

Isabella Harris

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**“Give It A Good Title”: Freddie Mercury, Grunge, & Everything In Between**

On my *Spotify* playlist and pinterest boards for *Here, There, & Everywhere In Between* I wrote in the description box “nostalgia for a time in the before. a script.” Descriptions for these two items are not entirely necessary, in fact, most people opt to leave those sections blank but I chose to write *those* words. I wrote them because I wanted to remind myself of my motives for this narrative everytime I worked and in a medium that is intended to be visual for a story centered on music, what better place to carve my intentions as a reminder than into the inspiring playlist and collage.

These intentions came from a very personal place for me as I am known to miss people before they are gone, and even those I have never met, simply because I won’t know them in what I call “their before.” Before they became what they are and who they are as *I* know them. What seemingly mundane moments would become core memories? What fleeting moments made up who they are? Writing *Here, There, & Everywhere In Between* was about finding these characters’ fleeting moments and immortalizing them. With finishing this project I’ve discovered that I thrive, almost entirely, on characters’ relationships with themselves and others as well as their environment. To do this though, I first had to *understand* those relationships.

From the conception of this project I felt as if I was playing with fire. The 90s are not a time so distant that we remain uninfluenced by them which, though exciting, left me with an

anxiously small margin for error. I knew I had to have the details of this story and the characters within it settled and secure before I could move forward with anything else. That included not only turning in the playlists, inspiration boards, and treatments for evaluation but also being able to defend every action taken in the creation of this work. This was all to answer the greater question of: why? Why does this setting have more exigence than another? Why this story? Why these characters? All ultimately leading to the question: why was *I* doing this?

Which leads me into my next point. I spoke about this in my presentation but, why the 90s? Why this story? The answer comes from the fact I have always been deeply in love with the artistry that is involved with creating music and as a person in the LGBTQ+ community I found myself gravitating towards historically queer musicians. Bikini Kill, David Bowie, Kirk Hammet, Billie Joe Armstrong, and the catalyst for *my* story, Freddie Mercury. All famously queer musicians that proved my point; queer people *were* here in the music scene as well as everywhere else. So, when looking for a setting, I was looking for a city I was comfortable that I knew enough about it as well as having active queer *and* music communities. In my research, I found that the oldest gay club in the country, The Double Header, had its home in Seattle. Given this information as well as Seattle's grunge scene and active chapter of ACT UP, I knew that it would have to be there. The Double Header unfortunately closed down in 2015, but because it was known as a safe haven for the local queer population it was imperative that it make an appearance in the script:

She reaches one that reads The Double Header in bright blue font.

ANGEL

That one's my favorite.

JULIETA

Where'd you get it?

ANGEL (SMIRKING)

Let's go with my friend Dorothy gave it  
to me.

Seattle was home to an exploding grunge scene throughout the 90s and because I wanted the characters in this story to be indivisible from the music that surrounds them, I chose the 90s. With the music scene came the queer scene and with the time period of both, the AIDS epidemic suddenly became inextricable from the story. This realization was anxiety inducing. The AIDS epidemic was traumatic for an entire generation and my own mother lost someone because of it. I had told myself time and time again that this would not be a story that included trauma and in my mind, this would become the written equivalent of Candy Land for my queer characters. It wasn't until I spoke with Dr. Barron, head of the Women & Gender Studies Department, quite a bit before and after the Queer Art & Activism classes I took with her. One conversation shifted my view on what I was writing. While we spoke, I made a passing comment about being exhausted and angry at seeing continuous trauma during queer stories. At the time I was referring to "bury your gays" (ie. Lexa's instant assassination after confessing her love to a woman, Clarke, or Castiel's immediate sentence to Hell after confessing his love to Dean) but I hadn't realized that my narrow view of trauma was limiting to the activism side of the stories I was telling until Dr. Barron asked: how do we give an accurate picture of history without the trauma?

I subscribe to the idea that activism is art and art can be activism and in my research I found signs of that the deeper I looked. Among several demonstrations and die-ins I found several sources depicting art during and after the AIDS epidemic as portrayed by the loved ones. I found an artwork that persisted in my mind named *Untitled (A Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*. It is a display made by Felix González-Torres that is entirely made from individually wrapped candies that all together weigh 175 lbs exactly. The weight of González-Torres' lover, Ross, when he was healthy before passing from AIDS complications. Viewers are encouraged to take a piece of the

candy from the work. I bring this up because after my conversation with Dr. Barron, I refused to be the viewer who takes the candy and doesn't look back. Taking the sacrifices of people who are no longer here and never considering who it reflects. I never knew González-Torres or Ross but I think about them and their influence quite a bit; art, artist, and lover. I never knew these people and yet I miss them, in fact, I miss the entire generation of queer people that was lost and it was through this research and this connection with past queer communities that I was now adamant about not erasing *anything* of cultural or historical significance.

I said I didn't want my script to be about trauma and yet I chose to end the episode with the death of Freddie Mercury. It is meant to be painful. A small reminder of the lives lost too soon but it isn't meant to cut anyone down at the knees. This impacts the characters as they are queer 20-somethings in the music scene but it is not the end of their story, in fact, it propels them forward to find their own joy. Structurally it sets up the rest of the season as a catalytic event to sway the characters in one way or another but, at the heart of it, it is at the end because it is the *first* episode. The continuation of the season and of the show bears the hope for all the life the characters will continue living as a community. This script is for the generation of queer people that could have been and still are. It was going to be a love letter to survival and an ode to love and growth.

Focusing on growth as a central theme lands this piece directly in the genre Coming of Age. These are young characters in a new phase of their life, navigating problems, and finding their places. It was a textbook example of "coming of age." I let it rest in that genre for a bit as I wrote the preliminary stages but when I laid out the pieces I realized it didn't quite fit the genre anymore. The coming of age genre remains severely lacking in terms of good representation both on television and on film. The thematic appeal of the genre was still at the heart of my work but

my cast no longer fit the typical character list an audience is used to seeing. Julieta is a Latin bisexual woman. Angel is a gay drag queen. Elliot is a genderqueer black person. Jude is a bisexual Asian man who fronted a rock band. Laci is a masculine presenting lesbian. Noah is an unlabeled queer black man. Once I realized this fact, I no longer wanted it labeled as a “coming of age” if only because I wanted it to carve a place of its own. I wanted it to be the cinematic beauty of *Perks of Being a Wallflower* but allow for the humor and historical mixing of *Derry Girls* while remaining its own and because of that I was able to get lines like this to bring in humor:

ANGEL

I can't force you obviously.

JULIETA

I don't know if it's my scene...

Angel calls the name again.

ANGEL

Then don't go.

JULIETA

It's not that I don't want to it's just-

Angel leans over the counter to be heard over the entire shop.

ANGEL (YELLING)

Jesus Christ- LATTE FOR MARK FINAL CALL  
OR I'M DRINKING YOUR SHIT MYSELF!

As well as moments that showcase the love and freedom finding yourself allows you in scenes like this:

The sound of people running reaches Julieta's ears. Her eyes widen and she speeds up to follow after Elliot. As the distant sirens grow closer the trio's steps speed up into a hasty walk, then to a jog, and finally to a run.

Angel hops a fence first and Julieta laughs as the rip in his jeans catches on the chainlink. It feels weird to laugh when the red and blue is reflected on the metal. Angel rolls his eyes at her when he finally lands.

Elliot goes next and then Julieta. They sprint down the small field and the music swells. Angel whoops loudly and everything feels less scary.

With the genre, or lack thereof, decided, there came a new-found comfort with writing the characters and their stories. The subtle things like Laci's carabiner, the drag queens on the bus that I have plans for in future episodes, or even Angel's array of taped matchbooks, all brought significance to moments that are otherwise mundane. The characters exploded and became their own entities with memories I continue to discover the more I write.

I wrote this story because as a queer Latin woman, I felt like I hadn't seen much of myself in that way. The idea was for myself, as many things begin, but as it unraveled I discovered that it wasn't *just* me that felt this way. Marginalized communities deserve to be seen for who they are on screen in a way that doesn't only highlight the hurt of their communities. Trauma exists in every life but the continuation of the monetization of that pain is when the systemic issue arises. What are we pushing if we only allow for these communities to see themselves in pain? What are we showing the people who aren't in those communities?

I named this paper "Give It A Good Title" because good writing leaves a legacy beyond just the title. I am not so vain as to think my work has reached that status yet but if the audience is willing to take away nothing else but the title, I want it to have a good one, or at least a representative one. *Here, There, & Everywhere In Between* is the representation of the beautifully confusing lives of queer people in every facet they exist in as well as the in between parts of life we never want to forget. Queer joy must exist in our media *alongside* the pain or else we are not telling a story of a life, we are telling the story of how it ended. I wrote at the beginning of this

paper that I write for the fleeting moments and I find joy in knowing there are so many out there, for myself, for everyone (queer or not), and for Julieta, Angel, Elliot, Jude, Laci, and Noah, and any other character not yet written.