

Gender, sexuality and film

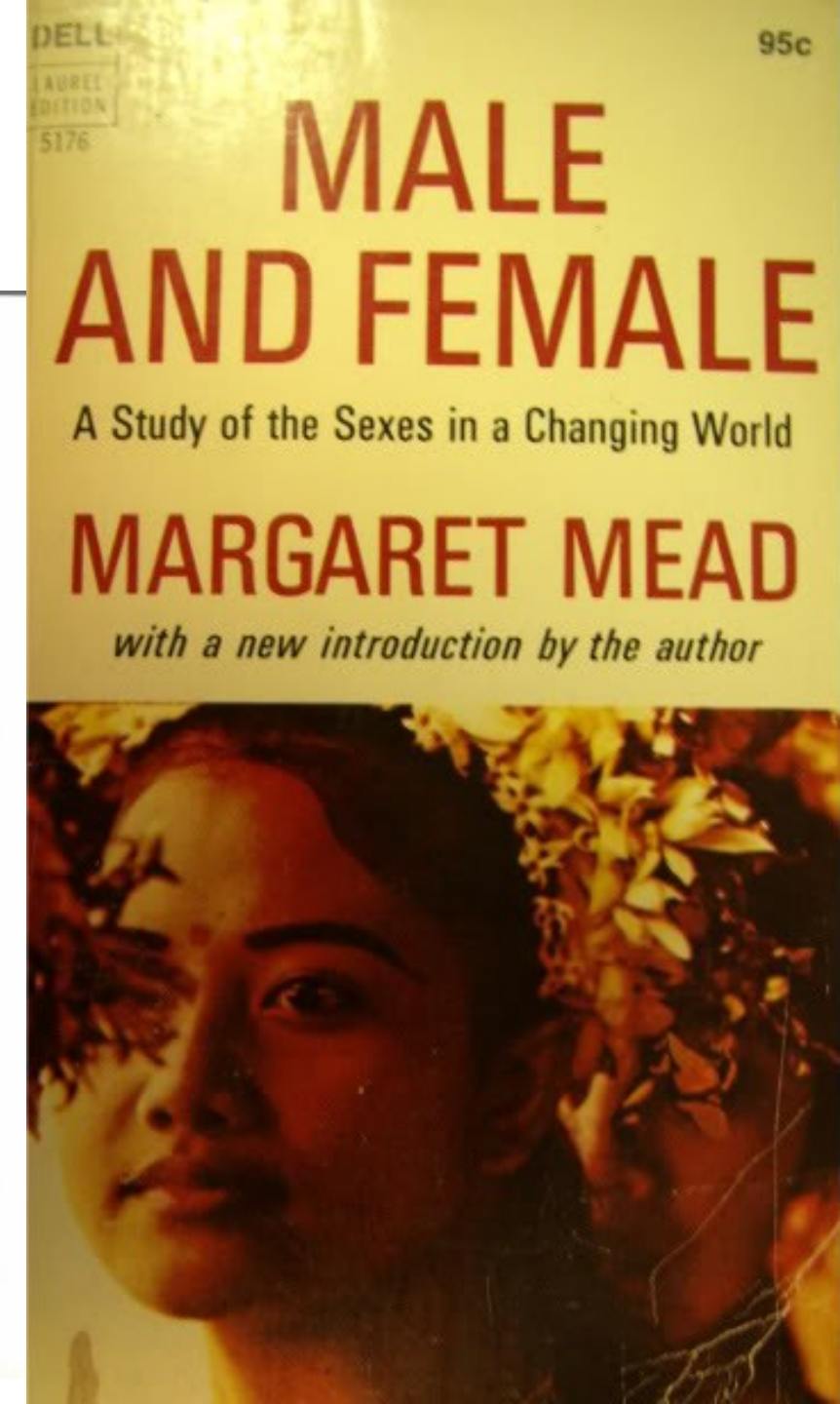
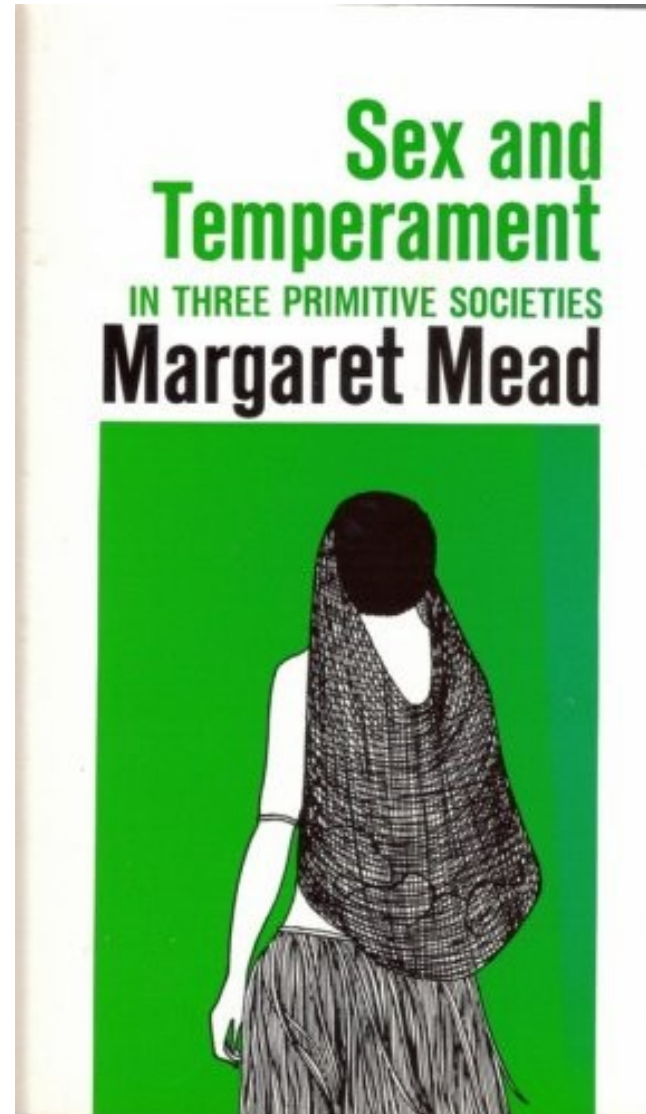
audience and critics perspectives

Guest lecture Masaryk University Brno, November 2018

Prof. dr. Kevin Smets (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium)

- Part 1: feminist media studies and gender perspectives
 - Case study: audience study in Turkish and Moroccan communities
- Part 2: queer studies and film
 - Case study: “Zenne Dancer” and homonationalism

Margaret Mead: gender roles



Feminism: 4 waves

- Late 19th – early 20th century: political rights (Suffragettes)
- 1960-70s: public role and participation of women: work and culture
- 1990s: violence, reproduction, sexual liberation
- 2010s: role of social media, harassment, #metoo

→ Media and cultural studies influenced since the second wave!

During the second wave: Laura Mulvey

- *Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema* (1975)
 - Combining Freud, Lacan and feminist theory
 - Both men and women are represented in stereotypical roles
 - Phallogentrism
 - Cinema from a predominantly male – narcissistic point of view
 - Scopophilia (voyeuristic gaze)

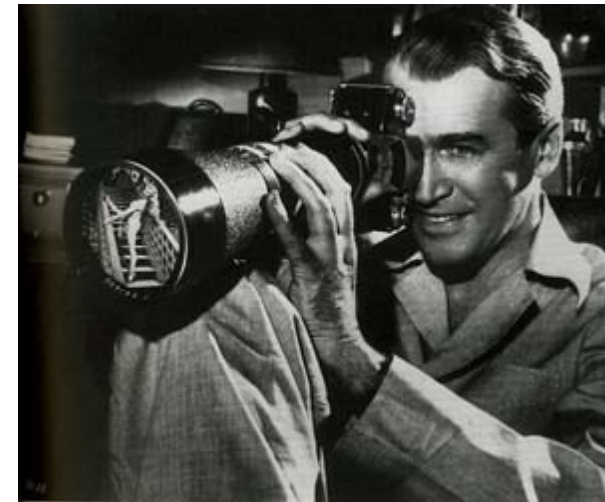


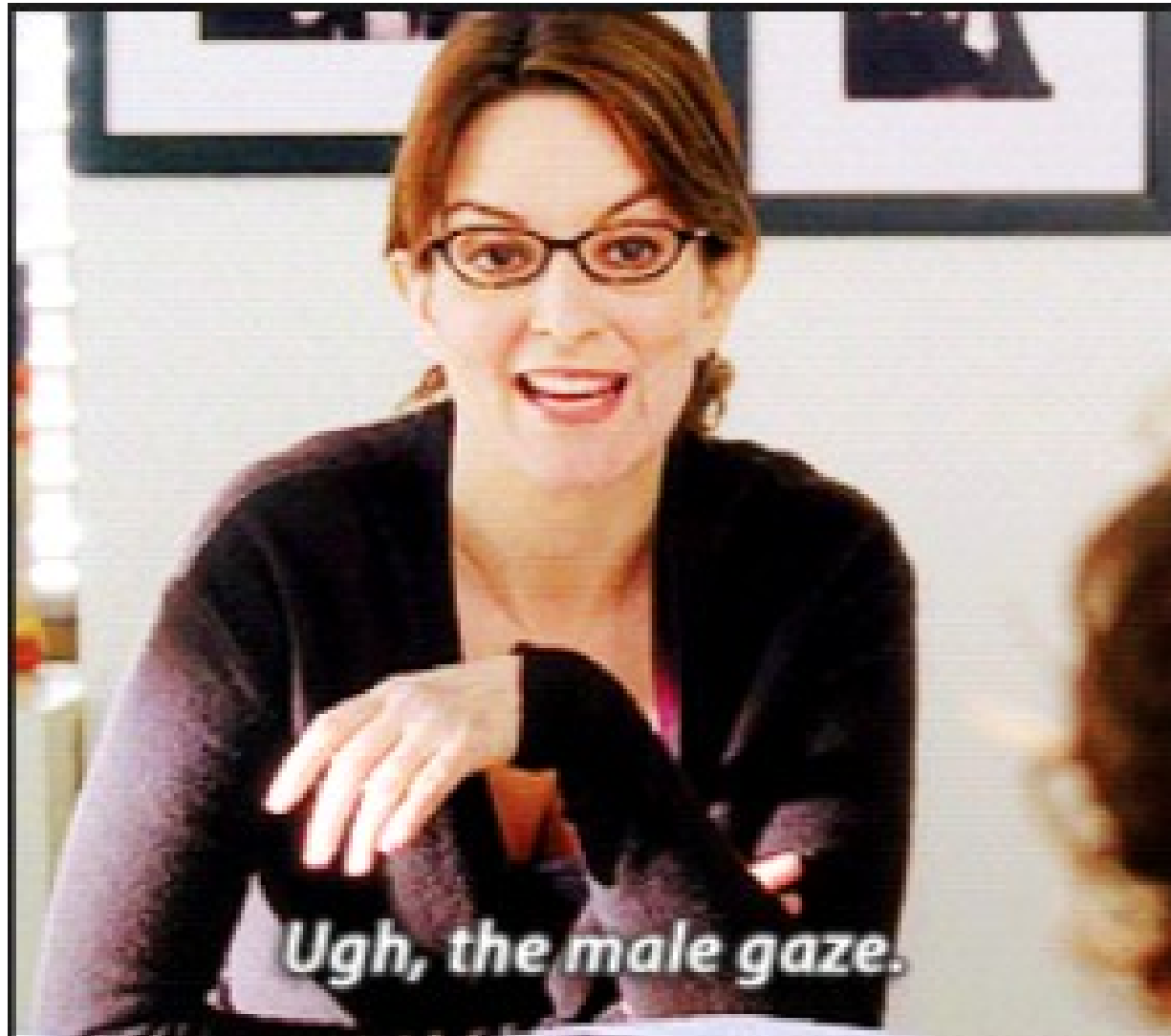
Peeping Tom

Peeping Tom (Michael Powell 1960)

Laura Mulvey: *Visual pleasures and narrative cinema* (1975)

- Viewing = identifying with the screen
- “Male gaze”
- Tension is resolved by giving man the role of spectator, and woman role of the spectacle
- Spectator sees through eyes of male protagonist
- Eroticization



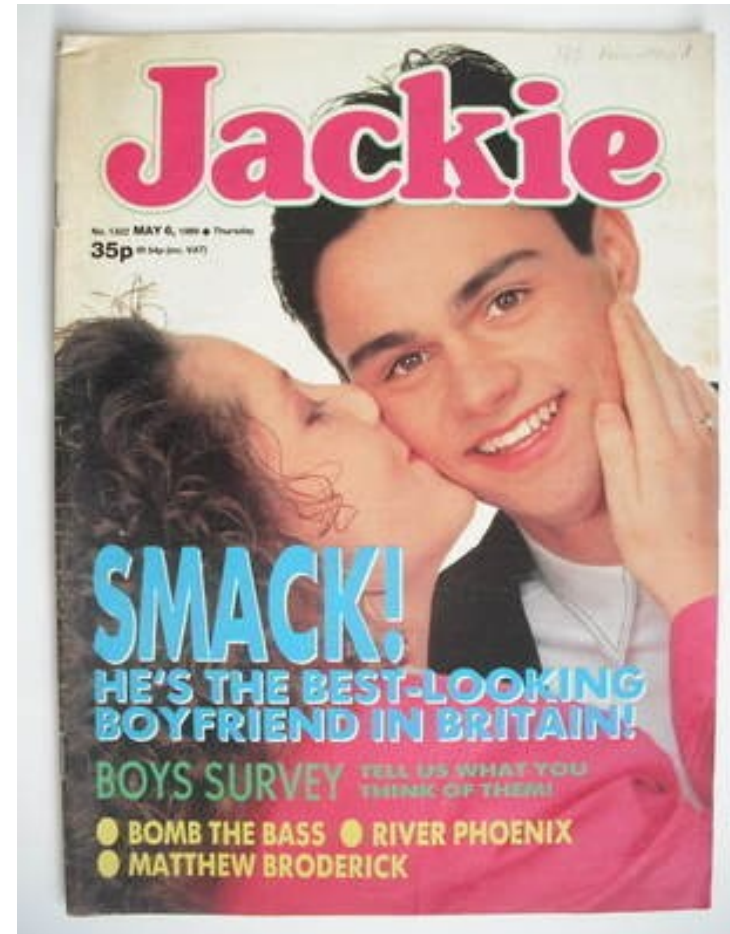


The male gaze: criticisms

- Gay gaze, female gaze
- Mulvey later nuances the theory



Feminism and cultural studies (1): Angela McRobbie



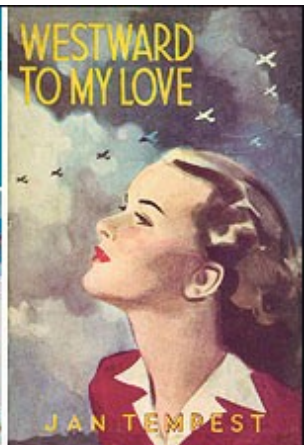
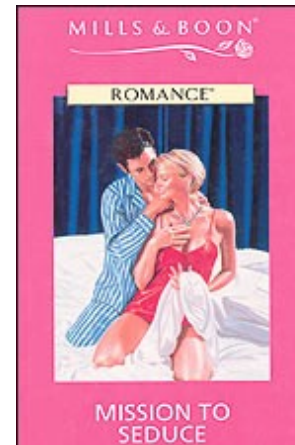
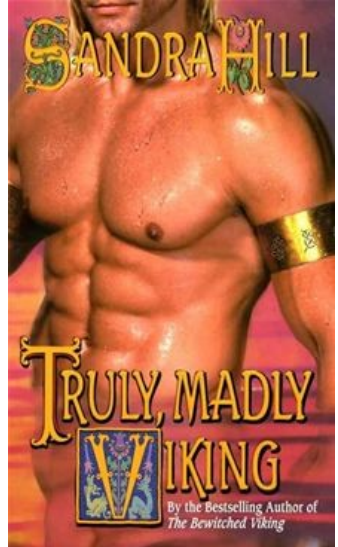
Angela McRobbie

- Research on popular women's magazines
- --> Can be inspiring for film studies!

- Gender and youth culture through perspective of Althusser's "ideological state apparatus"
- Power of publishers and media industry
- Dominant reading: women's lives revolve around beauty and men ; Meaning of love, beauty, sex... are determined by this industry
- But: Attention for resistance, pleasure, disruption

Feminism and cultural studies (2): Janice Radway

- *Reading the Romance* (1987)
- Interpretative community of female readers of romance (clustered around a book shop)
- Commercial and problematic aspects
- But: the reading process can be empowering
 - Romance can be idealized, but not the protagonists
 - Readers create their own interpretative space
 - Readers can resist the commercial reading
 - Erotic pleasure of readers



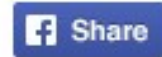
3th and 4th wave feminism and Disney



How Fourth-Wave Feminism is Changing Disney's Princesses

By *Kaitlin Ebersol*

Posted Thursday, October 23, 2014 - 1:10 pm





fuckyeahcostumedramas

Lily James & Richard Madden in 'Cinderella' (2015) | cynthia record

Amanda Roberts
Cinderella

Emma Watson Refusing a Corset For Beauty and the Beast is Important



entertainmentweekly • 4 weken geleden

+ Volgen



31.4K vind-ik-leuks 1,013 reacties

Instagram

A case study: gendered viewing practices

- Study on Turkish and Moroccan film cultures in Antwerp (Belgium)
- Family environments, homes, and the film theatre

Family time: bridging divides in the multiplex

“[the head of the household] is willing to pay the price of a night out to the cinema. They have a drink, take a popcorn... The man feels good because he has done something with his family. For us, there are very few things to do with the whole family.”

man of Turkish origin (38yo, second generation)

Filmic safety zones among diasporic families

“[...] there is a lot of doubt about films from the West. One can always doubt and expect that *something* can happen and you should be careful to watch it with your family.”

girl of Moroccan origin (18yo, third generation)

Filmic safety zones among diasporic families

“[...] I wasn’t allowed to watch films like *Dirty Dancing* [...]. I missed that, because it’s entertaining, especially as a teenager. I mean... your world opens through TV, because I wasn’t allowed to play outside very often either.

[...]

Years later, when I already had children, I finally watched *Dirty Dancing* and I was like: finally I can watch it [laughs]. Isn’t that silly?”

woman of Moroccan origin (32yo, second generation)

Filmic safety zones among diasporic families

Interviewer: And did you ever watch this films secretly?

“I guess so... When I heard somebody approaching in the background, I *zapped* quickly, or yeah... I realized that I shouldn't watch be watching it. [...] Or I heard they peeked at what I was watching. We had one TV, so there wasn't much of a secret.”

woman of Moroccan origin (32yo, second generation)

Filmic safety zones among diasporic families

“For us, Indian films are accessible... I think that it is the main reason why Moroccan girls watch those films. It never crosses the limit, you know? I don’t know if you’ve ever seen such a film [laughs], but you notice that the limit is always precisely avoided. That is why many Moroccan girls watch those films, and Moroccans in general, I believe.”



girl of Moroccan origin (third generation)

Filmic safety zones among diasporic families

“[...] their culture is different, but the behavior is similar to ours, such as respect for the elderly, family values... It’s actually the same as in our culture.”

woman of Turkish origin (42yo, second generation)

Gendering genres, compromises and gendered guilt

women : romance

- emotional
 - calm
- sentimental
 - soft

men : action

- wild
 - violent
- to the point

“something
for both”

Gendering genres, compromises and gendered guilt

“When I look at the women that I know [...], they are not interested in films. When a film starts, it is often like this: men on the couch, women in the kitchen. I have never seen them calmly, watching a film with us...”

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

“My father’s wife and my father’s sister too... they seem to feel guilty when a film is turned on, they feel lazy when they are on the couch [...]. And they are constantly baking and making tea... because, when you watch a film you have to make tea. And it’s not just tea, there should be biscuits too, and so they keep going...”

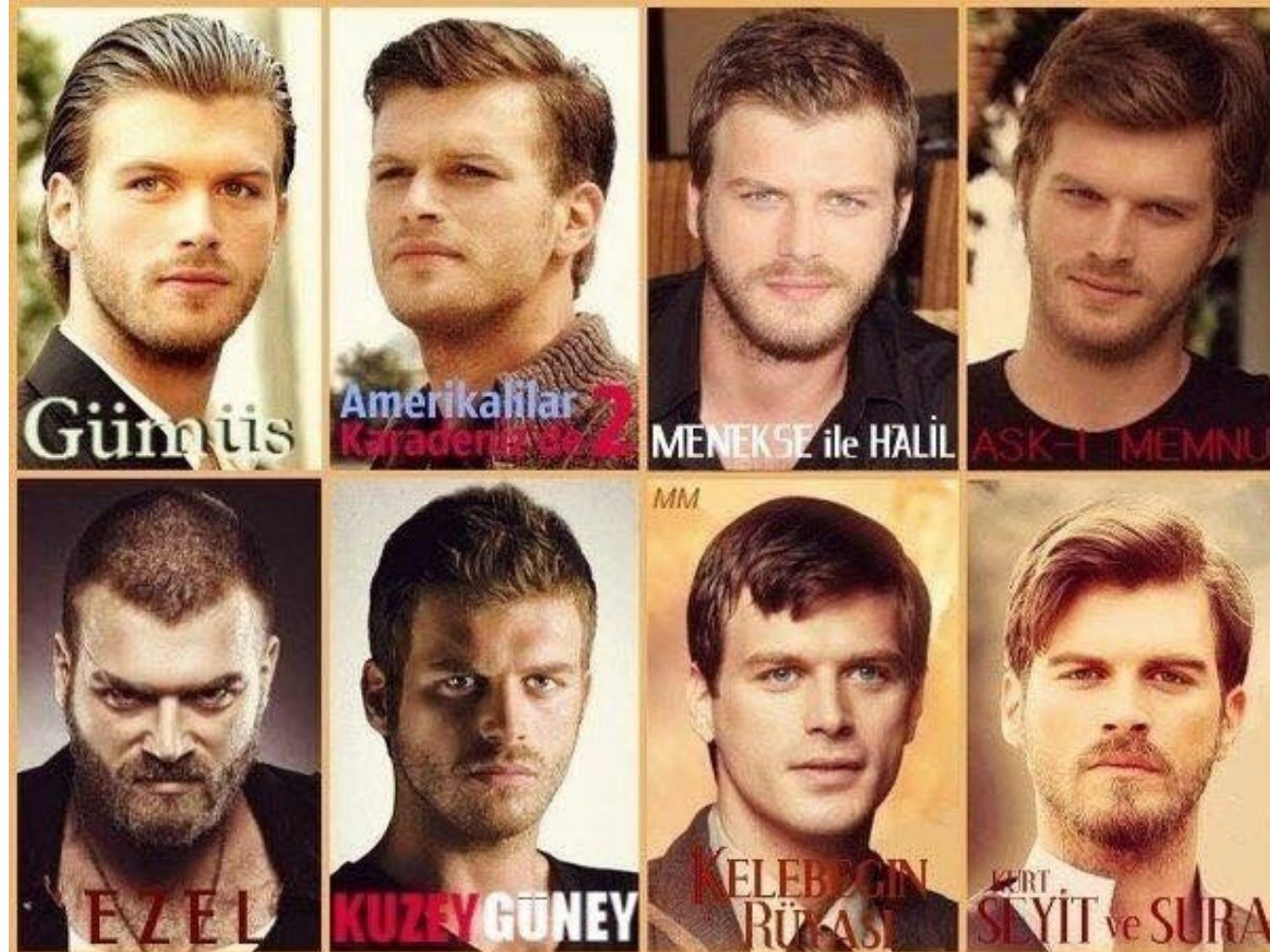
woman of Moroccan origin (31yo, second generation)

Gendering genres, compromises and gendered guilt

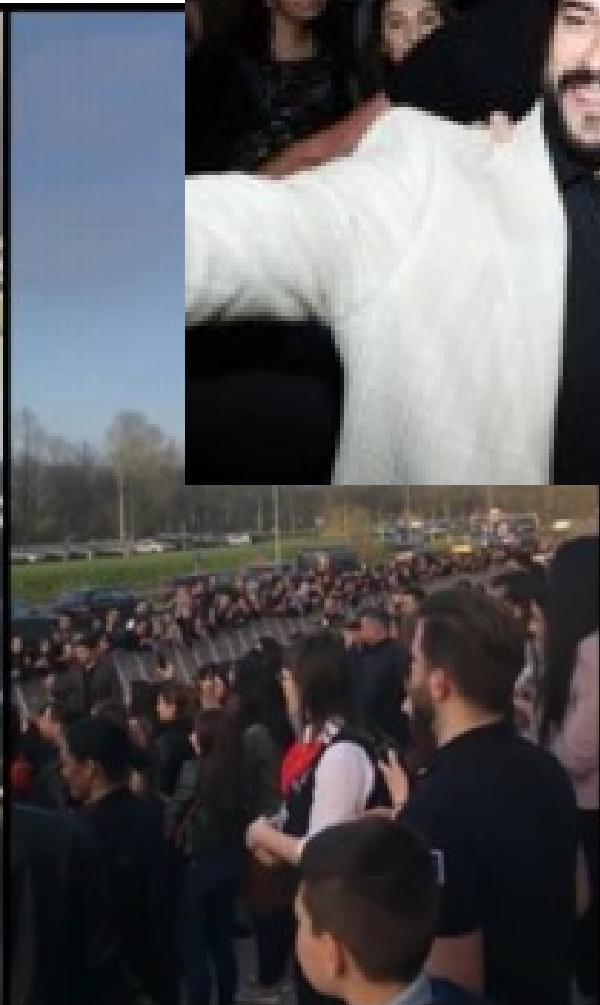
“I think they take advantage of the little freedom they can get, they use it for that. [...] I think they all secretly watch films when their husbands are absent.”

man of Moroccan origin (60yo, first generation)

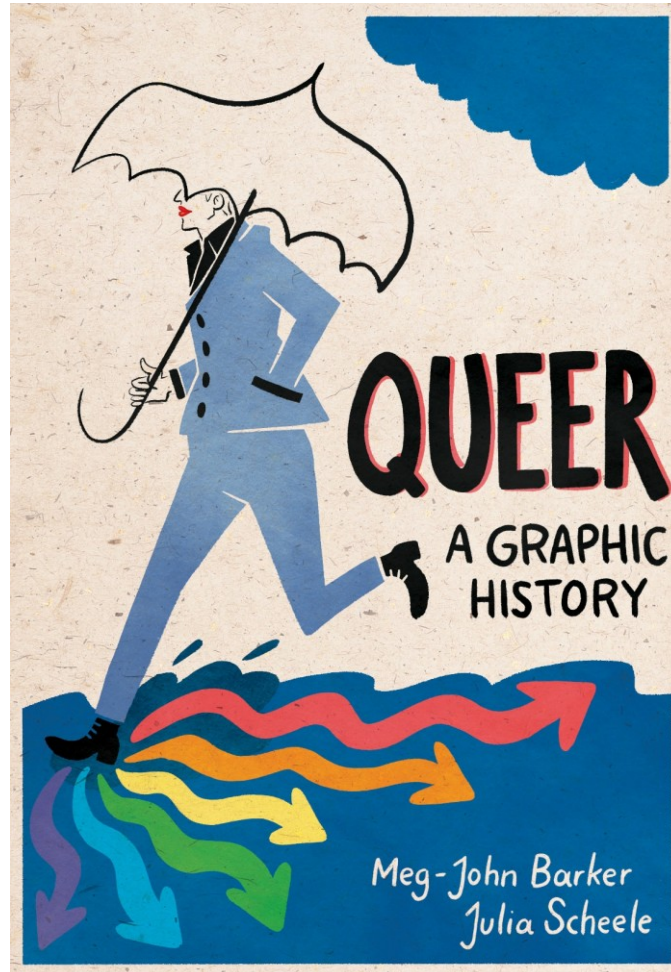
Pleasure and resistance: (daytime) soaps and male stars



Male stars



Part 2: queer films and homonationalism



QUEERER UMBRELLA?

Many queer activists see “queer” as an umbrella term for folk who are outside of the mainstream: both the heterosexual/cisgender mainstream and the conventional LG(BT)* mainstream.

They point out that being “equal” is not always “equally good” and question the gay rights movement’s focus on things like marriage, consumer culture, and serving in the military.

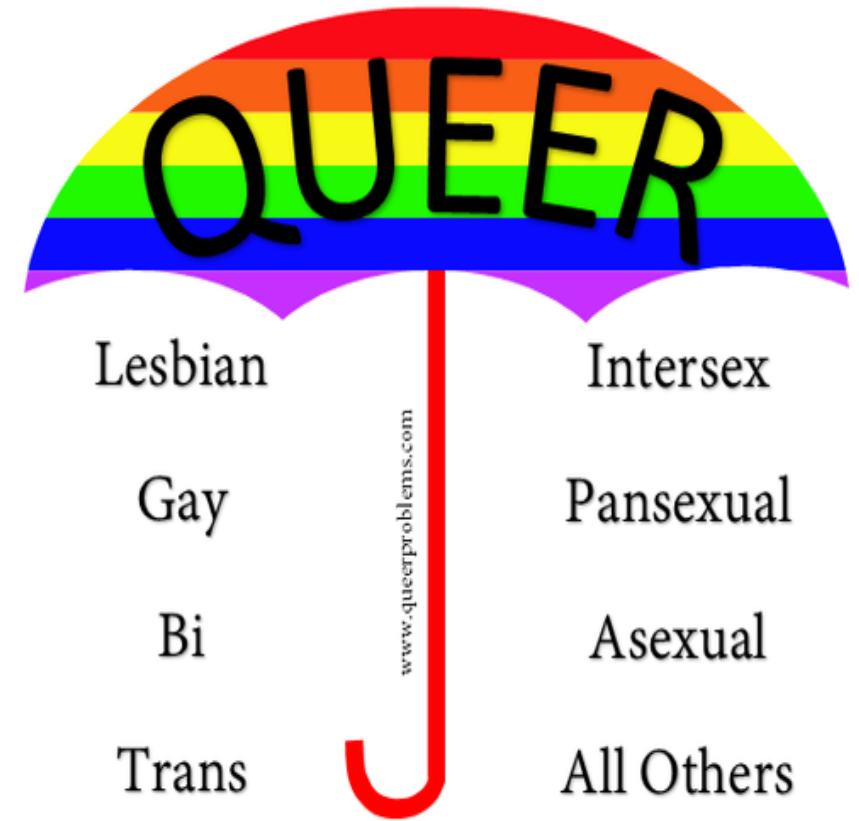
Maybe the focus should also be on the groups under the queer umbrella who are most marginalized, such as those who are at everyday risk of violence, suicide, poverty and homelessness.



* B and T are in brackets here because LGBT rights agendas are often driven by gay men and, to a lesser extent, lesbians.

Queer?

- “Homosexual”: 1869 (cf. Foucault)
- Queer historical meaning: weird, strange
 - German “quer”
- Used as an insult during most of the 20th century
 - Appropriated by activist community
- Umbrella term / subversive





I use 'queer' in a narrower sense to note political investments that challenge not only heteronormativity and normative constructions of gender, but also homonormativity: the reproduction by GLBT of classed, raced, and gendered structures of privilege.

Sender (2012): 223

LOSE

I'M
SOMEWHERE
IN THE MIDDLE
OF THE
SPECTRUM.



I DON'T
FEEL THE NEED
TO LABEL MY
GENDER OR
SEXUALITY.

MILEY CYRUS



I DON'T
THINK IT'S
NECESSARY TO
FIGURE OUT IF
YOU'RE "GAY" OR
"STRAIGHT".



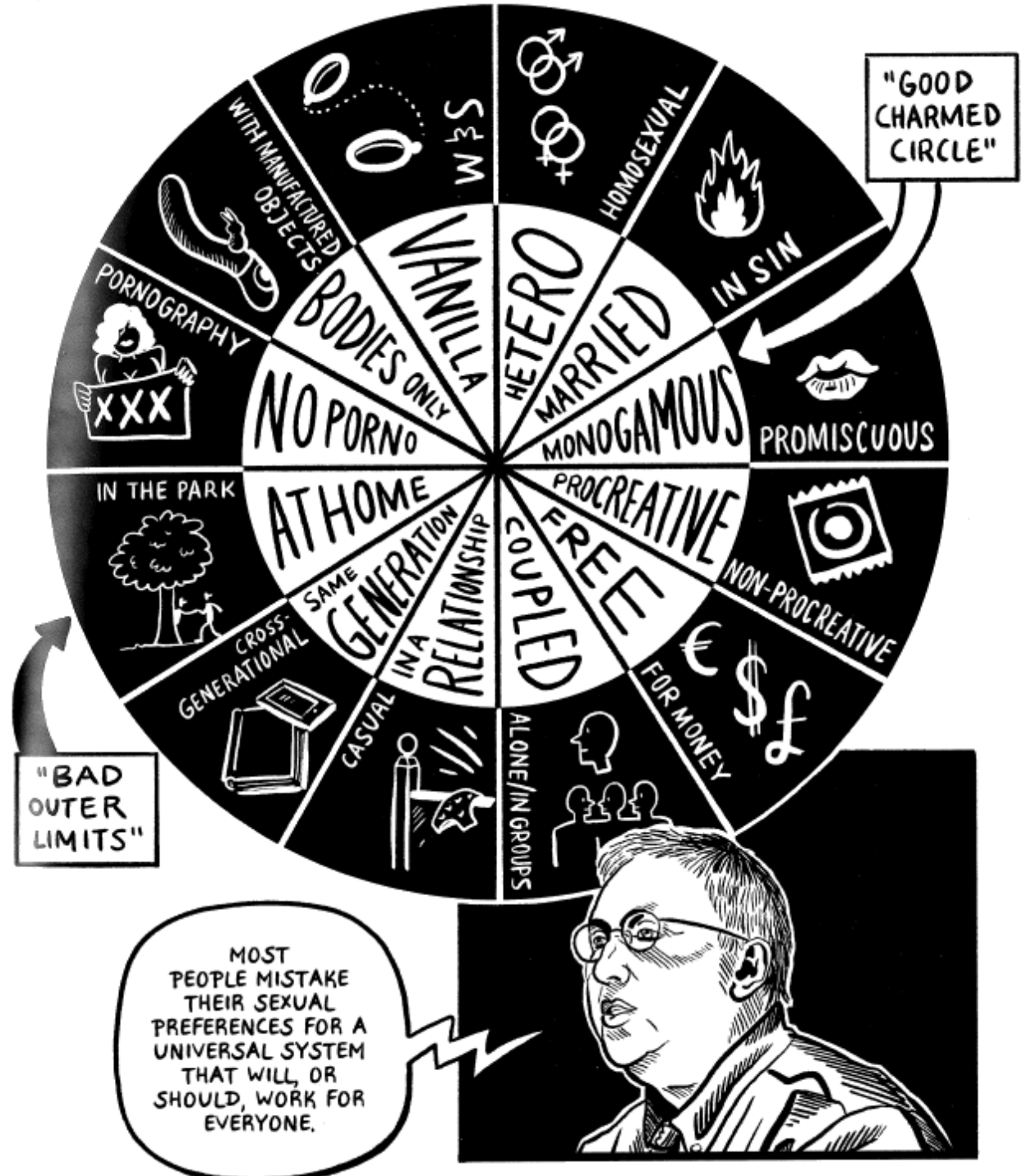
Queer theory: 1990s

- Activism (aids activism, ...)
- Artistic: cinema (see later)
- Academic: from gender studies to gay & lesbian studies to queer studies : emphasis on performativity (most influential theorist: Judith Butler)

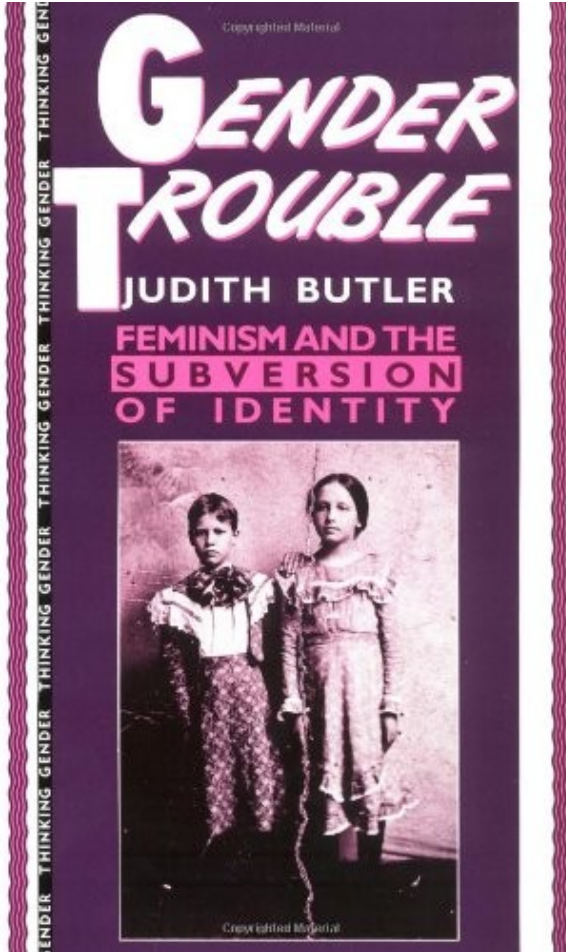
Gayle Rubin (1984)

Sexual performativity

The "charmed circle"



Judith Butler



1990



- Gender is a social construct; not what one *is* but what one *does*
- Gender changes through time
- Going outside the boundaries is punished

Roses are red.
Gender is
performative.
Mass market
romance is
heteronormative.



som**ee**cards
user card

Queer and media studies?

Queer theory seeks to expose the false truths that have constructed boundaries of centrality and marginality, and have normalised the centre by revealing the performative nature of gender and sexuality and the fluidity of identity.

Jodie Taylor (2012): 30



Conchita Wurst

This guy says: "The day before yesterday was the last day the beard makes you more manly".



FULL KHOKHOTOUCH
@SnowmanBrsk

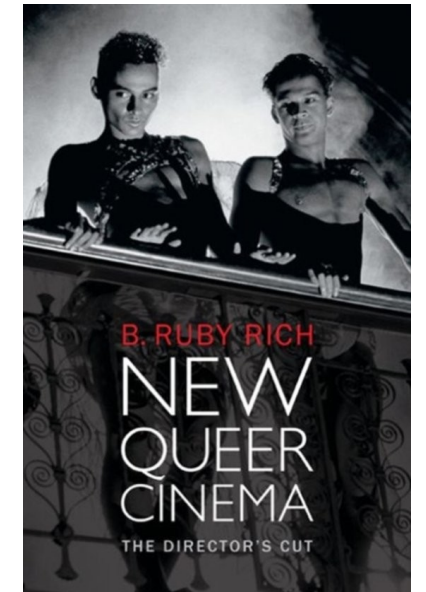
Позавчера был последний день, когда борода делала тебя более мужественным

4:37 PM - 11 May 2014

46 12

Queer cinema

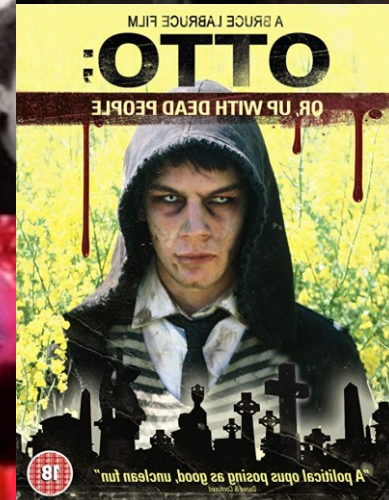
- New Queer Cinema
 - E.g. *Poison*, *Edward II*, *Swoon*, *The Living End*...
 - Later *Brokeback Mountain*, *La vie d'Adelle*, ...
- -> queer-themed independent film since 90s



10 Scary Gay Movies You Can Stream Instantly

Gay werewolves, lesbian vampires from the '70s and the gayest Freddy movie ever made make up our list of the best LGBT-themed scary movies to watch this Halloween.

by **JOSH MIDDLETON** • 10/16/2014, 1:23 p.m.



A case study: *Zenne Dancer*

Asian Journal of Communication

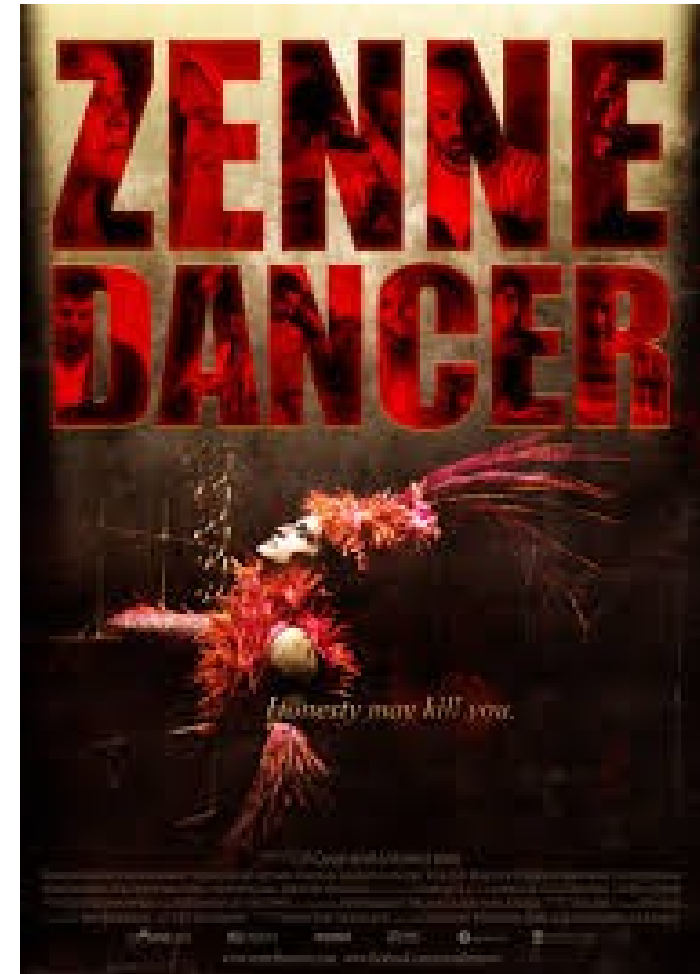
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rajc20>

Homonationalism and Western progressive narrative: locating 'conservative heartlands' with *Zenne Dancer* (2012) and its Western reviews

Lukasz Szulc^a & Kevin Smets^a

[Szulc & Smets \(2015\)](#)



Murder on Ahmet Yıldız (2008)

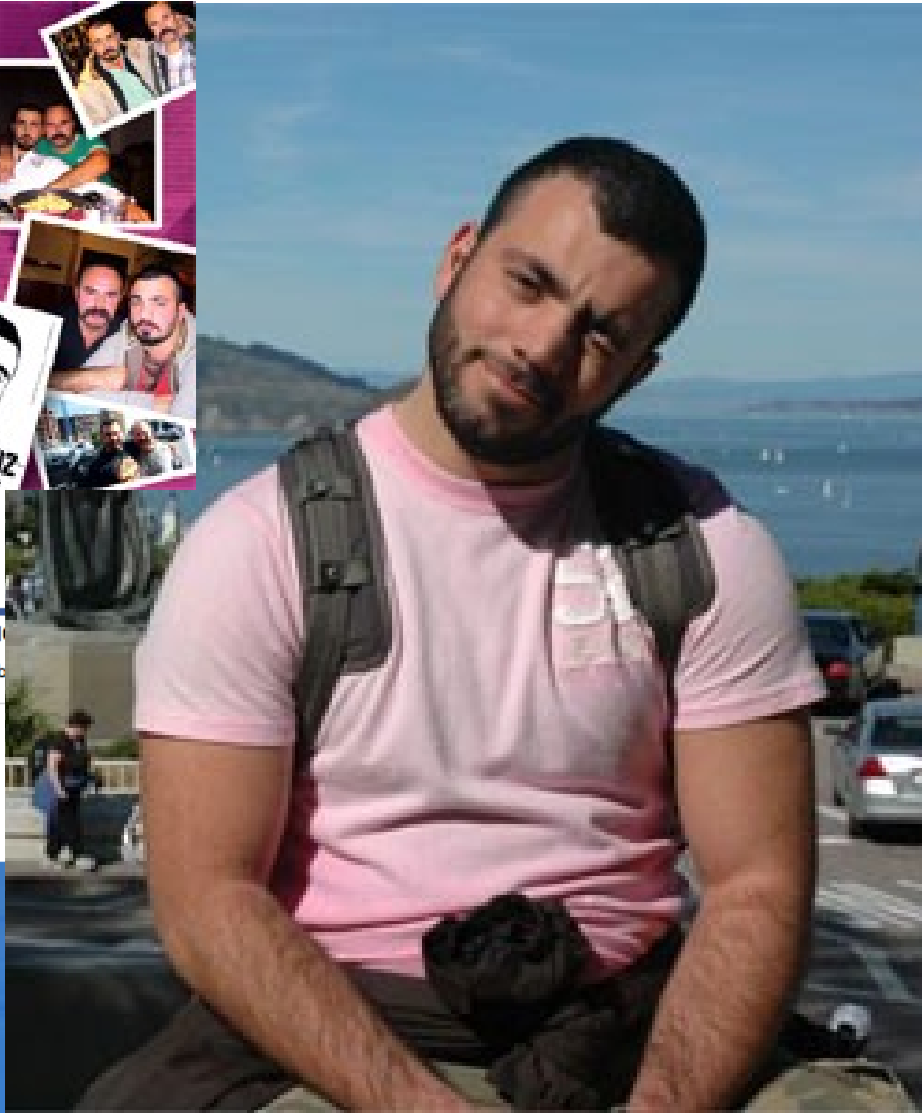


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Was Ahmet Yıldız the victim of Turkey's first gay honour killing?





Ahmet Is My Family. A Tribute To Ahmet Yildiz



Zenne Dancer, 2011, dirs. Caner Alper and Mehmet Binay (CAM Films)

- Western progressive narrative

- **Homonationalism:** a rhetoric of sexual modernization that is simultaneously able to castigate the other as homophobic and perverse, and construct the imperialist center as “tolerant” but sexually, racially, and gendered normal (Jasbir Puar, 2005)



Ahmet



Daniel



Can





Daniel: Why can't you be honest and tell the truth to your parents? Honesty is the easiest.

Ahmet: You don't understand. Honesty will kill me.

Daniel (laughing): No, I can't understand. What could possibly happen? They are your parents, they love you.



Review #	Country (website host)	Website	Author	Date posted
1	USA	The Hollywood Reporter (entertainment news)	Karsten Kastelan	12/10/2011
2		The Economist (general news)	N/A	22/10/2011
3		CNN (general news)	Ivan Watson	13/01/2012
4		Huffington Post (general news)	Suzan Fraser	21/01/2012
5		EurasiaNet/Open Society Institute (regional news)	Dorian Jones	07/02/2012
6		Voices of America (general news)	Dorian Jones	09/02/2012
7		Queer & Feminist Film Studies (blog)	D. Hewitt	30/04/2013
8		San Diego Gay & Lesbian News (LGBT news)	Ken Williams	22/05/2012
9		Edge Boston (LGBT news)	Killian Melloy	18/06/2012
10		Variety (entertainment news)	Dennis Harvey	25/06/2012
11		Arne's Flicks (blog)	Arne Adolfsen	28/07/2012
12	Netherlands	NRC Handelsblad (general news)	Niels Posthumus	13/01/2012
13		NOS op 3 (general news)	Emil (pseudonym)	13/01/2012
14		Journalist in Turkije (journalist blog)	Frédérique Geerdink	26/01/2012
15		Jessica Maas Istanbul (journalist blog)	Jessica Maas	25/05/2012
16	UK	Madi Kazemi Blog (LGBT asylum news)	Paul Canning	25/11/2011
17		The Guardian (general news)	Elif Shafak	18/01/2012
18		Pink News (general news)	Bradley Secker & Dan Littauer	09/02/2012
19	Australia	The Cue Dot Confessions (Melbourne Queer Film Festival Review)	Michael Scott	22/03/2013
20	Austria	E-Kurd (Kurdish news)	Ece Toksabay	21/01/2012
21	Belgium	Holebi Info (LGB news portal)	N/A	12/01/2012
22	France	Au Bonheur des Dams (blog)	SweetAngel (pseudonym)	17/01/2012
23	Germany	Deutsch-Türkische Nachrichten (German-Turkish general news)	N/A	24/10/2011

Turkey...

- 'still has a long way to go before it overcomes deeply entrenched institutional homophobia' (CNN)
- 'has a long way to go when it comes to banning homophobia' (NRC Handelsblad)
- and that its society 'still has a long way ahead' (Holebi Info).

- ‘the hot-button issue of gay rights (or the lack thereof) in Muslim nations’ (Variety)
- ‘Islam disdains homosexuality as a sinful though curable disease’ (Deutsch-Türkische Nachrichten)
- ‘gays in a Muslim country that is seeking European Union membership’ (Huffington Post)

Locating conservatism

- Turkey's 'conservative heartland' (Huffington Post)
- the 'impoverished and conservative southeast' (E-Kurd)
- 'Middle Eastern values' (San Diego Gay & Lesbian News)

Discussion

- The imperative of coming out?
- Superiority of the "western" way of life?
- Critiques on "feel good pride" and commodification of LGBT rights / pinkwashing

