

What Queerness Means To Me

Asher

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I remember playing pretend games with my brother when he was really little. For a happy ending to one epic struggle of good versus evil, he wanted all the dolls/“action figures” to “all get married together”—boys, girls, witches, dragons, demons, whatever, united in a big happy pansexual polygamous clusterfuck. I remember explaining to him that you couldn’t do that, that marriage was between two people, usually a man and a woman.

Forgive me. I was twelve, I didn’t know any better. On the other hand he was about five, and apparently he already did.

The innocence of children with regard to love, romance, gender, friendship and relationships is truly beautiful. They are basically open to all kinds of gender expressions and all sorts of relationships, including the queer, the polyamorous, the platonic. Best friends in preschool get engaged and even married all the time, regardless of gender (or prior mock-marital status). I remember that innocence.

I lost it. First I was a girl, then I was heterosexual, then I was bisexual, then I was wondering if maybe I wasn’t kind of just a lesbian. Then I was polyamorous, then I was kinky, then I was pansexual. I was submissive, then a switch. Then I was gender questioning, then FTM, and gay. I was a transman, and then a trans man. I was homoflexible, or just a faggot. I was transsexual then transgender then transsexual again and finally just trans. Today I’m a trans fem/androgynous male who uses he/him/his pronouns and doesn’t like being called a man but guesses it’s better than being called a boy by strangers and who isn’t really genderqueer. I think. I may be something else tomorrow. And if you think that sounds complicated you should talk to some of my friends.

But my own angsty odyssey of identity isn’t really what I want to talk about. I want to talk about the word queer and the world of possibility it represents to me. Queer is a term which for me recaptures the unconstrained innocence of childhood, when best friends could all get married together and we could all be fairy princesses one day and firefighters the next.

Isn’t it weird that we’re all supposed to feel one way about friends, another about family, and another about lovers? Isn’t it strange that family is only determined by biology or sanctified by marriage and sealed with reproduction? Isn’t it odd that romance is supposed to be doomed without sex, and sex is considered pointless without romance? Isn’t it strange that we’re only supposed to feel one way about one person until death do us part?

Queerness, to me, is about far more than homosexual attraction. It’s about a willingness to see all other taboos broken down. Sure, many of us start on this path when we first feel “same

sex” or “same gender” attraction (though what is sex? And what is gender? And does anyone really have the same sex or gender as anyone else?). But queerness doesn’t stop there.

This is a somewhat controversial stance, but to me queer means something completely different than “gay” or “lesbian” or “bisexual.” A queer person is usually someone who has come to a non-binary view of gender, who recognizes the validity of all trans identities, and who, given this understanding of infinite gender possibilities, finds it hard to define their sexuality any longer in a gender-based way. Queer people understand and support non-monogamy even if they do not engage in it themselves. They can grok being asexual or aromantic. (What does sex have to do with love, or love with sex, necessarily?) A queer can view promiscuous (protected) public bathhouse sex with strangers and complete abstinence as equally healthy.

Queers understand that people have different relationships to their bodies. We get what it means to be stone. We know what body dysphoria is about. We understand that not everyone likes to get touched the same way or to get touched at all. We realize that people with disabilities may have different sexual needs, and that people with survivor histories often have sexual triggers. We can negotiate safe and creative ways to be intimate with people with HIV/AIDs and other STIs.

Queers understand the range of power and sensation and the diversity of sexual dynamics. We are tops and bottoms, doms and subs, sadists and masochists and sadomasochists, versatiles and switches. We know what we like and don’t like in bed.

We embrace a wide range of relationship types. We can be partners, lovers, friends with benefits, platonic sweethearts, chosen family. We can have very different dynamics with different people, often all at once. We don’t expect one person to be able to fulfill all our diverse needs, fantasies and ideals indefinitely.

Because our views on relationships, sex, gender, love, bodies, and family are so unconventional, we are of necessity anti-assimilationist. Because under the kyriarchy we suffer, and watch the people we love suffering, we are political. Because we want to survive, we fight. We only want the freedom to be ourselves, love ourselves, love each other, and live together. Because we are routinely denied that, we are pissed.

Queer doesn’t mean “don’t label me,” it means “I am naming myself.” It means “ask me more questions if you curious” and in the same breath means “fuck off.”

At least, that is what it means to me.

At 21 going on 22, I have done a little bit of living, maybe more than a lot of my cishetero peers, probably less than many of my queer friends. I have been disappointed in many things, have suffered great pain, and have had many illusions shattered. But I have also learned that human relationships are deeper, wider, more mysterious, more diverse, more perverse, more intense, more free, less definable and infinitely more beautiful than I was ever taught that they could be. The word queer sums up that hope for me, the hope that there is more than one kind of sex, more than one kind of meaning to romance, and far more than two genders.

In short, “queer” means infinite possibilities for love, pleasure, and self-expression. To me, that is everything I ever wanted, everything I never dared to want, and more.

Queers and queerness are my hope for humanity.

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