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“Gay Now”: Bisexual Erasure in Supernatural Media from 1983 to 2003

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ABSTRACT

Bisexual representation in media has historically lagged behind gay and lesbian representation. Given that bisexual people experience poorer mental health measures when compared to heterosexual and gay people, positive representation could have a significant impact on bettering bisexual people’s lives. Additionally, examining historical trends of bisexual representation may help us better contextualize the current state of bisexual representation. This paper conducts a thematic analysis of three bisexual women from two texts: Miriam and Sarah from *The Hunger*, a 1983 movie, and Willow from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a 1997–2003 television show. Although Miriam, Sarah, and Willow all exhibit attraction toward both men and women, they are commonly referred to as lesbians. The erasure of potential readings of their sexualities as bisexual occurs through three streams: downplaying attraction to men, describing erotic scenes as “lesbian,” and formulating bisexuality as an invisible identity. Further, the supernatural context of these texts creates a connection between bisexuality and monstrosity. However, these texts occasionally subvert traditional methods of erasure and are thus praised as progressive, rather than criticized, by reviewers. These texts imply that potential bisexual readings of characters in the 1980s and 1990s were erased by both the texts themselves and their reviewers, in favor of characterizing progression of lesbian representation.

KEYWORDS

Bisexuality; bisexual erasure; *The Hunger*; *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Queer representation in popular media has changed significantly in the last 60 years, from subtle hints of same-sex attraction in movies such as *Suddenly, Last Summer* (Spiegel & Mankiewicz, 1959) to explicit sex scenes between queer characters in movies such as *Blue is the Warmest Color* (Chioua, Maraval, & Kechiche, 2013). A review on LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) inclusion by GLAAD found that in 2018, 18.2% of films from major studios contained LGBTQ characters, the second highest percentage in seven years (GLAAD, 2019). This increased media representation is also seen in television shows. In the 2018–2019 season,

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8.5% of characters on television were sexual minorities, the highest percentage found since GLAAD began doing reports on LGBTQ characters on television in 2005 (GLAAD, 2018). However, improved representation has not spread equally throughout the LGBTQ community. About 67% of queer characters on television and 55% of queer characters in movies are gay men or lesbian women, despite bisexual people being estimated as the majority of the LGB (lesbian, gay, and bisexual) community in the United States (GLAAD, 2018, 2019; The Williams Institute, 2011). Additionally, although 27% of queer characters on television and 15% of queer characters in movies in 2018 were bisexual, GLAAD (2018, 2019) did not specify whether this number included characters who were depicted as being attracted to more than one gender but did not explicitly label themselves as bisexual. This raises an issue as the avoidance of the term “bisexual” can be itself a form of bisexual erasure (Magrath, Cleland, & Anderson, 2017).

The erasure of bisexuality within media has significant real-world consequences. Bisexual people are consistently found to have poorer mental health outcomes than both heterosexual people and lesbian/gay people (Bostwick, Boyd, Hughes, & McCabe, 2010; Johnson, 2016; Taylor, 2018). The lack of representation of bisexual people in media can contribute to these outcomes by isolating bisexual people from positive role models. For example, a survey by Johnson (2016) found that the majority of bisexual participants expressed feeling that most media portrayals of bisexuality are negative. Additionally, 38.9% of bisexual participants who had been diagnosed with a mental illness felt that their disorder was somewhat affected by media representation of bisexuality (Johnson, 2016). The lack of positive representation can thus have significant effects on the mental health of bisexual persons.

On the other hand, Craig, McNroy, McCreedy, and Alaggia (2015) found that media featuring positive queer representation helped LGBTQ+ youth cope with discrimination and helped them feel empowered. Similarly, respondents in Johnson (2016) noted that positive bisexual representation in media could lead to better outcomes for bisexual people, including self-acceptance and decreased experiences of biphobia. This finding is more generally mirrored in McNroy and Craig (2017), where LGBTQ emerging adults (between the ages of 18 and 22) described how positive media representation helped them understand and validate their own LGBTQ identities. Therefore, we can hypothesize that increasing positive and well-rounded representation of bisexual people can counteract the negative effects of bisexual erasure.

While there is much to be said about the current state of bisexual representation, it is also important to recognize historical trends, as this is an important step in examining current representations of bisexuality. It is

easy to assume that representation and acceptance of LGBTQ issues have progressed linearly and evenly; however, this is not necessarily the case, and historical trends can help us determine when significant changes in LGBTQ representation took place to better connect them with cultural and societal movements that may have impacted these changes. In particular, this paper will examine bisexual representation between 1983 and 2003. As this time period is situated post-Stonewall Riots and encompasses much of the AIDS crisis and growing LGBTQ activism (Meyer & Sikk, 2016), it is a time of change that will likely be mirrored in popular media. Examining how representation of bisexuality has changed over time, particularly during a time of upheaval such as the 1980s and 1990s (Meyer & Sikk, 2016), can help us better situate the current state of bisexual representation within a wider cultural timeline.

Additionally, this paper will focus specifically on the representation of bisexual women. Historically, women are more likely to be depicted as bisexual than men (Johnson, 2016), with GLAAD (2018) reporting 88 bisexual women to 33 bisexual men on television in the 2018–2019 season. The content of depictions of bisexuality also vary by gender, as bisexual women tend to be depicted using their same-gender attraction as a ‘tool’ to get what they want, or the depiction is done in an oversexualized manner meant to draw male attention (Johnson, 2016). Thus, examining representations of bisexual women allows us to focus specifically on the ways in which these overlapping minority identities intersect and inform each other.

Two pieces of media were chosen for this paper to exemplify depictions of female bisexuality in popular culture between 1983 and 2003. The first, the film *The Hunger*, has been praised for “pivot[ing] on a lesbian relationship” and including a “lesbian love scene” (Amador, 2003, p. 5; Shepherd & Scott, 1983; Warn, 2004). *The Hunger* centres Miriam, a vampire who seeks solace in gerontologist Sarah after her previous lover, John, succumbs to insomnia and loses his eternal youth. Miriam quickly becomes infatuated with Sarah, and attempts to turn her into a vampire during their sexual encounter. However, Sarah is repulsed at the thought of becoming a vampire and refuses Miriam’s advances. By the end of the movie, Miriam has lost her fight and ages rapidly, while Sarah is implied to have taken Miriam’s position. Despite much praise for its depiction of lesbian characters, neither Sarah nor Miriam are explicitly labeled as such throughout the movie, and both are also shown in romantic relationships with men.

The second piece of media, the show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, premiered in 1997 and centered on Buffy Summers, the titular vampire slayer, and her two best friends, Xander Harris and Willow Rosenberg. Willow, a witch, spends the first three seasons of the show in relationships with men, first shown in an unrequited crush on Xander and later in a committed

romantic and sexual relationship with the werewolf Oz Osbourne. Despite these depictions, Willow exclusively refers to herself as “gay” in the final four seasons of the show after entering a relationship with Tara, a fellow witch she meets in college.

Throughout my engagement with both texts, I conducted a contextual, thematic analysis which focused on both semantic and latent depictions of potential bisexuality and/or lesbianism within the texts. As a framework, I used Richter’s (2013) description of three forms of female bisexual erasure: downplaying sexual attraction to men (e.g., ignoring or even killing off previous male lovers), describing erotic scenes between two women as “lesbian”, and constructing bisexuality as an invisible identity (e.g., implying bisexuality is a phase through which one passes while moving toward lesbianism). While Richter’s (2013) analysis focused on bisexual erasure in scholarship about movies that depict potential female bisexual characters, I expanded this analysis to include the texts themselves. Additionally, the narrative context of these characters allowed me to examine how female bisexuality has shifted in this time period within the realm of the supernatural, where sexual fluidity is commonly portrayed as a threat (Cocarla, 2016). In general, these two texts exemplify how, despite the growing push for LGBTQ acceptance and recognition during the 1980s and 1990s, clear and positive mainstream bisexual representation did not evolve during this time.

Mundane bisexual erasure

The Hunger was praised for being revolutionary during its time for its explicit and largely positive portrayal of queer women (Warn, 2004). The text is clear about the romantic nature of Miriam’s attraction to Sarah, as she tells Sarah “we belong to each other” and that Sarah will eventually love her “as I love you” (Shepherd & Scott, 1983). The sexual nature of their relationship is also clear in the movie, as the two are seen engaging in sexual activity. Despite some homonegative aspects, such as the implication that Miriam has corrupted Sarah through sexual deviancy (Warn, 2004), the movie’s portrayals of both Miriam and Sarah are generally progressive for its time. Notably, Susan Sarandon, who played Sarah, has maintained that her character went willingly with Miriam and was not coerced into having sex with her (Amador, 2003). Sarandon’s statement reinforces the positive depiction of queer women in the movie, while refuting readings of predatory lesbianism (Sharpe, 2002).

Similarly, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was also praised for its depictions of queer characters Willow Rosenberg and Tara Maclay, including the way their relationship confronted the “hot lesbian” trope (Shuster, 2016, para.

1). Rather than portraying Willow and Tara in a manner that caters to the heterosexual male fantasy of lesbianism (Jenkins, 2005), they are portrayed in a down-to-Earth and genuine relationship, often shown in small gestures such as holding hands. The show is known as one of the first to show a relationship between two women that “wasn’t for ratings and wasn’t a punchline” (Rylah, 2017).

At a cursory glance, it appears that both texts are progressive depictions of lesbian women. The women are well-rounded, their relationships are not oversexualized, and they avoid falling into the pitfalls of common homo-negative tropes. However, upon further inspection, it becomes clear that both *The Hunger* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* feature not progressive depictions of lesbianism but problematic depictions of bisexuality.

At the beginning of *The Hunger*, Miriam is in a long-term devoted relationship to John, a man, and near the end of the movie, it is revealed that she has had several male and female lovers (Shepherd & Scott, 1983). Likewise, Willow’s first romantic storyline revolves around her crush on her best friend Xander; she then goes on to date Oz, another boy, before eventually meeting and falling in love with Tara (Whedon, 1997). Both Miriam and Willow can thus be read as bisexual characters, having had both male and female partners, but these potential identities have been erased both within and outside of the texts they appear in. In *The Hunger*, Miriam’s sexuality is never explicitly labeled, which may be considered a form of erasure in and of itself (Magrath et al., 2017). Moreover, several reviews and academic papers refer to the movie as a “lesbian vampire movie” featuring a “lesbian love scene” (Newman, 2006; Richter, 2013). On the other hand, in *Buffy*, Willow changes her self-described identity to exclude attraction to men after she begins dating Tara: when another character implies that she is afraid Willow will steal her boyfriend, Willow protests, “Hello?! Gay now!” (Whedon, 1997). This form of bisexual erasure also appears in queer theory and media studies, where both potentially and explicitly bisexual people and characters are referred to as “gay” or “lesbian” (Richter, 2013). Thus, erasure appears significant during this time period in media depicting characters who have had relationships with both men and women, as well as in reviews and critiques of this media.

Bisexual erasure in female characters tends to occur through three different avenues (Richter, 2013). First is the downplaying of bisexual attraction: media that erases female bisexuality tends to minimize the attraction queer women feel toward men. Although John is featured prominently in the first half of *The Hunger*, Miriam’s relationship with him is rarely mentioned in reviews, focusing instead on the second half of the film where Miriam is attracted to Sarah. These reviews also ignore the appearance of Miriam’s previous male and female lovers at the end of the film, a scene which

arguably confirms her bisexuality, though it has the potential to also play into stereotypes of oversexualization of female bisexuality. Similarly, Sarah is shown in a relationship with a man during the first half of the film; however, after her involvement with Miriam, this attraction is rendered unimportant by having her kill and feed off of him. This plotline may be interpreted as a concrete example of bisexual erasure, with Sarah's attraction to men, as represented by her boyfriend, being quite literally killed.

Likewise, in *Buffy*, Willow's crush on Xander and relationship with Oz are both forgotten soon after she starts dating Tara, despite their relevance in the first three seasons of the show. Importantly, when Oz returns after their break-up, Willow openly acknowledges that she is still attracted to him despite her growing attraction to Tara, as she struggles to choose which relationship to pursue (Whedon, 1997). It also later becomes clear that her attraction to men has not entirely disappeared. In the season seven episode "Him", a football player's letterman jacket causes people to fall in love with him. While Xander and Spike, men who have been characterized as heterosexual, do not feel this attraction, the female characters do—including Willow. These scenes oppose Willow's characterization as a lesbian and suggest that a reading of her as bisexual may be more suitable. However, when another character points out to Willow that she is supposed to be a lesbian ("Willow, you're a gay woman! And he's not!"), she decides to prove her love for the football player by using magic to transform him into a woman (Whedon, 1997). The devaluation of Willow's attraction to a man furthers the erasure of her potential bisexuality, by implying that attraction to men is not incongruent with her identity as a lesbian woman. "Bisexual" becomes an unnecessary label, overshadowed by lesbian identity.

In the second mechanism of bisexual erasure, erotic scenes between two women are described as "lesbian". This description is problematic because if all sex scenes between two women are "lesbian" sex scenes, only threesomes featuring men and women qualify as "bisexual" sex scenes. This form of erasure occurs in both reviews of *The Hunger*, where the sex scene between Miriam and Sarah has been called a "lipstick lesbian love scene" (O'Neill, 1983), and of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which was called the "first broadcast network television series to show a lesbian sex scene" (Warn, 2003). Both these scenes featured two women having sex, but the implied sexual identities of the individual women are not taken into account when describing the sexual interaction itself. Miriam's, Sarah's, and Willow's former sexual relationships with men are devalued because no men are involved in their current sexual relationship. Referring to all sex between two women as "lesbian sex" places bisexual women in a precarious position, where they are forced to choose between engaging in a pleasurable

activity and maintaining the visibility of their identity. Bisexual identities are therefore reduced to invisibility in sex.

Finally, bisexuality is erased through its construction as an invisible identity which serves solely to structure heterosexual and homosexual identity (Richter, 2013). In particular, Richter refers to the “bisexual threat of fluid sexuality” (p. 278), as it threatens the gay/straight binary. This threat is diminished by referring to bisexual identities as “ambiguous” or by characterizing them as “lesbian”. Several reviews of *The Hunger* exemplify this erasure through their fluctuating uses of the terms “lesbian” and “bisexual” in relation to Miriam and Sarah. For example, Warn (2004) refers to the “lesbian relationship” between Miriam and Sarah, but also acknowledges that the film portrays both women as bisexual. Much like with erotic scenes, the labeling of relationships between two women as “lesbian” reduces bisexual identity to invisibility, as a relationship cannot be considered “bisexual” unless it involves at least three people.

Similarly, conflicting scenes throughout the last four seasons of *Buffy* show Willow clearly identifying herself as a lesbian, but also experiencing a certain level of attraction toward men. In the season six episode “Tabula Rasa”, after the characters have their memories erased, Willow assumes that she is in a relationship with Xander (as she is wearing his jacket) and that she and Tara are study buddies. Tara, however, displays no attraction toward any of the men in the episode, though she and Willow later begin feeling attracted to each other. This juxtaposition implies that Willow’s lesbian identity is not as well-defined as Tara’s. Notably, McAvan (2007) comments on the expressive nature of identity within the episode, as the characters continue to speak in their previous idioms rather than constructing new ones. In other words, if Willow were a lesbian, she would have rebuked the theory that she was in a relationship with Xander because her lack of sexual attraction toward men would’ve been apparent to her. Therefore, Willow’s “rediscovery” of her lesbian identity contradicts her characterization and implies that she continues to experience attraction to both men and women. These hints that Willow is not exclusively attracted to women are largely ignored by both the show itself, which continues to state that Willow is a lesbian throughout the rest of the series, and its reviewers, who speak of the “lesbian relationship” between Tara and Willow and praise her as a lesbian icon (Amador, 2003; King-Miller, 2014). While bisexuality is often alluded to, it is never explicitly mentioned and rather exists as a “phase” that Miriam, Sarah, and Willow move through from heterosexuality toward lesbianism. It is interesting that their direction of movement through bisexuality is toward lesbianism; stereotypically, the ‘phase’ of female bisexuality is given up when a woman returns to dating only men (i.e., the “lesbian until graduation” phenomenon; Diamond,

2003), and the movement through bisexuality toward queerness is saved for men, who are assumed to be “really gay” (Yost & Thomas, 2012). Thus, while this is still a form of bisexual erasure, it may be mistakenly considered to be “more progressive” for eschewing common tropes.

The supernatural threat of bisexuality

While the erasure of bisexuality discussed so far occurs in a mundane context, *The Hunger* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are both stories based in supernatural worlds. Though the word “vampire” is never actually used in *The Hunger*, Miriam’s characteristics—immortal, eternal youth, subsisting on blood—are all consistent with popular depictions of vampirism. These characteristics are later passed to Sarah after they share blood. On the other hand, in *Buffy*, Willow fits two supernatural constructs. First, throughout the show, she begins to explore magic and becomes a powerful witch. Second, in season three, an alternate universe depiction of Willow is created, one where she has been turned into a vampire. Interestingly, both of Willow’s supernatural identities are tied to her sexuality. Ricard (2018) notes how magic is used throughout the show as a metaphor for Willow’s sexuality. This is most explicitly seen in season four, when her relationship with Tara is first developing. They are drawn together by their similar interests in magic, and many scenes in which they perform magic rituals together have an erotic undertone. Similarly, depictions of Vampire Willow are considered to be “foreshadowing” of Willow’s eventual coming-out as a lesbian. In the first encounter between Vampire Willow and real Willow, Vampire Willow seductively leans over real Willow’s shoulder, licking her neck and asking her if she wants to “be bad” (Whedon, 1997). Willow shows disgust at her alternate persona’s behavior, flinching away; later, she observes that Vampire Willow is “so evil, and skanky, and [...] kinda gay” (Whedon, 1997). This is the first scene in the show where Willow (through her alternate persona) shows attraction toward both men and women, and its ties to the supernatural are notable because, while Willow’s sexuality is generally shown in a positive light, Vampire Willow’s is not.

The supernatural context of these texts adds an interesting twist to their representations of bisexuality. In *The Hunger*, Miriam’s immortality has given her time to have several consecutive monogamous relationships with both men and women. This monogamy is somewhat surprising, given the stereotype that bisexual people are unable to maintain monogamous relationships (Zivony & Saguy, 2018). In contrast, *Buffy*’s Vampire Willow is shown making several sexual advances toward both men and women within the span of one episode (approximately 40 minutes). McAvan (2007) characterizes this as a “bisexuality marked by excess” (para. 14): the

number of people she flirts with is framed as absurdly large. She is overly sexual, especially when opposed to the real Willow, who is depicted as “desexualized and vanilla” (McAvan, 2007, para. 16). This contrast is best observed when both women are present in the same scene: real Willow wears a fluffy pink sweater, Vampire Willow wears a leather corset. This depiction of female bisexuality falls into the oversexualized stereotype mentioned by Johnson (2016); in this case, bisexual representation seems to have not progressed but regressed.

Willow’s “excessive bisexuality” on *Buffy* reappears in the end of the sixth season, where, following Tara’s death, she is driven mad by the need for revenge and becomes “Evil Willow”. Her change in demeanor, accompanied by a change in appearance—darker hair, paler skin, and a switch from feminine clothes to more masculine ones—has been argued to be based on the “evil lesbian” trope (McAvan, 2007, para. 19) and mirrors the depictions of Vampire Willow seen previously. These changes are also notably accompanied by a swing toward bisexuality. While her attraction to women remains in the forefront as she is explicitly driven by the need for vengeance over Tara’s death, her interactions with Rack, a magic dealer, are also sexualized (McAvan, 2007). She also makes sexual advances toward Dawn, Buffy’s younger sister. These are particularly disturbing given her characterization as a pseudo-parent toward Dawn, so these advances are also portrayed as vaguely incestuous (McAvan, 2007). The sudden reappearance of her attraction toward men, accompanied by an increase in sexual advances toward women, implies a connection between bisexuality and evilness, especially as her persona begins to explicitly shift toward that of Vampire Willow: Evil Willow borrows the catchphrase “bored now” from her vampire counterpart.

Miriam, Sarah, and Willow also share an undercurrent of BDSM connotations in their depictions. In *The Hunger*, Miriam ‘turns’ Sarah into a vampire during their sexual encounter, exchanging blood through bites. While this can be seen as purely a strategic act on Miriam’s part—hiding the bite under the guise of sex—Sarah does not know that Miriam is a vampire at this point of the film and is not averse to engaging in this behavior. The fact that at least one of the women involved engages in the act purely for pleasure implies there is a sadomasochistic element to their sexual relationship. Similarly, in *Buffy*, Vampire Willow is shown in several situations with BDSM undercurrents. For example, she asks another vampire if she can “play with the puppy”, where the puppy is an imprisoned vampire (Whedon, 1997). Her ‘play’ involves sadism, as she examines his bruises and comments that maybe she “played too hard last time” (Whedon, 1997), and uses matches to burn him. Vampire Willow’s penchant for leather clothing also implies a BDSM taste. Likewise, Evil Willow is marked by an increase in

sexual implications, as well as a change in wardrobe echoing Vampire Willow's love for dark shades, contrasted to real Willow's brightly colored wardrobe. Bisexuality is clearly linked to BDSM in both of these texts, implying that it is at best abnormal and at worst dangerous.

Notably, the connection between vampires and bisexuality is not limited to *The Hunger* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Stevenson (1988) remarks on how bisexuality in vampires is presented as “both strange and familiar, both an overt peculiarity to be seen and dreaded and a reflection to be repressed” (p. 146). In other words, bisexuality is both a threat as well as a human impulse. Yet this impulse is degraded in its popular depiction as a defining characteristic of the supernatural, something to be afraid of, within others but especially within ourselves. This reading is echoed in Cocarla (2016), who notes how the “monster” is used in several films and television shows to represent queer desire and/or literal queer subjects. Thus, the fear of supernatural creatures and the fear of bisexuality are intricately linked in several pieces of media.

One plot point of *The Hunger* does seem to eschew the trope of the bisexual vampire. When Sarah, overcome with the desire to feed, is placed in the same room as her boyfriend, she protests and tells him to go. Nevertheless, after he refuses to leave, she caves to her instincts and kills him to satisfy her hunger. The literal killing of her boyfriend, the only man in the film she is explicitly shown to be attracted to, can be seen as a shunning of heterosexuality (and of bisexuality) as she fully becomes a vampire. Though she refuses to remain with Miriam and chooses to kill herself instead, she later appears kissing another woman, with the implication being both that she is still alive and that she is still attracted to women. Sarah's plot therefore implies that becoming a vampire, rather than making her bisexual, turns her into a lesbian. While this still has homonegative implications—queer desire is connected to the supernatural as something to be feared, and Miriam, who is depicted as bisexual, is framed as the one who “turns” Sarah into a lesbian—it complicates the connection between supernatural creatures and bisexual attraction.

Conclusion

While representation of gay and lesbian people has largely improved over the past 60 years as it has expanded to include more diverse and positive characters, the representation of bisexual characters has struggled to catch up in both number and quality (GLAAD, 2018, 2019). Examination of two texts from the 1980s and 1990s exemplifies how bisexual representation struggled to improve during this period, despite flourishing LGBTQ activism. Both the 1983 movie *The Hunger* and the 1997–2003 television show

Buffy the Vampire Slayer feature characters who are coded as bisexual but referred to as gay/lesbian. It is of note that this erasure occurs not only in reviews, but within the texts themselves, often in parallel ways. While these representations have been praised for being fairly progressive in regards to portraying women in relationships with other women, they do so at the cost of representing women who are attracted to both men and women. This becomes particularly problematic in the supernatural context of these media pieces, where coded bisexuality becomes conflated with monstrosity, danger, and violence.

It is also of note that several aspects of bisexual representation in these texts, especially within *The Hunger*, do not follow typical paths of bisexual erasure. The characterization of bisexuality as a phase the women move through toward lesbianism, Miriam's monogamy, and Sarah's eventual lesbianism all avoid using typical methods of bisexual erasure, which mirror popular stereotypes of bisexual women as promiscuous and "really heterosexual" (Burke & LaFrance, 2016; Yost & Thomas, 2012). This is particularly important as these forms of erasure may be seen as more 'acceptable'; since they all characterize lesbian women, these texts end up being praised for contributing to LGBTQ representation rather than criticized for valuing one type of representation over another.

Exploring bisexual erasure in the 1980s and 1990s, as represented by these texts has several important outcomes. First, it highlights the potential wider pattern of a lack of progress in bisexual representation during this time period. While LGBTQ activism thrived during this period, and several mainstream depictions of queer characters did emerge (e.g., *The Birdcage*, the musical *RENT*), these texts imply that bisexual representation struggled to emerge, as even when characters were coded as bisexual, this bisexuality was erased by both the texts themselves and the culture surrounding them. Secondly, recognizing historical trends in representation allows us to better examine current bisexual representation. This analysis emphasizes the importance of both distinguishing between subgroups within the LGBTQ community, as the representation of gay men, lesbian women, and bisexual men and women may progress at different rates, and of searching for trends within smaller periods of time, as an overarching trend may be characterized by several smaller periods of change and stagnancy. While examining the progression of gay/lesbian representation in this time period is outside the scope of this paper, it is clear that female bisexual representation in the 1980s and 1990s continued to rely on bisexual erasure and oversexualization, particularly within the supernatural context.

The lack of progress in these representations is disappointing, but recent coverage of both *The Hunger* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is more hopeful. Ricard (2018), McAvan (2007), and Mo (2016) have all criticized the erasure of Willow Rosenberg's potential bisexuality within the show, and

Richter (2013), Warn (2004), and Garber (1995) have all emphasized Miriam's bisexuality and its erasure in reviews. This increased pushback against erasure in earlier pieces of media lends hope that bisexual representation is improving, and will continue to improve, throughout the twenty-first century.

Notes on contributor

Ana Carolina de Barros is an undergraduate Honours student at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research interests include resiliency in bisexual people, transgender people, and queer youth, as well as media representations of bisexuality. Her Honours thesis focuses on positive identities and their relationship to resilience in bisexual people. In addition to her BA in psychology, she is also completing a minor in Mathematics. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in social psychology.

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