



Queer Children's Film and Television

Programme at a Glance (01 March 2024, GMT):

Opening Remarks (panels linked) Passcode: 811620	9:00-9:15 GMT
Panel 1a: Topics in Queer Animation (Chair: Abigail Jenkins) Passcode: 700327	9:30-10:45
Enes Akdağ: (A)Sexual or (De)Sexual (Re)Presentations of Childhood?: Tracing the Split Attraction Model in <i>Big Mouth</i> (2017-2024)	
Sophia Staite: The Superhero Formerly Known as Prince of Sorrow	
Richard Squires: 'The Perpetrators: Queer Childhood, Memory and the 1980s	
Panel 1b: Queer Subjectivity and Spectatorship (Chair: Rachel Milne) Passcode: 203317	9:30-10:45
River Seager: Notes on directing a documentary on queer anime fandom	
Em (Emma) Tarasenko: Queering the screen (back): exploration of gender and sexuality in russophone teenage online fan communities	
Sonia Ghalian & Lakhan Raghuvanshi: Beyond the Norm: Unearthing Queer Narratives in Indian Children's Films	
Keynote Jacqueline Ristola: Animating Queerness: Forms and Figures in Contemporary Children's Television Animation Passcode: 562502	11:00-12:00
Panel 2a: Fantasy & Sci Fi (Chair: Rachel Milne) Passcode: 407755	12:00-1:15
Judy Harris: Fluid Forms In A Hybrid World: Maurice Tourneur's <i>The Bluebird</i> (1918)	
Catalina Paz Fritis Estay: Made of Love: How fantasy is used to smuggle queerness and allegorise heterocisnormativity in <i>Steven Universe</i>	
Aneesh Barai: Normalising Gender Diversity? An Exploration of Non-binary Characters in Recent (Science) Fantasy Animated Series	
Panel 2b: Queer Kinship and Family Structures (Chair: Abigail Jenkins) Passcode: 600703	12:00-1:15
Rritwika Roychowdhury: Disney-Pixar's <i>Turning Red</i> : Expressions of Nontraditional Gender Dynamics	
Joshua Fagan: Breaking the Disney Spell: Radicalism and Queer Community in <i>The Owl House</i>	
Apoorva Juneja & Mrinalini Kumar: From 'Other' to my <i>Dear Dad</i> (2016): 'Son-light' on the mystique of Queerness	
LUNCH Break for Lunch	1:15-2:15
Panel 3a: Queering Disney Studies (Chair: Rachel Milne) Passcode: 945207	2:30-3:45
Kendall Belopavlovich: The Binary Broke It: How Disney's Feminist Live Action Remake of <i>Mulan</i> (2020) Failed to Transcend the Male-Female Divide	
Ashmita Biswas: Heterosexuality To The Rescue: Exploring Queer Temporality in <i>Snow White</i> (1937), <i>Cinderella</i> (1950), & <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (1959)	
Sayantani Chakraborty: Let kids be kids: A look into the policing of FTV content for young queer audiences & respective resistance toward representation	
Panel 3b: Queer Histories and Temporalities (Chair: Abigail Jenkins) Passcode: 727412	2:30-3:45
Michael Brodski: Exploring Queer Poetics and Soviet Reality in the Children's Films of Rolan Bykov	
Ritoshree Chatterjee: The Blue Octopus In The Room: Reading The Queer Anthropomorph In Early 2000s Children's Cartoons In India	
Alex Moran: Animating Utopia: The Here and Now of Queer Futurity	
Panel 4a: Queer Coding and Transformation (Chair: Abigail Jenkins) Passcode: 539212	4:00-5:15
Kinga Erzepki: From a Monster to a Millennial: The Person of Indeterminate Gender from the Netflix adaptation of <i>A Series of Unfortunate Events</i>	
Jiyuan Li: A Queer Home-(Be)Coming: Reading Queerness and Kinship in <i>Everything Everywhere All at Once</i> (2022)	
Alesha Serada: The Gay Bluey and the Flamboyant Spirit of the Swamp: Queer Coding in Soviet Children's Screen Media	
Panel 4b: Queer Joy and Imagination (Chair: Rachel Milne) Passcode: 710121	4:00-5:15
Ibtisam Ahmed: Radical Empowerment – Queer Hope and Joy in <i>Heartstopper</i>	
Rin MacRitchie: Into the Unknown: Queering Naming and the Non-human in <i>Over the Garden Wall</i>	
Lance Weldy: The Best Campy, Queer, Iconic Christmas Ever: <i>Pee-Wee's Playhouse</i> Christmas Special	
Closing Remarks and Social Space Passcode: 782006	5:15-5:45



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09:00-09:15: Opening Remarks

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96285703483?pwd=VDZXZ3FOY1Y0dXkrd201ZVhFZnkzUT09>

Meeting ID: 962 8570 3483

Passcode: 811620

09:30-10:45: First Sessions

Panel 1a: Topics in Queer Animation (Chair: Abigail Jenkins)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/95089110722?pwd=Y01tc0Z6aXNHMldEUzV0KzJqblA1QT09>

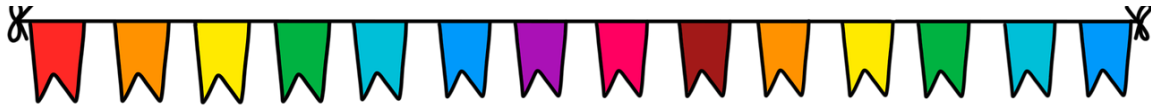
Meeting ID: 950 8911 0722

Passcode: 700327

Enes Akdağ: “(A)Sexual or (De)Sexual (Re)Presentations of Childhood?: Tracing the Split Attraction Model in *Big Mouth* (2017-2024)”

Asexual spectrum has the least explicitly affirmed representations and lesser screen times, in streaming era. GLAAD's Where We Are on TV Report 2022-2023 indicates that the number of characters in asexual spectrum has risen to eight, from two. Ongoing discussions on current representations of asexual community, among asexuals on AVEN2 blog, Reddit and The Asexual Agenda has been underlined four key distinctions, for more affirmative representations: (1) The split attraction model offers that sexual attraction and romantic attraction might be different from each other. (2) Sexual attraction and attitudes towards sex are quite different than each other. (3) Asexuality is not the same as celibacy or sexual abstinence. (4) Asexuals have equal mental, social, physical capabilities to allosexuals. One of the hit Netflix original series *Big Mouth* (2017-2024), recently introduced and explicitly confirmed heteroromantic asexual character, Elijah, 13 years old, black kid, who has love interest for his classmate Missy, in season 6. In this research piece, starting from split attraction model, the researcher will trace how four distinctions above have been applied or disregarded in *Big Mouth*'s season 6.

Enes Akdağ received his bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations, and pursued a double major in Cinema and Television, from Istanbul Sehir University. He earned his masters degree in the Media and Communication Studies, from Galatasaray University, with his thesis titled "Current Aspects of Communal Viewing Experience: Subscription Video-On-Demand Platforms and Online Watch Parties". He has been studying in the Communication Studies PhD Program, at Kadir Has University. His current research interests lie in fields of children's media, cinematic narration, digital ethnography, new cinema history, and queer cinema. Recently, he joined Kadir Has University Core Programme as guest lecturer.



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Sophia Staite: "The Superhero Formerly Known as Prince of Sorrow"

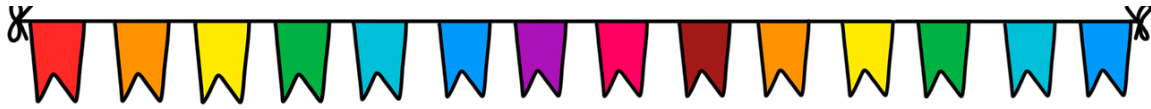
The television programmes adults create for children, and the reception of those programmes by children, may be read as a mirror reflecting the cultural constructions of childhood. Early childhood television is a site of particular interest for such readings, because this audience are moving from uncivilised, unregulated, and unboundaried toddlerhood (see Tobin, 1997, p. 19) through the transition into formal schooling and the beginnings of literacy. The process of adapting a children's text transculturally involves adjusting what adults are asking of children (Rose 1993, p. 137) through that text, bringing the request into alignment with the cultural and temporal priorities of the dominant construction of childhood in the new location. In 1995 Haim Saban, attempting to capitalise on the success of *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*, debuted a new early childhood series: Saban's *Masked Rider*. This series repurposed footage from Japanese superhero franchise *Kamen Rider* (1971 – ongoing), intercut with newly filmed American footage to create an action-sitcom. Drawing on Dina Georgis' claim that 'queer' could be understood as "the parts of us that refuse to be colonized into affable, upright subjects" (2013, p. 118) and Hannah Dyer's suggestion that child development could be conceptualised as a struggle against "letting go of queer affect" (Dyer, 2020, p. 3), I read Saban's *Masked Rider* as a text that, through its particularly clumsy attempts at matching Japanese footage with American constructions of childhood, offers a queering glimpse at an alternative developmental trajectory and different gendered affordances.

Sophia Staite recently completed their PhD, titled *Mighty Morphin' Childhood*, at the University of Tasmania, Australia. Their research interests include Japanese media, childhood, and gender.

Richard Squires: "The Perpetrators: Queer Childhood, Memory and the 1980s"

Suburban London, the 1980s. A stranger in the family becomes a ghost child and awakens the monsters and desires of a queer childhood... Commenced during lockdown and shot in the neighbourhoods the filmmaker grew up in, *THE PERPETRATORS* collages moody analogue film, original animation and archival materials in a dreamy autofiction of queer darkness that ponders the correlations between *Stranger Danger*, the construction of homosexual identity and the institution of the family. The screening will be followed by a presentation elaborating on aspects of queer childhood, memory and the 1980s broached in the film.

Richard Squires is a London-based visual artist and academic who works predominantly with film, drawing and animation. His work is shown internationally in galleries, broadcast, and at film festivals. Recent screenings include Queer Lisboa; BFI London Film Festival; Rotterdam International Film Festival; Animator, Poland and Sicilia Queer Film Fest. Squires' practice-based PhD research utilises the essay film to interrogate 1980s images of 'gay male depravity' through the lens of queer negativity. <http://lmfyffproductions.com/the-perpetrators/>



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Panel 1b: Queer Subjectivity and Spectatorship (Chair: Rachel Milne)

<https://zoom.us/j/92181948787?pwd=Q1Z5TnA2WU5RdFFWbXRjL3RMb2MxZz09>

Meeting ID: 921 8194 8787

Passcode: 203317

River Seager: "Notes on directing a documentary on queer anime fandom"

This year I directed a documentary titled "I Am a Cyborg: Conversations About Queerness and Anime Fandom." This film is made up of interviews with LGBT individuals discussing their anime fandom engagement and has been selected to be shown at the 2023 Scottish Queer International Film Festival (SQIFF). Increasingly, the aesthetics of anime appear to compose a major part of semiotic discussion within LGBT, and particularly trans, communities. As scholar Riley Hannah Lewicki notes, 'While understudied, it is clear to those within Western trans-feminine online spaces that anime and manga are exceptionally popular in these spaces compared to the general population' (2022). This can also be seen in recent trans literature and art, a notable example being the novels of writer Porpentine Charity Heartscape, who describes her work as 'post-anime' in nature, or the band Black Dresses, whose music videos incorporate a host of anime-inspired aesthetics. However, there is a lack of academic research exploring this emerging aesthetic interplay. Throughout my documentary, a recurring theme is the significance these texts had in allowing the interview subjects to articulate their identity during childhood. This paper will ruminate on the specific ways queer artists and activists are using their childhood engagement with anime media to craft new forms of queer aesthetics. I will also discuss how I went about conducting interviews, and the aesthetic choices made in their presentation. Finally, the argument will be made that video essay and documentaries provide unique possibilities toward discussing queer childhood media engagement, allowing both a textual and aesthetic engagement with memory and fandom, itself a form of community building.

Dr River Seager received their PhD in 2023 for their thesis on the films of Scottish writer Alan Sharp. Their research interests include film genre and gender, fandom studies, and trans literature. Recently they have been working on a number of documentaries on queer subject matter. They produced the documentary "Phreaking Gender", an exploration of DIY-HRT regiments, which will be shown at an exhibition held at the Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Arts this month. They also directed the 2023 documentary "I Am a Cyborg: Conversations About Queerness and Anime Fandom", which will be shown at SQIFF 2023. They are currently working on a monograph on Alan Sharp, which will explore masculine archetypes in his screenplays.

Em (Emma) Tarasenko: "Queering the screen (back): exploration of gender and sexuality in russophone teenage online fan communities"

The LGBTQ+ community in Russia has faced a shift in official discourse towards condemnatory rhetoric, leading to the implementation of the 'gay-propaganda law' in 2013 (Buyantueva 2018). Following the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian government rapidly imposed restrictions on media discourse, including the enactment of the "gay-propaganda law" in 2022 and the subsequent rollback of gay and trans rights in 2023 (Sauer 2022). These restrictions have



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affected film and animation, with online platforms such as Premiere, Okko and Kinopoisk facing severe penalties for hosting 'gay propaganda' content, leading to content removal, censorship and increased age restrictions. In this context, teenage fan communities have emerged as important spaces for identity exploration. This paper focuses on Russian-speaking teenage and young adult fan communities' comprehension, analysis and interpretation of queer films and animations restricted by the government. It also investigates how teenagers recognise and define queer content given the official homophobic context.

The research uses contextual analysis, ideas of convergence culture (Jenkins 2008) and participatory culture and inclusive digital ethnography (Varis 2015). During analysis three dominant scenarios were identified: the restoration of banned and censored content through grassroots initiatives, fan blogs, unofficial translations and content piracy; the creation of headcanons and fan fiction integrated from English-speaking communities using platforms such as AO3 and Tumblr; and the convergence of Russophone animation/TV with the community through interviews with creators (resulting in a language of hints). These scenarios include grassroots content creation, role-playing, translation, localisation, and the management of bans on platforms such as Ficbook. The research explores how Russian-speaking fan communities engage with and adapt to restrictions on queer film and animation while resisting oppressive and homophobic discourses.

One of the key observations is that film and television serve as sources for Russian-speaking youth to form identities and create safe spaces to resist the oppressive regime. This analysis contributes to LGBTQ+ grassroots resistance and self-exploration in oppressive societies.

Emma (Em) Tarasenko (she/they) is a first year PhD student at the University of Manchester. Her current research focuses on LGBTQ+ representations in grassroots Russophone media since the 2010s. She holds a Master's degree in Cultural and Visual Studies (Higher School of Economics, Moscow). Her main research interests are queer studies, media and visual studies, especially Russian and Russophone alternative media and functioning of grassroots communities.

Sonia Ghalian and Lakhan Raghuvanshi: "Im(possibility) of Queerness in Indian Children's Films"

In a nation like India, where discussions surrounding gender and sexuality are still emerging within the public sphere, children's screen cultures rarely explore such identity-related themes. Compounded by the absence of a distinct category for children's cinema in the Indian context, representations of gender and sexuality often appear indirectly through adult characters' flashbacks or within the confines of a heteronormative framework. This paper aims to reestablish the connection between children and queerness in Indian cinema, highlighting specific narratives that navigate these identities beyond societal norms. The paper aims to delineate the potential avenues for representing queerness in children's films within the current constraints, advocating for greater diversity and inclusion in cinematic narratives aimed at younger audiences.

Sonia Ghalian is an interdisciplinary scholar of film, literature, media, and cultural studies. She is currently working as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Division of Literature and Arts at Krea University in India. She was the recipient of the Charles Wallace India Trust Fellowship in 2017. With a strong focus on Indian cinema, she is working on her manuscript titled "Contours of Children and Childhood in Indian Cinema." This work delves into multiple facets of the children's cinema genre, encompassing the industry as well as the prevalent themes



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surrounding the portrayal of children and the construction of childhood in contemporary Indian cinema.

Dr. Lakhan Raghuvanshi is an Assistant Professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Devi Ahilya University, Indore. He has completed his PhD in film studies. He has co-edited the book "Digital Academics: Deliberations on Higher Education in India." He has also received a film research fellowship from the National Film Archives of India. His research interests include media and society, advertising, and film studies. He is a contributing writer for various newspapers and literary magazines in India and has been published in national and international journals.

11:00-12:00: Keynote Speech

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/91419648507?pwd=Uk9Ca01jbDM2WlJBskVEN1d5em1vQT09>

Meeting ID: 914 1964 8507

Passcode: 562502

Dr. Jacqueline Ristola: "Animating Queerness: Forms and Figures in Contemporary Children's Television Animation"

This talk attends to the queer potentials and performances of contemporary children's television animation, and the fundamental queer potential on animation more broadly. It begins by discussing the fundamental queer potentials in animation as a form, before diving into how animated children's television capitalizes on animation's queer affordances, highlighting some of the key series working on queer representation in children's television both narrative and aesthetically. By examining series that contain queer representation, both intended (such as *Steven Universe*) or otherwise (*SpongeBob SquarePants*), this talk points to the varieties of queer expression found in children's animated television.

Dr. Jacqueline Ristola is a Lecturer in the Department of Film and Television at the University of Bristol. She received her PhD in Film and Moving Image Studies from Concordia University, Montreal. Her research areas include animation/anime studies, media industry studies, and queer representation. Her dissertation examines animation's transformation from cable television to streaming platforms. She is currently the co-chair for SCMS's Animated Media SIG. Her work is published in *Synoptique*, *Con a de animación*, and *Animation Studies Online Journal*, where she was awarded the inaugural Maureen Furniss Student Essay Award. She also co-edited a special issue on LGBTQ Animation for *Synoptique: An Online Journal of Film and Moving Image Studies*, and has a chapter in the edited collection *Representation in Steven Universe* (Palgrave 2020). She is currently teaching a course on anime, where she is rediscovering her inner otaku.

12:00-13:15: Second Sessions



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Panel 2a: Fantasy and Science-Fiction (Chair: Rachel Milne)

<https://zoom.us/j/93895794867?pwd=dTdHZStEYjBqdzBEQ3NLWDNrUkp1QT09>

Meeting ID: 938 9579 4867

Passcode: 407755

Judy Harris: "Fluid Forms In A Hybrid World: Maurice Tourneur's *The Bluebird* (1918)"

This paper explores the radical intermediality of Maurice Tourneur's *The Bluebird* (1918), arguing that it displays a queer aesthetic that challenges highly gendered cinematic norms. Firstly, I analyse the way the film moves between photorealism and an aesthetics of artifice without providing narrative justification, a practice which became taboo in mainstream cinema. Using the work of Naomi Schor and Rosalind Galt, I argue that in bringing together naturalistic and artificial styles Tourneur creates a queer aesthetic that destabilises the binary between what has historically been conceived of as a 'raw' masculine photorealism and a feminine aesthetics of adornment. I explore the film's artificial aesthetic and its use of craft techniques which film theorists including Epstein, Vertov, Benjamin and Metz rejected as at odds with the modern, technological medium of film. Such devaluation of craft practices is heavily gendered and I use Michelle Pierson's concept of film as a 'craft- industrial fusion' to illuminate the important role of craft practices in children's cinema. Secondly, I use the work of Eve Sedgwick and Vivian Sobchack to explore the film's staging of humans dressing as animals and objects morphing into sentient beings, practices which privilege the fluidity of identity. I conclude that *The Bluebird* queers both the binary distinction between naturalism and artifice and the stability of identity, creating a playful and fluid diegetic world which maintains its cohesion while shifting in form and style.

Dr. Judy Harris is an independent scholar living in London. Her PhD (Goldsmiths College, University of London) explores the utopian film theory of the American troubadour poet Vachel Lindsay, author of *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915). Her research interests include silent film, regional and amateur filmmaking and the history of special effects. Her M.A. dissertation 'Can the Subaltern Teach?' was published in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (2015). She is currently working on a short article titled 'Anarchic Assemblages: Hybridity and Animation in the Silent Era' which will be published on the Fantasy/Animation website in December.

Catalina Paz Fritis Estay: "Made of Love: How fantasy is used to smuggle queerness and allegorise heterocisnormativity in *Steven Universe* (2013-2019)"

Eve Sedgwick described the harrowing lack of queer representation in culture as a wound and theorists as fulfilling promises to 'make the tacit things explicit; to smuggle queer representation in where it must be smuggled' (1993, 3). Three decades later, overt queer representation in children's television finally exists. However, its suitability for children is still intensely debated, censored and challenged. In this context, I observe that several televised texts engage with fantasy and sci-fi to 'smuggle' and explain queerness for child viewers. Zoe Jacques writes how 'children's fantasy animates and gives a voice to a host of imaginary, impossible and real beings' (2015, 6) that can 'offer potentially radical destabilisations of hierarchies' (2015, 5),



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particularly if grounded in posthuman philosophies. Feminist science fiction specifically 'test(s) the limits of the dominant ideology of gender by proposing alternative possibilities for social and sexual relations which conflict with the dominant representations' (Jenny Wolmark 1994, 55). In this context, I observe how some current television series depict fictional world orders with fantastical species, cyborgs and aliens that mirror and interrogate our systems of power and oppression. This includes heterocisnormativity. In this paper, I explore how fantasy in world-building can convey and allegorise queerness for children. I focus on magical fusion and the creation of the enemy in *Steven Universe* (2013-2019) and cyborgs, robots and queer families in *OK KO! Let's Be Heroes!* (2017-2019). I use both queer theorists (Butler 1999; Rosky 2013; Teal and Conover-Williams 2017) and children's literature scholars (Jaques 2015; Zolciak 2020) for the analysis.

Catalina Paz Fritis Estay is a student from Chile residing in the UK. She has a Bachelor's in Hispanic Literature at Universidad de Chile and a Diploma in Children's Literature and Literacy at Universidad Catolica de Chile. She also has an MPhil in Education (Critical Approaches to Children's Literature) at the University of Cambridge. Catalina is currently in her final PhD year at the same university. Her thesis studies overt queer representation in US children's television of the last decade. Specifically, she explores these texts' underlying childhood constructs and their engagement with strategies to ensure airing and commercial viability.

Aneesh Barai: "Normalising Gender Diversity? An Exploration of Non-binary Characters in Recent (Science) Fantasy Animated Series"

Attebery (2002) argued that androgyny was "transgressive" and "trendy" in 1960s and 70s science fiction, and following his work, I have argued that queer and non-binary characters are "trendy" in recent children's fantasy animation (Barai 2022). In this paper, I draw on four series that contribute to this trend – *Steven Universe* (2013-20), *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (2018-20), *The Owl House* (2020-23) and *Supernatural Academy* (2022) – all of which provide intersectional representations of diversity in both gender and sexuality. In terms of non-binary identities, these shows present Double Trouble (*She-Ra*), Raine (*The Owl House*), Jae (*Supernatural Academy*), and all the non-human characters in *Steven Universe*. Moreover, they are often voiced by genderqueer, trans and non-binary actors, such as Avi Roque and Jacob Tobia.

In many of these cases, while our main characters are human or humanoid, the characters who sit beyond the gender binary are significantly non-human in their appearance: for example, Double Trouble has green skin, a tail and pointy ears. Only in *Steven Universe Future* do we meet a human non-binary character, Shep. Science fiction and fantasy often come under criticism for 'othering' queer characters by making them non-human, but equally are praised for how they imagine alternative ways of being and relating (Giffney & Hird 2012). This paper seeks to examine these tensions and ambiguities, and will comprise of three parts: a critique of how the characters represent non-binary identities (sometimes problematically); the media production landscape; and the impact of human/non-human representation of gender diversity.

Dr Aneesh Barai (he/they) is a Lecturer in Education and Children's Culture at the University of Sheffield. They are an interdisciplinary researcher in education, children's literature and media, researching youth cultures and literary/media representations of education. Their research



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interests are particularly on text and media representations of diverse childhoods and young people's political agency, and they have written on queer, postcolonial and eco-activist childhoods in children's literature, television and film. They have recently published on queer ecologies in the children's animated series *Steven Universe*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, and *The Legend of Korra*.

Panel 2b: Queer Kinship and Family Structures (Chair: Abigail Jenkins)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94151650141?pwd=MytpQWhTMDArQIBNZ3E0MVlvSDU4QT09>

Meeting ID: 941 5165 0141

Passcode: 600703

Rritwika Roychowdhury: "Disney-Pixar's *Turning Red*: Expressions of Nontraditional Gender Dynamics"

The Walt Disney Company is a global leader in shaping popular culture, especially for children. Consequently, it becomes imperative to undertake an in-depth exploration of how Disney's cinematic productions portray gender dynamics. Disney films often feature characters who subtly challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, presenting nuanced variations of both masculinity and femininity. This is frequently accomplished through "queerbaiting," which sparks extensive discussions on the topic without Disney explicitly endorsing these interpretations. The primary objective of this research paper is to conduct a comprehensive examination of tender masculinity as depicted by Tyler Nguyen-Baker, and nontraditional femininity embodied by Mei Lee and her friends in *Turning Red* (2022). It will closely examine gender expressions that courageously defy long-standing stereotypes and conventional associations with masculinity and femininity, as exemplified by these film characters. Nonetheless, the confident self-expression of these queer teenagers is frequently interrupted by family interference, prompting an examination of the role of families in the journey of self-discovery. Mei's transformation into a Red Panda symbolizes a range of themes, including the challenge of managing one's emotions, the shame associated with expressing one's sexuality, and the desire to seek solace away from one's family. It functions as an extended metaphor, illustrating the emotional transformations adolescents experience during this critical period of their lives.

Rritwika Roychowdhury is an English major Postgraduate student at Presidency University, Kolkata. Her research interests include representations of childhood in literature and media, evolution of children's literature, folklores, folk cultures, and fantasy as a genre in books for children. Her chapter "Beyond Perfection: Inclusion and Self-exploration of Neo-Disney 'Beauties,' 'Beasts,' and 'Monsters'" in the edited collection *Neo-Disneyism: Inclusivity in the Twenty-First Century of Disney's Magic Kingdom*, edited by Brenda Ayres and Sarah E. Maier, examines new trends in physical images of adolescent characters and their mental health in contemporary Disney films. It has been published by Peter Lang in 2022. She tries her hand at writing flash fictions during her free time.

Joshua Fagan: "Breaking the Disney Spell: Radicalism and Queer Community in *The Owl House*"



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Despite Disney's traditional role as a bastion of conventional, platitudinous storytelling that reproduces pre-existing hierarchies, the ground-breaking *The Owl House* unsettles the expectations of Disney storytelling, exploring more radical possibilities for connection and community. The thorough queerness of the work appears both obviously, in the character of the protagonist, Luz, a bisexual Latina teenager in a same-sex relationship, and more subtly in the communal ethos of the work, which celebrates the formation of non-traditional familial structures. Considering the long-standing hesitancy of Disney to feature queer characters in leading roles, *The Owl House's* achievement of this alone would be radical, but what I argue is most subversive about the show is its refusal to focus merely on a single individual or family unit. I assert that *The Owl House* rejects these narrative categories, celebrating not just Luz as a queer individual but the entire network of queer communities that support and guide her.

The Owl House frames the conventional family not as an unequivocal wellspring of love and support, but rather as a fragile and tenuous structure that cultivates disconnect and even abuse as often as it cultivates warmth and community. Luz receives support from other characters failed by conventional, fixed familial structures, and they form a new family on the outskirts of their society, linked not by hierarchy and control, but by egalitarian, mutualistic support. Queer communities like this, I argue, are the main, revivifying force of connection in *The Owl House*, radically questioning the prominence of the traditional, biological family uncritically celebrated by the majority of Disney films and television shows.

Joshua Fagan is a graduate student at St. Andrews, specializing in American and British literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a particular focus on shifting conceptions of history and science. His current project focuses on literary uses of Darwinian ideas of time and flux in response to the impermanence and overstimulation of the *fin-de-siècle* world. He has published on William Morris and Mark Twain, and his writing on the relation between the premodern and naturalistic transcendence in Robert Frost's poetry received the Lesley Lee Francis Prize from *The Robert Frost Review*.

Apoorva Juneja and Mrinalini Kumar: "From 'Other' to my *Dear Dad* (2016): 'Son-light' on the mystique of Queerness"

One is not born, rather becomes an anomaly. The repetitive stigmatising of a difference, to soothe the systemic perception that maintains the status quo, creates one. In this regard, the heteronormative binaries, consequently, inculcate the need for the creation of an 'other.' These binaries, reflective of the mistreatment of the 'other', mould the cognition of future generations for posterity. Queerness emerges and struggles in this matrix. Nevertheless, the ongoing search for the key to the closets of nonnormative sexualities has been furthered through the Indian Cinematic representation of *Dear Dad* (2016). While the current discourse is reflective of a person's fear of stepping out of the closet and the consequent disappointment of their parents and society, this film depicts a reverse narrative, thereby seeing queerness through the child's eyes. On a road trip with his father, the son undergoes a two-fold dilemma; one, the popping of his idyllic heteronormative family bubble, and the other, the acceptance of the queerness of his father.

In this context, this paper will juxtapose a child's inner battles with queerness, in the Indian context, to the external legal battle, that the LGBTQIA+ is still fighting. It will chart the journey of the 'dad' to and from the position of the 'other', dispelling the mystique around queerness. It will



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conclude with an attempt to build an inclusive model for future Indian cinematic adaptations, especially dealing with children's narratives, to break the LGBTQIA+ free of the stereotypical label of being an anomaly.

Apoorva Juneja is a 25-year-old Ph.D. Research Scholar, specialising in English, from Amity Institute of English and Scientific Research, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India. She is doing her Ph.D. in Literature and Cinematic Adaptations. She talks about the need for feminist identities, their voice, as well as their representation through the lens of soft power. She has written a poetry anthology called, "The Art of Unmasking" delving into the themes of acceptance and growth. She is currently working as a Visiting Faculty at Amity University. She has participated in conferences and paper presentation competitions.

Mrinalini Kumar is a 27-year-old Ph.D. Research Scholar, specialising in Political Science, from Amity Institute of Social Sciences, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India. She is doing her Ph.D. in Climate Change and Migration. She talks about climate politics, and feminism, and delves into power narratives. She has qualified the National Eligibility Test for Assistant Professor in India and has worked as a Visiting Faculty at Amity University itself. She has participated in conferences and paper presentation competitions. She has been published in journals and several poetry anthologies as well.

13:15-14:15: Lunch

14:30-15:45: Third Sessions

Panel 3a: Queering Disney Studies (Chair: Rachel Milne)

<https://zoom.us/j/98604380122?pwd=eWF3K0dmWDQxdURhU0lGdXM0ZkxSUT09>

Meeting ID: 986 0438 0122

Passcode: 945207

Kendall Belopavlovich: "The Binary Broke It: How Disney's Feminist Live Action Remake of *Mulan* (2020) Failed to Transcend the Male-Female Divide"

In Disney's *Mulan*, an animated film (1998) and live-action remake (2020), problems of gender, culture, and genre (Wang 2022; Dundes & Streiff 2016) have resulted in a complex reception of both films that ultimately leave represented groups affected by a lack of cultural sensitivity (Chen et. al 2021; Nighman 2021) or disappointed by unfaithful adaptation in the case of the live-action reboot (Chen & Mehdizadkhani 2022). While the animated film features camp and drag performance through song and dance, the live-action film peels back to find a decidedly feminist focus on Mulan as a woman with magical Qi and a guardian Phoenix. Live-action director Niki Caro's perspective, while attempting to balance a feminist perspective with industry demands in a male-dominated business under Disney-genre (and gender) expectations, erases the possibility of a non-binary gender expression that the animated film hinted toward. The animated film presents Mulan's gender performance as ambiguous, within a queer context of camp and drag, which creates the possibility of a reading of the character Mulan discovering



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themselves as transgender / non-binary. The refusal to locate Mulan within the normative gender binary is a radical, dynamic transformation of an enduring story that has secured its place within a mediated global imaginary. By applying Judith Butler's theory of "gender performativity", I analyze how Mulan's gender performance in 1998, when compared to 2020, provides a more robust attempt at breaking the binary. I argue that this analysis demonstrates the erasure of non-binary / transgender performance and identification for young queer audiences over time.

Kendall Belopavlovich (they/them, settler of Finnish heritage) is a doctoral candidate of the Rhetoric, Theory, and Culture program at Michigan Technological University. Working at the intersections of film and media studies, and Indigenous studies, Kendall is a settler scholar whose work bridges disciplines, knowledge systems, and communities. They are the Indigenous Studies area chair for the Midwest Popular Culture Association.

Ashmita Biswas: "Heterosexuality To The Rescue: Exploring Queer Temporality in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959)"

This paper seeks to explore the workings of Jack Halberstam's notion of "queer time" as depicted in Disney's animated adaptations of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). All the three princesses had been condemned to a death-in-life situation where the trajectories of their lives were thrown off-course. Snow White falls into a coma after taking a bite of the poisoned apple, Cinderella is held captive, and Aurora falls into a deep sleep after pricking her thumb on the spindle. Halberstam's notion of queer time is a "perverse turn away from the narrative coherence of [...] marriage - reproduction - child rearing - retirement - death," the temporal logic of which is disrupted as the princesses are stuck in a queer limbo. It is no coincidence that they are ushered into the heteronormative framings of temporality through heterosexual encounters. This paper will investigate the relationship between livable lives and the heteronormative social order as evidenced by the role of the princes as liberatory heterosexual agents, and hence problematize how heterosexual marriages are the linchpin of fairy tales. Further, this paper draws attention to the nonnormative kinships portrayed in the films, namely, the seven dwarfs in *Snow White*, the non-human characters in *Cinderella*, and the three fairy Godmothers in *Sleeping Beauty*, and how they actively contrive to bring together the heterosexual protagonists, while fading into insignificance once the heterosexual union is secured. I further argue that the queer subtext of these canonical children's films challenges the notion that children's television is 'innocent', but rather it is a space where dominant ideologies are constantly subverted and questioned through queer counter-narratives.

Ashmita Biswas is a PhD candidate at the Department of English, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata. She has presented her papers at several National and International Seminars, and has a few publications to her credit. Her areas of interest are Queer Studies, Gender & Sexuality, Lesbian Studies, Indian Writing in English, Memory Studies, Popular Culture & Manga studies.

Sayantani Chakraborty: "'Let Kids be kids': A look into the policing of Film and TV content for young queer audiences and their respective resistance towards representation"



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In spite of stepping well into the third decade of the 21st century, the realm of popular media continues to show signs of acute exclusion when it comes to non-normative narratives of children identifying with non-heteronormative markers of gender and sexuality. According to Jefferey P. Dennis, a majority of productions targeted at children, especially in the US, “never openly allude to LGBT persons” (Dennis, 738) but only hint and resist through smaller palatable forms of homosocial or borderline non-heteronormative structures.

By bringing up questions like “What is the culturally accepted minimum age to be queer?”, “Why and how are expressions of self-identity with regards to gender and sexuality dismissed as indoctrination when it comes to child audiences?”, “How are young queer children being brought up with Disney villains as prime idols of queer allegory?” and “How is the young queer still getting their dose of representation from mainstream film and TV?”, this study seeks to interrogate the problems around the structure of what it means to “protect” children from certain content consumptions. Through a qualitative analysis of contemporary reports of queer-specific censors, it also seeks to shed light on the socially accepted association between innocence and heteronormative gender/sexuality expression. Additionally, via queer readings of mainstream film and TV for children this paper seeks to argue that while policing queer content consumption for children reeks of already embedded seeds of queerphobia, the efforts are rendered pointless owing to subtle resistances from popular culture productions and their audiences that have constructed the average PG-13 villain as the cultural icon for everything queer.

Sayantani Chakraborty is a graduate with a BA degree in English Literature and a Masters Degree in English and Cultural Studies from Christ University, Bangalore, Bannerghatta Road Campus. She has also worked on an academic project called Queer Ecologies which deals with intersections between queer studies and ecological discourses, to fulfil the requirements of her Master's degree. She has attended two international academic conferences, organized by the University of Hawaii and Carnegie Mellon University respectively. Currently, she is invested in qualifying for the UGC-NET and pursuing a PhD in English and Gender Studies.

Panel 3b: Queer Histories and Temporalities (Chair: Abigail Jenkins)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/91582473088?pwd=MHc4bGR5Tms1Y0tXZTIiTmhxckZ1QT09>



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Meeting ID: 915 8247 3088

Passcode: 727412

Michael Brodski: "Exploring Queer Poetics and Soviet Reality in the Children's Films of Rolan Bykov"

This paper aims to demonstrate how the oeuvre of Soviet stage and film actor as well as children's film director Rolan Bykov (1929-1998) can be regarded as employing queer narrative and aesthetic strategies. In this regard, key works such as *Aybolit-66* (USSR 1966), *Car, Violin, and Blot the Dog* (USSR 1974), as well as *Scarecrow* (USSR 1984), will be analyzed. Firstly, his films often feature musical numbers in which his protagonists engage in anarchic and playful behavior that doesn't contribute to the narrative, thus presenting a concept of queer temporality (see Halberstam 2005). Moreover, the actors occasionally directly address the audience on the opposite side of the screen in a Brechtian break with the fourth wall, making ironic comments about their diegetic situation. On a formal level, Bykov excessively (and almost parodically) employs techniques like the jump cut to emphasize the artificial nature of his works. Finally, his child protagonists often engage in performances that can be seen as queer challenges to (Soviet) children's expected behavior and gender roles, reaching a climax when the young protagonist in *Scarecrow* shaves her head as an act of societal revolt. When classifying them in the context of Soviet film history, Bykov's queering narrative and aesthetic strategies will be regarded as a form of Aesopian language commonly encountered in children's films (see Bulgakowa 1999), serving as a subtle means to critique and resist the Soviet regime.

Michael Brodski is a PhD candidate at the University of Mainz (Germany). He is working on a thesis on cinematic spectatorship in relation to various portrayals of childhood and child figures. Michael holds a BA in Film Studies and Philosophy and a MA in Film Studies. His main research interests include children's film and intermedial representations of childhood and children's culture, affect theory, Eastern European and American cinema as well as fairy tale and folklore studies. He also works as an associate lecturer at the University of Vienna and as a co-editor for the German Journal for Fantastic Research.

Ritoshree Chatterjee: "The Blue Octopus in the Room: Reading the Queer Anthropomorph in Early 2000s Children's Cartoons in India"

The first decade of the new millennium witnessed advancement of hitherto 'Eurocentric' LGBTQ activism in the Global South. Situating a globalising Indian media in the backdrop of a neoliberal economy which had slowly begun to unclasp itself from anti-sodomite colonial strangleholds of the IPC, this paper attempts to diagnose a 'queer' turn of the century in India through investigating early 2000s children's cartoons (as broadcasted by newly sprung-up sister channels — PogoTv and CNN India operated by Warner Bros. Discovery India) wherein it locates a shift from the gendered, anthropocentric, heteropatriarchal paradigms of 90s Hanna-Barbera and MGM (*The Flintstones*, *The Jetsons*, *Dexter's Laboratory*) to the agendered/ genderqueer cartoon anthropomorph cohabitating networks of homosocial camaraderie and quasi-erotic 'squads' (*The Powerpuff Girls*, *Oswald*, *Pokémon*). As the cartoon-anthropomorph is revealed as a site of departure from the heteropatriarchal anthropocentric normative, Butlerian Performativity is reworked to include the inherently queer non/human which is also read as a domesticated mutation of the 'monstrous queer' of earlier queerphobic discourse(s). The interrogation of the essentially anthropocentric core of queer



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theory by the likes of Jeffrey J. Cohen is used to unpack the affective potential of 'queer' cartoons in a nation wherein homosexuality would take two more decades to be decriminalised. Performativity, which, in Butler's words, remains one domain where power acts as discourse, is thus read as a marker of a slackening, 'queer', albeit infantile national cultural centre. In conclusion, the paper re-imagines aforementioned cartoon lifeworlds as macrocosmic Kosofskian 'closets' free from trappings of gender and sexual absolutes, which champion a new utopic aesthetic of kinship, caregiving, and queer peacebuilding.

Ritoshree Chatterjee pursues her M.A. from the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nerhu University, India. Interested in Queer theory/LGBTQIA+ studies, she has presented/been invited to present papers at Cambridge University, NeMLA'24 (Boston), IAMAS' 2024 conference (Boston University), PCA National Conference (Chicago) and Jadavpur University. Ritoshree's work has also found home in *The Wire*, *Outlook*, *Café Dissensus* and *The Punch Magazine* among others.

Alex Moran: "Animating Utopia: The Here and Now of Queer Futurity"

Jose Esteban Muñoz's essay *Cruising Utopia* made the brazen statement that "we are not yet queer" and queer theorists since have gone as far as to say that a queer utopia is not attainable. Using Muñoz's writing as a framework, I intend to disprove this notion, using both *Steven Universe* and *The Owl House* as examples of queer utopia at work in both the fictional worlds they create and the real world that they impact.

In *Imagination and Creativity in Childhood* (2004, p.20), Vygotsky posits that when something entirely new is made concrete, it begins to affect the world around it. Put simply, "imagination becomes reality" (ibid.). In the case of Queer animation, I argue that the expansiveness of children's imaginations indicate that they may be the natural catalyst for creating a queer utopia: a child's awareness of -and embodiment of their own- Queerness is fundamentally evidence that we have achieved the Queerness that Muñoz argued elusive.

Alex Moran (he/they) is a fourth-year Theatre and Film student at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. Their research interests lie in the realm of Queer studies, particularly as it relates to intersectionality with disability, race, culture and religion.

Panel 4a: Queer Coding and Transformation (Chair: Abigail Jenkins)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93838246160?pwd=UEIUWIRhR3FvQ1BMQmhlalZONU5RUT09>

Meeting ID: 938 3824 6160

Passcode: 539212

Kinga Erzepki: "From a Monster to a Millennial: The Person of Indeterminate Gender from the Netflix adaptation of A Series of Unfortunate Events"

Entangled in the titular series of unfortunate events, the Baudelaire children experience various atrocities but time and again trumping them all is the ubiquitous incompetence, or sheer



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stupidity, of adults. Unlike in the case of many adaptations, the Netflix serial adds nuisance and further develops the characterisation of these background actors, while remaining faithful to their literary counterparts—in most cases. Fortunately, the Person of Indeterminate Gender is not one of them. In the novels, the androgynous helper of Count Olaf—the main villain—is described as a beastly monster, capable of superhuman strength but not speech. Their role and villainy are limited to looking menacing in the background and one bout of animalistic violence. The Netflix production does not reproduce this grotesque image. Instead of caricaturing the Person, the show frames their androgyny and physicality in the current understanding of gender identity and expression. Furthermore, it provides them the opportunity to not only communicate but articulate themselves.

My characterological and typological analysis of the character argues that following these changes to their construction the Person practically embodies the (stereo?)typical image of a liberal Millennial: a gender non-conforming malcontent engaged in critical theory and social justice. Like the book series, the Netflix adaptation is primarily a satire of tangible injustices and absurdities—and it is thanks to this 'millennial' perspective that the Person of Indeterminate Gender emerges as both the voice of reason among the antagonists and an authentic link between the fictional world of the "Series ..." and the critiqued realities.

Kinga Erzepki (she/her) is a PhD Researcher in Sexuality and Gender Studies at the University of Birmingham. Dissecting the characters' construction piece by piece, Kinga examines the representation of non-binary people in mainstream American television series. In 2021, her work on the characterization of Taylor Mason from the series *Billions*, the first such portrayal, was published in *Jump Cut* journal. When not working on her thesis, she focuses on the depictions of sexual acts and taboos. Otherwise, an avid Americanist, dirty debater, and volunteer public speaker. She can always be found lurking on Twitter/X @KingaErzepki or at erzepki.kinga@gmail.com

Alesha Serada: "The Gay Bluey and the Flamboyant Spirit of the Swamp: Queer Coding in Soviet Children's Screen Media"

It can be argued that children's films and animation in the Soviet Union remained a creative outlet for artists and directors who could not express themselves due to ideological pressure. In some of such films, a queer viewer (Doty, 1993) will see queer kinship and found families, non-patriarchal gender roles and expressions (Oushakine, (Ed.), 2008), while a straight gaze may get lost in total queering of space and time (Fishzon, 2015). What could Soviet TV offer to a queer child's gaze? Firstly, the travesti tradition that came from the classical theater, most famously, represented by Georgy Millyar who played Baba Yaga in fairy tale films of Aleksandr Ptushko. In *Mio in the Land of Faraway* (Grammatikov, 1987), the lead role is played interchangeably by male and female child actors. Then, there is queer coding of villains, as in one of the many Soviet adaptations of *The Snow Queen* (Kazansky, 1967). Finally, I will talk about unintentional messages of acceptance. Most notably, this is case of *Blue Puppy* (Gamburg, 1976), which message can be understood as "It is OK to be gay", but also the flamboyant character Vodyanoy, or the Water Spirit, from *The Flying Ship* (Bardin, 1979). There is no evidence on the educational potential of this media: homophobia and queerphobia was commonplace in the USSR. Still, there is proof that genuinely creative, imaginative, and



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inventive films for children, produced by adequately financed diverse casts, provide space for every young viewer to reflect on his, her, or their unique identity.

Alesha Serada (they/them) is a game and culture studies scholar, currently finishing their PhD studies at the University of Vaasa, Finland. Their dissertation discusses construction of value in games on blockchain. Originally from Belarus, Alesha explores their personal horrors in studies of the late Soviet and post-Soviet visual culture, published in *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, *Mortality*, and other journals.

Jiyuan Li: "A Queer Home-(Be)Coming: Reading Queerness and Kinship in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022)"

In my paper I intend to examine the journey of homecoming of the character Joy in the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) who is the queer, rebellious daughter of an immigrant Asian American family. In the film, Joy's multi-verse alter-ego Jobu Tupaki creates a black hole embodied by a bagel which is threatening the entire multi-verse system. Although Joy's mother Evelyn is given the mission to destroy Jobu, she ends up saving Jobu from self-termination as she accepts and embraces her estranged, home-leaving daughter Joy. In my analysis, I propose the reading of Jobu's self-termination as allegorical of Joy's termination of the part of her identity as the unaccepted queer daughter in an immigrant Asian family. The same heavy mass of pain and struggle under which Jobu's bagel collapses into a centripetal, all-devouring black hole drives Joy away from home in a centrifugal direction, which bespeaks the collective experience of second-generation Asian American children who experience a sense of displacement and undergo a new type of queer diaspora as the compounded result of reproductive heteronormativity, emotional unavailability, and the lack of intergenerational communication typical of Asian kinship relations. Nevertheless, I argue that the film's ending presents a potential solution to the predicament faced not only by these second-generation queer children but also their parents and that the key to the homecoming of queer children lies in the mutual effort of the two generations in the making, or in other words, becoming of home.

Jiyuan Li is MSc Comparative Literature student at the University of Edinburgh, UK. He previously completed his BA in English at Peking University, China. His research interests include intermediality, film studies, feminist and gender studies, and postcolonialism. He also takes a particular interest in queer studies with a comparative approach to Chinese and Western contexts. He will be attending the British Comparative Literature Association conference: *Spectres, Spectrums and Spectrality* soon in October, 2023.

Panel 4b: Queer Joy and Imagination (Chair: Rachel Milne)

<https://zoom.us/j/94689103566?pwd=eGJjQU5rZEVwcUR2dXhUhyOUdkZz09>

Meeting ID: 946 8910 3566

Passcode: 710121



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Ibtisam Ahmed: "Radical Empowerment – Queer Hope and Joy in Heartstopper"

On-screen portrayals of queer relationships have historically been treated as spaces of hardship. As Sara Ahmed notes in "The Promise of Happiness" (2010), queerness had to be unhappy so as to avoid promoting non-normative relationships as "good". Even now, in a world that has become nominally accepting of queerness and its varied portrayals, there is still an abundance of cliché and tropes on-screen, especially concerning queer death, bisexual promiscuity, and transgender confusion. This is precisely why *Heartstopper* is such a radically empowering narrative. In this paper, I argue that normalising queer hope and joy becomes an act of liberation. *Heartstopper* follows a group of British highschoolers who learn about their various LGBTQ+ identities over the course of its run (two seasons so far). The episodes cover a range of queer coming-of-age stories – first relationships, coming out on your own terms, bullying and its subsequent impacts, accepting families, prejudiced families, and finding community. But, unlike other shows, these experiences are all seen as par for course rather than as anomalies faced by a handful of outcasts. Moreover, the negative experiences are heavily criticised while the positive experiences are celebrated as the norm.

By creating and promoting a world where queerness is ordinary, queer hope and joy become deserved and normalised aspects of life within the show. With the real world currently going through a renewed phase of LGBTQ+ discrimination, especially aimed at queer youth, this matter-of-fact representation of queer positivity is liberating and necessary.

Ibtisam Ahmed (he/him) completed an MPhil in Politics from the University of Nottingham, with a thesis on decolonial utopianism. He is the Head of Research at LGBT Foundation, a founding member of the House of Spice performance collective, and a member of the Beyond Gender research collective. He has been published in print and audio in *Imagining the Impossible*, *Fantastika*, *Ancillary Review of Books*, and *Shuddhashar* on various topics, including the impact of queer visibility. He co-edited the collection "The Politics of Culture" (2020, Cambridge Scholars Publishing), in which he wrote a chapter about queer immigrant superheroes. He tweets in a personal capacity at @Ibzor and always aims to lift up marginalised and overlooked voices.

Rin MacRitchie: "Into the Unknown: Queering Naming and the Non-human in Over the Garden Wall"

In the opening section of his monograph *Trans**, Jack Halberstam invokes a series of literary examples ranging from Melville's *Moby Dick* to Pixar's *Finding Nemo* to "make sense of the powerful nature of naming". This paper will build from Halberstam's attention to instances and experiences of naming to show the ecocritical, or ecologically minded, potential of Queerness in instances of identification and classification in Patrick McHale's 2014 TV miniseries *Over the Garden Wall*. In addition to its tongue in cheek subversion of a number of narrative tropes, *Over the Garden Wall*'s perennial popularity with queer audiences and online communities situates it well as a case study of queerness in children's television. This paper takes particular interest in the "pet" frog that accompanies the show's two protagonists through each of its ten, brief episodes. Over the course of the show Wert and his young stepbrother, Gregory, find themselves embedded in any number of odd encounters as they move through a mysterious



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wood called only, "the Unknown". The tension of their travels is cut often, and at opportune moments, by Gregory's innocence and antics and – especially – his frequent renaming of his frog friend. The absurd instability of the frog's identifier centers queerness in the brothers' relations with both naming and the nonhuman. This paper will make use of this case study to show that representations of queerness in children's television can be vital in ecocriticism, as well as in efforts against climate crisis more broadly.

Rin MacRitchie is a reader and writer from Northern Colorado, who graduated from the University of Denver in 2020 with a Bachelors in Literary Analysis and Spanish language and literature. She now lives in Scotland where she received an MLitt in Comparative Literature from the University of Glasgow in 2022.

Lance Weldy: "The Best Campy, Queer, Iconic Christmas Ever: Pee-Wee's Playhouse Christmas Special"

In his 2003 essay about Paul Reubens' screen persona, Pee-wee Herman, R. Anthony Slagle argues that "Pee-wee Herman is a camp version of the classic portrayal of homosexuals as sissies" (138) and later notes that "All of the characters in Pee-wee's world are carried to extremes through the use of camp as a rhetorical strategy" (141). Indeed, camp is one of the ways that Reubens' TV/film productions for children convey a queer perspective. Pee-wee's *Playhouse Christmas Special* (1988), a one-hour holiday special episode of his *Pee-wee's Playhouse* series (1986-1991), serves as a striking example of the different queer representations in the body of Pee-wee Herman's TV and film appearances.

As Nancy McVittie notes, Reubens' Christmas special employs camp through many different elements of the show, including the frenetic camera angles, the outlandish set design of the Playhouse, and the opening, overlong credit sequence (141). However, we can also observe the show's queerness through Herman's performance as a man-child, as evidenced through such behavior as his greedy appetite for numerous Christmas gifts. But this Christmas special's queerness also stems from its bevy of cameos from queer icons—celebrities either revered by the queer community or who may be queer themselves—including Little Richard, Cher, Grace Jones, and k.d. lang.

In my presentation, I will argue how *Pee-wee's Playhouse Christmas Special* serves as a blend of various forms of queerness through its campy production tone, its lovably selfish man-child, and its showcasing of cameos who are admired by the queer community.

Lance Weldy is Professor of English at Francis Marion University in South Carolina, USA. He teaches courses in children's and young adult literature. His current research interests include queerness, religion, and children's agency. He has co-edited a special issue on Sexualities and Children's Culture for the Children's Literature Association Quarterly. His most recent article, "The Queerness of the Man-Child: Narcissism and Silencing in Astrid Lindgren's Karlson on the Roof Series" (2021) was published in *Barnboken: Journal of Children's Literature Research*. He edited the collection, *BJU and Me: Queer Voices from the World's Most Christian University* (2022), published by the University of Georgia Press.



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17:15-17:45: Closing Remarks and Social Space

Join Zoom Meeting

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Meeting ID: 976 1116 1245

Passcode: 782006