

Script

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INTRODUCTION - 1 MINUTE

My global issue is how portrayals of LGBTQ+ people can either perpetuate or challenge harmful stereotypes of the LGBTQ+ community, focusing on Guadagnino's, *Call Me by Your Name* and Yoshimoto's, *Kitchen*.

Many queer characters in today's media are either written by non-queer writers or sanitised for mainstream heterosexual audiences, creating only a reflection of queer people as imagined by heterosexual audiences. Worse, some representation perpetuate negative stereotypes, such as portraying queer people as promiscuous, trans characters as sex workers, and the trope of 'bury your gays', where queer characters' only function is to suffer and die, giving motivation to a heterosexual protagonist.

Although both texts explore ideas about identity and acceptance within society as a queer person, CMBYN challenges negative stereotypes by using a tracking shot to increase empathy with Elio's perspective, whereas *Kitchen* denies us intimate access to Eriko instead focusing on Mikage's narrative perspective.

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KITCHEN - 4 MINUTES

Kitchen's Eriko - a transgender woman - is presented as overly-sexualised, otherworldly to the point of othering and a force of light and life in this extract and in the wider novel. Here, Yoshimoto focuses first on Eriko's physical appearance, with a semantic field of otherworldly beauty with phrases such as 'incredibly beautiful', 'hair like silk', and the 'deep sparkle' of her eyes. This may not be damning as perpetuating harmful stereotypes, but then consider that Eriko is also wears (quote) 'dramatic makeup', a 'red dress', 'high heels' and undertakes 'night work', thus coding her as both hyperfeminine but also promiscuous, aligning her with stereotype of transgender women as sex workers without ever in the novel exploring WHY Eriko has chosen this profession - Has her gender identity made it difficult for her to be accepted into a more mainstream job in the homogenous society of 1980s Japan? As a reader limited to only Mikage's first person narrative perspective (who never asks these questions), we are left with a shallow impression of Eriko that is largely formed by these transphobic and harmful stereotypes.

This leads to Eriko being dehumanised by her beauty. In this extract, it says that (quote) 'she didn't look human' and that Mikage had 'never seen anyone like her'. Whilst it could be read that these phrases are only symbolic of the special role that Eriko has in healing Mikage's grief, they could also show Eriko as the Other, inhuman, unknowable and only seen at night time on the outskirts of society in 'gay bars' rather than in the bustle of mainstream Tokyo, preventing the reader from ever truly empathising with her as a result of this distance, unlike Elio with whom the viewer is encouraged to understand as a complex character despite the fact that like Eriko he is shown to be a sexual being. However, it could also be argued that Eriko is clearly presented as a force for hope and goodness, shown by the use of light imagery in this extract, quote, 'there was a warm light, her afterimage, softly glowing in my heart'. Indeed, this is a motif that is repeated throughout the novel, such as after Eriko's death when Mikage's final reflection is that 'Eriko had been the dazzling light that lit the place'. This association of Eriko with light could actually challenge negative perceptions of trans characters, as it might accept the reality that trans people are often on the margins of society yet have much light, hope and vitality to offer the world - and so Yoshimoto could be being quite progressive for her time. Nonetheless, the focus is still on the impact Eriko has on Mikage rather than exploring her as a character in her own right, thus she becomes just an 'afterimage' to the reader too, a side character whose only role is to heal the heterosexual protagonist and then die.

[Alternative](#)

ELSEWHERE

When we consider how Eriko is represented throughout the novel, we see that Yoshimoto continues to other Eriko and undermine her gender identity. For example, upon learning of Eriko's transition both Mikage and Yuichi begin to use male pronouns and Mikage refers to 'Eriko-san' using speech marks, as though to imply that this is not her true name, thus undermining her identity. Not only this, but *Kitchen*

also plays into the **Bury Your Gays trope**, with Eriko abruptly dying at the start of chapter 2, with no hint of tension prior that her murder was a possibility, only learning that **'Eriko died in the late autumn'** as a **short, declarative sentence** with no expansion, presenting her death as matter of fact, even to be expected. This death serves only for Yoshimoto to explore the emotional impact on Yuichi and Mikage but never to truly examine how society systematically inflicts violence upon transgender people. In some ways Eriko is even blamed for her own death, as her murder occurred because the killers was **'shocked to learn she was a man'**. Here this plays into the **stereotype as trans women** as being deceptive, hiding their supposed true identity, in order to entice unwitting straight men into bed with them. However also note that **Mikage's narration** reinforces the idea that Eriko ultimately **'was a man'**, undermining her gender even after her murder. This is also **echoed** by Yuichi, when, after learning Eriko has died says, quote, **'my mother, or, uh, should i say my father was killed'**. Now dead and unable to speak for herself, Eriko's gender identity is undermined and **negative stereotypes perpetuated**.

CMBYN - 4 MINUTES

Conversely Call Me By Your Name allows us a greater understanding and empathy for Elio as the protagonist of the film and therefore allows us to explore the challenges he faces, such as being unable to speak freely about his love for Oliver in this extract.

This scene is shot by a **steady cam** and is a **single long take**, positioning the audience as a sympathetic viewer brought into this scene, allowing us to see Elio especially as a real person with complexities **rather than a 2D stereotype of a queer man**.

The **establishing long shot** situates the pair in the middle of a small Italian town, which is why their feelings must be spoken about in coded language lest others overhear. The use of **diegetic sound**, of buses and people, interrupt this scene to remind us of the outside world's expectations. Then shifting to a **tracking shot** filmed on a **steady cam**, the camera **pans** to follow Elio, thus suturing the viewer to his perspective and increasing empathy, so that when Elio hints to Oliver **'I wanted you to know' about his feelings**, the viewer is located behind Elio's head looking at Oliver from far away, distant, unreadable, and increasing our anxiety along with Elio's as we await his response. As Oliver moves behind the monument out of Elio's view and thus our view too, the viewer is left only with Elio and **non-diegetic** sound of dreamlike music begins but is interrupted by the sound of a bus - the outside world once again snapping them back to reality, preventing them from openly declaring their love. Elio and Oliver then reconvene in a **long shot**, both wearing sunglasses, we see how difficult it is for them to literally see eye-to-eye and express their emotions openly, with Oliver saying **'I'm going to pretend you never'** spoke, here the camera is at **eye level**, emphasising the difference in stature to **symbolise** Elio's diminished position after having confessed his feelings. Notably twice in this scene, the camera **pans** up and away from Elio, once to a war memorial and once to a church, with both the institutions of the church and army representing notions traditional masculinity that **constrain queer men**, their unattainability emphasised by this **high angle**, yet the viewer is **encouraged to challenge these stereotypes and restrictions**, especially since Elio is **coded** both sympathetically but also as a handsome **male lead**, for example the close up shot of Elio blowing smoke, which aligns him with Hollywood icons of the past, such as Marlon Brando or Humphrey Bogart. *Alternatively, as this shot shows Elio's eyes hidden by sunglasses and his face masked by smoke, implying how Elio must conceal his true self in order to be blend in.*

Alternative

ELSEWHERE

Elsewhere the **film acknowledges homophobic stereotypes** and how these cause Elio to internalise homophobia himself, such when an older gay couple causing Elio to become uncomfortable and is said to call them **'Sonny and Cher behind their backs'**. His dad challenges these attitudes, saying **'you're too old not to accept people for who they are'**. Since this scene is **shot** from behind Elio with him **out of focus** and his dad in focus, the viewer is once again placed in Elio's perspective as we are also lectured by Elio's dad and challenged to face our own prejudices. Furthermore, throughout the film we see **images** of nature such as the peach, the lake, the meadow and plants associated with Oliver and Elio's relationship suggesting that their love is as natural as their surroundings. **Likewise, Kitchen also uses** imagery of plants and food throughout to suggest that bonds between people require effort and **nourishment**, yet Kitchen's focus is on familial bonds whereas CMBYN uses this imagery to tackle **homophobic beliefs of deviant or unnatural sexuality head-on**. This message is emphasised at the end of the film when Elio's father admits he knew of their relationship, saying **'Nature has cunning ways of finding our weakest spot'**, **personifying** nature as something unavoidable, just as Elio's love for Oliver was. The final scene of Call Me By Your Name is a **close up long take** of Elio crying next to a fire place, **breaking the fourth wall** by glancing at the camera with a soft smile, implying his happiness at this sadness - and thus universalising his experience: queer or not, this is a coming-age-story of **first love**. By

humanising Elio in this way and showing us that we are all more alike than different and challenging stereotypes towards the queer community.

CONCLUSION - 1 MINUTE

It is vital to call out stereotypes of queer people where ever we see them in order to create a more just and equal society. Not all representation is positive but both texts can open a dialogue about how we represent queer communities in our media. Where CMBYN universalises Elio, Kitchen others Eriko as inhuman and unknowable. These texts were produced with a thirty year gap and so this could go some way to explaining the less nuanced view of Eriko and perhaps had she been written today there might have been more exploration of her backstory, motivations and commentary around her brutal murder.