Dear Voices,

You may have noticed our absence since Voices’ most recent issue last spring. It was a time of rushing to tie loose ends, cardboard boxes and packing tape, and departure. Once again, we now find ourselves ready to leave, but we’ll save our great joyous goodbyes for the summer months.

While our plans for a cozy fall release were dramatically disturbed by the flu (no need for further explanation), we believe it was worth the wait. From analysis of Italy’s political landscape to queer cult classics like Good Omens, to changing LGBTQ+ resources and residential models on our very own campus, we hope you find this issue sick, in the least harmful sense.

Wishing you warmth and wellness,

voices
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The Missing Colors of Sports

vic glass

With the expansion of LGBTQ+ representation in media, specifically TV shows and books, the queer community is finally beginning to get the representation we have spent decades fighting for. However, the rise in queer characters disproportionately depicts those outside the queer sports community, and, when they do, does so in a stereotypical way. Despite efforts to diversify the LGBTQ+ characters being included in these forms of media by moving past just the first two letters of the acronym, queer teens who not only play sports but are dedicated athletes are not seeing an uptick in representation.

As an LGBTQ+ identifying athlete, I rarely see queer characters portrayed as being seriously involved with sports; when I do, it is commonly football. While the sport is popular, this may also be due to the stereotype that traditionally masculine people play sports. This is clear in books such as Like Other Girls by Bretta Lundin, where the main queer character is a masculine lesbian football player. Her contributions to fighting traditional gender roles provided a platform for young girls to become inspired by the book, but her reluctant acceptance of the more feminine-presenting girls on the team shows how deep these stereotypes run. Few other books depict queer athletes who truly love sports; instead, many find passion in the arts or in other areas that challenge traditional societal roles and expectations.

While this expansion of representation is something we, as a society, should strive towards, queer athletes are not seeing the benefits of the slow acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in mainstream media.

This lack of representation was pointed out in Jennifer Dugan’s book Some Girls Do, where the main character walks into a
queer-safe space and finds no other athletes in it. This scene is reflective of real life; oftentimes, when I enter places meant for LGBTQ+ people, I find those who can relate to other parts of my identity, but not my deep love of sports. While the sports community must shift to make teams a safe space for their queer members and break away from the idea that ‘ideal’ athletes are cisgender, heterosexual, and usually male, so too must queer representation in media. Many queer kids find safety and relatability in TV shows, movies, and books where they are represented, especially in the visual and performing arts scene. LGBTQ+ athletes oftentimes do not have the same outlets. Representation in media is key for us to see ourselves as normal; otherwise, queer athletes will remain in the shadows of both the TV shows and books we love while our issues become lost in the battle for queer rights.

Queer Zines as Political Activism

vik wei

From as early as Thomas Paine’s pamphlet “Common Sense,” zines have been an important part of history, covering topics in music scenes, subcultures, and activist groups. However, while Paine did write a banger of a pamphlet in 1776, modern zines and zine culture truly developed in the 1930s.

So what is a zine? The term is a shortened form of “magazine” or “fanzine”, and describes a self-published, non-commercial work, usually in the form of print and made up of collages of images or text. Zines can come in many forms—the only rule is that there are no rules! Recently, the art of the zine has also adapted to an online format as Zines cover topics that may usually be less mainstream: politics, personal issues, and really just anything.

Zines have acted as important outlets for topics that might be too niche for more traditional/commercial forms of
publication and as a mode of expression and communication for otherwise marginalized and silenced communities.

Lesbian communities, specifically, used zines as an important means of communication in the 1950s during the extreme oppression and persecution of queer people. The first lesbian zine, “Vice Versa,” was typed on carbon paper in batches of just twelve per issue. Even those few issues were read and passed on by hundreds of women. Queer zines have also provided radical theory to generations of queer people.

So why are zines so important? Although they can cover such a wide range of topics, there’s one thing they all have in common: “They speak for their time, they are unedited, they are personal, and they deal with things you would never read about in major publications, from the personal to the political and beyond,” writes Sara Century in an interview with radical zinesters.

In today’s digital age, virtual archives like the Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) help to preserve zines and make them available to anyone interested in accessing them. Launched in 2003, QZAP began with only 15 zines in the archive. Today, the number of zines in the archive has increased to over 1,300.

Zines are invaluable in documenting queer stories that would never have been told otherwise. Despite oppression, marginalization, and many other adversities, queer people have found a way to communicate and educate through zines. Even printed in small batches, the reach and impact of zines has been hugely important for queer communities throughout history.
Student protests are not a new phenomenon: it makes sense that the youngest generations are the ones most hungry for change. History shows this as well. During the Vietnam War, protests sprung up all over the country; however, it was college students that held a powerful influence in the anti-war movement. The biggest student protest took place on April 17th, 1965 and was the largest peaceful protest of that time period, amassing 15,000-20,000 college students and others to the United States capital of Washington, D.C.

On September 27th of this year, students demonstrated their first amendment right of gathering of assembly to protest Governor Glenn Youngkin’s signing of new restrictive policies regarding the state’s transgender student rights. Supporters of Youngkin immediately backed the policy, as the issue of parents’ rights pushed Governor Youngkin to victory. One policy would require all trans students to use bathrooms or participate in programs (e.g. sports) in accordance to their sex assigned at birth. Another would require parents to approve their child’s proper pronoun usage during the school day as well as legal documentation for changing school records.

The day of the walkout, students from more than 90 schools—ranging from middle to high school—left their classrooms holding signs and chanting “Trans rights are human rights.” These walkouts were organized by the LGBTQ+ youth advocacy group Pride Liberation Project. One strong oppositional argument lies in the fact that these policies violated the Virginia Human Rights Act, which protects individuals from discrimination due to their gender identity in public settings—including schools. It’s worth noting that seven months before these walkouts took place, the Virginia House passed a bill that exempted certain religious organizations from nondiscrimination laws set by the Virginia Human Rights Act.

It seems ironic that one of Virginia’s state legislators, Del. Danica Roem, was the first out trans person to be seated in the U.S. state legislature—ever—and yet Governor Youngkin is reversing the rights of young trans people. As a country, the U.S. has come a long way in terms of laws and policies. However, there is still change to be made. Drastic change. With the overturning of Roe v. Wade, who knows if Obergefell v. Hodges (the Supreme Court case that legalized federal same-sex marriage) or other cases will share the same fate. Students are vital catalysts for change, as well as young people. It is our duty to demand change and fairness.
Meet Dr. Erin Hopkins

mikayla dasilva

Have you heard the cries for identity-specific, relatable counselors? Well, thankfully, so has Choate. This school year, we welcome a new counselor: Dr. Erin Hopkins. As a recent addition to the counseling team, Dr. Hopkins brings a fresh, new, queer perspective to the department.

While she is queer and can relate to and connect with students on the basis of shared identity and lived experiences, it is important to note that Dr. Hopkins is not only a counselor for individuals who identify as LGBTQ+. In fact, Dr. Hopkins is actively working to amplify a more holistic approach to counseling, especially in the pressure cooker that is Choate Rosemary Hall. She notes, “I would love to support students more in looking at who they are and what makes them feel alive and full of joy and their identity and exploring all of that. I think Choate students can get very wrapped up in crossing off the next thing, and the next thing, and the next thing...I also want people to be whole people and feel that they are connected to what makes them feel alive.”

In the spirit of acknowledging what makes you feel alive through the process of counseling, Dr. Hopkins clarifies that counseling is not just a pathological solution to extremely intense issues, “It’s not just problem focused. It’s not just students who are in a crisis and would like to see somebody, it’s that we’re all working together and collaborating. Kind of along the lines of what brings you alive as a person. What does your best look like? Versus just thinking of things.” Students experiencing this holistic form of counseling may start to truly understand the value of talking through ideas, emotions, and experiences. Counseling then becomes an avenue of maintaining mental health—rather than struggling to salvage it. Choate is a wonderful, stressful place with so many pressures that they’re impossible to list. Teachers, coaches, parents, and even individuals themselves each have their own conception of how much a student can handle. This variation causes a lack of inclusive empathy and understanding that can make it difficult to reach out and accept help. But that should never mean we enter a cycle of destroying
I think it takes all of the different approaches to help support students in their well being.” In terms of concrete ideas, Dr. Hopkins retains a refreshing perspective shared by many Choate students, “I think I would like that people are reaching out to us more and that we’re out in the community more and people feel like they knew they know who we are, and that they’re wanting to get support, whether it’s for one session or many sessions or to have us be part of events or clubs.”

If you’re interested in preserving your mental health ahead of fall term finals, or have a new observation or idea related to counseling and wellness, reach out to Dr. Erin Hopkins. She’s here, queer, and ready to listen.

With the goal of encouraging students to establish this system of maintenance, the new Health and Wellness team is working to ensure that “people really feel positively about counseling and wellness.” In the interest of combating the stigma against counseling here at Choate, Dr. Hopkins states, “I think this community is really talented and knowledgeable. And it’s important to kind of figure out who’s experts in what. In counseling, our background is in relationships, emotions, talking about other things, helping people get through the hard things, and we’re gonna have a different approach than deans or prefects.

and rebuilding our health, whether mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual. Beginning the practice of consistent, inclusive counseling can ensure that this cycle is preemptively counteracted.
Netflix, Your Lesbophobia is Showing

eve stanley
In June, Netflix informed the public that its new women loving women (WLW) television show, First Kill, was canceled after just one season. Fans were outraged, and not just because their favorite lesbian vampire show had been canceled, but because Netflix seems to have a rather strange pattern of canceling WLW television shows after only a few seasons: I Am Not Okay With This, Trinkets, Everything Sucks, One Day at a Time, and so on.

Okay, so maybe First Kill and these other shows just didn’t perform as well as other shows that get renewed. Wrong. According to news source Deadline, First Kill had 30.3M hours viewed in the first three days of release, following only Stranger Things Season 4’s viewership, and in fact, did better than Heartstopper—another LGBTQ+ centered TV show. So maybe it’s because of critiques.

Well, Heartstopper does have a significantly higher Rotten Tomatoes score than First Kill, but the audience scores aren’t far apart. And to be completely honest, Netflix isn’t really known for the quality of its television (cough, cough, Tall Girl). Maybe hetero-media just does better? Let’s look at Emily in Paris, renewed for a third and fourth season—the show has a rotten tomatoes score almost identical to First Kill’s! Emily in Paris has been put on several “Top 10 Worst Shows” lists; just google it. But while First Kill was received pretty well by audiences, it was canceled, and Emily in Paris, along with countless other “straight” television shows, were renewed.

Over the past few years, a growing number of WLW television shows have been canceled, unlike MLM and straight-centric television. This trend in Netflix’s behavior has prompted fan outrage. There are countless posts like this one from @williesimaug on Twitter, “the way first kill trended top 10 in the US for like 2 months and it still got canceled...yeah netflix actually hates wlw that’s insane.” Fans are angry, and they should be. Netflix is canceling WLW television shows and taking away representation from queer teenagers who are already incredibly underrepresented in television.
When asked about Italy’s Giorgia Meloni, Hillary Clinton stated that “the election of the first woman prime minister in a country always represents a break with the past, and that is certainly a good thing.” Meloni was sworn in as prime minister of Italy on October 22, 2022, the first woman to hold the position. Yet, Meloni’s election, while seemingly signifying increased representation in politics, presents an alarming possibility: the reinforcement of heteropatriarchal policies that threaten the rights of both women and LGBTQ+ people alike.

Meloni is Italy’s first far-right premier since the end of World War II, and her party, Fratelli d’Italia, or Brothers of Italy, has roots in the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement, formed by supporters of former dictator Benito Mussolini. The party’s rise to preeminence marks a likely regression in the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights in Italy, at a time when it is much needed. The country ranks 23rd in the 27-member European Union when it comes to legal protections for LGBTQ+ people and is the only major Western European country that has failed to legalize same-sex marriage. The country legally recognized same-sex civil unions in 2016—a reform that Brothers of Italy opposed in parliament.

While claiming that she won’t try to weaken LGBTQ+ rights or outlaw abortion, Meloni—a self-proclaimed “Christian mother”—frequently espouses the maintaining of “natural families” and the view that a child should only be raised by a heterosexual
mother and father. In implementing this belief, Meloni is adamant in her opposition to adoption and surrogacy for same-sex couples. In vitro fertilization (IVF) for same-sex couples is currently banned in Italy, and surrogacy is entirely prohibited, forcing many couples to travel abroad to become parents. Meloni has proposed extending the ban to criminalize gay couples who seek surrogate mothers abroad.

Moreover, Meloni is not the only politician under the latest cabinet to embrace these anti-LGBTQ+ lines of thought. Eugenia Roccella, newly appointed Minister for Family, Natality, and Equal Opportunities, said in 2017 that she wanted to either abolish or significantly modify the civil unions bill, arguing that it had damaged the traditional family. Roccella also rejected a law that would have criminalized homophobia, claiming that it would’ve compromised free speech.

Even if Meloni and her contemporaries act on her promise of retaining existing protections for LGBTQ+ rights—despite the evidence that this is unlikely—a Meloni administration would contribute to the normalization of anti-LGBTQ+ policies and violence. When confronted at a campaign rally by Marco Marras, who told her he wanted to be able to get married and raise a family as a gay man, Meloni replied, “You want a lot of things … everyone wants things; you already have civil unions.”

The politician made it abundantly clear that she views the limited legal protection LGBTQ+ individuals have as sufficient and has no plans of strengthening them. Her Christian fundamentalist rhetoric in favor of heterosexual parenting and against what she calls “gender ideology” provides justification for individual acts of violence against LGBTQ+ individuals in everyday life. Furthermore, Meloni will shift the Overton window on LGBTQ+ issues, making it easier for her successors to enact draconian policies that will prevent LGBTQ+ individuals from having the most basic of rights.
Queer Media Review: Good Omens
kinsey ho

*Good Omens*, based on a 1990 book and recently adapted into a 2019 TV series, enjoys a large fanbase which, as with many fandoms, centers around a ship of Crowley, a demon sent to spread mischief on Earth, and Aziraphale, an angel meant to thwart him. It’s hard to deny that the TV show is by and large fueled by their relationship. The two enjoy a secret friendship before raising a child together; Crowley charmingly calls Aziraphale angel, and more than one (or three, or five) person assumes they are together.

Even divorced from their relationship, both characters are very much queer-coded. Crowley, a demon struck from the Heavenly host for spending time with the wrong people, has the air of someone estranged from their family and left with confused resentment at the abandonment. Conversely, Aziraphale is terrified of being fearfully cautious, and Crowley, hurt beneath a devil-may-care veneer, echoes common narratives about coming out.

Even putting sexuality aside, *Good Omens* also has a remarkably forward view on gender: the 1990 novel noted that “Angels are sexless unless they really want to make an effort,” a statement pointing towards agenderism. In the show, one character uses they/them pronouns, and both Aziraphale and Crowley present as female casually subjected to the f-slur, and many wonder why the two’s relationship remains so vague. The former is difficult to grapple with, and justifiably a roadblock to enjoyment for some. To the latter: co-author Neil Gaiman has professed his belief in the death of the author, responding to most such queries with encouragement for fans to embrace their own interpretations. Gaiman has a history with LGBTQ+ representation, having won the GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) award in 1997 and gaining recognition for his recent, delightfully queer series, The Sandman. Some fans also hold Aziraphale and Crowley up as an example of a queer platonic relationship, embracing interpretations of the two as aromantic, asexual, or something else as indefinable as their gender.

Now, publicity has begun for a second season. But while

“Angels are sexless unless they really want to make an effort.”
the events of *Good Omens* 2 are a mystery, Aziraphale and Crowley’s relationship will doubtless continue to drive the narrative, with Gaiman describing the season as “quiet and gentle and romantic.” As to whether that means a step towards a more explicit romance—or whether such a thing is even necessary—one must look to Gaiman’s response to all questions about the second season: “Wait and see.”
i knew you didn’t hate me
when you took me to the gas station.
an excursion that felt so intimate
we may as well have been best friends already.

i knew you thought i was at least a good friend
when you let me tag along with you to walgreens.
my phone was basically dead,
but i felt alive there with you.

i knew you trusted me
when you invited me to the bookstacks with you.
it became a daily routine,
and it brightened my day.

i knew you might like me
when you slid me that post-it.
it sent me in a panic,
and that day, i almost confessed.

i knew you loved me
when you started buying pocky.
it looked like an instinct,
and i appreciated it.

i knew you loved me
when you went out and looked up the effects of bedbugs.
you seemed so worried.
did you know we call them chinches too?

i knew you loved me
when you told me i could rest my hand on your knee.
i think you knew i was scared of hurting you.
thank you for letting me know i wasn’t.

i knew you loved me
when you always added a “we don’t have to.”
you’re afraid of hurting me too.
you haven’t.

i know you love me.
i do.
and i hope you know
i love you too.

creativity

i didn’t always write my stories.
they’d rattle around my head.
still do.
some are better than others.
those are the ones
i like to write.
they aren’t all good,
but they’re not bad.
“the blacker the berry,
the sweeter the juice”
does not apply to daytime nightmares.
a celebration of life

we gather here today
to acknowledge marshall the fire marshal.
a gift, a friend,
a brother.
a classmate, a peer,
a cuddle buddy.
the night he fell into my small arms,
i felt so excited;
i was so excited to play with him.
we’d save the world from fires.
he was from california,
so he had personal stakes.
how ironic how he passed.
trapped in exactly what he would’ve wanted to stop.
i wonder if he heard the fire.
but i know he’d love all my new friends.
he and the others are happy.
i know they are.
may they rest in peace.

love is

gentle taps on my scalp
a snake of green
all of it makes me melt
makes me feel something unseen
words slow down
a small red box
next to me on the ground
made me unlock
arms wrapped tight
eyes piercing me
a gentle warm light
a hand asking me to see
how do i love thee?
let me count the ways.

it’s...

it’s all the little things,
you know?
the way you pull my hand to you,
the way you wrap your arms around me,
the way i feel safe when you do.
the way you watch shows with me,
the way you lend me clothes,
the way you look at me,
the way i love you.
the little things.
Citations

Queer Zines as Political Activism


Virginia Trans-Rights Walkouts


Netflix, Your Lesbophobia is Showing


Marisa [@Hot4Haught]. “SAVE FIRST KILL. There’s literally no reason to cancel a profitable show with record-setting numbers and a dedicated fanbase. Especially when it has fantastic representation that makes so many people feel seen. #SaveFirstKill #RenewFirstKill” Twitter, 3 August 2022, https://twitter.com/hot4haught/status/155488560461365248


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Amazon. https://www.amazon.com/Good-Omens-Season-1/dp/B089XW1Z6Y.