured, its leg is broken, (at the same moment that Phil injures his hand). Perhaps Peter, in murdering Phil, is only doing what Phil has asked him to when he says, "Well, put him out of his misery," (1:34:36 - 1:34:39) before Peter first pets and then snaps the rabbit's neck. In the other narratives we have explored queeritage functions to buffer its queer characters from a hostile world. The brutality that each of the queer men in *Dog* manifest is the product of living in such a hostile world. Once they find themselves in the same family, they are forced to confront what in *Dog*, are merely the logical consequences of it.

.

Chapter VII.

Queeritage and Autobiography

Images and stories of queeritage take many forms. The twelve dramatic narratives outlined in our discussion engage queeritage to profoundly different purposes and degrees. *The Hours* uses queeritage to link the story of Richard's mother, Laura Brown, to that of his best friend, Clarissa Vaughn. In *Call Me by Your Name*, queeritage is introduced at the end of the narrative and its function is limited to its role as a means for Samuel's consolation of Elio and to deepen our understanding of the tragedy of the heteronormative choice that Oliver makes. In *Bent, Queer As Folk*, *Vida* and *Power of the Dog*, queeritage changes the plot; its related queer characters support one another, or if deceased, the knowledge of their lives is edifying, or they take actions which help or, in the case of *Dog*, hinder their queer relatives on account of their shared queerness. While the episodes of *Will & Grace*, which revolve around Will and his nephew Jordan, and Jack and his grandson Skip, are certainly about queeritage, they consist of only three of the two hundred and forty-six episodes that comprise the series and its reboot.

There are five narratives however, *The Lost Language of Cranes*, *Fun Home*, *Transparent*, *Man in an Orange Shirt* and *Uncle Frank,* which not only *engage* with, but can be viewed as being *about*, queeritage. What might compel someone to create such a narrative? And what might compel someone else to write a thesis about them. Autobiographical queeritage is known, as it has been widely reported, to be the impetus behind the creation of four of these narratives, as well as being what prompted my

interest in the topic. The author of the graphic novel on which the play *Fun Home* is based, the creator of the television series *Transparent*, the writer of the television movie *Man in an Orange Shirt*, and the writer/director of the film *Uncle Frank*, all have in common the fact that they only learned in adulthood that their biological fathers were queer. The role of autobiography in the development of dramatic narratives about queeritage is significant in that these narratives address the popular misconception that queer people exist in a world without queeritage. It is precisely this, which the creators of these narratives believed until they learned the story of queeritage in their own families.

To what extent finding queeritage in one's own family may have led to engaging queeritage in the other narratives that we have explored is a topic that is not easily researched, and beyond the constraints of this discussion, but merits exploration. These four narratives are also connected because the link between autobiography and queeritage was used to garner interest from a public ready to accept queeritage in real life. The profound impact that the real-life discovery of queeritage has on these writers compels them to create narratives which portray it. By reviewing these connections between the personal and the creative we can gain a better understanding of the power of queeritage.

Fun Home is the only dramatic narrative engaging queeritage based on a memoir. As such it is the clearest expression of the autobiographical, the characters are not "like someone" in the creator's life, and the events are not "influenced by" things that happened to the creator, they are the people in Alison Bechdel's life, and the narrative is a re-telling of what happened to her. In its dramatic adaptation as a musical, the opening number, in which all of the characters we will meet are introduced, ends with the character Alison captioning the frame of her graphic novel:

ALISON: Caption: My Dad and I both grew up in the same small Pennsylvania town

And he was gay.

And I was gay.

And he killed himself.

And I...became a lesbian cartoonist. (Kron 17)]

The entirety of the work is an exploration of the consequences of queeritage.

The creation of a dramatic narrative about queeritage, for *Transparent*'s Joey Soloway, while not telling their own story, was part and parcel of their journey to embracing their own queer identity. Like the series' character whom we are first introduced to as Ali and comes to identify by the series' end as non-binary. In the course of making *Transparent,* Joey Soloway takes a similar journey. Much like the character of Ali's sister, Sarah Pfefferman, Joey Soloway, when they began to create *Transparent*, was married to a man, was at that time known as Jill, and was the mother of two children. This suburban mom would become romantically involved, during the production of the series, with the lesbian poet Eileen Myles (Levy 16; Villarreal) and ultimately come to identify, like the character now called at series' end, Ali Pfefferman, as non-binary, and change their name from Jill to Joey.

In 2011 Soloway, then forty-six years old, received a call from their biological father, known at the time as Harry, who came out to them as transgender and changed her name to Carrie. Accepting the Emmy award in 2016 for best director of a comedy series Soloway, after saying, "Thank you to the trans community for your lived lives. We need to stop violence against transgender women," added, "Topple the patriarchy, topple the

patriarchy" ("Jill Soloway" 1:49 - 2:05). As Ariel Levy observed in a 2015 profile of Soloway in *The New Yorker,* when "her father called to say that he was a woman named Carrie...the most intimate patriarchy in her life toppled" (Levy 8). Soloway, who aptly named their production company 'Topple' might not have been able to predict the effect that their parent's coming out would have on their own personal life and gender identity. It has, however, been reported in articles and interviews, perhaps most succinctly in *The Hollywood Reporter*, their reaction to Carrie's news was a definitive influence in the show's narrative. Soloway is quoted, "'For most of the phone call, I said, "I love you, I'm proud of you, you're so brave." And pretty much in the same instant I was like, "This is going to be my show"'" (Hunt).

Transparent is the narrative in which queeritage is the most thoroughly explored extending, as it does, to three generations of queer family members. The relationship of autobiography to queeritage in *Transparent* is the most complex. Learning that their father was queer was the impetus for Soloway's creating a narrative which engaged queeritage and this in turn changed their perception of their own queerness. It was in the process of the creation of the character of Leslie, the professor with whom the character Ali becomes romantically involved, that Soloway met Myles[23]:

> Myles had come up during a meeting in the *Transparent* writers' room, Soloway said. The writers were in the process of creating Leslie, a character played by the out actress Cherry Jones, who is based on Myles.
>
> Soloway wasn't aware of Myles at that time, but upon recalling that the panel with Myles was coming up in a couple of months, began researching the poet. So while the *Transparent* crew was developing the Leslie character, Soloway was concocting a plan involving Myles.

[23] As reported in *The Advocate*, these comments were made at a public forum with Soloway and Myles at Los Angeles' Hammer Museum.

> "I went to the San Francisco museum planning to seduce you," Soloway told Myles onstage at the Hammer. (Villarreal)

Also, like *Transparent's* Ali/Ari, Soloway journeyed from femme to butch, changed their name and adopted non-binary pronouns:

> Soloway said Myles was "the last stop on the femme train for me." Being butch, Soloway said, is a "respite" from a part of their personality they don't want anymore. (Both Soloway and Myles use gender-neutral pronouns.) "I can't imagine dressing femme right now because I feel it would be a strange costume," said Soloway. (Villarreal)

Man in an Orange Shirt was not the first time that queeritage in Patrick Gale's own family inspired his writing. In a 2015 *Guardian* piece he described the impetus for writing his novel *A Place Called Winter.* In the essay he describes his relationship with his maternal grandmother whom he was often sent to stay with in his youth. He loved the stories that she would tell him and characterizes them as "full of family gossip - about everyone except her father." It would be decades after his grandmother's death, when Gale's mother would pass on to him the chest of drawers that she had inherited from her mother that Gale would find in it a "nondescript plastic ring-binder full of lined paper on which Granny had been encouraged at some point to begin her memoirs" (Gale)

> There was the story I had never heard, of her parents' sad marriage – a rich young man, Harry Cane, urged to marry a girl still secretly in love with another man rejected by her family for being "trade". Using maddeningly scant detail, she recounted how Harry had left her and her mother in order to become one of the hundreds of eager homesteaders lured out to the Canadian prairies in the 1900s by easy railway access and the offer of free land. What had become of him there? How had he coped? Why was there no question of his daughter joining him when her mother died of breast cancer?

Gale goes on to describe how, to answer these questions, he searched for photographs of his great-grandfather and in a family with a "tradition of photography," was surprised to find only three photographs of Harry Cane. "In two taken during courtship and early fatherhood, he is young and really rather beautiful. In the third, taken on his brief, sad return to England in 1953, he is a ravaged shadow of a man, evidently toothless, shabbily dressed in second-hand clothes." The advice of two psychics whom Gale had visited in the 1990s, and had confidence in as they had worked with the police, now resonated for him. Both had told him to "find out about the family's black sheep." Gale traveled to Canada visiting the places his great-grandfather had lived and searched for information:

> I found tiny references to him in local history projects stored in North Battleford library in Saskatchewan, saying that he had retained his lovely table manners, had the best horses in the area and had always 'batched it' - lived without a woman. In constantly imagining myself in Harry's shoes, the inescapable happened and I started using my own personality and experience to join the dots in the little I could glean of his nature...wondering how I would have coped with being obliged to marry and have children or with being propelled into a harsh, isolated and almost exclusively masculine environment, it was perhaps inevitable, that I should have turned my great-grandfather gay. Only of course he couldn't be gay. Or not in so many words. For given it was set initially in illusory, endless, upper-middle-class summer of 1900s England, this had to be the story of a man furnished with no words for what he was or what he wanted, whose dream of fulfillment was, literally, unspeakable.

Gale's article ends with a reflection on looking at his great-grandfather's photograph:

> What has taken me completely by surprise is the way in which my confected version of events has become like an artificial memory. I now repeatedly catch myself looking at Harry's photograph and drawing spurious comfort from the thought of having a gay ancestor who found true, if secret, love at last on a prairie farmstead."

It would be only two years after the release of *A Place Called Winter* Gale's novel before he would tell a story, in *Man in an Orange Shirt,* that was not only prompted by the discovery of queeritage in his own family but about queeritage itself. It is about what

happens when the queer history of a family has been suppressed and what can happen for a queer character like Adam, who learns of it.

In 2017, again in *The Guardian*, Gale describes a different discovery of queeritage in his family, one much closer and more definite, that led him to write *Man in an Orange Shirt*. Gale had taken his mother out to a show and to dinner in 1984, when he was twenty-two. The closest that he had come to officially coming out was several weeks prior, when he had given his "mother the manuscript of [his] first novel, *The Aerodynamics of Pork*...in which every character has a lesbian or gay secret. He relates what happened:

> 'So?' I finally asked, when she didn't bring it up, 'What did you make of my book?' 'It was lovely,' she said unconvincingly. 'Funny and naughty and oh so sad. Now I'll think every policewoman I see is a lesbian. Your father read it too.'...'It will help him come to terms with himself,' she added. Twenty-three years earlier, while heavily pregnant with me...she had taken it upon herself to tidy out my father's desk. She came upon a sheaf of letters tucked away in a drawer, saw the first began, 'My darling Michael' and gleefully sat down to read, assuming them to be from some girl he had never mentioned. Only they were from his oldest school friend, who had gone to Oxford with him, and fought alongside him in the war. They had been best man to each another.
>
> 'But maybe they were just very close?' I suggested. 'Men back then often had deep romantic friendships. Darling didn't always mean–' She cut me off, espresso cup wobbling. It was plain from the letters, she said, that my father had shown the man a passion he had never shown her. She burnt them – terrified, in such an era, that their discovery would see him arrested and sent to one of the prisons his colleagues governed. In the early 1960s, discovery would have spelled a ruin as complete as in the time of Oscar Wilde. Her next responses were stranger and more damaging. She never told him what she had discovered. She simply never let him in her bed again – encouraging the adoption of separate beds under a single hypocritical quilt, and then separate bedrooms.

In *Shirt*, Gale has put the autobiographical queeritage, that of himself and his father, at a remove so that it tells the story of a young man who learns about

his grandfather's queerness. In it Gale imagines what would have happened if his father had been confronted about the love letters by his mother. Gale described the effect of learning about the queeritage in his family as well as the relationship between that discovery and the characters in *Shirt*:

> [I]n that Pimlico restaurant in 1984, after two decades of believing myself a family freak and someone living outside the law, making my legs and arms and scalp bleed from eczema as my guilt and fear erupted through my skin, I had been abruptly awarded the validation that comes from genetic inheritance. So learning that he might have been like me, had he only been born 40 years later, made me understand, pity and warm to him. Yet, like my mother, I found I could never tell him what I had learnt. I showed my new love in code instead, in books and bottles of whisky and in invitations to visit me in my new life in Cornwall. He was deeply supportive of my two long-term domestic relationships, settling my share of the family silver just as if I had got married, and doing his best to love my partners. Man in an Orange Shirt is not about Pippa and Michael Gale. I've written versions of them repeatedly in my novels. But it has at its heart that terrible scene of discovery and letter-burning. However, in the drama I've imagined how differently things might have played out had my mother confronted my father and, like so many couples of their generation, achieved a terrible, respectable compromise. Writing it, I gave voice to my father's stifled passion and pain, but also came to understand the impossible burden my poor mother took on in marrying him. (Gale 2017)

So too was it the discovery of queeritage, or at least the likelihood of it, in Alan Ball's family which led him to conceive of *Uncle Frank*. As reported in *The Advocate*:

> The film first began to take shape in Bell's mind "years ago, when I came out of the closet to my mother. She grabbed her head like she thought it would fly off into space if she didn't hold on to it, and said, 'Oh, God has dealt me some blows in this life.' I started laughing because it was so absurd, and then she said, 'Well, I blame your father for this because I think he was that way too.'"
>
> That exchange shook Ball, whose father died when he was young. The next day, he and his mother visited a relative in a North Dakota state park, and when they arrived at the local lake, his mother turned to him and nonchalantly said, "'That's where Sam Lassiter drowned." "Who's Sam Lassiter? I've never heard of this person," he asked his mother. "Well, he

> was a real, real, real good friend of your dad." Ball was floored at what he perceived his mother to be implying. “Later, I found out that after Sam drowned, my father accompanied his body on a train back to their hometown of Asheville, N.C., for the funeral. They were 18, 19 years old, I believe. I don’t know if my father was gay, because he was already dead and I couldn’t talk to him about it. But the idea of a young man whose lover committed suicide just sort of stuck in my head for years and years and percolated.” (Henderson)

Ball elaborated on this idea with *The Irish news*:

> 'And then later I found out that my father had accompanied Sam’s body on a train back to their hometown of Asheville, North Carolina, and I just had this big ‘what if’ in the back of my mind for years and years and finally my inner Tennessee Williams took over and I just wrote it.
>
> 'It’s a story, it’s not true, it’s not autobiographical, I made it up, but it was triggered by something that was told to me that made me ask the question.' (Harding)

Uncle Frank, thus reimagines the life of Ball's father, also named Frank. Ball creates the story of Frank and Sam Lassiter's relationship, the later character bearing the same name as his father's 'real, real, real, good friend,' as he imagines it might have been. As *The Advocate* reported: "All these decades later, the truth is bound tight and lying six feet under. 'I don't know what happened,' Ball points out. 'It could very easily be something not having to do with being gay, but in my mind, it just sort of became this story.'" The story which Ball creates imagines a Frank who comes of age, like his father, in the 1950s but who, rather than getting married to a woman and having children, goes to New York's Greenwich Village and is his authentic self. In this imagined story, Frank, now a middle-aged man in the 1970s, comes out to his mother and learns, just as Ball did, that someone in the family already existed who was queer.

The actor who played the title role in *Uncle Frank*, Paul Bettany, like its writer/director Alan Ball, also had a father who was a closeted gay man. As Lucian quips

to Michael, in *Man in an Orange* Shirt, after Michael says of his closeted boss, "He's married with children," 'there [*really was*] a lot of it about[!]' Gregory Ellwood spoke with Bettany for *The Playlist*:

> I was raised by a father who was a closeted gay man and came out of the closet at 63, and then had a 20-year relationship with a man who I think was the love of his life," Bettany says. "And then when that man, Andy, died, my father went back to sort of the dogma of his Catholicism, went back into the closet and refused to acknowledge his homosexuality. I guess he wanted to get into heaven. It was an awful thing to see. [To] watch him unable to mourn the love of his life. And it struck me that I might have a perspective that was useful to Alan in terms of realizing the vision for this character who is struggling to reconcile two parts of his life.

While Bettany is not queer, he understands something of the consequences when the queer history of a family member is hidden:

> "My father died and I was with him, and this is sort of amazing. He died, and in his pocket, I found a vial, a glass vial, of Andy's ashes," Bettany recalls. "So, despite him having entirely buried this 20-year love affair and relationship, he clearly kept him close in other ways. But you know, there are consequences. There are consequences for a family, being raised by somebody that is carrying that much of a secret and is experiencing that much shame, regarding who he is." (Ellwood)

It is this 'shame regarding who he is' that the queer biological fathers of the queer creators of the narratives which engage queeritage shared, the 'consequences' of which, that Bettany speaks of, are as we have seen, all the more challenging when the child is also queer.

One of the effects of dramatic narratives about queeritage, which take place within the realm of family life, is that people start thinking about the queer people in their own families. In a review of the film entitled, "American Beauty writer Alan Ball takes us back to 1973, when we all had an Uncle Frank," in *Mature Times*, a British newspaper

targeted toward those over the age of fifty, the reviewer begins by describing their own 'Uncle Frank.'

> One of my favourite relatives growing up was Uncle Frank, a soft-spoken, shy man who never married, seldom attended large family events, and, when not enduring some mundane job, drew beautiful pictures that inspired my sister to become an artist. Long after Uncle Frank died, as unassumingly as he lived, my mother speculated that her uncle was gay. My sister and I had heard of gay people by then, but never thought we knew one.
>
> Many of us probably had an uncle, or as in my case a great Uncle Frank – or an Aunt Frances. Writer-director Alan Ball, who is 63, must have had one, too, as his film, starring Paul Bettany, rings so true on many levels. (Glasser)

The prominence given in the review to the idea that everyone had a closeted queer relative in a prior generation speaks to how people relate dramatic narratives to their own lives. Amongst the things that stories that engage queeritage do is to provide a queer person who does not know the 'Uncle Frank' or 'Aunt Frances' in their family to imagine the probability of their existence. Alan Ball shared some of the strategizing of Amazon Prime, who distributed the film after it debuted at Sundance, in an interview with *The Indepenedent*:

> I hope that [helping to heal families] happens but I certainly never thought this is a movie that's going to bring people together. I just thought this is a story that breaks my heart and at the same time, feels hopeful. Which is, I guess, a place where, especially in America, we're all living right now. (Mottram)

Like the *Mature Times* reviewer and her sister who lived in a world where they could say they "had heard of gay people by then, but never thought we knew one," queer people are living in a world where they will hopefully no longer be able to say they 'never knew' about the other queer people in their family.

There are no revelations or public discussions if autobiographical queeritage played a role in the creation of *Bent*, the first dramatic narrative with queer characters in more than one generation of the same family, or in *The Lost Language of Cranes*, the first dramatic narrative that is *about* queeritage. The four other narratives which are about queeritage spring directly from an autobiographical discovery of it. I only came to be interested in the subject of queer family history a few years ago after meeting a distant cousin. She revealed to me that her uncle (my grandfather's first cousin), William Alexander Levy, had lived a much more radically queer life than I could ever even imagine to. Levy had been in a love triangle in the 1930s with the adventure/travel writer Richard Halliburton (considered a swashbuckling heartthrob, as familiar as Amelia Earhart in his day) whose sobriquet was "Daring Dick" and Paul Mooney, the ghost writer of Halliburton's books. Levy designed Halliburton's Laguna Beach home (Max), in what architecture critics have called an early example of queer space (Parra-Martínez, J., Gutiérrez-Mozo, M.-E. and Gilsanz-Díaz, A.-C.), with three adjoining bedrooms, one for each of the men. Halliburton and Mooney would die in 1939 while attempting to cross the Pacific Ocean in a Chinese junk and fade into history. One of Halliburton's legacies is Susan Sontag's crediting her reading of his books as a child with her decision to become a writer (Fadiman). Of course, Sontag did not know that Halliburton was queer, nor that his books were written by his lover Paul Mooney. After the deaths of Halliburton and Mooney, William Alexander Levy entered a relationship in 1940 with, the later to be pioneering queer activist, Harry Hay (then closeted and married to a woman), the two living together for seven months in Levy's Greenwich Village apartment (Max). This was one block away from where I would move, over a half-century later, to live, what I thought was, my uniquely queer life. Growing up in a family where every relative who

had achieved any sort of success or notoriety was discussed, how had I never heard of this queer antecedent? How differently might I have dealt with my own coming out or my own sense of belonging in my family if I had?

While every queer person may not have had a preceding queer family member as colorful as William Alexander Levy, it is surely the case that every family has a queer history.

Learning about the queer history of their own families Bechdel, Soloway, Gale and Ball crafted narratives which revolve around queeritage. The ways in which autobiography and queeritage interact in these narratives differ and converge. Bechdel did not reimagine what happened by fictionalizing her family story, but in her memoir reconsidered her childhood and what her relationship with her father meant in light of queeritage. All four writers discovered in adulthood that their biological fathers were queer. Bechdel, Gale and Ball are young adults when they learn this; Soloway is middle-aged. Bechdel, Gale and Ball first learn the information from their mothers rather than their fathers, and Soloway learns it from the person she will come to call "Moppa." Bechdel, Gale and Ball, wait decades before writing their queeritage narratives while Soloway begins right away. All four being personally aware of the profound effects that one's knowledge of queeritage bring about craft narratives which portray them.

Chapter VIII.

Conclusion

When the character Max sat down on a park bench with his uncle Freddie, in Martin Sherman's 1979 play *Bent*, something remarkable was taking place; a queer person in a dramatic narrative was interacting with a queer person from a prior generation of their own family. While this had never happened before, no one remarked on its novelty. Understandably, conversation and controversy about the play centered around its central revelation, the theretofore unexplored, treatment of homosexuals in Nazi Germany. Coming at the end of a decade of post-Stonewall queer liberation, the play also critiqued the value of primarily sexual liberation in which some queer people remained, like Max, possessed by an internalized belief that they were unworthy of love. When Max, in the play's final scene, realizes that he is indeed worthy and capable of love, he embraces his queer identity; queeritage was a vital link in the chain of events that brought this change about.

A few years into the HIV/AIDS crisis, David Leavitt's 1986 novel *The Lost Language of Cranes* and its mid-crisis 1991 film adaptation also presented a queer character who interacts with another queer character from a prior generation of their own family. A coming out story in which, for the first time, a child's coming out to their parents leads eventually to one of the parents coming out to them. It is a story about the fact that both son and father are queer and neither know that about the other. While *Bent* was the first iteration of queeritage in a dramatic narrative, *Cranes* was the first dramatic

narrative that was *about* queeritage. However, it was only, the straight, *New York Times* critic, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, in a review fraught with heteronormative language, who seemed to have grasped the significance of the father and son's queer connection as "what may be a scene unique in literature." Michael Cunningham's 1998 novel *The Hours* and its 2002 film adaptation offer a second iteration of queeritage during the crisis, wherein it functions as a plot device to join two of the three narratives in the work. While queeritage is unexplored in *The Hours,* it is extant. Its iteration comes at the end of the period when the overwhelming devastation of HIV/AIDS left little room in the queer imagination for the treatment of anything else.

In the 2001 - 2005 American incarnation of *Queer As Folk*, queeritage is established by the relationship of the queer character Michael with his queer uncle Frank, an HIV positive survivor of the HIV/AIDS crisis. *Folk* exuberantly portrayed a period of renewed sexual liberation brought about by more effective treatment and prevention of HIV which also saw queer political action for greater enfranchisement coalesce around the issue of same sex marriage. In addition to the primary relationship of queeritage in the series, it presented not one but two additional iterations in the relationships of Michael and his biological father Danny, portrayed in the context of fundraising for an HIV/AIDS charity and Lindsay and her deceased grandmother Faye in the context of Lindsay's wedding preparations.

Alison Bechdel's 2006 graphic novel, *Fun Home*, and its incarnation as a dramatic narrative as Lisa Kron's 2013 musical, present us again with queeritage in the form of a child and parent. It tells the story of a queer man who destroys himself by trying to fit into a heteronormative world, despite the newfound liberation of the 1970s, by remaining

in the closet with a wife and children. It tells this story from the vantage point of his queer daughter who is living in a time in which political progress is being made, progress that ultimately leads to the Supreme Court decision, *United States v. Windsor*, overturning the Defense of Marriage Act in the same year as the play's premiere at the Public Theater.

Joey Soloway's 2014 - 2019 TV series *Transparent* would be the most thorough exploration of queeritage to date and involve three generations of the same family. After the 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* Supreme Court decision guaranteed same sex couples the right to marry throughout the United States, there was a proliferation of dramatic narratives in which queeritage factors significantly, if not primarily, in what transpires. The social change brought about by the legalization of same sex marriage seems to have resulted in a legitimization of queer people whereby they can now be discussed within the context of what has been considered "family," a place where they have always existed but where it is now more common to talk of them having been.

Queeritage has been established in dramatic narratives between a queer character and their intergenerational queer relative by way of five fathers, three uncles and two grandfathers, by two mothers, one grandmother and one aunt. Until now, not only has there been no critical analysis of how these relationships function in their narratives but there has been no mention that something has changed and is changing about the way in which queer people are represented within an intergenerational family structure. Narratives in which queeritage exists now span many genres. Whether these portrayals occur on stage, film, or television; on Broadway in a straight play, or a musical; in a TV movie, or a major motion picture; on a premium subscription service, or network

television, taken together queeritage has entered the mainstream, appearing now in such iconically American genres as the Broadway musical, the situation comedy, and the Western.

Queeritage is, like prior media representations of queer life, slowly but surely moving from being portrayed only in a white male cisgender context to include its existence in female, transgender, non-binary and non-white narratives. *Transparent*'s 1934 and 1958 flashback scenes take place in the Los Angeles section of Boyle Heights a then ethnically diverse but predominantly Jewish neighborhood which included significant numbers of Mexican and Japanese Americans. *Vida* takes place in the same neighborhood, now predominantly Mexican American, a mainstay of Mexican American culture in Los Angeles and threatened, as the series portrays, by gentrification.[24] Whatever the ethnic character of the families that live in Boyle Heights may be in the future, it is certain, that queer people have and always will be in them. Almost all of the dramatic narratives that engage with queeritage either take place entirely, or to a significant degree, in a historical period prior to the time in which they were written: in *Bent*, the 1930s; *The Hours*, the 1950s; *Fun Home*, the 1970s; *Man in an Orange Shirt,* the 1940s, *Call Me by Your Name*, the 1980s, *Uncle Frank*, the 1970s, *Power of the Dog*, the 1920s; and/or employ flashbacks which take place prior to the narratives action: *Transparent,* 1930s and 1950s; *Uncle Frank,* 1950s; or intertextually employ home movies from the characters' childhoods: *Vida* 1990s. They reach back into history and tell the stories of queer people in the context of the biological families in which they lived.

[24] While the series sought to heighten awareness about the dangers of gentrification, the show's filming in Boyle Heights became itself a subject of protest by some neighborhood activists trying to stop gentrification (Reyes-Velarde).

With portrayals of queeritage increasingly widespread, it is perplexing that neither queer theorists nor critics have commented on, or even identified, this theme. Is there something about familial relationships that would lead to this oversight? An example, taken from the field of anthropology, might provide part of the explanation. In Stanford anthropologist Liisa Mallki's study of Hutu refugees and their mythico-history, *Purity and Exile*, she describes how refugees from different parts of Burundi, who were "thrown together" in a camp in Tanzania, had gone about changing the way in which they interacted with an internalized colonial idea about themselves versus the Tutsi (from whom they had fled):

> What the refugees described was a kind of collective effervescence of consciousness, an intensive period of intellectual and political awakening. People from very different regions of Burundi who had had little to do with each other prior to 1972 were thrown together in exile with a strong consciousness of the fact that they were there because of something they all had in common, their Hutuness. (102)

In a chapter section entitled, "The Breakdown of Ruling Colonizing Ideas," she continues:

> The oppositional character of the Hutu mythico-history was rendered more complex by the fact that the refugees' attack on the mythico-historical versions constructed by the "other," "the Tutsi," implicitly *linked* them with precisely these versions. Thus while the Hutu mythico-history challenged by denaturalizing the ruling ideas (Marx and Engels [1846] 1970) of the Tutsi version of a national history, it simultaneously incorporated certain features of this opposing version into itself. Acceptance of the "beauty" of "the Tutsi" is but one example. Far from claiming an alternative standard of beauty, people in Mishamo seemed to fully agree with what they themselves saw as Tutsi criteria—and with what were in fact also, largely colonial European criteria. In this sense, then, it seems that certain aspects of the "Tutsi version" had penetrated the Hutu mythico-history. But if the thought of the Hutu refugees was to some extent "colonized," by their Tutsi rulers, it was equally clear that any Tutsi hegemony, was subject as all hegemonies are, to subversive reworkings. Thus even while the Hutu accepted the

> description of the Tutsi as "beautiful" they were busy revaluing beauty itself, casting it as a sign, not of nobility or virtue, but of evil and danger. (102 - 103)

Queer people were forced for so long to be refugees from their biological families by literally leaving them or else exiling their queerness from them and living in secrecy. It is possible that familial relationships became, for queer theorists and commentators, devalued, not worthy of consideration, causing them to be ignored even when they were with, as in these queeritage narratives, other queer family members. There is no doubt that the erasure of queer family history has historically led many queer people to believe that they were the only queer person that ever existed in their family and the lack of a critical discussion of queeritage acts to perpetuate this myth.

Queeritage in dramatic narratives dispels the myth that queer people are alien to a particular family. When Maura Pfefferman, a Jewish-American academic says, "Some people say it runs in the blood" (*Transparent* 1/6 7:20 - 7:23), and "Maybe it runs in the family" (4/9 18:05 - 18:07); when Lyn Hernandez, a Mexican-American, vegan, free spirit, says of her sister Emma, a lawyer, "I guess it runs in the family" (*Vida* 1/3 6:48 - 6:51); and when Mammaw Bledsoe, the elderly matriarch of a white family in rural South Carolina offers to her son, regarding his queer great uncle, "I figured that's probably why you were. I mean if being curly-headed is something that gets passed down, why not..." (*Uncle Frank* 1:27:03 - 1:27:13); we understand that there is no family to which queeritage is alien.

Across time and place, when a persecution of LGBTQ+ people occurs, political leaders legitimize these actions by claiming that homosexuality, or gender nonconformity, is something alien to their culture. This has occurred in circumstances as

vastly different as 1930s Denmark, where it was argued that it came from Berlin; 1950s America, where it was considered to be part of a communist conspiracy; or current day Russia and Poland where it is considered non-Slavic; or African, Asian and Caribbean nations, where it is considered to have been brought there by the colonizers, when it is often only penal codes which punish it which are such a vestige; or Iran or Chechnya, where the very existence of homosexuals is completely denied, while at the same time they are killed by the state or imprisoned. What is a nation state that believes homosexuality is something foreign to it other than a collection of families within it which believes the same thing, that "'nobody in this family' was ever that way?" If queeritage exists in every family, it must in every nation.

In a full quarter of the narratives which engage with queeritage at least one queer person commits suicide. *The Hours*' Virginia Woolf, and Richard Brown; *Fun Home*'s Bruce Bechdel; and in *Uncle Frank*, Sam Lassiter and, we are led to believe, Frank Bledsoe, until he reappears, meet this fate. While the history of the trope of queer suicide is complex,[25] so too is the reality that in the United States, while most LGBTQ+ teenagers, and the adults they go on to become, live healthy and productive lives, LGBTQ+ people continue to be disproportionally impacted by suicide. According to UCLA School of Law's Williams Institute, "a 2016 review of research found 17% of LGB adults had attempted suicide during their lifetime, compared with 2.4% of the general population" (Williams; Hottes). According to the Trevor Project's 2020 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health—the largest such survey ever

[25] For a thorough discussion of its history originating in Weimar Germany and its continuing influence see "Death Wish: Suicide and Stereotype in the Gay Discourses of Imperial and Weimar Germany" (Huneke).

conducted in the United States with 40,000 respondents between the ages of thirteen and twenty-four—"40% of LGBTQ respondents seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months [and m]ore than half of transgender and nonbinary youth have seriously considered suicide" ("Trevor Project, 2020"). While one might be tempted to believe that such high rates of suicidal ideation are the result of the multiple crises of 2020, these percentages were completely in line with the Trevor Project's 2019 survey of 34,000 respondents where the respective figures for LGBTQ youth were 39% including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth (Trevor Project, 2021).

According to, what its authors believe to be, the first study that explores the "association between family rejection and negative health outcomes," amongst transgender and gender nonconforming adults in 2016:

> After adjusting for sociodemographic factors, having experienced high levels of family rejection was associated with almost three and a half times the odds of suicide attempts and two and a half times the odds of substance misuse, compared to those who experienced little or no family rejection. Having experienced only moderate levels of family rejection was associated with almost twice the odds of suicide attempts and over 1.5 times the odds of substance misuse. These findings suggest the importance of investigating and addressing stigmatization experienced by transgender persons by close others, not only by broader society, structures, and systems. (Klein, Golub, 195)

The effect of family rejection on queer youth is even more profound. The Trevor Project "estimates that at least one LGBTQ youth between the ages of 13-24 attempts suicide every 45 seconds in the U.S." ("Estimate"). Despite all the gains that have been made post-Stonewall in the United States with greater societal acceptance of queer people, queer youth are five times more likely to attempt suicide then their heterosexual peers. For transgender queer youth who are rejected by their biological families this

increases by a factor of eight making them forty times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight cisgender counterparts.

Clinical psychologist Marshall Duke and researcher Robyn Fivush at Emory University have done pioneering work since 2000 on the way in which, controlling for all other factors, an adolescent's resilience can be predicted by the degree to which they know their family's stories. Duke and Fivush's research on adolescents and the effects of 9/11, and with descendants of holocaust survivors, spurred them to develop a theory of the intergenerational self and the role that family stories play in its development:

> Within the family, children's knowledge of family history has been found to be positively related to their family functioning, children's internal locus of self-control, and self-esteem and negatively related to anxiety and internalizing behaviors. (Duke, Lazarus & Fivush, 2008; Fivush et al., 2008). Thus, simply knowing family history seems to be a positive indicator for psychological functioning in children. (Merrill, Fivush, 2016, 83)

In adolescents, Merrill and Fivush found that those "who know more about their family history show higher levels of identity development, higher self-esteem and lower behavioral problems than adolescents who know less of their family history" (84) and also contribute to feelings of generativity in mid-life (89). They point out, however that there is a "potentially problematic assumption about the homogeneity of how these processes play out" (85). As a consequence, they suggest that "research on a variety of populations as well as research incorporating a variety of perspectives on identity development would provide a richer understanding of what intergenerational narratives mean in individuals lives" (89).

Fivush did a study examining how family stories that are told in New Zealand differ amongst those of Chinese Maori and European ancestry (Reese et al). It was only

in 2021, however, that scholars began looking into whether knowledge of family history had positive psychological effects for queer people. Researchers at The New School looked at three groups of adult women who self-identified as either heterosexual, "masculine presenting sexual minority women," or "feminine presenting sexual minority women" to determine if knowing their family of origin's history lessened depressive symptoms. They found that within these three groups "only heterosexual women who knew more about their family of origin history showed lower levels of depression" (Gardella et al, 7). They also found that "all three groups of [adult] women who knew more about their chosen family reported lower depressive symptoms" (7). As a result, they argued that "[w]hile connections to our family of origin are likely critical for healthy identity development and wellbeing in adolescence, our findings suggest that friendship plays an important role in sustaining wellbeing in adulthood for SM [sexual minority] and heterosexual populations, potentially for different reasons" (7).

Queer people have queered the very idea of kinship so it is natural to ask what the value of stories that portray queer people in the context of a traditional family structure —what many consider a now moribund form of social organization—might be. In addition to providing examples of queeritage giving the lie to the idea that a young queer person is anathema to their family. By extension they dispel the myth that queer people are alien to any given society comprised of families. The point of exploring how intergenerational queer familial relationships are portrayed is not to reify the family.

Regardless of what one believes about its usefulness, the family remains the primary way in which people throughout the world are organized and a queer person needs to be old enough to have the autonomy and agency to leave their biological or

adoptive family and to find a chosen family. Queeritage narratives may help them survive until they are able to find this new family. It may also serve a role in making it less likely that a family would reject them before they are able to.

Now that queer people have more opportunity to start their own legally recognized families through childbirth or adoption, some of those children, born or adopted, will also be queer and will grow up with one or more queer parents. Dramatic narratives that are written about and by them will add new twists on queeritage. Some queer theorists might see the proliferation of queeritage narratives as the latest salvo in the struggle between assimilationist and liberationist forces in queer life. Perhaps they provide an opportunity to queer this binary and by doing so, queer, with regard to familial relationships, what it means to be queer.

In queer rabbi Jill Hammer's exegesis of Genesis 47:28-50:26, "Uncovering Joseph's Bones," she describes the biblical and rabbinic evidence for the biblical figure Joseph's being considered queer and recounts how his bones had to be found and carried with the Jewish people as they made their way out of captivity in Egypt. Hammer argues that the story of "Joseph teaches us that remembering is as important as physical survival in establishing identity...Queer folk too must find the gift of memory, even when memory has been repressed. We must search for the bones of our queer ancestors wherever they are hidden. We cannot leave Egypt without them" (Hammer 71). The Jewish people would wander in the desert for 40 years. It has been a bit longer than 40 years since queeritage first appeared in a dramatic narrative in Martin Sherman's 1979 play *Bent.* After sparse appearances of the theme during the HIV/AIDS crisis, the first two decades of the twenty-first century have seen an increasing number of iterations of queeritage in

dramatic narratives, six of those discussed here, in the past five years. Perhaps it is time for scholarship to take note and for queer people to finally be allowed to come home.

References

Bogart, Anne. “The Role of Storytelling in the Theatre of the Twenty-First Century.” *HowlRound Theatre Commons*, HowlRound Theatre, howlround.com/role-storytelling-theatre-twenty-first-century.

Bronski, Michael. *The Pleasure Principle: Sex, Backlash, and the Struggle for Gay Freedom*. 1st Stonewall Inn ed., St. Martin's Press, 2000.

---. *A Queer History of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2011.

Burt, Stephanie. “Transparent's Greatest Trans Legacy Is How Quickly It Grew Irrelevant.” *Vulture*, Vulture, 26 Sept. 2019, https://www.vulture.com/2019/09/transparents-trans-legacy-is-how-quickly-it-grew-irrelevant.html.

Butler, Isaac. “Transparent Is the Most Jewish TV Show Ever.” *Slate Magazine*, Slate, 27 Sept. 2017, https://slate.com/culture/2017/09/transparent-is-a-profoundly-jewish-tv-show.html.

Call Me By Your Name, Directed by Luca Guadagnino, Sony Pictures, 2017.

Coontz, Stephanie. *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families*. Basic Books, 1998

Dempsey, Anna M. “Jill Soloway's Transparent: Transgender Memory and a Tale of Two

Cities.” *Gender & History*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2018, pp. 803–819.

Denby, David. "How 'The Hours' Happened." *The New Yorker*, 16 Mar. 2003, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/03/24/how-the-hours-happened.

Doty, Mark. "On Eric Rhein: Maps and Treasures." *Eric Rhein: Lifelines*. First edition., Institute 193, 2019.

Edelman, Lee. “The Future Is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive.” *Narrative*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1998, pp. 18–30.

Ellwood, Gregory. “Paul Bettany Has a Heartbreaking Personal Connection to His New Film.” *The Playlist*, 17 Nov. 2020, https://theplaylist.net/paul-bettany-personal-connection.uncle-frank-20201117/.

“Estimate of How Often LGBTQ Youth Attempt Suicide in the U.S.” *The Trevor Project*, 30 Sept. 2021, https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/estimate-of-how-often-lgbtq-youth-attempt-suicide-in-the-u-s/.

Fadiman, Anne, et al. “The Books that Changed their Lives.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 7 Dec. 1997, www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/1997/12/07/the-books-that-changed-their-lives/a1bf8e95-bb19-44b7-91fa-38fb3592e00b/.

Fox, Meghan C. “Alison Bechdel's Fun Home: Queer Futurity and the Metamodernist Memoir.” *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 65, no. 3, 2019, pp. 511–537.

Framke, Caroline. “Will & Grace Is Back, and so Is the Debate Over Its Place in

LGBTQ History." *Vox*, Vox, 29 Sept. 2017, https://www.vox.com/fall-tv/2017/9/29/16360962/will-and-grace-history-controversy.

Gale, Patrick. "My Father's Love for Another Man: How I Turned My Parents' Tragic Secret into a TV Drama." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 28 July 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/jul/28/my-fathers-love-for-another-man-patrick-gale-man-in-an-orange-shirt.

---. "Patrick Gale: 'I Turned My Great-Grandfather Gay'." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 28 Mar. 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/28/patrick-gale-a-place-called-winter-great-grandfather-canadian-settler.

Gardella, Jamie M., et al. "Knowledge of Chosen Family History and Depressive Symptoms in Sexual Minority Women." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, Frontiers Media SA, 2021, pp. 624641–624641, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.624641.

Gelfand, Rachel. *Nobody's Baby: Queer Intergenerational Thinking Across Oral History, Archives, and Visual Culture.* 2018. University of North Carolina, PhD dissertation.

Gioia, Christopher. "Felice Picano Interview," *Stonewall: Riot, Rebellion, Activism and Identity*, accessed March 26, 2021, https://stonewallhistory.omeka.net/items/show/8

Glasser, Joyce. "American Beauty Writer Alan Ball Takes Us Back to 1973, When We All Had an Uncle Frank." *Mature Times*, 8 Dec. 2020,

https://www.maturetimes.co.uk/american-beauty-writer-alan-ball-takes-us-back-to-1973-when-we-all-had-an-uncle-frank/.

Green, Penelope. “They Live in Public.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 13 Oct. 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/13/style/jill-soloway.html.

Griffiths, Kimberley. *Fugitive Dead: Queer Temporality and the Project of Revisioning in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*. 2013. McMaster University, MA Thesis. https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/bitstream/11375/13507/1/fulltext.pdf

Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place*. NYU Press, 2005.

Hammer, Jill. “Twelve. Uncovering Joseph’s Bones.” *Torah Queeries*, New York University Press, New York, USA, 2020, pp. 68–72.

Harding, Laura. “Alan Ball: Uncle Frank Reflects My Own Struggles of Being Gay in the US South.” *The Irish News*, 27 Nov. 2020, https://www.irishnews.com/arts/2020/11/27/news/alan-ball-uncle-frank-reflects-my-own-struggles-of-being-gay-in-the-us-south-2140493/.

Henderson, Taylor. “'Uncle Frank' Is Alan Ball's Most Personal Gay-Themed Project Yet.” *ADVOCATE*, Advocate.com, 25 Nov. 2020, https://www.advocate.com/exclusives/2020/11/25/uncle-frank-alan-balls-most-personal-gay-themed-project-yet.

Hess, Linda M. “'My Whole Life I've Been Dressing Up Like a Man': Negotiations of Queer Aging and Queer Temporality in the TV Series Transparent.” European Journal of American Studies, vol. 11, no. 3, 2017, p. 38.

Hottes, Travis Salway, et al. “Lifetime Prevalence of Suicide Attempts Among Sexual Minority Adults by Study Sampling Strategies: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.” *American Journal of Public Health (1971)*, vol. 106, no. 5, 2016, pp. E1–E12, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303088.

Horvat, Anamarija. “Haunting and Queer Histories: Representing Memory in Jill Soloway's Transparent.” *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2020, pp. 398–413.

The Hours. Directed by Steven Daldry, Paramount Pictures, Miramax, 2002.

Huneke, Samuel Clowes. “Death Wish: Suicide and Stereotype in the Gay Discourses of Imperial and Weimar Germany.” *Duke University Press*, Oxford University Press, 1 Feb. 2019, https://read.dukeupress.edu/new-german-critique/article-abstract/46/1%20(136)/127/137515/Death-WishSuicide-and-Stereotype-in-the-Gay.

Hunt, Stacey Wilson. “'Transparent' Boss Reveals the Moment She Decided to Make a Show about a Transgender Parent.” *The Hollywood Reporter*, The Hollywood Reporter, 29 Dec. 2014, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/transparent-boss-reveals-moment-she-758426/.

“Jill Soloway Acceptance Speech.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 18 June 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i91ReC_YnrU&t=128s.

Jones, Jeffrey. “LGBT Identification Rises to 5.6% in Latest U.S. Estimate.” *Gallup.Com*, 2 Feb. 2021, news.gallup.com/poll/329708/lgbt-identification-rises-latest-estimate.aspx.

Klein, Augustus, Golub, Sarit A., "Family Rejection as a Predictor of Suicide Attempts and Substance Misuse Among Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Adults." *LGBT Health*, 3(3), 2016.

Krassner, Jonathan. “The Interwar Family and American Jewish Identity in Clifford Odets’s *Awake and Sing!*” *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* n.s. 13, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 2-30.

Kron, Lisa, et al. *Fun Home*. Samuel French, 2014.

Lehmann-Haupt, Christopher. "Books of the Times." *The New York Times*, 11, Sept. 1986, p. C24.

Levy, Ariel. “The Radical Mind Behind ‘Transparent.’” *The New Yorker*, 7 Dec. 2015, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/12/14/dolls-and-feelings.

Little, Lyneka. “Joe Biden Says 'Will and Grace' Helped Change Public Opinion on Gay Rights.” The Wall Street Journal, Dow Jones &Company, 7 May 2012, www.wsj.com/articles/BL-SEB-69987.

The Lost Language of Cranes. Directed by Nigel Finch, BBC, 1991.

Lowenthal, Michael. *The Same Embrace*. Dutton, 1998.

---. "Saying Kaddish for Peter." Bouldrey, Brian. *Wrestling with the Angel*, edited by Brian Bouldrey, Riverhead Books, 1995, pp. 259-263.

Malkki, Lisa. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania*. The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Martanovschi, Ludmila; and Gary Edward Holcomb. *Family Ties: an Introduction to Postwar American Drama*. Institutul European, 2012.

Max, Gerry. *Horizon Chasers: The Lives and Adventures of Richard Halliburton and Paul Mooney*. McFarland & Co., 2007.

McNally, Terrence. *Love! Valour! Compassion!; and, A Perfect Ganesh: Two Plays*. Plume, 1995.

Merrill, Natalie, and Robyn Fivush. "Intergenerational Narratives and Identity Across Development." *Developmental Review*, vol. 40, Elsevier Inc, 2016, pp. 72–92, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2016.03.001.

Miller, Arthur. "Family in Modern Drama, The." *The Atlantic* (Boston, Mass), vol. 197, 1956, pp. 35-40.

Mitgang, Herbert. "David Leavitt, A Writer to Watch." *The New York Times*, 8 November 1984, p. C25.

Mottram, James. "Alan Ball Interview: 'I Wonder If American Beauty Would Get Made Now'." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 27 Nov. 2020, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/alan-ball-interview-uncle-frank-american-beauty-b1742366.html.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia*. NYU Press, 2009.

Murray, Heather. *Not in This Family: Gays and the Meaning of Kinship in Postwar North America*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

O'Connor, John J., "Reviews/Television; A Faithful (and Grown-Up) 'Language of Cranes.'" *The New York Times*, 24 Jun. 1992, p. C29.

Panisch, Alex. “5 Things We Learned from Queer as Folk's Creators, 15 Years On.” *OUT*, Out Magazine, 7 Aug. 2015, https://www.out.com/popnography/2015/8/07/5-things-we-learned-queer- folks-creators-10-years.

Parra-Martínez, J., Gutiérrez-Mozo, M.-E. and Gilsanz-Díaz, A.-C., 2020. "Queering California Modernism: Architectural Figurations and Media Exposure of Gay Domesticity in the Roosevelt Era." *Architectural Histories*, 8(1) p.14.

Pearl, Monica B. “Graphic Language.” Prose Studies, vol. 30, no. 3, 2008, pp. 286–304.

Picano, Felice. *Like People In History*, Viking Penguin, 1995.

The Power of the Dog. Directed by Jane Campion, Netflix, 2021.

Queer As Folk, Based on *Queer As Folk* by Russell T. Davies, Developed by Ron Cowan and Daniel Lipman, Showtime, 2000-2005.

Reese, Elaine, et al. “Adolescents' Intergenerational Narratives Across Cultures.” *Developmental Psychology*, vol. 53, no. 6, American Psychological Association, 2017, pp. 1142–53, https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000309.

Reyes-Valarde, Alejandra. “A TV Show Chronicling Gentrification in Boyle Heights Is Protested as an Example of, Well, Gentrification.” *Los Angeles Times*, Los

Angeles Times, 1 Sept. 2018, https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-boyle-heights-tv-show-protests-20180901-story.html.

Russo, Vito. *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. Rev. ed., Harper & Row,1987.

Scanlan, Tom. *Family, Drama, and American Dreams*. Contributions in American Studies; no. 35. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978.

Sherman, Martin. *Bent*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.

Sisters. Created by Noa Erenberg and Galit Hoogi, Yes Stars Comedy Channel, (2016 -).

Solomon, Alisa. "Performance: Queerly Jewish/Jewishly Queer in the American Theater." *The Cambridge History of Jewish American Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, pp. 547–565.

Thurm, Eric. "'Transparent' Is the Most Jewish Show on Television." *Esquire*, Esquire, 21 Aug. 2020, https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/tv/a49295/judaism-on-transparent-jill-soloway/.

"The Trevor Project National Survey 2020." *The Trevor Project*, https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2020/?section=Introduction.

---. 2021. The Trevor Project, https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/The-Trevor-Project-National-Survey-Results-2021.pdf.

Transparent. Created by Joey Soloway, Amazon, 2014-2019.

Uncle Frank. Directed by Alan Ball, Miramax, 2020.

Vida. Created by Tanya Saracho, Starz, 2018-2020.

Villarreal, Yezmin. “The Love Story of Jill Soloway and Eileen Myles.” *ADVOCATE*, Advocate.com, 28 Oct. 2016, https://www.advocate.com/love-and-sex/2016/10/27/love- story-jill-soloway-and-eileen-myles.

Wakefield, Thaddeus. *The Family in Twentieth-Century American Drama*. 2003.

Weinert-Kendt, Rob. “How 'Bent' Made Gay History.” *Center Theatre Group*, Center Theatre Group, 3 July 2015, https://www.centertheatregroup.org/news-and-blogs/news/2015/july/how-bent-made-gay-history/.

Weston, Kath. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. Columbia University Press, 1991.

Will & Grace. NBC. Created by David Kohan and Max Mutchnick, 1998-2006 and 2017-2020.

The Williams Institute. “Suicide Prevention Month: A Summary of Data on LGBT Suicide.” *Williams Institute*, 22 Sept. 2020, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/suicide-prevention-media-alert/.

Works Consulted

Benshoff, Harry M., and Sean. Griffin. *Queer Cinema: The Film Reader*. Routledge, 2004.

Butler, Judith. "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 13 no. 1, 2002, p. 14-44.

Christopher Castiglia, and Christopher Reed. "'Ah, Yes, I Remember It Well': Memory and Queer Culture in 'Will and Grace.'" *Cultural Critique*, vol. 56, no. 56, 2004, pp. 158–188.

Gillespie, Benjamin, and Rowen, Bess. "Against Chronology: Intergenerational Pedagogical Approaches to Queer Theatre and Performance Histories." *Theatre Topics*, vol. 30, no. 2,2020, pp. 69–83.

Gowing, Laura. "LGBT Histories and the Politics of Identity." *History, Memory and Public Life*, 1st ed., Routledge, 2018, pp. 294–316.

Levison, Jenny. "'Fun Home' and the Continuity of Alienation." *Lilith Magazine*, lilith.org, 16 Jan. 2014, www.lilith.org/articles/fun-home-and-the-continuity-of-alienation.

Ludot-Vlasak, Ronan. "Canon Trouble: Intertextuality and Subversion in Queer as Folk." *TV Series (Le Havre)*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2016, pp. 265–276.

"LGBTQ Inclusion in Advertising & Media." *GLAAD*, 27 May 2020, www.glaad.org/inclusion.

Mason, Olivia. "'Man In An Orange Shirt' Is a Moving Study of Love and Shame." *Earlybirdbooks.com*, Early Bird Books, 15 June 2018, earlybirdbooks.com/man-in-an-orange-shirt-trailer.

Murray, Iana. "The Author of 'Call Me by Your Name' Is Ready to Make You Cry Again." *GQ*, GQ.COM, 29 Oct. 2019,

https://www.gq.com/story/the-author-of-call-me-by-your-name-is-ready-to-make-you-cry-again#:~:text=The%20Author%20of%20Call%20Me,book's%20new%20sequel%2C%20Find%20Me.

Queer As Folk. Created by Russell T. Davies, Channel 4, 1999-2000.

Roden, Frederick S. "Queer Jewish Memory: André Aciman's *Call Me By Your Name*." *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2019, pp. 194-211.