

QYA OCTOBER ZINE



Cover art by Jasper (they/them), pg. 7

INSIDE:

"Spooky Season is Queer"

"The Zine Creatures Celebrate One Year of Zines"

Dear reader,

Welcome to the October issue of the Queer Youth Assemble monthly zine! This month we are celebrating spooky season, along with one year of zines! Inside, you will find beautiful pieces of art, writing, and poetry created by Queer Youth Assemble members. We acknowledge the intersecting elements found within the content of this zine, and encourage you to read with both compassion and understanding.

Due to our strong belief in uncensored creativity, we decided to not put content limits on our creators for this publication. However, we understand that some of the content within this zine may be triggering to some readers. In this and future QYA zines, a list of specific triggers can be found at the top of each page, and any potentially triggering themes can be found at the beginning of each zine. Potentially triggering themes in this issue include anti-LGBTQ+ laws and regulations, demonization of LGBTQ+ identities, mentions of substance abuse and homicide, as well as disturbing imagery involving eyes on page 10. If you find yourself struggling after reading, we encourage you to reach out for support.

We hope you enjoy this publication, and are inspired to create whatever your heart desires.

With love and care,

Esmée Silverman (she/they)
Queer Youth Assemble Co-Founder

August Doherty Mead (they/them)
Queer Youth Assemble Writing Team Lead



WHAT IS QYA?

Queer Youth Assemble is a non-profit youth-led organization dedicated to serving queer youth across the United States and its territories. We are committed to nurturing the joy, interests, and talents of queer youth, and giving queer youth the resources and support to create positive change within their communities. We envision a day where all queer youth are happy, supported, and able to reach their fullest potential.



SPOOKY SEASON IS QUEER

by Ellen Richards (she/they)

CW: discussion of anti-LGBTQ+ laws and regulations, discussion of demonization of LGBTQ+ identities, mentions of substance abuse and homicide

I. Foreword

I have a confession to make: I love pumpkin spice lattes. Although, of course, I am aware Starbucks is overpriced, probably destroying the environment, and I could just make it myself, right? Every cultural aspect of Fall is perfect. Whoever made this consumer cult of apple picking, going to the fair, and rewatching horror movies with friends did a great job. They should really get a solid pat on the back - and a sip of my latte.

When considering how we got here, I think we really owe all our gratitude to the ancient Celtic celebration of Samhain. Spooky season, as we know it, wouldn't be here without it. If I am perfectly honest, what really hooks me in is that I am fascinated by almost anything paranormal - whether fictional or stranger than fiction. And all this excitement has sent me down the path of my greatest discovery yet - that the history of the macabre is even queerer than you would expect.

Before we continue, I must disclose that my personal knowledge on this topic is limited by three factors. One is that I am a white, which limits my personal perspective, another is that there is limited documentation on the topic, and the third is that existing research mostly focuses on American history. While bearing this in mind, there is still much I can report back on despite these factors.

I. The Hays Code & LGBTQ+ Censorship in Film

The censorship of queer identities in American pop culture can trace its roots back to The Hays Code. The Hays Code was a set of regulations on the content of a film that directors were required to follow to ensure their films would be allowed to be played in the majority of theaters in the United States. It was developed in response to national moral panic against the scandalous production standards of Hollywood during the roaring twenties. This was coupled in with a series of high profile murders and frequent overdose deaths of directors and starlets. Postmaster general William Hays oversaw the creation of an early draft of the list "36 Don'ts and Be Carefuls" that Hollywood Studios willingly adopted. This list would later become the foundation of The Hays Code. Despite this, there was no formal reinforcement of the guidelines, and no clear consequences for disobeying them.

By 1930, Hollywood Studios officially imposed The Hays Code, which declared that "no picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it."

"Hence the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin." While it did prohibit any explicit display of queerness, it did not prohibit the presence of queer coded characters entirely. Rather it required them to be depicted as villainous, in an attempt to convey to audiences that queerness must be seen as immoral.

Like most rules for censorship, The Hays Code quickly became outdated and unappealing to the general public. Topics that once got films barred from production - gambling, substance use, and sex - now became the blueprint for a box office hit. Following the end of World War II studios began weakening their enforcement of the code to compete with uncensored foreign films that were met with greater commercial success. In 1955, Frank Sinatra won an oscar for his portrayal of a character who was an addict in *The Man with the Golden Arm*. Despite its success, Hollywood Studios had refused to approve the film's release into theaters under its jurisdiction.

By 1969, the rapid decline in the code's effectiveness led its creator to admit that as long as each "moral conflict" is presented in such a way that it does not encourage it, any film could be approved except those portraying queerness. The movie *Some Like It Hot* premiered shortly after Hays made these remarks. It featured its two leads in drag, along with scenes of gambling, business fraud, sensuality, and the consumption of liquor. This event marked the death of The Hays Code. Hays and his organization abandoned their efforts to censor filmmakers to use, instead, a rating system informing audiences of any explicit content within a film. Today, the letter rating system is still used to evaluate films in the United States.

II. Queer Coded Villains in Film, *The Babadook* & The Rejected Monster Trope

In recent years, queer analysis of films has shed light on one of the lasting effects of The Hays Code: the queer coded villain. Queer coding refers to incorporating secondary attributes associated with queerness into a character. Disney villains are a prime example of queer coding in action. Captain Hook, from the *Peter Pan* films, is portrayed as vain and cowardly. He is typically adorned with an oversized pirate's hat, and a flouncy cravat. Many of Disney's male villains are written with qualities of a similar nature; and Ursula the sea witch from *The Little Mermaid* was modeled after a famous drag queen known as Divine.

Many American films, animated or not, associated gender non-conformity with queerness. This set a precedent of making villainous characters in media frequently feminine men or butch women. This perpetuates the stigmatization not only of queerness, but of anything remotely associated with it - especially gender non-conformity.

In December 2016, an Instagram post surfaced depicting the Australian horror movie *The Babadook* (2014) being listed under the LGBT+ movie section on Netflix. The movie follows the story of a monster out of a storybook, The Babadook, who begins terrorizing a single mother, and her son after they read a mysterious storybook about it. The credibility of the original post on the Babadook remains uncertain even today. Nevertheless, it sparked an era of memes solidifying the Babadook as a queer icon.

But why, in particular, was the Babadook embraced so passionately by some in the LGBTQ+ community? Besides the overwhelming appeal generated from its humorous placement, the Babadook follows the same character arc as Frankenstein's monster. I find that the story arcs of villains often center around themes of otherness. Being queer, especially while closeted, can be an extremely isolating experience. Stories that center around monsters who are rejected by human society can become a form of media that can be seen as relating to a queer experience in a time when media about authentic queer experiences may be censored.

III. The Rise of Sapphic Pulp Fiction in the 1950s & 1960s

Cheap fiction novels had an established presence dating as far back as the early 19th century. Short stories and news articles called "penny presses" were popular sources of entertainment. They are reminiscent of modern day tabloids. Groundwood paper was invented in 1843, which greatly reduced the cost of paper production, and by association, printing itself. This resulted in the beginnings of mass-marketed, cheap novels in addition to earlier pamphlets.

Writing publications in the United States did not face direct censorship because their influence on the public was seen as being weaker than that of the film industry. Although, writing with controversial subject matter, like same-sex relationships, was subject to censorship by the US Postal Service. It was declared to be in violation of their rules that prohibited reading materials that may promote socially deviant behaviors.

The earliest explicitly lesbian novel to be published in England and the United States was *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall. Hall identified with being a lesbian, and also demonstrated a strong affinity to masculine gender identity and gender expression. Hall frequently went by the name John. The novel faced legal trouble in the United Kingdom, and became effectively banned from publication for thirty years. However, the right to the novel's publication was upheld while at trial in the United States due to strong protections of freedom of speech and publication under the constitution.

Pulp fiction is a genre of story that is sexually suggestive that features rapid action in its plot progression. They were frequently printed in cheap, paperback format and sold with the assumption of being thrown away after being read. As a result, books of this nature with explicitly gay or lesbian relationships were associated with, and often influenced by, other topics that were deemed taboo. This includes writing with depictions of prostitution, pornography, violence, or general criminality.

Pulp fiction magazines were profitable from the 1920s until the onset of World War II, when the cost of publication became inflated. The classic paperback, pocket-sized pulp fiction novels inherited this demand after the end of the war. Sapphic pulp fiction novels peaked in popularity, and in number of publications during the 1950s and 1960s. The majority of them were largely written by women catered to audiences of straight men.

The association of lesbians and the paranormal developed from the demonization of lesbians as dangerous, particularly towards other women. This stereotype leaked into a genre of sensationalized drama within stories. The way in which this ruling most notably affected the way in which these stories were told is evident even today. The endings of the stories of openly queer women in fiction often had one of three endings from this point on: (1.) the woman marries a man and rejects her queerness, (2.) the woman is depicted as queer due to personal insanity (or otherwise suffers an emotional breakdown), and is institutionalized, or (3.) the woman dies. The popularity of the genre dissolved as the feminist movement, the womanist movement, and the gay liberation movement rose to prominence in the United States. These movements provided the social change necessary to allow the possibility of queer relationships to have their happy ending.

The harm and enduring legacy of LGBTQ+ censorship in the media still haunts us today. Disney's failure to put visible queer characters in its films and franchises circles back to this pervasive belief that LGBTQ+ relationships and identities are seen as immoral and provocative, even though this could not be further from the truth.

IV. Conclusion

The future of LGBTQ+ associations with spooky season is proving to be more promising than its origins. Media representation once intended to ostracize queer people is now being reclaimed by some in the community as a positive connection to spookiness that can be built upon, and redefined. One of the first long-term lesbian relationships portrayed on television was developed over multiple seasons on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003). More recently Netflix's *Fear Street* (2021) trilogy subverted past horror movie tropes by ensuring its queer characters, and characters of color survived through its ending. In recent years, organizations such as "The Stonewall Columbus Queer Ghost-Hunting Club" have been dedicated to visiting historically queer sites, and seeking out evidence of queer ghosts. So yes, by all sense of the word, spookiness is decidedly very much queer and trans, as long as you would like it to be so.

The demonization of queer and trans people in American popular culture have created an unspoken association to the public. It is the failure of those in power to understand queerness that intensifies the stigma of what the public may not yet understand. After all, queerness itself really isn't spooky at all. Embracing spookiness can be an act of queer reclamation, and defiance against its past stigmatization. Spookiness can be camp.

Sources:

[Maveal, Chloe. "No Adam for Eve: The Quiet History of Lesbian Pulp Fiction". CrimeReads. Oct 12, 2020.](#)

["Pulp Magazine; Peak of Popularity". Wikipedia.](#)

["Lesbian Pulp Fiction". Wikipedia.](#)

[Albanesi, Melanie. "The History and Legacy Surrounding "The Well of Loneliness," the First Lesbian Novel to Be Published in the United States and Britain." PBS. April 1, 2019.](#)

[Mondello, Bob. "Remembering Hollywood's Hays Code, 40 Years On". NPR. August 8, 2008.](#)

[Rowan Ellis. "Why are Disney Villains Gay / Queer?". Youtube. November 19, 2016.](#)

[Rowan Ellis. "The Evolution of Queerbaiting: From Queercoding to Queercatching". January 30, 2019.](#)

[Baume, Matt. "We're Here, We're Queer, We're Ghosts". Vice. December 15, 2016.](#)

by Jasper (they/them)



Image Description (left):
A photograph of two individuals wearing white sheets over their heads. The one on the left wears a frog beret. The one on the right wears sunglasses with rainbow lenses.

Image Description (right):
A photograph of an individual wearing a white sheet over their head and sunglasses with rainbow lenses. Their hand pokes out of the sheet to do a peace sign.



Image Description (left):
A photograph of two individuals wearing white sheets over their heads. The background is dark, except for a few tree branches with green and yellow leaves.

BACK TO SCHOOL BURNOUT

by Alex (they/them)

School is a lot of work. And after a summer off, it can be even more overwhelming than usual to return to a routine of doing nightly assignments or spending hours studying for tests. As we close out September and transition into October, it is even more important than usual to practice regular self-care and check in with oneself, especially if you suspect that you may be beginning to be affected by burnout.

Warning signs of burnout

Though all of these symptoms can be normal—especially for neurodivergent, disabled, or mentally ill folks—any sudden development or worsening of symptoms such as these may signal that something else is going on as well:

- Feeling irritable or constantly frustrated with schoolwork
- Difficulty initiating tasks and concentrating
- Lack of energy and trouble sleeping
- Feeling dissatisfied, even while doing things you normally enjoy
- A sense of emotional numbness
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, or nausea

Coping through burnout

School is incredibly demanding, and teachers can often be rigid; not all simple solutions may be possible for students. However, below are some strategies that may assist with working through or treating burnout:

- Practice self-patience. Burnout is not something under your control.

According to an Ohio State University study, it affects up to 71% of students after the pandemic. Be as gentle with yourself as possible while you recover.

- Incorporate extra self-care into your life. If you have a chance during the day, go for a walk, or spend time with a pet. Read a book you like, binge a TV show, or practice mindfulness. Hang out with friends you haven't seen for a while.

With your mental health in a more vulnerable state than normal, taking care of yourself is even more essential.

- Take care of your body as well. Eating well, getting fresh air and exercise, and establishing a regular sleep schedule are all very important. Physical health and mental health are interconnected, so improving one may help with the other.
- Set boundaries with how school fits into your life. Designate specific times for schoolwork, and let yourself have full and regular breaks. In addition, avoid taking on extra projects or assignments. It's okay to need to only do the bare minimum to get by.
- Talk to a teacher or mental health professional. Especially with COVID, school staff members know that this is a difficult transition for students. They want to help you, and will often be flexible and understanding. Having a resource in a trusted adult is important; mental health counselors may be able to assist with coping mechanisms for side effects of burnout such as anxiety or depression.
- Research executive functioning strategies. As energy and motivation decrease with burnout, many key executive functioning aspects such as task initiation, time management, and organization will be affected. Finding ways to work around your executive functioning will make the process of finishing schoolwork less frustrating, and hopefully allow for more free time.

Burnout is an all too common aspect of high school life; hopefully these tips will help those struggling with recognizing or coping with it!



TRINKETVILLE

by Grey (they/them)



Image Description: A black and white digitally-drawn image is shown. The image depicts a dead tree standing in the middle of a foggy night. The branches and roots twist out in different directions. The tree is covered in eyes, with one large eye in the center of the trunk. Chains and lanterns hang from the branches of the creature. In the sky above is a crescent moon.

BACK TO SCHOOL FESTIVAL

by @Rixitup (they/them)

Image Description (right):
A photograph of an individual with dyed red hair, reflective sunglasses, and a black tank top. They are looking to the right of the camera and smiling.



Image Description (left):
A photograph of an individual with short dark hair, round glasses, a green tank top, high waist light blue jeans, and a backpack. They are bending over and holding their phone, attempting to shade the camera from the sun. More people can be seen in the background.



Image Description (left):
A photograph of an individual with long dark hair, yellow tinted sunglasses, a blue tank top, and light blue jeans. Her hand is resting on the corner of her sunglasses as she smiles at the photographer (from the previous photo) who is off camera.

[Link to image description for photograph below](#)



BITTERSWEET NEW YEAR

by Hayden (they/them) - Translations

I knew I didn't want to wear a skirt, I
wanted to wear pants and a shirt so I did.
I added extra eyeliner and a pair of
earrings for some flair and I was ready to
go

I looked like the definition of gender
confusion and envy mixed into a queer Jew
I got into shul and couldn't figure out what I
had done wrong

Some people recognized me and said hi
and had quick small talk

Some new people thought I was a man or
just couldn't figure it out

Some people who had known me since I
was 2, wearing a dress in a stroller didn't
recognize me at all.

The greeting "chag sameach" spoken from
the mouth of other men no longer meant
"happy holidays". "Shana Tova" no longer
meant "have a sweet new year". It now all
meant "I perceive you as a man".

The mothers chatting to me no longer
meant they were being friendly and nice. It
now meant "I perceive you as a woman".

But I was there to listen to the Shofar
I stood outside the doors of the sanctuary
frozen.

I knew my way to the women's side but
what about all the people who thought I
was a man. Do I go the men's side? Of
course not

I was paralyzed with fear outside of the
doors of the shul, unable to decide where

to go from here

I stood there as they blew the shofar
because it was a way I could listen to it but
I wasn't on one side or the other

"Tekiah"

Well I guess I am stood here

"Shevarim"

I know my dad just looked back at me
wondering why I haven't walked to the
women's side yet

"Teruah"

My heart is pounding faster than the
staccato blows on this horn

"Tekiah"

Am I on the right page?

"Shevarim"

I should've gone to the women's side when
I had the chance

"Teruah"

Just try to take a deep breath

"Tekiah gedolah"

I never want to go through this experience
again

The sound of the shofar bounced off every
wall and out of the doorway where I stood
And it's over

I run

I don't want to be there anymore

The role of judgment should be reserved
for Yom Kippur and not by my fellow Jew.

Fulfilling this mitzvah to listen to the shofar
shouldn't have been this difficult. It should
not

THE ZINE CREATURES CELEBRATE ONE YEAR OF ZINES

by Abby (Bee) (she/they)



Image Description: Digital art depicting a pale pink cake decorated with rainbow sprinkles on the top and rainbow piping around the bottom. The top of the cake reads: "1 year of QYA Zines!" in black letters. The cake sits on a table covered by a rainbow tablecloth with black checkering. Several creatures from past zines are positioned around the cake, including, from left to right: two frogs hugging, a pale rainbow flag bee, a trans flag bee, a bat, and a fishbowl containing a nonbinary flag fish and a trans flag fish.

Above them hangs a string of hearts in rainbow order.



MONSTER MINGLE

Hosted by Queer Youth Assemble at Connexion Church

149 Broadway, Somerville Massachusetts

Oct. 22, 2022

4-6:30 13-18 *only*, 18-25 enter at 6:30

Entry into Monster Mingle is free. \$5 donation is suggested.

This is a substance free event.



THANK YOU!

Stay tuned for next month's edition
& QYA Zine announcements!

Visit us at:

Website: queeryouthassemble.org

Instagram: [@queeryouthassemble](https://www.instagram.com/queeryouthassemble)

Tiktok: [@queeryouthassemble](https://www.tiktok.com/@queeryouthassemble)

Twitter: [@qyouthassemble](https://twitter.com/qyouthassemble)

[QYA Zine Feedback Form](#)

