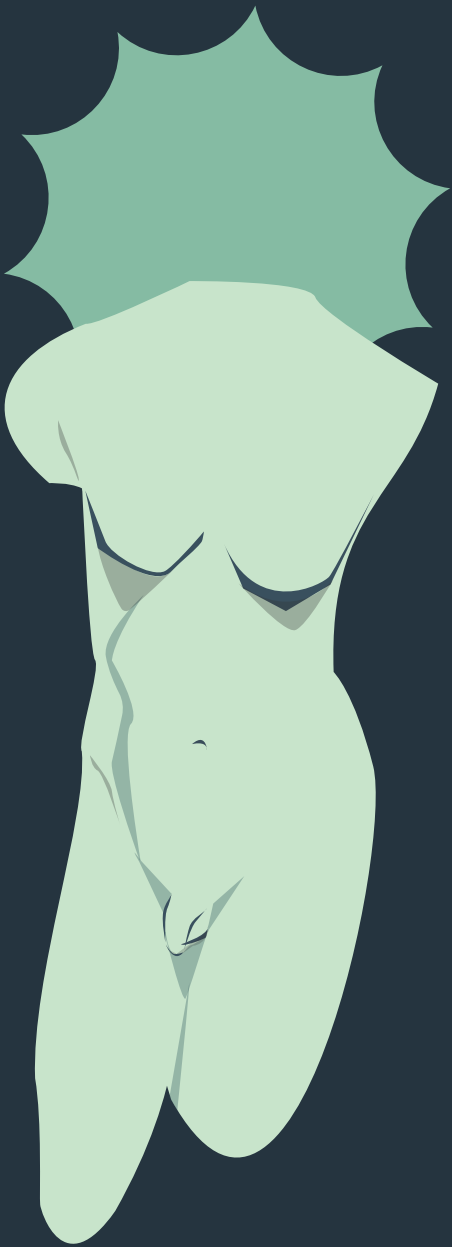


# Queer Etymology

by Amelia Motino



Everyday we look for more and more ways to label both ourselves and communities of people. Of course, it's difficult for terms, especially new ones, to stay the way they are, some are left for their outdated ways, and others barely make their mark in the world. Sometimes, those words we've seen used over and over are adapted and changed as time goes on. Each meaning different in the eye of the beholder, or even in the eye of the community. Parts taken and reused, remade into something understandable to the person who holds it.

Looking back to old terms, we can find how the people before us did the same in hopes of finding an understanding. One of these terms, coined by ancient Greek artist traditions is, ANASYRMA. This was a practice most seen in sculptures, where the figure would reveal their buttocks or genitals to the viewer, this practice was seen commonly in the statue of Hermaphroditus, the child between Hermes and Aphrodite. They possessed both male and female sex characteristics.

Gods were meant to aid humanity in understanding the complex nature of their world, even some depictions of Aphrodite, who in modern times is seen as feminine beauty, often worship her in a more masculine form. Today, we've depersonalized the statues of Hermaphroditus into that of "a hermaphrodite". There is a sense of grief and comfort in seeing how statues and people from ancient times tackled gender and sexuality, knowing that people before us hoped to understand themselves and others. Even when history has been twisted to hide them away, or knowing that queer people still faced challenges back then, it still connects us, knowing that people have never once stopped and given up in depicting themselves how they wished to be seen. To see anasyrma is to see the queer body in all its beauty, to become a witness to the life and complexity that people and the world are.

Delving into topics and terms more used to oppress and harm, we see another term being made to fit into queer spaces. MONSTERS are something we are told to fear, to look out for, they are what famously make up the Horror genre in media. In this binary, we are told there is a hero that will win, that will defeat the evil that the monster has brought upon the world. However, when looking past the veil, we can see how this becomes a matter of perspective. Famously, we see Godzilla, this country-ending threat, be defeated time and time again, face off different monstrous foes as well, however, it has deeper messages in it's destruction. Godzilla is meant to represent the harm humanity has brought upon the world through nuclear war, climate change, and general destructive nature. Godzilla was birthed from the damage humanity has brought on itself, and this message remains true even now in modern depictions.

Let's take a look at more classic monsters, werewolves (and others like vampires), have deep roots in queerness that spread all over human mythology and folk stories. These

beasts are ravenous men turned wolves, raging against the world for the violence that has been brought onto their own bodies. While there are many depictions and themes in these monster, we see a common element, fighting against a nature that was always present.

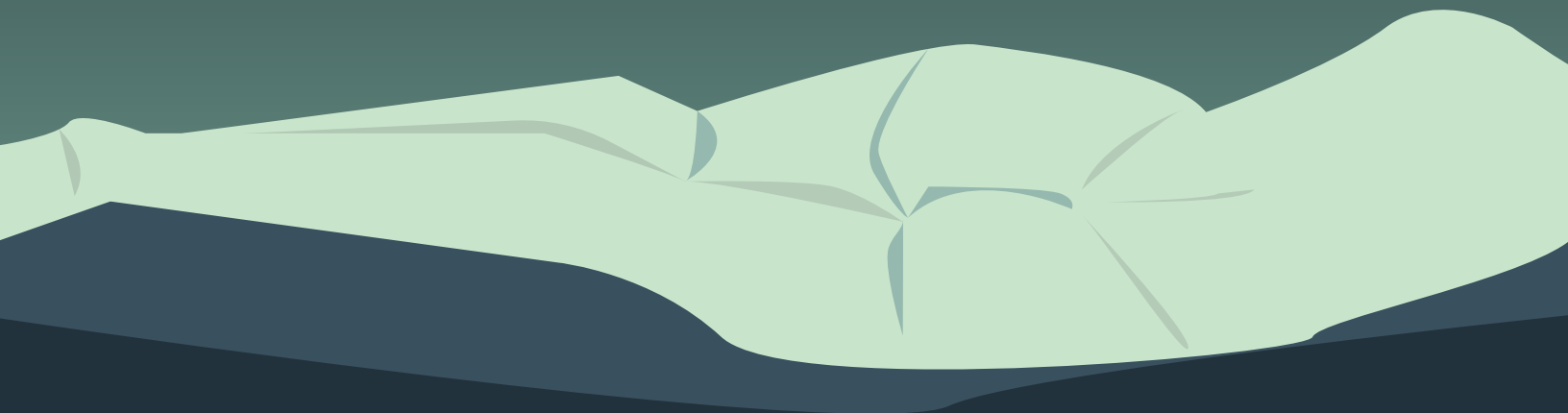
Werewolves face a constant battle, against both the world and the self, all for the crime of existing. When the world shuns, humilates, and harms those who are "unnatural" in their eyes, forcing them into costumes that they expect them to be. Yet, to accept these expectations means turning against the self, the werewolf's dilemma makes us rebel against the world, viciously tearing off those costumes. This battle only has one end, for the world to accept the monster 's existence and learn to live with it.



With a norm so stagnant and set in it's way by the people who created it, queer people and spaces are forced to break out of it and disrupt it. We are seen as problems to those who want to keep the normalcy they set, but we are constantly trying to find and make a space where we are allowed to exist in peace and comfort. With how often people learned knew things about the world, we find ourselves hoping for the day that the complexity will be understood by everyone.

This is where etymology and the words we use come into play, from the dawn of civilization to now, we find ways to associate words and create new ones to queerness. There will always be words rooted in oppression and hatred for what can't be understood, and these words must not be forgotten for they are what makes up our history. To forget about them means to forget about the struggles the people before us have faced. Looking now, we can see how certain terms grow and change from the way people today use them everyday or online. They grow and adapt alongside humanity. Despite the notion that queerness is something not born of this world, we see how nature proves that notion wrong time and time again.

Just like how terms in ecology and other sciences help us understand the framework and intricacies of the world, queer etymology helps us find our place in this beautiful tapestry weaved together.



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