



A QUEER GLOSSARY

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This queer glossary does not aim to provide the ultimate and fixed definitions.

In addressing queer issues from a personal and therefore outspokenly non-neutral perspective, it nevertheless leaves room for curiosity, interpretation, disagreement, and polymorphic images.

This glossary aims to be a tool to participate in conversations on queer issues, by providing a first encounter with the relevant terminology.

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ACTIVISM

is belief translated into action. It involves political and social engagement, usually in the form of grassroots movements. Gay activism could be seen as phenomenon originating in the United States, which can be categorized together with other kinds of civil rights activism: black activism, environmentalism, and so on, but this would be an expression of the Anglophone hegemony which exists in our imagination (see imperialism and homonationalism). Or could it be an objective historical view? Certainly the activist legacy of the Stonewall riots and combatting AIDS cannot be downplayed, despite its darker side. On the other hand, queer activism originated in the opposition to the assimilationist attitudes of mainstream gay activism and adopted a more confrontational and rebellious attitude, combatting binarism and normativity.

AGEISM

Old women are ugly, old bodies are unattractive, old people's sexuality is disgusting. These are examples of ageism that permeates society. But it could work the other way round as well. When are younger people discriminated against? And what are the intersections with other kinds of discrimination?

AGENCY

We are agents. We can act, engage, have a voice, have an impact. But we are also within a social structure that can impact us, shape us, limit us. Agency is the margin of freedom for individual or collective change and action within such structure.

ANDROGYNOUS

has a fascinating appeal. Ambiguity, beauty, youth, angel-like features are some of the key words historically associated with androgyny in Western art. Curiously, this same ambiguity often generates confusion and stigma when associated with intersexuality (or to a lesser extent with transsexuality).

APPROPRIATION

is a process in which someone outside a certain culture or social group uses the symbols or attributes of that group. Would you wear a traditional Sari as a fashion item? Would you wear a Sari as a fashion item when invited for dinner by a traditional Indian family (if you are not assumed to be Indian yourself)? The feeling of discomfort you would probably feel in that case is due to the fact that, whether consciously or unconsciously, you are engaging in cultural appropriation. Whether it is on a large or small scale, appropriation involves complex power relationships and the fetishization of the diverse, hence the objectification of the other. Appropriation can take place with gay culture as well, and remains a contentious topic. Should a straight leader of a big LGBT campaign be seen as a cultural appropriator or as a valuable ally?

ASEXUALITY

In a society pervaded by sexual images and revolving around sexuality, asexuals are misunderstood, isolated, erased, not taken seriously. Asexuality is not a disease or a synonym for celibacy or virginity. It is a sexual orientation characterized by different degrees of lack

of interest in sexual activity, or by the absence of sexual attraction to any partner, irrespective of gender. This is not always accompanied by an absence of romantic attraction, of kinky-ness, and many asexual people can still engage in romantic relationships. For example, a bi-romantic asexual is an asexual person who is romantically attracted to males and females.

ASSIMILATIONISM

(to a heterosexual standard) reflects the important difference between homosexual movements and queer ones. A policy of assimilation is aimed at presenting gay people as respectable members of society according to heterosexual standards, and aspires to the same civil rights and duties. It is an effective means to an end, which can include, for example, marriage and adoption. This is seen as controversial by many queer activists as it implies keeping a low profile and accepting the implicit rules and divisions of heterosexuality (monogamy, respectability) at the expense of queer characteristics and irregular identities (see homonormativity). The politics of assimilation may not be comfortable for non-vanilla sexualities or the promiscuous and rebellious aspects of LGBTQ sexualities. The politics of assimilation can undoubtedly be effective. My grandma wouldn't object to our polite middle class lesbian neighbours' right to marry, but might feel uncomfortable about the colorful trans Pride parade. However, are gay rights about convincing grandmas and achieving a gradual change in society or about challenging the concepts of respectability and social norms themselves? And are these positions really mutually exclusive anyway?

BI-CURIOUS

refers to a usually self-defined heterosexual person who is attracted to the idea of having some sort of same-sex sexual encounter (see questioning). I often hear that teenage girls who kiss their female friends at parties are seeking male attention and that this has nothing to do with questioning their sexuality. I often hear this from people who are not teenage girls kissing female friends at parties. But making claims about one's sexuality is not anyone else's business.

BINARISM

is the pervasive social division into opposites: male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, white and colored, and so on. Gender binarism makes the assumption that a person is either a man or a woman. Binarism continues to be omnipresent, despite awareness raising about gender as a social construct, discussions of intersexuality, and the increasing visibility of gender-queer people. When we are told stories about a new "friend" we have a hard time imagining this person if we don't know his or her gender. We lack the right pronouns, we are put in an awkward position. Binarism is present in IDs, forms to be completed, gendered toilets, in sports teams, medical files and stereotypes. Could and should binarism be replaced by different models to theorize about sex and gender? Is a spectrum model (in which there are "in-between" areas between the male/female polarities) more acceptable to non-binary people? Or should thinking in terms of binary and non-binary be completely rejected and replaced by a radically different model?

BISEXUALITY

is a sexual orientation. As obvious as this might seem, it cannot always be taken for granted. Stereotypes which discriminate against bisexual people come not only from heterosexuals, but also from the gay community, and could actually be a byproduct of society's binary view of sexuality. I have heard it said that bisexual people are indecisive, confused and greedy, but not necessarily more unfaithful or hypersexual. That they need to make up their minds. That if a bisexual woman marries a man she becomes heterosexual. That there are mathematical percentages of bisexual people (40%/60% or 50%/50%?) and that their sexuality can be a synonym for polygamy. All these beliefs are an expression of prejudice and discrimination. This is called biphobia, and really sucks.

BODY POLITICS

Body politics reflect the political importance of the body and has triggered the rebellion with regard to reclaiming the ownership of one's own body. To quote a 70s feminist slogan: "The personal is political". Rape, reproductive rights, contraceptive techniques, are issues where the body becomes a political arena. When queer bodies are oppressed, erased, controlled and medicalised through medical, political, and juridical intervention, we are witnessing body politics. Think of hormonal therapies, non-consensual surgery on intersex babies, and even the imperative of gendered clothing and socially prescribed, racialized beauty practices.

BUTCH

is the adjective used to describe a lesbian woman with masculine characteristics, either in clothing, behaviour or looks. Butch lesbians are not (necessarily) crossdressers or gender-queer, but may prefer a less stereotypically feminine style. In a lesbian couple composed of a butch partner and a femme, there is not "one who is the man and one who is the woman", as they are both lesbian women. It simply means there are two women. (see: femme, crossdresser, gender-queer).

CAMP

is just fabulous, sparkling, glittery, over the top, unashamedly kitsch.

CISGENDER

is the term used for majority of people in society who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. This does not mean that cisgender women, for example, are individuals who embrace femininity and the whole baggage of social expectations associated with the female condition. It simply means that cisgender women do not feel the need to question their inherent condition as women. For example, they do not consider their identity as being actually a male one, nor their sex as mismatching their gender.

CLOSET

Coming out of the closet: the closet can be seen as a symbol for non- disclosed sexuality, the opposite of being

out, for example, a closeted homosexual, a closeted lesbian. The closet is the symbol of non-acceptance, hidden desires, internalized shame, guilt, and fear. “Out of the closet, into the streets!” was an early gay activist slogan to promote visibility.

However such narratives often downplay or ignore everyone who is not out, as though the only right way to conduct a non-heterosexual life is the militant, brave out life. In many social contexts the closet can also be a private and safe space, a protection from violence and homophobia, and a place to avoid trauma. The closet is multidimensional and complex, and carries contrasting symbolic meanings.

COMMUNITY

What makes the gay community a community? Does the fact that people supposedly share the experience of questioning their sexuality and suffer episodes of difficulties and discrimination, negotiations, etc., mean that there are sufficient grounds for claiming that they form a community? There is no doubt that many people feel this sense of community, as the solidarity, common struggle, and on a lighter note, shared leisure facilities and meeting points are an important reality for many, and the term “gay (or lesbian, LGBT, etc.) community” is a common way of referring to homosexual people. However, it is important to consider who is excluded from this community and who is marginalized. Rural LGBT communities are rare or even non-existent. The so-called “scene” exists in cities and bigger centers, leaving the voices of those who do not have access to these large physical safe spaces unheard and unconsidered. However, web communities and

platforms are providing significant relief for this isolation of non-urban sexualities, and constitute a global virtual gay community, with the potential to improve gay lives on the one hand, and impose Western ideals, on the other.

CROSSDRESSING

is the act of dressing in clothes that are commonly recognized as being of the opposite gender. Crossdressing does not constitute an identity but is an act which translates the performativity of gender from theory into action. In this sense, crossdressing should be seen as the playful appropriation of the other gender through clothing, and does not necessarily have anything to do with sexual orientation or transsexuality. Anyone can crossdress or have the desire to cross-dress, and it can be used as a tool to acknowledge the theatrical nature of gender as performance in its most concrete sense.

DIVIDES

Social divides are transversal social divisions that separate people into groups and power relations. Examples are gender, sex, age, ability, race and ethnicity, class, sexual orientation. Are these naturally given or socially constructed? It is easier to acknowledge the nature of some social divisions as social constructs than others. Nowadays the scientific basis of racial divisions is considered obsolete, but when it comes to age and ability, for example, things become more complex. In the Western world, childhood has been recognized as a distinctive stage of human development, significantly different from adulthood, only since the late 18th century.

The social model of disability argues that it is the social environment that is tailored to the able bodied that means that some bodies are disabled. However, the presence of these divides is real and it has a real influence and impact on individuals' lives. For this reason, the argument that social divides are social constructs does not deny their existence, but it does to challenge the innate and legitimate character of these divides.

DISCRIMINATION

can take on many forms. Homophobia, racism, sexism, ageism, classism, etc. They are often interconnected in a confusing way and difficult to analyze separately (see: intersectionality). They are all forms of violence exercised by a dominant group which has power over a subordinate group, and using this definition, there can be no such thing as reverse discrimination. Reverse racism, reverse sexism, heterophobia, are hollow words, which do not take into account the underlying power relations in society and history.

There are different degrees of discrimination, from violence and structural inequality to micro-aggression, which can be linguistic, rhetorical, interpersonal and so on, and it is often the product of ignorance and misinformation.

The homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, misogyny..., discrimination experienced by queer people is multidimensional and comes from different quarters of the queer as well as the non-queer community. Gay people who deny the authenticity of bisexuals are discriminating. Lesbian families who do not want to see trans* people at the Pride are discriminating. The politics which aim at

extolling monogamy and respectability at the expense of poly-amorous queer sexualities are also discriminatory.

DRAG QUEEN

is the stage persona which a (usually male) person adopts to perform, with fabulously over-feminine sparkling clothing, make-up and accessories. Performing as a drag queen is not the same as being a transvestite. In fact, drag queens do not present themselves as men dressed as women, but as men dressed as drag queens! Drag queens have specific and particular style that is actually rarely seen worn by women anywhere. Therefore drag queens are performers, alter egos in the entertainment business, and can be the stage persona of a heterosexual man just as easily as of a homosexual men, and also of a woman (in which case is a faux queen). And let's not forget the royal counterparts, Drag Kings!

EMBODIMENT

of gendered and sexualized practices is the consequence of social expectations regarding the body. Gender-based ideals of beauty, of femininity and masculinity, of butch and femme, of camp and so on, are all supported by embodiment and result in embodiment. The embodiment of gender tricks us into accepting the innate character of gender divisions and diversity, as the subject of the gender seems to have physical differences, which can actually be seen merely as the consequence of constantly striving for social ideals.

ESSENTIALISM

is the theoretical orientation that explains certain phenomena by referring to the alleged essence and innate character of things. Essentialism goes hand in hand with reductionism and biological determinism, in the way that it sees social facts as having a magically intrinsic nature. Girls like to play with dolls and boys with cars because they are essentially different beings, with different hormonal levels and body structures. It is a giant leap of logic to assume that this will cause a preference for blue over pink (and vice versa), to a sexual preference for girls over boys, the desire for motherhood or for more sexual partners. Women are seen as being essentially caring, nurturing and prone to sacrifice, while boys are active, strong and have a high sexual drive. Can this essentialist view then partly shed light on why marital rape became illegal so late in many countries (in 1991 in the Netherlands)?

EXOTIFICATION

Exotification is the fetishization of the exotic, a pick-and-mix-(and-colonise) of the fairytale-like other, who is dehumanized, silenced and oppressed by such process. The charm of the exotic, this colonial daydream! And still, still, we are carrying its heritage. When the exotic, oriental, far away other is imagined, shaped and stereotyped through a Western (colonial) gaze, then the freedom for self-definition of the non-Western subject is lost.

FEMINISM

What a scary word! Is it about equal rights, or is it about man-hating, peculiarities of femaleness, political lesbianism, body hair, religion, abortion, and defeating gender barriers? Whose feminism is it anyway? Is feminism the feminism of black women? Of non-Western women, of women wearing a hijab? Is it the feminism of the porn stars and the sex workers? Is feminism trans* inclusive or is it about motherhood and reproduction? Whose feminism is your feminism?

FEMME

Lipstick, earrings, sparkle, heels, skirts. Fashionable and outspoken embrace to femninity. Is it for lesbians, is it for straight women, is it for non binary people, is it for men, is it for able bodies, is it for fat bodies, is it for everyone? It is. Femme beyond gender, femme beyond orientation, femme as fabulous.

FETISHIZATION

A fetish is a part that stands for the whole, an empty vessel. What does fetishization imply when meant as a way to relate to others? Is it when we like, appreciate, value of desire only a part, only an empty vessel of the “whole” other? When we reduce the other to only one characteristic, we are fetishizing them. But drawing the line might be tricky. If I am attracted to a non-able person only because of their disability, am I fetishizing them? If I am only finding attractive a Thai girl because of her “oriental” features, am I fetishizing her? If I only find desirable people with red hair, am I fetishizing them? If I

only find desirable people with a certain kind of genitals, am I fetishizing them? If I have am heterosexual, am I fetishizing the opposite gender?

FtM / MtF

These are commonly used acronyms to designate a transgender person who has respectively transitioned from female to male and from male to female: an FtM transgender person is a male, an MtF transgender person is a woman. N.B. It's about self-identification, not genitals!

FLUIDITY

What an amazing thing. Claim fluidity, claim it now, claim it unapologetically. Sexual fluidity is the notion that sexual identities are not fixed and are liable to change.

FUCK YOU

"Not gay as in happy, but queer as in fuck you". Queer activism and radical queer views have been associated with a confrontational attitude, especially compared to the mainstream LGBT's activism fighting for civil rights. A "fuck you" queer attitude emphasizes that queer activism is a long way away from the norms of straight monogamous and "respectable" society. If mainstream heterosexual society is playing a game with a set of rules, a radical queer attitude would not only refuse to play with those rules at the same table, but would probably toss away the rules, start dancing on the table and be thrown out of the party.

GAY

(in its contemporary use) is a recent term that came to designate homosexual people. A long list of words has been associated with homosexuality in history, including sodomy, buggery, unnatural sexual act, etc. What is peculiar in this terminology is that the use of the term homosexual or gay to designate the sexual identity of a person is recent. Historical terms such as sodomy and buggery certainly refer to homosexuality not as a characteristic but as an act; and notably a largely male act, hence erasing lesbianism. In ancient Rome and Greece male homosexual acts were a fundamental part of men's sexual life and development, but this does not mean that Romans and Greeks were homosexuals in the contemporary sense. In fact it is important to remember the historical and geographical significance of the words gay and homosexual. The specific nature of homosexuality or gayness as an identity-based concept is largely overlooked, when the current Western concept of homosexuality is held up as a paradigm.

GAZE

To gaze, to stare, to look. The gaze it's relational, it implies the other. The gaze can create the other, it's a process by which the Other is observed, conceptualised, imagined, desired, controlled. Second wave feminist Laura Mulvey introduced the concept of the male gaze, to designate the way in which women were portrayed in Hollywood movies, when men were behind the camera. The male gaze for Mulvey was patriarchal, objectifying, voyeuristic. It can be internalised by women, too, if and when they look at each other and themselves through men's eyes.

It can be argued that sexually provoking female models advertising bras and swimming costumes are an example of such internalisation. Why an advertisement targeted at

GENDER VERSUS SEX

Sex is the sum of the biological attributes that determine whether an individual is male or female. Sex can be determined by chromosomes, hormonal levels, genitals, gonads and so on. Gender is the social consequence of sex, i.e., whether one is considered to be a man or a woman in society. It has been widely argued that gender is a social construct and a performance, dependent both on arbitrary customs and distinctions perpetuated on a daily basis (different gendered names, clothing, behaviors, etc.). However, there is also a more controversial argument for sex being a social construct as well. In fact it is possible to consider a one-sex model (Laquer) or a whole spectrum of sexes, as opposed to the contemporary Western binary divide.

GENDERQUEER

is a term encompassing all gender identities that challenge, reject, refuse and go beyond gender binarism. A genderqueer person might identify as being neutral, as being male and female at the same time, as being male sometimes and female sometimes, as something beyond maleness or femaleness, or as someone who challenges binarism by refusing to play by its rules. The linguistic pronouns used to refer to a genderqueer person vary according to each person's preference and sensibility, but it is not uncommon in English to use

“them“. An androgynous look and bodily expression is not necessarily the expression of a genderqueer identity, just as a genderqueer identity does not necessarily imply an androgynous bodily presentation.

HERMAPHRODITISM

echoes the myth of “creatures” which possess both male and female genitals. Unlike intersexuality, which can reflect various conditions, hermaphroditism has more cultural weight than statistical significance. However, it is precisely the historical fascination that explains why this term is preferred by some intersexual people as a stronger description of their identity, although it is disliked and rejected by many others as being inaccurate or offensive. Hermaphroditism has been found to be a significant cultural element in different non-Western societies, such as the “guevedoches” in the Dominican Republic or the “Hijras” in India.

HETERONORMATIVITY

is a term used in a society in which heterosexuality is the dominant and normative sexuality. Heteronormativity is reinforced by the pervasive emphasis on heterosexuals in the media and daily life, and by silencing non-normative sexuality and making it invisible. Because of heteronormativity, failing to emphasize non-normative sexualities is not the same as neutrality, but often sustains heteronormativity itself. In other words, when sexuality is silenced, this does not imply that it is not relevant, but only that heterosexuality is implicitly assumed. Look around, heteronormativity everywhere.

HOMONATIONALISM

Jasbir Puar's term which reflects the imperialist Western attitude which assumes that all LGBTQ people comprise a sort of homogeneous population with the same (Western) needs and (Western) struggles. It makes sexual orientation appear as a sufficient basis for expressing political views. This goes hand in hand with Western powers (US) proclaiming themselves to be defenders of gay rights against oppressive non-Western powers. This, of course, ignoring the fact that often the oppression of LGBTQ people in non-Western countries is not (only) due to a sexually repressive State, but also involves colonial violence, capitalist pressure, globalized erasure of local identities. Moreover, homonationalism is linked to homonormativity, which implies an almost unilateral Anglo-European way of interpreting queer individuals, precisely because of their sexualities, and not much else.

HOMOPHOBIA

This ranges from institutionalized and legalized discrimination and persecution to gay bashing, from inappropriate jokes in the workplace to linguistic micro-aggression. Many queer people are facing homophobia on a daily basis, to different degrees. Homophobia has strong roots in powerful institutions such as the State and the Church; it is reflected in the dogmatic, legal and sacred importance given to reproductive sexuality; in the apparent naturalness of heterosexuality; in the notion of the traditional family. Since discrimination often comes from different directions, homophobia is often interlinked with sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

IDENTITY POLITICS

Gay identity politics imply a shared homosexual identity as the basis of claims and agendas. They can degenerate into essentialism, either consciously or unconsciously. In fact, from a strategic point of view, a "born this way" line of thought is politically more effective than a deconstructivist philosophical stance on sexual identity as being performative or a social construct. This means that identity politics are an efficient way of fighting for gay civil rights, but the price seems to be on the borderline of assimilationism and essentialism. Spivak developed the concept of "strategic essentialism" as a conscious embracing of essentialism and as a tool to promote the agenda of an oppressed group.

INTERSECTIONALITY

is a key concept when discussing power, privilege and oppression. For example, the theorist bell hooks wrote about the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" in her feminist discourses, to emphasize how power and oppression are always multidimensional and encompass different social divides. No one is ever solely a female, a person of color, a working class individual, or a lesbian. The oppression and discrimination that people are faced with do not operate in separate compartments, as though it is simply an arithmetical sum: sexism + racism + classism + homophobia. On the contrary, oppression is complex and has many layers, and the different factors cannot be considered individually. Similarly, a person can be privileged and oppressed at the same time: what about a white middle class gay disabled man or a Hispanic queer able-bodied young girl.

INTERSEXUALITY

Nothing about intersexuality seems to be certain: from its definitions to its frequency or terminology. Intersexuality is not necessarily a medical condition, although it is medicalized in our society. It disrupts sexual binarism and the neat social divisions between male and female bodies. Sex is related to several factors: chromosomes, hormones, genitals, gonads, and secondary traits. In a statistically significant number of cases, these characteristics are not aligned to a socially acceptable standard. Intersexual people do not necessarily have both male and female genitals. It is more common for there to be a mismatch between their various sexual attributes. Many intersex activists were outraged by the 2005 definition of intersexuality as a disorder and see it as the medicalization of a non-medical condition. Tragically, it was and still is common practice to perform sex-assignment surgery on intersex infants, who are clearly too young to give their consent. Since intersexuality rarely puts health at risk, many people see those operations as having a merely cosmetic character. However, given the prevalence and dominance of sexual binarism in society, many parents fear that their children could be socially excluded and marginalised, to the point that intersexuality is seen as a disease. It is unclear whether the “disease” lies in the intersexed body or in society’s body.

KINKY

sexual practices refer to sexual behavior that is considered to be outside the norm. Of course, this leaves untouched the issues of what the norm is, who gets to define it and what behavior is not included.

LESBIANISM

Lesbianism has been historically less officially sanctioned than male homosexuality. Could it be that a phallogentric and patriarchal focus has contributed to dismissing lesbian sexuality through history as being either non-existent or invalid? It is unimaginable, and therefore invisible, or fetishized, distorted and appropriated by the male gaze for the (heterosexual) male pleasure. Or: but how do you have sex without a man?

LGBT.....

Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender. Also found in the extended acronyms of LBGQTQ (queer), LGBTQI (intersex), LGBTQIA (asexual), and even in the possibly most inclusive acronym ever used: LGBTQQIP2SAA which includes a second Q for questioning (i.e., people currently questioning their sexual orientation, P for pansexual people, a second A for (straight) allies and 2S for two spirit people. 2S refers to Native Americans, whose culture believes that a masculine and feminine spirit can be present in one person simultaneously. However, it is legitimate to question whether inclusivity can be obtained through acronyms. When would this stretching and adding become meaningless, and even laughable and useless?

MONOGAMY

seems to be the moral high ground for the Love Relationship, to the point where, in today’s society, it is governed not only by uncontested moral values and religion, but also by the secular law. It has no direct link

with sexual orientation, but it is a point of discussion for queer and non-normative sexualities and lifestyles. There is indeed big resistance within the mainstream gay movement towards any attempt to dissociate from the comforting and reassuring image of monogamy, that surely facilitates a smooth inclusion in the heteronormative status quo. In the US and the UK there has recently been a debate about whether gay marriage was more of a right-wing cause than a left-wing cause, as it was aimed at portraying the traditional monogamous image of the family as a pillar of society, rather than challenging it with queer non-monogamous alternatives.

NORMATIVE

What is considered appropriate, normal and morally and socially correct. Normative behavior does not incur social sanctions and complies with the expectations of the social majority. Heterosexuality, monogamy, reproductive sexuality, a moderate sexual appetite (depending on your gender) are all normative sexual behavior. While the norm refers to common behavior, even if it is not clear-cut, the term normative implies a value judgment and a moral component, which makes normativity a battleground and a territory much more controversial than normality.

PANSEXUALITY

is a sexual orientation that, as the term implies, rejects gender and sexual binarism, assuming a potential sexual and romantic attraction to people of all genders (not only female/male), or to people irrespective of their gender. Pansexuality is a kind of protoqueerness, as it implies

a rejection of binarism, but still does not (necessarily) exclude other normative sexual practices or lifestyles.

PASSING

In a heteronormative context, passing as straight is common, unless otherwise stated. Passing, hence being assumed to be heterosexual (and cisgender) can take a psychological toll, comparable to hiding in a closet one does not necessarily want to be in. Unfortunately everytime passing takes place, people are pushed back into the closet. The former US “don’t ask don’t tell” military policy is a good example of passing being institutionalized and normalized, where erasure and invisibility become regulated. Bisexuals and people whose sexuality does not fall within the homosexual / heterosexual binary classification experience both sides of the passing phenomenon: they are often assumed to be homosexual when they are with a same sex partner. Sometimes passing is considered to be a desirable outcome, for example, in the trans* community. In fact, making an assumption about someone’s cisgender identity can sometimes be seen as a “success” for a trans person. However, there could be a problem related more to social transphobia than to gender identity: would passing as cisgender be desirable in a society where transphobia did not exist? Moreover, further questions arise when trying to understand the passing process: is the invisibility of sexual orientation as a social divide different from other visible divides such as race and age, viz. a condition in which passing is always disempowering and distressing? Can it be used as an empowering and strategic tool?

PATRIARCHY

is the all-encompassing social structure in which male privilege and dominance prevails. It is pervasive in virtually every culture and age, including the contemporary Western world. It is reflected in unequal pay; in the glass ceiling and walls which form barriers for women in the workplace; in sexual objectification of women in the media; in the suppression of male emotionality, in the socially accepted daily catcalls and street harassment; in small and large incidents which make gender and sexual binarism seem banal. From an intersectional perspective, patriarchy is linked to white supremacy, capitalism and heteronormativity, in which systems of oppression sustain each other.

PERFORMATIVITY

by queer philosopher Judith Butler. One does not have a gender, rather one does gender. Gender, as other parts of our identity, is actively performed, reiterated and normalised through our gestures, poses, interactions, daily activities. Gender is then a performance, and a doomed one, since it's an endless tension to an ideal that might never be reached.

PINK

is the color of the triangle which homosexual men had to wear in Nazi concentration camps. Lesbians were not persecuted as homosexuals, but were classified as being asocial (along with alcoholics, tramps and prostitutes) and had to wear a black triangle. However, remembrance of the homosexual victims of Nazism is always associated

with the pink triangle in the collective imagination, thus fixing invisibility (of homosexual victims) with new invisibilities (of lesbian victims).

PINK WASHING

How (right-wing) parties or other groups are adopting the gay crusade, mainly for their own benefit.

Pink washing practices are found wherever a political party, State, or group uses an LGBT cause in order to benefit from it and to conceal other sorts of human rights violations, intolerance or problem attitudes.

POLYAMORY

Loving more than one: yes you can. Key elements to polyamory are consent, communication, honesty, love. And no, it's not cheating.

Polyamory is regarded by some as a sexual orientation, but this does not mean that polyamorous people can't still identify themselves as being gay, lesbian, queer, straight, asexual, etc. Utopia or nightmare, polyamory is still highly stigmatized in the monogamous-oriented social scenario.

POST-PORNOGRAPHY

is activism through pornography. It is an alternative to the endless repetition of normative and binary bodies in male-stream porn. In fact, queer and non-normative bodies unapologetically reclaim the right to please and be pleased, to use their bodies in ways that protest against the aesthetics of commodified, conformed

and homogenized sex that saturates the mainstream pornography industry.

(Gay) PRIDE

(Gay) PRIDE is the parade to celebrate the gay and queer community and to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall riots. Through the years the various pride parades have changed from being rebellious and banned by the public authorities. They are now displays of appropriate behaviour and integration into civil society (even gay members of the police force form part of the parade).

The whole commodification and commercialisation of the Pride as a dystopian gay Disneyland, or the social sanctioning of the Pride as a tasteless display of private sexual inclination takes place between these two extremes. What remains of the political urge to make private matters public as a form of activism? What is considered acceptable and appropriate as a representation of the gay community? Is a parade of gay couples with children a better representation than a dancing group of dragqueens? Who is in charge of policing the image that is conveyed to society by the Pride? Is consumerist and souvenir-oriented participation in the Pride a modern day form of activism? How does this ethos differ in non-US or Western European Pride events?

PRIVILEGE

is hard to see when you benefit from it. Gay activism has been accused of ignoring privilege. How is that possible, since gay people are actually oppressed themselves? From an intersectional point of view, one can see how

white cisgender middle class males have historically made themselves more easily heard in the gay movement (see patriarchy and homonormativity). Acknowledging privilege does not mean erasing the oppression that is experienced (white gay men certainly do face homophobia on a daily basis), but amounts to understanding that this privilege can influence this fight against oppression, e.g., when making claims, putting forward theories or fighting for a cause. Separatist lesbian movements, queer black feminism, trans* activism, are just some of the examples of movements that by their mere existence reveal inherent positions of privilege in the mainstream gay and queer movements.

QUEER

Queer is fluid; rejects categories and heteronormative (and patriarchal) standards; unapologetically promotes non-normative sexualities; shows the flaws, contradictions and incongruencies in the heterosexual (and gay) fairytale. Queer is radical and challenging and questions norms. Queer is not gay, and gay is not queer: is a right-wing married homosexual queer? However, recently queer has come to be used as an umbrella term for LGBT sexualities, losing some of its political impact in favor of a politically correct and inclusive meaning.

QUESTIONING

is an essential part of sexual discovery, of the search for identity and pleasure. Questioning can be used both as a (transitional) identity category, and as a verb. Questioning does not necessarily have to lead to a definite conclusion,

but can be an ongoing state, for example, for those whose experience resonates with sexual fluidity.

RECLAIM

Words are power tools, but it is also possible to have power over words. Slut, dyke, queer, crip. Reclaiming and owning words can be seen as an act of (linguistic) resistance, also known as reappropriation.

SAME-SEX DESIRE

is a formal expression often used in academic contexts to describe homosexuality. It is particularly useful in a historical context. Most of the terms used nowadays to describe same sex desire are anachronistic and nonsensical when they are applied to the past. Referring to the Roman emperor Hadrian as a homosexual is incorrect. Despite being notoriously involved not only sexually but also sentimentally with males, and particularly with his young lover Antinous, “homosexual” is a modern term that refers to an identity which is not heterosexual, in a sort of binarism. This does not apply to Roman times, where heterosexuality and homosexuality were not binary concepts at all, and when the sex life of men often involved both in different times and social contexts.

SEX POSITIVE

is a (still debated) feminist point of view that celebrates sexual freedom and promotes the destigmatisation and reclaiming of areas traditionally linked to patriarchal oppression, such as prostitution and pornography. A sex

positive stance celebrates pleasure, ownership of one's sexual drive and desire, places consent at the core of any sex act.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

(versus sexuality). Sexual orientation refers to the people one is attracted to. In the popular (binary) view, heterosexuality and homosexuality are the main sexual orientations, sometimes also including bisexuality, pansexuality and asexuality. A queer stance towards sexuality often considers sexual orientation to be fluid and rejects such fixed categories. Sexuality, on the other hand, is a broad concept that only partially encompasses sexual orientation. Sexuality relates to the sphere in which sex is (or is not) acted, felt, desired, thought, theorized, performed, etc. A person's sexuality is related to their sexual practices, partners, inclinations, experiences, and a wealth of other considerations.

SITUATEDNESS

Knowledge is always situated in a particular place and those who are knowledgeable on a certain subject are inevitably individuals with a specific life experience and background. Personal experiences and beliefs influence a person's point of view about their knowledge of a certain matter and lead some people to claim that their views are more valid because of some personal connection with the matter concerned. This is often reflected in feminist and queer theory. Would your knowledge of concepts such as heteronormativity and patriarchy be different, depending on whether you were a trans* man or a cisgender woman?

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

is a theoretical orientation that challenges the natural and pre-determined origin of many social phenomena, seeing them as the product of cultural and social developments and negotiations. Social constructionism contrasts with the essential, reductive explanation of gender, sexuality, and sex, amongst other things. Seeing gender as a social construct means acknowledging that it is a product of centuries of gendered practices, imposed as part of socialization, both with a top-down approach (gender divisions perpetuated by an institutional, political and legal perspective) and with a bottom-up approach. It means it is not seen as an innate given. For gender divisions to be maintained the former implies the reiteration of this binarism on a daily basis with mundane codified attributes: from clothing to ways of sitting and walking, from color-coded accessories to conversational patterns. Acknowledging the performative nature of gender as a social construct is actually the basis for dismantling the innate nature of gender itself. "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", Simone de Beauvoir, 1949.

SPECTRUM

Sexuality is a spectrum. But what does this mean? The idea of spectrum contrasts commonly held binary assumptions of heterosexuality and homosexuality as the only options. One could argue that also a term such as bisexuality does nothing to challenge binarism, since it still implies a world divided into two genders. The spectrum model suggests that there is much more in between!

TOMBOY

refers to a girl with boyish looks or behavior, which clashes with stereotypically feminine gender-prescribed behavior. Exercise for thought: how could a tomboy image overlap with the image of motherhood and pregnancy?

TRANSGENDER

(versus Transsexual versus Transvestite) As the term suggests, a person who identifies as transgender emphasizes the change of gender, while a person who identifies as transsexual emphasizes the change of sex. Transgender people usually describe their condition/identity as a state in which their gender identity does not match their socially assigned gender. Transsexual people choose for interventions to change their sex to the one they identify with (not necessarily or only with surgery). On the other hand, the term transvestite refers to a person who (consistently) dresses in clothes that are typical of the opposite gender.

TRANSPHOBIA

is omnipresent and comes as much from mainstream society as from the gay community. From trans exclusionary radical feminism (terf) to the common, unsanctioned use of offensive words such as "tranny" or "shemale", to the erasure and invisibility of FtM people, transphobia is still a form of discrimination that attracts very few social sanctions. Mundane situations can be very stressful for transgender people who have not undergone sex or gender reassignment, or for transitioning people: for example, when they have to tick F or M boxes in

documents, when entering toilets and changing rooms.
Gender binarism seems then unavoidable and identity is constantly challenged and questioned.

VISIBILITY

What is visibility? Who is visible? Being visible means being seen, being heard, being represented. Visibility means being known, being out there, being acknowledged, being part of the game, part of society. Being visible means existing.

There is another side to visibility. Being visible is also a

YOU

Are you sure you're not a little bit queer, too?

A complex, abstract collage artwork. The central focus is a large, stylized face with a wide, open mouth, rendered in a dark, almost black color. Surrounding this central face are various smaller images and elements. On the left side, there is a vertical strip containing several car models, each labeled with its brand name: 'JEEP', 'MERCEDES', 'BMW', and 'RENAULT'. Above this strip, the text 'AFTER GLOSSAR' is written in a bold, pink, sans-serif font. The background is a mix of dark, swirling colors and textures, with various other images and elements scattered throughout, including a person's face, a building, and a car. The overall style is highly abstract and surreal.