



The Queer Foundation Scholar

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Zeus Fondarosa

The School of Art Institute of Chicago



Zeus is a sophomore working toward a BFA, with a concentration in directing and a minor in performance.

At the School, he works with the Disabilities Resource Center, where with other students and staff he “works to help develop school policies and practices to be more inclusive and mindful of students with disabilities.” He sees himself as an advocate for Queer and Disabled rights who is also interested in how the two intersect.

His career goal is to become “a director either of films or of videogame production.” He would also like to be “married, healthy, and living in either Europe or California.”

The Push

by Zeus Fondarosa

There is always pressure on young people. School, work, media, there is always some outer force trying to sway you to go one way or another. All this information is targeted at young individuals the most. We start consuming media that tells us who to be and how to be sometimes as early as elementary school and it becomes the

majority of what we perceive by the time we reach the age of 13. Above all the opinions of the ones around us and what we see on the internet/TV is the most impactful to queer teens. Media has been notoriously heteronormative and it has shaped the world in which we live. It seems to be the most difficult and impactful for young transgender/ genderqueer people. There’s very little to no representation for us in media and the representation that is there seems to give little to no variety, completely excluding nonbinary individuals and just about any non-medically transitioned trans person.

With all this being said and knowing how media affects people's perceptions of the world we live in, I constantly feel like I am being pushed to do different things with my body. It’s a combination of pressure from my family and peer pressure. It’s difficult to explain as a young transgender person why I don’t want to transition or why I can’t. I have an even tug of war between my social group and my family attempting to sway my decisions on what to do with my body. At the end of the day I have a hard time sitting down and thinking what I truly want for myself as an individual. It’s difficult to work through the onslaught of information for me to decide on my own what I truly want. I know being young that I don’t have to make up my mind yet but I feel like I am being pushed to.

Now it’s only natural my family is against me medically transitioning. I as many trans people do not have a very supportive family. I’m very fortunate in the same aspect however, that they are not as unsupportive they could be, rather than being thrown on the streets my identity is just purely denied. Still I digress almost every single member of my family (which is aware of my gender identity despite their actions) is viciously against me transitioning. Much of the argument stems from the health complications that hormones bring. I am more than fully aware of the medial risks but somehow, I have lacked the ability to explain to my family that I am not really concerned with dying later in life when I’m constantly in jeopardy with every day I don’t pass. The myriad people who want to hurt me because of my gender identity and my own mental struggles with not being able to shower with my eyes open play just as gruesome a toll on

my health as any HRT treatment. I digress there is no amount of pleading or medical study that will sway my relatives minds that gender reassignment surgery was created by ghouls to steal our young DNA or what have you. I have been bombarded with a gross amount of fear mongering from my family I feel that comes from misinformation. All I can hope to do is educate them and pray they don't excommunicate me when I eventually make my decision of what to do with my own physical form.

On the other hand I have a very strong pull in the other direction from my friends and comrades. I am encouraged to transition by my friends, even persuaded to attempt medically transitioning behind my family's back. In some cases, I feel pushed by many and their expectations because if I "don't medically transition," I'm not a "real" transgender person. I have been told by many peers that if I don't want to transition, I simply am not a trans person and thus am an insult to the community and should not consider myself queer (this is funny since it skips right past the fact I am bisexual). I feel the people who say this to me are under the assumption I say I do not wish to transition because I'm perfectly happy with my body. This is anything but the case in actuality. I suffer from gender dysphoria just as bad as anyone else and I find it patronizing when I am interrogated for not wanting to jump into a very scary change. In a perfect world, I'd snap my fingers and wake up a cis man.

I feel like as a grown man I shouldn't have to justify my reasons for what I do in order to feel safe and accepted. I have noticed that social media and even television (Netflix, YouTube, etc.) seems to push, push, push for transitioning. The mass majority of information young trans people consume seems to shove transitioning as the only option for existing in the world as themselves rather than trying make a more accepting environment for trans and nonbinary folks. I find myself constantly having to pull out my full medical history in order to explain to people why I can't just waltz to the doctor's office and ask them to give me a bottle of testosterone. I feel I have to do this to prove my reasons against transitioning rather than people simply taking my word. It's frustrating knowing that I cannot be the

only person who has to share their medical information in order to justify my choosing of what to do with my body. Not to mention many people overlook the socio-economic drawbacks. Being financially unfortunate to put it nicely means that when it comes down to it, medical care is second to having dinner. I know transitioning will bring a lot of extra medical complications so even if T is covered by my barebone government insurance, the extra medicine and surgeries I might need due to side effects from HRT or even top surgery complication are simply expenses I can't spare if worse comes to worse. So, while people are chanting just transition, I have to keep reminding them and myself how sometimes one cannot simply just do it.

This comes to another thing, between my family, friends, and peers: I have not once really sat down and asked myself what I want without the influence of these options. I rarely get to ask myself the aching question of what I actually want. In all fairness, yes, I'd love to medically transition, but I really am afraid of the complications that might come along the way. Even if I was perfectly healthy transitioning is scary and it's a lot of change one often has to mentally prepare themselves for. At this current point in my life I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place when I think about it. One hand my physical health will kill me, the other, my mental. At the end of the day all I can really do is keep dragging myself through life and work towards things like graduating college and getting a stable job. All I can do is I hope who I am doesn't get in the way of that for the time being. I know one day I'll be in a place that I am happy with even if it's far off. One day I'm going to be okay with who I am and how I am regardless of what is on my TV.

(AN: I prefer the term "queer" as an all-inclusive term for the LGBTQA+ community not only because of its all-encompassing nature but because I feel as an individual who belongs to this subgroup, it is important to reclaim slurs and bring them to a meaning tailored for our community rather than a power that can be used against us. This is just my personal opinion and I do not mean in any way to insult any LGBTQA+ individual by using the term queer.)

Ari Paden

Oakland Community College



“Ari Paden is a disabled, gender variant, bisexual writer and artist. He is interested in LGBT history, mostly centering around the 20th-century United States, and is inspired by the life of activist Sylvia Rivera. He dreams of traveling the world, working for an organization that rescues LGBT people from abuse, oppression, and homelessness, and finding a girlfriend. “Story of a Sinner” was heavily based on his own journey concerning the intersection of religion and sexuality.”

Ari is the recipient of a \$500.00 QF scholarship.

Story of a Sinner

by Ari Paden

*love the sinner but hate the sin
love me as long as I obey
love me as long as I self-hate
be pure, respect yourself, be holy,
be straight.*

*but I have never loved myself more,
than when I held her and breathed in the
beautiful scent of her hair.
I have never felt more pure
than when I have touched myself
imagining myself
between a woman's thighs
never have I felt more holy
than when I stopped seeing sex
as sin,
and began seeing it as an offering*

I was told I was dirty, fake,
only good as a fetish,
as a toy,
my sexuality,
sacred intimacy between two women
was for porn,
not for myself.

love the sinner but hate the sin
love the sinner but hate the sin
love the sinner but hate the sin
I felt like a guest in my own house
until I fell in love
and loved myself
enough to leave the House of God.

love the sinner but hate the sin

I am not a sinner.
But I did hate myself enough to leave.
And now I love you, baby,
I love you enough to stay

we are not sinners.
we are holy,
and this love is heaven.

Liz Tetu

Metropolitan State University



Liz Tetui is a junior majoring in Creative Sexual Communication, and minoring in Violence Prevention and Intervention, and in Game Studies

He is a “freelance writer with poetry, prose, and essays present in queer and body positive anthologies,” e.g., “*Arcane Perception* and *My Body My Words*, and magazines/journals, including *Impossible Archetype #2*, *Eternal Haunted Summer*, and Metro State’s *Haute Dish*.

He is also a “gag comic artist with works appearing in the *Queer Masculinity Zine*,” and a “blogger at paganblogger.com under a blog called ‘Installation Wizard’.”

Tetu is particularly “interested in the queer study potential of indie and mainstream video games as well as Tumblr.” He plays “games like merrit kopas’ *Consensual Torture Simulator*, anna anthropy’s *DysAria*, BioWare games and *Saints Row 4*—get[s] deep in their fandoms and the queer.

At Metropolitan State University he is the recipient of the Conference Organizers’ Award for his presentation “Tedchnopaganisms + Videogames” during the Student Research Conference.

Liz is the recipient of a \$500.00 QF scholarship.

Earth-Bound

by Liz Tetu

She was wearing a black gauge with a bright pentacle painted on it in her right ear, but she might as well have been wearing a hook the way strangers fishtailed walking up to her that night, nervous and disinhibited. Her hair was barely longer than the fine wisps on my arm, and dark, showing off a widow’s peak and leaving me to wonder just how many widows got doughy over the eyes underneath. Orbs sparkling a black that would’ve blended in well with the T-shirt she filled out and stretched, she examined the crowds even after they started to leave, tapping scummy steel-toed boots on the faux-wood floor to some low beat. I ducked, hunched shoulders lifting my thin brown hair. I watched worked work boots scuff the floor as they approached.

“A moment?” she asked the back of my head. The slight strain of her deepened voice thrilled and comforted me. My shoulders relaxed. She sat in a chair next to mine, bold ear decoration in view.

I looked up at her, sat helpless as she read the shyness in my muddy eyes. “What you got?” I croaked.

A delighted smile lit up her large face. “Well, since you ask.” She paused distractedly, picking at an invisible blemish on her skin. “Well, you need—no. I saw your craft outside, and.” The light in her black eyes warmed my face. “I was hoping you’d be heading to Earth tonight?”

“Definitely!” I nodded over-enthusiastically, biting my cheek so that I wouldn’t cry out in embarrassment.

Grinning, she took my arm in hers, leading me to the door in a way that was considerate and covert. I was pressing my left hand against the door when the proprietor yelled at our backs, “Hey, you paying lady?” Nosy eyes burned into my stooping back in the quietness of the room. I grimaced.

Her hand released my arm as she turned around. “You mean this person?” she inquired in a high, curious voice that oozed her disinterest in the mumbled affirmation. In my periphery, I saw her eyes darken. “I picked up their tab, you Marsgard marmot,” she growled. She slammed

her hand into the door, holding it open for me as I passed through.

As we rushed into the chilly oxygenated air, I couldn't help giggling, out of restlessness, out of relief, "What was that?"

"That?" she questioned. "That's how *we* swear."

She stumbled, catching herself, gripping my shoulder but barreling onward.

"Um, we, well, at least I, find that using animals keeps us grounded in what's really happening. You know, instead of swearing at the heavens." She affected a booming voice. "Marsgard marmot. Midgard mouse. Asgard ass!"

"No," I interrupted her as we stopped near the craftlot. "I'm talking about." I shuffled my feet. "Other things. How'd you know?"

"That you're a chubby?" she answered softly, her steady hand keeping me still. Although I had never considered the harshness of my gender when said out loud until that moment, I still glowed from hearing her say it. Her eyes explored my own. "They them? That being called 'lady' is your . . . Achilles' heel?"

I nodded before I mused, aloud, "Who're you?" She shook her head, breaking contact.

Curtailing the desire to pout, I put all my energy into shoving my hands inside my carpenter pants pockets, feeling around for the dull edges of my keys. "You are in no condition to command a cantaloupe right now, never mind a craft." She waved at me to follow. "Come on!" Animated, she guided us between desolate buildings and through monolithic industrial parks.

Rust began to creep onto the hem of her dark jeans as I followed her frantic feet. She ducked left and right, turned around, exhilaration marking her heavy breaths that matched the pulsating of all the lights in the sky way above us. My eyes watered, from the dust, and my legs ached, from the chase we were on, and I secretly hoped she didn't know the way back.

When she finally stopped, I faltered, hoping my intense glare would keep the ground I could see from meeting my face. Doubling over, I caught my breath before scrutinizing curbside, beam, brick, and, as my gaze went higher and my breath lighter, the yellow neon sign that exclaimed "Marscade." Her hands were on her hips, declaring her pride in the surprise she had

brought me. Brought me to, rather. I met her raised eyebrows, wide eyes, and expectant grin with a tug of my lips and a head bob.

We sauntered in, encountering intimate, wordless praises aimed at my energetic compatriot. I strained to pick out her name in the noise, without luck, as she went to embrace her friends. I stood awkward, still at the door, when someone thin, bald, and musical posed a question to her: "Who's your friend?"

She looked at me, keenly. A small part of me wanted to point out that some of us weren't playing by the rules of the name game, but I went on and replied, "Zane."

Cheers repeated my name, the people trying it out in their mouths. In various stages, it sounded a lot like her name.

"They're ready to break all your records," she boasted, to laughter. "Zane is." She passed through a doorway into a room with a low ceiling, me in tow.

It took up most of the bare room, it and some rubble from unfinished renovations, like most of the planet. Big, awkward shape of machinery, she was already tinkering with it, slapping its side. Over her shoulder, I peered at its screen, two-dimensional comets hurtling towards the blinking prompt asking if "commander" wanted to start a new game. She backed up, nodding at me. I rolled my eyes, decided to humor her.

My fingers fell into place, muscle memory making me mimic my commanders ed training as the screen fell away to a field of crafts and asteroids. The motion of my digital vehicle made my body feel a little queasy. As the objects on the screen kept reappearing, faster and more intense, my pulse increased. My hands froze up in moments, creaked during others, frustrating me. My flushed face was an overreaction to these miniscule movements, but I didn't really care. I laughed genuinely through gritted teeth as I bested and befell 8-bit opponents, as she brushed struggling locks of hair out of my face and behind my left ear, whispering to me congratulations as well as my fluctuating score. I rolled my shoulders and licked my lips as I focused on my objectives: defeat my enemies, get back to Earth, reclaim space.

When I finally ran out of lives and the game ended, my narrow concentration turned the disruption into a throaty sigh that sent me stumbling back. Standing unevenly on a pile of stones, I ran my hand through my hair. She ambled up to the machine and typed in my name in the blank space next to the number two, which in one minute would have matched the reading of the 24-hour clock that hung over the doorway.

A pair of butch Cinderellas, we hurried into the street to the electronica chime of the clock, racing past friendly faces and amicable calls. Once fully immersed in the blue black of night, however, we walked at our own leisure, pointing out ruins and constellations to each other with an untamed curiosity. We both greeted Earth's distant moon with animal noises, her bear growl curling comfortably around my wolf howl, and laughed like old friends on a first date. We read every pockmarked sign in silly voices and threw every piece of paper refuse into the humming recyclers, and by the time we approached my craft, we were ready to leave.

Sitting in the single seat, I looked over my shoulder at her. She had scraped together some blankets and rugs from the supply closet in the back, on which she was now reclining. "Comfortable back there, huh?" I poked, using a nearby button to close the door remotely.

I brought us into orbit before speaking again. "We'll get there about eight, eight thirty Monday."

"Perfect," she exhaled. Her breathing slowed. "How do you sleep here?"

I chuckled. "Usually, I strap in and turn on autocontrol," I lied.

An hour passed before I could break out of orbit and track us onto an interspace channel. My companion was quiet, even asleep, as I prepared to shut down myself for the rest of the trip. Between space and dreams, I braced for turbulence. With a sluggish flick of my finger, I relinquished management of the craft to the computer and started to bring the buckles together when I heard her stir.

Muffled pats. "Join me," she worded.

She moved her hand as I rested on my side on the unoccupied field of blanket. With hooded eyelids, she stared through the window in the ceiling of my craft, spellbound. Earth was still far

off, but in her irises I could see its blue-green serenity, brilliant above penetrating depths.

Laughing gently, she stated, "You're admiring me."

"You're admiring a sea of stars."

"A 'sea' of stars?" she gurgled. "You sound like my father." Breaths, from me and her. In the silence, I decided to reach out for her. At the end of a measured, steady, precise stretch of my arm, my thumb brushed the glowing pentacle, adorned with smaller characters I couldn't decipher with my sleep-blurry eyes, swimming just above her earlobe.

"What's your name?" I breathed tentatively.

She turned her head to me, eyes fully opened, unveiled radiance leaving me ashy in its wake. "I am Freyja. She Hers."

I blinked. "Goddess of warriors?"

"Goddess of sexuality," She smirked. With a limp hand, She traced purple shapes in the air between us. "Goddess of magic, too." My lips mouthed sentiments as my eyes traced Her fingers, all of Her exuberance streaming to them. She pressed Her energized hand to my warm face. "Receiver of the slain."

"I'm the slain," I squeaked, surprising myself. I curled up on my side, pulling inward.

"You need," She breathed. "I can make you—"

Inhalation became insufficient. Perspiration dotted my flushed face under the intensity of Her gaze. In that cramped craft, in the light emanating from the stars and the dashboard and the lingering illusion, I felt so small. "Don't change me," I cried out in a small voice. Elbows met stomach, my knuckles kneading the softness of my cheeks and just meeting the fingertips and ragged nails of Her corporeal hand.

She caressed cheek and sideburn. "Please. I can make you a spell, a realm, a place to channel the negativity instead of absorbing it into your beautiful body." Exhaling softly, She added, "I will only do this if you agree, no matter how much I want to relieve your distress."

I held my eyes to Hers as I nodded. "Yes. I'm giving You permission."

Her bristly hair quivered, and a purple-black aura thickened around Her fingertips. "You have experienced loss and discord in the

belligerence of friends and foreigners,” She intoned softly into my form as She drew the rune *Fehu* above me. “You will create strength. You will become strength.” *Gebo* flowed from Her as she continued, “You have sacrificed for those who refuse to honor you, found loneliness amongst fellow lovers. You will gift yourself to those who care. You will become yourself to those who care.” Her volume increased to the strokes of *Ansuz*. “You have been manipulated by others as they have tried to hide who you are. You will name yourself. You will name the stakes.”

The Goddess growled, the aura spreading down Her arms. Enchantments hovered above my head, chest, and stomach. Her articulation was clear as She sculpt-sang *Wunio* in the ether. She bellowed, “You have strife and sorrow stopping you, aliens in your energy reserves. You will recognize your worth. You will.”

I inhaled suddenly.

“YOU ARE WORTHY,” came Her words as She muttered with endless dedication: “*Fehu Gebo Ansuz Wunio*.” I repeated Her, watched thick lips lead the muscles of Her dark features as She chanted. My tears were reflected in Her cries, my smile in the warm spread of Her lips, my whimpers in Her huffs.

The moment soared past us. The momentum transformed us back into our bodies, our big bodies in space, constellations, galaxies, mortals together, worlds apart. Her hand on my face, I slept in peace on my side, then my back, as I found home.

*

“Well, I feel so much stronger now that we’re on Earth,” she said mostly to a plate full of the remains of pancakes and hash browns drowned in a smoky syrup, much of which had leaked from the gluey container onto her hand. I chortled at the mess, absently tugging on the delicate hairs above my lip.

I glanced around the diner before patting my pockets for the umpteenth time, making sure I didn’t leave my license behind at the re-entry point we’d touched down on only an hour previous. I ducked my head, trying to read the slogan across my shirt as well as scrutinizing the effectiveness of my binder. I didn’t have anything her size in my craft, so she still wore the same T-

shirt, wrinkled and flattering. “Thanks,” I whispered.

“You are very welcome.” The check was in her hand. With an awkward twist of her arm, she reached behind herself for her wallet.

“Where’re you going now?” I asked. There was a pause, her screwing up her face while she figured some mental math, me flushing in the daylight frying us through the big greasy window to my left.

She tucked coins under the paper detailing our orders before toying with her empty earlobe. “You brought me back just in time, you know. A protest’s starting downtown in two hours, the march in just an hour.” Her eyes sparkled in anticipation.

A baby whined at the table behind me. An adult tried to soothe the weak shrieks, and a bright young man in a cardigan turned to watch their progress. He made eye contact with me and glowered. I shifted under the look of his verdict towards me and Freyja, our sheepish companionship without rank to him. I squinted against my own venom, maintained concentration on his hate. I followed the visage of his head as he closed down and resumed his breakfast.

I returned to her impish grin and felt one ease across my own face. “Need a ride?”



Contemporary Queer Writers Series.

James M. Wood. *Out and About With Winsor French* (The Kent State University Press, 2011).

In the 1930s, Winsor French was America's most out-of-the closet journalist and about-town columnist, who lived with his dog Brunhilde, on the east bank of the Cuyahoga River in Lakeside Flats, "a small but select artists' colony" on the shore of Lake Erie in downtown Cleveland.

In 2018, James Wood is an award-winning journalist and former about-town columnist, who lives with his partner, Joel Zureick, near the west bank of the Cuyahoga River in Ohio City, the state's most diverse census tract.

Out and About with Winsor French is Wood's biography of a self-described "effeminate young man," who occupied desks in city rooms drenched with masculinity, endured his colleagues' homophobia and risked losing his job by defending unconventional behavior. Winsor ignored twentieth century newspaper taboos by writing about men who found males more exciting than females. Three excerpts document how he used innuendo to alert Cleveland playgoers to the sexual nature of a *ménage a trois* at the world premiere of Noel Coward's *Design for Living*, and how a Hollywood publicist and a famous film actress tried to use Winsor's sexuality to discredit his criticism.

The excerpts from *Out and About with Winsor French* are published with the permission of The Kent State University Press, www.KentStateUniversityPress.com

'The plot is very, very daring'

CLEVELAND, OHIO Monday, January 2, 1933 8:25 p.m. Five minutes before stagehands were to pull the

curtain for the world premiere of a mysterious new play by Noël Coward, the Hanna Theater was almost empty. Outside, the night air hovered just above freezing. Hundreds of anxious ticket-holders, unable to get inside, sought shelter under the hot white lights of the Hanna's marquee. Sunday's coal-colored snowfall was puddling in the gutters of East Fourteenth Street where a steaming queue of chauffeured limousines grumbled, filled with fretful passengers searching for openings in the crowd. There were none. People were jammed to the curb. Somewhere in the crush Winsor Brown French, the new movie critic for the *Cleveland News*, greeted friends. None of them had trouble hearing him.

Winsor had once belonged to an acting troupe whose players pursued vocal splendor. He burnished his baritone. "Every time a cork in a bottle of champagne goes 'bowp,'" a female newspaper colleague wrote, "I am reminded of Winsor French. He can say 'Oh!' and make you think the millennium is at your elbow."

Although he was only five feet, seven inches tall, among the men outside the Hanna it was easy to tell which one was Winsor. A male newspaper colleague wrote of the opening night audience, "There were hard high hats and collapsible high hats and black velour hats. . . . All the hats that were worn were worn by the men."

Not by Winsor. He was bareheaded, which was unconventional male behavior in the 1930s. He combed his straight brown hair back from an intellect's brow. As he inched towards the theater's entrance, his blue-gray eyes yearned to be amused. While he did not record his emotions on this particular night, the twenty-eight-year-old writer had every right to feel smug. He had created this clamorous mob. It was the first, but not the last mob he would incite in a rollicking career of provocative journalism.

In 1933, radio broadcasting was a five-year-old industry struggling to build an audience and secure advertisers. Television? The transmission of live, moving images was an eight-year-old invention with commercial potential. Newspapers and magazines were the only viable commercial news media. In Cleveland, three dailies vied for the attention of nine hundred thousand residents. The *Plain Dealer* was published in the morning; the *Press* and *News* in the afternoon. To cover Coward's world premiere, local

editors sent twelve journalists: three drama critics, two feature writers, two society editors, and five about-town columnists. Unknown to most Cleveland readers was the fact that one of the male about-town columnists used a *nom de plume*: "Noel Francis." He was none other than Winsor French. In addition to reviewing movies, he was also writing *The Night Parade*, an about-town column for the *News*, the smaller of the two afternoon dailies. He had chosen "Noel" because he was born on Christmas Eve, "Francis" because it was another form of French.

All twelve journalists were competing with each other to be the first to break significant news about Coward's play. Yet two weeks before the opening, Noël Coward had stymied the entire local press corps. Reporters had uncovered exactly four facts about his newest play: its title, *Design for Living*, and the names of its three leading players. Coward would reportedly appear on stage with two of his closest friends, Alfred Lunt, forty years old, and Lynn Fontanne, forty-five years old, husband and wife, two handsome, dark-haired perfectionists who created the illusion of spontaneity on stage and film through relentless rehearsals. In 1931, after starring in *The Guardsman*, a romantic movie about a famous actor and actress who were married, Lunt and Fontanne had become America's most popular acting couple.

A world premiere starring national celebrities in a play written by a brilliant, thirty-two-year-old Englishman was a first for Cleveland. Reporters and columnists were eager to publish rehearsal anecdotes. At the *Press*, the larger of Cleveland's two afternoon dailies, Helen Allyn, a twenty-eight-year-old feature writer and the only newsperson at the Hanna with a journalism degree, was forced to confess her inability to crack Coward's silence. "The plot and story," she wrote, "are so far a secret to the world at large."

Normally press agents hired by theater managers, producers and performers would be swarming about news people offering complimentary tickets in return for a mention that would boost box office sales. The Hanna was competing with two dozen downtown theaters presenting vaudeville, moving pictures, burlesque, and legitimate stage productions. Every night tickets for about 30,000 seats were for sale, more than anywhere else but New York City. More importantly, the lack of publicity about *Design for Living* had reduced the number of mail orders at the Hanna Theater, especially after management raised the top price for a single ticket from two dollars to three. The decision seemed foolhardy. Everyone else was lowering prices.

That very morning the Standard Oil Company of Ohio, the petroleum giant that had made John D. Rockefeller the richest man in the United States, announced that to increase sales, it had cut the price of its premium grade gasoline, the fuel required by the limousines idling in front of the Hanna, by two cents a gallon. The price was seventeen cents, the lowest ever in Cleveland history. Ruthless deflation had the world's economy in a tailspin. Relief organizations were swamped.

In 1933, national unemployment rates were stuck at twenty-five percent, and in Cleveland conditions were worse. Officials estimated the local work force numbered half a million persons. In early 1933, 219,000 individuals – more than forty percent – couldn't find jobs. The inability of President Herbert Hoover to reverse national unemployment rates led to a landslide victory for his opponent in November's election. Franklin Delano Roosevelt would be inaugurated in March.

During this same period, press historians noted that "bleakness" permeated most writers' prose. While acknowledging "the gaunt and ugly shadow of the depression" under his "Noel Francis" by-line, Winsor was essentially optimistic, dispensing advice on how to cope with a drastically reduced income.

He cheered deflation when it lowered prices for males who made weekly visits to barber shops. In December, "Francis" had gleefully announced, "Fifteen-cent haircuts have arrived."

Under the circumstances, workers gave the highest priority to holding their jobs, yet in Winsor's first month at the *News* he risked losing his by allowing "Francis" to violate American newspaper propriety with an item about unconventional male employment. While the road company was performing *Show Boat* at the Hanna, "Francis" wrote, "One of the highest kickers in the . . . feminine chorus is a man."

The person who tolerated Winsor's journalistic misbehavior was Albert Edward Myrne (A.E.M.) Bergener, managing editor at the *News*. He hired Winsor and authorized his use of the *nom de plume*. Bergener, fifty-eight years old, was the "most sworn-at and sworn-by newspaperman" in Cleveland. Although reporters had tremendous respect for the man, his decision to hire Winsor rankled certain male employees. Journalism was not an occupation that accepted openly gay men in the 1920s and 1930s, as compared to restaurants, department stores, hotels and the theater industry. Polly Parsons, the society editor at the *News*, documented the profession's intolerance. She wrote that Winsor "created a raised eyebrow department among the hard-boiled reporters of the

News city room when he fluttered into an about-town column and movie reviews.” (Because homosexuals were often labeled “fairies,” verbs suggesting winged movement were a device some reporters used to identify a sexually unconventional male.)

Bergener ignored his homophobic reporters and allowed a young man some thought effeminate to infiltrate an American daily newspaper’s “city room,” traditionally a rumpled, smoky den of masculinity with liquor on its breath. In this rancid, droll atmosphere, Bergener and his new columnist/critic did share some attributes. They were both short and fastidious. Bergener set unusual hygiene standards for reporters. “Before coming to work, every man on the *News* must take a shower and put on a clean collar.” (In the 1930s, most men’s shirts had detachable collars and had made Winsor’s maternal grandfather, George P. Ide, a wealthy man. He manufactured “soft” and “starched” models in Troy, N. Y. Winsor preferred the “Idehaven,” one of his grandfather’s patented “starched” collars.)

Although Winsor had the least newspaper experience of any journalist covering the world premiere, he thought he could reveal the “secret” plot of *Design for Living* under the “Francis” byline, if he could only talk to Coward personally. He had met the playwright at least twice: In March, 1926, when Coward played Cleveland in another of his shows, *The Vortex*, and later that same summer in England, while Winsor claimed to be “studying” at Oxford. On both occasions, Winsor’s Cleveland friend, Leonard Colton Hanna, Jr., who was an acquaintance of Coward’s, had arranged the encounters. For introductions to celebrity playwrights, Hanna, the portly nephew of deceased U. S. Senator Marcus Hanna, possessed impeccable credentials. Worth at least twenty million dollars in 1932, he occasionally invested in plays, plus his cousins owned a theater (the same one where *Design for Living* would be premiered) and a newspaper (the one that had recently hired Winsor). More importantly, Hanna, Coward and Winsor shared an uncommon desire. For sexual partners, they preferred men like themselves: Handsome, hard drinking, cigarette-smoking, articulate and amusing night people. Neither Hanna nor Winsor tried to hide who aroused them. Hanna had celebrated his forty-third birthday in December and played the role of a wise, generous older brother among Winsor’s homosexual friends and news sources, an unorthodox circle that often provided the columnist with the private phone numbers that gave him an advantage over his competition.

With Hanna’s help, Winsor tried to reach Coward in New York City, where *Design for Living*’s cast was rehearsing. His pursuit of the playwright is the first published account of an attempt by Winsor to turn a celebrity acquaintance into a quotable news source. Convincing a person of Coward’s stature to tattle on himself in print requires immense charm and discretion. For a man like Winsor, who was making his debut as a newspaperman, words attributable to Coward were of enormous value. Editors would grin. Readers would tell their friends. Competitors would curse. Yet, when Winsor finally reached the playwright over a crackling long-distance phone line, he heard a cautious man. Coward’s many biographers have insisted he was loath to discuss this particular play in advance of its opening for fear the subject matter might offend potential audiences. For the world premiere, he chose the United States, rather than England, because he suspected the Lord Chamberlain, Britain’s official censor, would not approve the script. Although Coward knew Winsor would applaud *Design for Living*’s theme, a rousing call for sexual liberty, the playwright still demanded that Winsor not publish details until after the opening.

The terms would appear to have defeated Winsor’s purpose; but he accepted them. While there is no record of the exact language the playwright used to explain *Design for Living*, it is a comedy about a *ménage à trois*, two men and a woman. Coward wrote the play for himself and the Lunts to fulfill a promise he had made the couple in 1921, when they were all living in New York City and before Lynn had married Alfred. In Manhattan, the playwright and two actors shared a cook and the dinners she prepared. In *Design for Living*, a playwright and two artists share more than a cook. Each is in love with the other two. During the course of three acts, the action and dialogue suggests that each has enjoyed the others sexually. The play was one of a handful in the 1930s that implicitly referred to homosexuality.

Because those couplings included two males, neither Winsor nor any of his contemporaries writing in American daily newspapers, could have been explicit about the play’s plot. There was no acceptable vocabulary. “Gay” still meant “excited with merriment” to most newspaper readers, although some men, who proudly identified themselves as “queers,” used “gay” to describe the flamboyant behavior of men they dismissed as “fairies,” “faggots” or “queens.” Derogatory slang – “nance,” “pansy,” and “buttercup” – were in the same taboo newspaper lexicon as “kike” and “nigger.” The meaning of “bisexual” was evolving, and didn’t necessarily mean attracted to both

males and females. For some it implied a person who was both male and female. "Homosexual" was not common usage. When Winsor hung up the phone, he had a scoop, yet both Coward's skittishness and the lack of a benign noun or adjective to describe the play's male characters, prevented him from breaking his startling news.

Winsor French was not to be deterred. On Tuesday afternoon, December 20, 1932, the following paragraph appeared, as the fourth item under the "Francis" byline: "Noël Coward is wondering what the reactions of the public will be toward his new play, *Design for Living*, which has its premiere at the Hanna one of these days. The plot is very, very daring."

Despite a depressed economy and higher ticket prices, broad hints opened checkbooks. One week after "very, very daring" appeared in the *News*, mail orders had purchased every seat on the theater's main floor for opening night. It was a record for the Hanna. Mimicking "Francis," Archie Bell, the *News* drama critic and Winsor's colleague in the entertainment department, described what happened: "Somehow, by a sort of underground telegraph, word had filtered through that [*Design for Living*] would be very, very naughty. This whetted curiosity. There was much speculation and gossip."

Apparently, the hullabaloo initially worried the play's producer. After *Press* drama critic George Davis printed "a wildcat report that the play now being launched here is so daring in its theme that many who see the play would object to it on that account," a press agent, who claimed to have read the script, told Davis, "It wasn't so." The public ignored the press agent's denial. The Hanna box office, according to Bell, had "so many unfilled mail orders for opening night, they would practically have filled another house to capacity."

On the night before the world premiere, after the final dress rehearsal, Coward did tell a reporter for the *Plain Dealer* that his play was about "three rather peculiar characters who loved each other very much but who found, after play of emotions between pairs, that they were incapable of division, that they were individuals who fitted into no ordinary human pattern." The description was very, very abstruse for a playwright known for crisp repartee. The *Plain Dealer* reporter clarified Coward's quote by citing "Francis," albeit without attribution. "The theme," the reporter added, "is rumored to be ultra-sophisticated and daring." Bell's "very, very" and the *Plain Dealer's* "daring" testify to the impact Winsor's language had on his colleagues. Yet using "rumored" meant the *Plain Dealer* questioned the authority of Winsor's

source. Readers waiting to get inside the theater believed he had inside information. For the Hanna, Winsor's words were as good as gold.

After opening night sold out, theater management satisfied pleas for tickets by flaunting fire laws and renting gilt chairs, which were lined up and down the four aisles on the main floor. The illegal chairs meant there were fifteen hundred and fifty tickets for sale every night – two hundred more than the Hanna's legal capacity. Coward accepted the scheme for increasing income while endangering the audience. In a letter to his brother Erik, the playwright boasted about the demand for tickets in Cleveland. "The play is a wow here and we have to have extra chairs in the aisles."

On opening night, it was those golden chairs, literally and metaphorically, that were preventing people from taking their seats. "Francis" fingered a member of Cleveland's City Council who took advantage of the lawbreaking. "Although chairs are verboten in theater aisles, Ex-City Manager [William R.] Hopkins sat in one."

When 8:30 finally arrived, there were more people standing than sitting, so Coward held the curtain. While he waited for the house to fill, Coward sat in his dressing room with Jeffrey John Archer Holmesdale, at thirty-six, the Fifth Earl of Amherst. He had traveled from England to attend the world premiere. While the audience sidled past the gold chairs, Coward and his short, blond, blue-eyed friend smoked cigarettes. Lord Amherst was the great-grandson and namesake of Sir Jeffrey Amherst, commander-in-chief of the British Army during the American War of Independence. Amherst College was named for his family. Coward's titled pal had dabbled in American journalism. In 1927 he wrote drama reviews for Alexander Woolcott, powerful and outspoken critic at the *New York World*.

That morning the *Plain Dealer* had introduced its readers to Lord Amherst with a photograph and caption that described the aristocrat as Coward's "intimate" friend, an adjective some reporters used to suggest a romantic relationship between two males. In Amherst's account of his travels with Coward, he characterized their friendship as a "sort of two-pronged mutual admiration society." Philip Hoare, Coward's authoritative biographer, suggests that the playwright was disappointed because they had not become lovers. On matters of sex and sexuality, 1930s newspapers were notoriously unreliable.

Coward's biographers agree, however, that of all his plays, *Design for Living* was the playwright's personal favorite. So at 8:45, when he finally stubbed a

cigarette, smoothed his blond hair with the palm of his hand and told the stagehands to pull the curtain, he was beginning what should have been a high point in his career.

Coward had set Act I in a squalid Parisian garret shared by a painter named "Otto" (played by Lunt) and an interior decorator named "Gilda" (Fontanne). "Otto" wasn't home when the curtain rose. Instead, "Gilda" had spent the night with a playwright named "Leo" (Coward). (Note the occupational and name-spelling similarities between Noël and "Leo.") Early in the act, Coward announced the theme through his female character:

GILDA *Everything's glandular . . . All the hormones in my blood are working overtime. They're rushing madly in and out of my organs like messenger boys.*

Members of the audience who bought tickets based on Winsor's "daring" were to be rewarded with a witty discussion of sex, and as the play unfolded, a critique of traditional marriage. Coward's lovers grappled with their *ménage à trois*:

GILDA *What's the truth of it?*

LEO *The actual facts are so simple. I love you. You love me. You love Otto. I love Otto. Otto loves you. Otto loves me. There!*

More than an hour later, the curtain fell, and according to Lord Amherst, Coward "stormed off the stage in a blind rage. It was a serious comedy. The oafs had laughed all through the first act; he'd be damned if he would go on with the play. Alfred Lunt was near to hysterics, Lynn Fontanne was in tears."

What caused the playwright's emotional outburst? Although local drama critics and reporters sensed something was wrong on stage, they attributed any problems to opening night jitters and acting technique. Davis claimed Coward and Fontanne had "mumbled most of their lines." In the *Plain Dealer*, McDermott wrote, all three actors were "too low pitched." "Francis" published another possibility on the following afternoon. "People will tell you, by the way, that *Design for Living* is Coward's own life story."

If Winsor's rumor was correct, the playwright had just spent an hour trying to explain his love and lust for both Lynn and Alfred. When the "oafs" laughed, Coward could only assume they found his confession, including an implicit reference to homosexuality, absurd or depraved. The audience didn't seem to understand how seriously he felt about the passions that drove his plot.

When *Design for Living* eventually opened in New York City, two drama critics gave credence to Winsor's item as the reason for Coward's outburst. Brooks Atkinson, drama critic for *The New York Times*,

sensed the playwright's desire to justify his character's emotions in the first act: "Mr. Coward writes as earnestly as a psychologist." After seeing the play twice, John Mason Brown, drama critic for the *New York Evening Post*, cited the play's first act as "a serious, though giddy, study of the intricate emotional relationship existing between two men and one woman, all of who are deeply fond of one another."

In Cleveland, however, Coward remained adamant. He would not return to the stage. As the ten-minute intermission neared its end, Gladys Calthrop, a long-time friend of the playwright's and the artistic designer for most of his productions, approached Coward "shaking her finger." "Small of stature," according to Amherst, "but strikingly handsome . . . she upbraided Noël, reminding him that he was not . . . Sarah Bernhardt." He finally surrendered and agreed to finish the show. Stagehands dimmed the house lights, calling audience members back to their seats.

When the curtain rose on Act II, the "oafs" saw "Gilda" living with "Leo" in London, but reviving her affair with "Otto."

OTTO *Our lives are diametrically opposed to ordinary social conventions. We've got to find our own solution for our own peculiar moral problems.*

By the end of Act II, Gilda's "solution" was to leave both men to each other and a bottle of brandy.

LEO (Resting his head on Alfred's shoulder) *Will you forgive me for everything?*

OTTO (Emotionally) *It's I who should ask you that . . . Thank God for each other, anyhow!*

LEO *That's true. We'll get along, somehow – (His voice breaks) – together.*

OTTO (Struggling with his tears) *Together . . .*

The curtain fell on Act II leaving the audience with the image of two tearful, tipsy men embracing, a stage image emphasizing intimacy. According to a *Plain Dealer* feature writer, the audience had been "astounded . . . in spots, but it was still a moot point in the lobby . . . whether everything that had been seen was a coherent understandable whole." *Design for Living* was only "understandable" if you could discuss romantic love between two men, and you couldn't do that in a newspaper....

Towards the end of Act III, "Leo" and "Otto" made a spectacular entrance from the top of a Bauhaus stairway dressed in "two of the most astounding pairs of pajamas ever seen on a stage."

Winsor saw Coward and Lunt arriving on stage in lecherous, satin bedclothes, two handsome *bon vivants* only a few years older than he. They were sexually attractive to a bright and beautiful woman, as well as to each other. And they were manly! They

didn't flounce. They were the antithesis of lisping, limp-wristed, supposedly comic "horticultural lads" (men called "pansy" or "buttercup") who pranced across the sets of American plays and movies in the 1930s.

On a couch with Alfred's arms around him, Coward held Lynn's hands as he defended their *ménage à trois*:

LEO *We have our own decencies. We have our own ethics. Our lives are a different shape from yours.*

The *Plain Dealer* counted eight curtain calls, but how many people really grasped what Coward was advocating, especially those persons who couldn't afford three-dollar tickets and had to rely on the explanations of newspaper drama critics. They were opaque in Tuesday's editions on a subject as critical as the *ménage à trois*.

Davis at the *Press*: "Coward's comedy poses situations which couldn't be acceptable if they were presented seriously."

McDermott at the *Plain Dealer*: "An unconventional variation of the triangle that would have shocked Queen Victoria and may even disturb some of her descendants."

Bell at the *News*: "A strangely different triangle, with a wavering hypotenuse and two curved sides."

[Because personal experience with married life might influence a critic's opinion, readers should know that Bell never married; McDermott was divorced in 1933; and Davis was in love with a woman who lived with him twenty years before accepting his marriage proposal.]

Using Bell's euphemism, what were any "curved sides" in the audience thinking? The newspaper critics did not write about the reaction of men for whom *Design for Living's* "situations" were not only "acceptable," but utterly desirable. That afternoon, Winsor didn't waste any space describing the *ménage à trois*. Instead, for all who had seen or would see the show during the week it played in Cleveland, the columnist made his startling announcement that Coward's friends thought *Design for Living* was autobiographical.

The playwright didn't object in print, although he was quite concerned about his press coverage in Cleveland. He dispatched his personal manager to the city room of the *News* to demand a correction from Archie Bell. The drama critic had overestimated Coward's weekly earnings (\$5,200 a week, not \$7,500).

Unfortunately, Winsor's candid items and Coward's silence were unknown to scholars studying this singular play in Noël Coward's oeuvre. As a

result, a gender studies academic, Samuel D. Abel at Dartmouth College, wrote, "What has gone unmentioned, though, is the possibility of reading [*Design for Living*] as autobiography." No, Winsor mentioned that specific "possibility" about twelve hours after the curtain descended on the world premiere.

In John Lahr's book, *Coward the Playwright*, the distinguished theater critic and historian writes that *Design for Living* is "Coward's comic revenge . . . the victory of the disguised gay world over the straight one." "Disguised" is not the right word to describe Coward's script. Barry Day, author of *The Letters of Noel Coward*, who also helped Coward's companion Graham Payn write *My Life With Noel Coward*, insists the playwright "always believed that suggestion is more interesting than statement." He was providing teasing glimpses of gay relationships, not hiding them. Coincidentally, when "Francis" described the play's subject matter as "daring," it was his broad hint about unconventional sexuality, never stated explicitly, that provoked the "speculation and gossip" among newspaper columnists and the public which increased ticket sales.

Limited to innuendo, Cleveland journalists in 1933 still struggled to report a topic that their publishers, reflecting what they understood to be the public's taste, considered taboo.... Yet, when Cleveland drama critics are compared with those writing for New York City newspapers, the local men seem positively permissive. At *The New York Times*, Atkinson smelled the "odor of sin" hovering about *Design for Living*, while Percy Hammond at the *Herald Tribune* complained about the play's "silken obscenities." Euphemia Van Rensselaer Wyatt in the *Catholic World*, called the production "essentially rotten." Because New York City journalists are considered more important than their colleagues in smaller cities, and their work is indexed in accessible publications, scholars studying *Design for Living*, Coward, gender and the media reached oversimplified and erroneous conclusions.

In Cleveland, newspaper readers discovered a new authority buried in the entertainment section of the *News*, the city's smallest daily newspaper. He was willing to amuse and inform with discreet sexual innuendo. His column offered "queers" a subtext; local theater owners found a place to boost their income. In less than six weeks, Winsor's "Noël Francis" had become the most powerful and talked-about columnist covering the city's nightlife.

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

This month we salute the 100 high school seniors who submitted essays in the Queer Foundation's 2018 English Essay Contest. They are LGBTQ students and friends of LGBTQ students who embody the spirit of Queer Scholars.

They come from thirty-three states and one Canadian province and represent, in their writing, the power of youth's voices to make sense of complex issues that affect their lives and the lives of millions of other young people everywhere. Judging from their essays, I can say that most of these courageous young authors let their voices be heard not only through their writing but also through their activism in their schools and communities. Queer Foundation feels honored to play at least a small role in their activism and, for some, to be a motivating force in support of it.

Contest judges—from California, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin—volunteer their time to read and evaluate submissions. Essayists have commented that knowing their writing has been read by successful LGBTQ teachers and writers is one of the most satisfying results of having participated in the contest.

All contest participants are urged to continue writing after graduation and to watch for announcements of opportunities to submit new writing for consideration for publication in upcoming issues of this newsletter, *The Queer Foundation Scholar*. Prizes in the form of QF scholarships may be used at the U.S. college or university of the writer's choice.

Participants need not be U.S. residents.

Queer Foundation is constantly looking for ways to reach students in more schools, communities, states, and other countries. Please share your ideas with me and let me answer any questions you have about our project.

You can write to me at jdial@queerfoundation.org or at

Joseph Dial, QF Executive Director
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From the editor's desk

Amid the barrage of disheartening news that offends our senses on a daily basis, we celebrate even small victories.

- **Anchorage, Alaska.** By roughly 52% to 47%, voters in Anchorage in their first mail-in ballot defeated a transphobic “bathroom” proposition on the ballot on Tuesday, April 3, 2018. The vote was a turn-around from a 2012 vote that defeated a proposition to extend equal rights to LGBTQ residents in hiring and housing.

Mayor Ethan Berkowitz also won reelection with 55.51% of the votes cast. Berkowitz, a Democrat, had campaigned against the proposition, vowing to continue working to make Anchorage a city that is “safe and secure” for all its residents.

- **Maryland** became the 11th state to ban conversion therapy for minors. The debate in the state legislature pitted a young, bisexual woman in the House of Delegates who had been forced through conversion therapy by her parents, and her father, a state senator. Meanwhile, the California legislature, which was the first to ban conversion therapy for minors, is now considering a bill that would ban it outright, labeling it a fraud.



Watch for these films: *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, directed by Desiree Akhavan and starring Chloe Grace Moretz as a teen forced into conversion therapy back in 1992. Although first released at Sundance this past January, its official release date is 3 August 2018. *Boy Erased*, directed by Joel Edgerton, stars Lucas Hedges as Jared, a

Southern teen whose Baptist parents (Russell Crowe and Nicole Kidman) force him to choose between conversion therapy or total rejection. *Boy Erased*, loosely based on Garret Conley’s memoir of the same name, is scheduled to be released 28 September. Hopefully, both films will help convince a few more state legislators to ban conversion therapy, at the very least for anyone under 18.

- Efforts to villainize, even demonize, **Emma González**, the openly bisexual Latinx with her now well-known buzz-cut, and **David Hogg**, the two most visible of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School student activists, have repeatedly failed. Unnoted by the mainstream media: central to the activism was the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance and that most likely at least two of the students who died in the February 14 massacre were queer.

Hogg as much as told everyone that he was gay when, in an interview before the March 24 “March for Our Lives” that he was still having difficulty processing the death of one of his best friends, but that he found solace listening to his best friend’s favorite song: one of Frank Ocean’s most obvious gay songs. And on April 24, 2018, **Cameron Kaskey**, another of the activist students at Stoneman Douglas, shared the news that he and David Hogg were going to senior prom together. The photograph of the two of them, posted online, has gone viral. I can only imagine what new vitriol they will now face.

Emma, David, and Cameron, of course, come from a predominantly white, solidly middle to upper-middleclass school and community. Like the other student activists at Stoneman Douglas High, they have the full support of their parents. Still, they live in a society and during an era when being queer is under assault by Republicans in Congress, the White House, and a majority of state legislatures.

It’s next to impossible to exaggerate the negative impact that massacres have on children and teens. Not just violent acts, but words do

matter. How do youth process the conspiracy theories? The massacre at Sandy Hook didn't happen; they were all actors in a charade staged by President Obama as a prelude to taking everyone's guns away. The massacre at Stoneman Douglas High was also staged. Sandy Hook, Orlando, Las Vegas, Stoneman Douglas, and then we have the extreme right-wing homophobic nutters saying it's too bad more were not murdered.

In my childhood in school, we had a fire drill and an earthquake drill once a term and, looking back, I think my peers and I didn't take them very seriously. They were an excuse to ignore our studies for an hour or so. After all, how many schools burned down, trapping dozens of students and teachers inside? And even in California, how often did earthquakes kill and injure dozens of school children? Growing up but a few miles from the Hayward Fault, we felt earthquakes a few times a month. The house shook, our school building shook, but "the big one" just never came. Quite different than what has been happening with increasing frequency. Columbine was hardly the first mass high school shooting. Sadly it will not be the last.

Like the biblical David, the activists at Stoneman Douglas High have risked their lives to take on the Goliaths: the NRA, gun manufacturers, Fox News, the President, and a group of mostly overweight white men who like to spit and cuss and pretend that, if necessary, they could defeat the U.S. Army. And let's not forget the gunrunners who keep inner-city gangs well stocked with semi-automatic weapons even in cities or states where they are illegal; after all, just as Nixon used anti-marijuana laws to undermine the "hippie" anti-Vietnam War protestors, and helped supply inner-city gangs with heroin and crack cocaine, ever fearful that blacks would rise up violently against whites, now guns have been added back into the mix, leading inner-city gangs, be they Black, Asian, or Latino, to use guns to kill each other. As long as they don't start killing whites, the majority of legislators will look the other way.

I am reminded that there was another Valentine's Day Massacre. On February 14, 1929, in Chicago, seven members of George

"Bugsy" Moran's Northside Irish Gang were lined up against a wall in a garage and shot with "Tommy guns," by Southside Italian Gang members allegedly taking orders from Al Capone (who was conveniently in Florida at the time). Analogy? The federal government agents, led by Elliott Ness, changed tactics, convicting Al Capone of tax evasion in 1931 and, by 1935, the federal government outlawed automatic weapons like the Tommy gun with no objections from the SCOTUS. Indeed, back then the NRA represented hunters, in an era when perhaps more than half of Americans still depended on hunting to put meat on the table, and the NRA supported a ban on automatic weapons.

I find it telling that the so-called defenders of the 2nd Amendment never say anything about the 3rd Amendment. The two amendments were clearly linked to each other. Oh, the 3rd Amendment gives the federal government the right to house members of the well-regulated militia in private homes should the need arise.

At any rate, let it be known that LGBTQ+ youth are at the forefront of the fight to find real solutions to the violence that has permeated our society since Europeans first landed on the shores of the "New World."

As an aside and in response to the ignorant politicians who lambasted Emma González for wearing a patch of "a Communist flag" on her jacket at the March for Our Lives in Washington D.C., the Cuban flag was designed in 1859 and was officially adopted by the Cuban Republic on May 20, 1902. I can't speak for Cuban-Americans. Those I do know, however, do not consider the flag to be a "Communist" flag. They consider it to be the flag of Cuba no matter who holds the reins of power. So the frequent analogies with the Confederate battleflag I've read on right-wing blogs are specious.

- Speaking of Cuba, the remake of the TV series "One Day at a Time" has received wide acclaim. It stars Rita Moreno (who's been a film and TV star for some 60 years) as Lydia, the widowed grandmother who dreams of the Cuba of her youth, a Cuba which existed for very few people, still swooning over the young man who swept her off her feet in Havana decades before.

She was still in her teens when she came to the US, so she has learned English well enough to survive, although she still understandably prefers Spanish but can't really use it at home if she wants to communicate with her two grandchildren.

Justine Machado, as Penelope, is Lydia's daughter. She joined the U.S. Army as a nurse, and has served several tours in Iraq. Separated from her husband who used alcohol to try to deal with his PTSD, Penelope is a nurse-receptionist in a doctor's office and dreams of continuing her education. Penelope is the family's rock and its mediator. She simultaneously teaches her mother and her children about tolerance, even though she, too, occasionally slips back.

Teenaged daughter Elena (played by Isabella Gómez) is a 16-year-old nerd, a social justice activist, and a lesbian campaigning for LGBTQ rights and the environment and better pay for labor, all of which frightens her grandmother. At times Elena sounds too much like, well, Fidel. Lydia often is more comfortable with having a granddaughter who is a lesbian.

And there is Alex (portrayed by Manuel Ruíz), a very sensitive 'tween struggling to fit in (yes, he's a stereotypical gay, but my guess is, no he isn't gay, not every sensitive young man is gay), often ashamed of his mother and grandmother because they are too boisterous, too "Latino" when they come to watch him play baseball. Alex resorts to fisticuffs at school one day, leading Lydia to chastize him until he tells her why he was fighting: because another student kept calling him a Mexican with a derogatory tone. Then Lydia is all for fisticuffs. "We're Cuban, not Mexican!" she proclaims proudly. For about two seconds Penelope joins in her mother's nationalist rant before she realizes they are all being as intolerant as the very people they're condemning.

Then there is Todd Grinell as Schneider, the looney Canadian refugee living in L.A.! Did his wealthy Canadian father buy him an apartment complex in L.A. to keep him as far away from home as possible, or did Schneider flee to get away from a controlling father? At any rate, using his role as the apartment complex manager, Schneider interjects himself into the lives of Lydia, Penelope, Elena, and Alex. They're "his" family,

the family he never had. He even offers to give Elena Spanish lessons! Hey, for someone who started studying Spanish in his late 20s, his pronunciation isn't perfect, but it's far better than one this professor would expect.

Sure the comic series is idyllic. Leave aside that Lydia and Alex were born in Puerto Rico, and Penelope is the daughter of Puerto Ricans, and Elena was born in Colombia and came to the U.S. with her parents at the age of ten and, oh, the looney Schneider was born in Massachusetts, not Canada, the series deserves the accolades it has received from many sources, including an award from GLAAD. Still, has the series been whitewashed for American audiences? And then, just where in a predominantly white neighborhood in L.A. can a single mother working as a nurse-receptionist afford what is apparently a five-room apartment? I see them crowded into a two-room apartment in East L.A.

But, yes, *One Day at a Time* confronts daily issues that confront all immigrants and their children and grandchildren and, at the same time, are timely issues for many of us, and it's significant that it is Elena, the lesbian granddaughter, who raises these issues: a liveable wage for everyone, a commitment to fight for civil rights for everyone, a need to fight against global warming, the need to do more to help veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, especially in terms of mental and physical health services, the need to register and to vote.

With a commitment from Netflix, SONY Pictures is now filming the third season of "One Day at a Time."

If you will still be enrolled at a college or university next fall, please consider participating in the QF's Publication Awards competition (see next page). And encourage your LGBTQ+ friends and allies to participate as well. For the past two years we've not been able to award all scholarship funds available. We really need many more submissions.

Ray Verzasconi, Ph.D.
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Queer Foundation Publication Awards for Young Writers Call for Submissions

Submission Deadline: July 1, 2018

Eligibility: Any individual who will be enrolled as a sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate student at an accredited U.S. college or university for at least one term or semester during the 2018-19 academic year.

Submissions: Up to three pieces of original work that have not previously been published or submitted to the QF and based on a queer topic.

1. Original work may include scholarly essays, op-ed pieces, short fiction or drama.
2. No piece may exceed 2,500 words.

Scholarships: A limited number of scholarships in the amount of \$500, \$1,000 or more will be awarded to Publication Awards participants who previously participated in the Queer Foundation Effective English Essay Contest for High School Seniors or have been designated as QF Scholars.

Scholarships can only be paid to a student's Financial Aid Office at their U.S. college or university.

Publication: A jury of five scholars shall, individually, evaluate all submissions. Their composite ratings will determine which entries merit publication in *The Queer Foundation Scholar* and which will be awarded scholarships.

Send original work as an attachment to an email to rverzasconi@msn.com

Questions? Ray Verzasconi, editor, *The Queer Foundation Scholar*
rverzasconi@msn.com