David Diaz

Dr. Kurt Buhanan

Humanities Core

27 May 2024

Queer Worldmaking in *Steven Universe*

The relationship between queerness and the media has historically been a hotly debated issue. While more recently, queerness has become more common within the space, its inclusion has frequently elicited backlash and censorship. For instance, great efforts have been spent trying to remove “queerness from the public view…”, ultimately marking it as “deviant” behavior (Kohnen 15). As Melanie Kohnen emphasizes, this censorship stems from queerness being understood as something “wrong”, unorthodox, and perverted. In fact, up to 1973, queer people were declared insane by the American Psychiatric Association (Carilli xi). This discrimination became even more prevalent with the rise of the AIDS epidemic, whereby it was associated as a “gay disease”, with those who didn’t conform to heterosexuality—those “associated with non-normative lifestyles”—identified as the cause, and hence labeled as dangerous “risk groups” (Kohnen 75). As scholar Meredith Worthen elaborates, our society is built on a system of stigma that they define as "norm-centered", in which there are two distinct groups: norm-violators and norm-conformers. These norms are “established standards and expectations about beliefs, behaviors, and expectations maintained by a group or society” (Worthen 10). Those who conform are granted acceptance, alongside social power and privilege, while those who defy the beaten path are subject to societal stigma (Worthen 10). This theory helps to explain why queerness has been responded to so negatively; queerness is understood as a deviation from the

norm, in this case, heteronormativity. Queer people express themselves—through their gender identity and sexuality—in ways that defy and conflict with societal expectations.

Often, the perpetuation of this stigma stems from a lack of connection between norm-violating, or queer, groups and the larger norm-conforming group. Generally, queer communities are seen as fundamentally different from "normal society", and in turn vilified because "difference is threatening, especially to individuals who do not have the opportunity to meet people with backgrounds and beliefs that are different from their own" (Carilli xii). Media offers a bridge for this disconnect, allowing the "cultural expression of all people" and their representation as "human beings with dreams and conflicts" (Carilli xii). Including queer themes and characters in common media, works towards closing these gaps in understanding, demystifying differences, and reducing "hatred and intolerance" (Carilli xii). By including queerness in everyday entertainment, we can challenge the concept of "normalness" and queer expectations regarding gender and sexuality, constructing a queerer future in the process.

The genre of science fiction is especially suited for this purpose. Science fiction authors "destabilize well-established categories and either render them meaningless or suggest that they must be understood differently" (Kurowicka 73). The genre serves as "fruitful ground for thinking through queer desires and gender identities" because of how it "defamiliarizes" notions of straightness portraying worlds where queerness is standard and straightness is an oddity (Kurowicka 72). In other words, science fiction can reimagine commonly accepted heteronormativity, displacing us from reality and allowing us to view a queerer world.

The cartoon television show *Steven Universe* participates in this type of science fictional defamiliarization. The cartoon's plot revolves around the main protagonist, Steven, and his non-traditional alien family of Garnet, Amethyst, and Pearl, who rebel against their home planet,

fight monsters, and protect the human race. The show's science fictional elements become apparent through these protagonists, sentient rock beings that take human-like forms through light-generated bodies. These alien Gems are capable of incredible feats, such as completely changing forms, summoning weapons, and even combining with one another through fusion. However, the rebel Gems of Earth, through their unorthodox lifestyle and use of these abilities, defy their home society's expectations and standards. As a result of these science fictional elements, *Steven Universe* presents fundamentally queer concepts and practices, which realize the construction of a queer utopia in the show's version of Earth, giving us insight into how to do so in the real world.

To preface, a queer utopia is the concept of a place where LGBTQ individuals can freely express themselves. However, there are various interpretations on how to define this place, and how to reach it. For instance, scholars such as Bruce E. Drushel share a pessimistic view of queer utopias, defining them as an unreachable community of LGBTQ individuals, created for the sake of protection from a hostile world. The ideal version of this community, referred to as paradise, is "thought to…no longer exist", living as both "paradise lost" or "paradise hoped to be found" (Drushel 13). Scholars such as Mandy Elizabeth Moore describe queer utopia as "a better world in which love, acceptance, and playful fluidity are the norm" (Moore 3). Moore's conception highlights how queer utopian communities can be achieved through active effort, while Drushel's view focuses on locating these pre-existing communities. Anna Kurowicka offers a more science-fictional approach to queer utopias, describing how the genre of science fiction can imagine functional worlds whereby queerness is normalized and celebrated, raising "significant questions about how alternate sex and gender systems might change society as a whole" (Kurowicka 74). What all these definitions share in common is a view of a future space where

queer individuals overcome the societal stigma of their identity. *Steven Universe* realizes this kind of space, while also exhibiting the active spatial construction that Moore describes as necessary to create a queer utopia. The main characters of the series, the Crystal Gems, defy the roles that were set by their home society, choosing to engage in unorthodox forms of expression—intimacy, shapeshifting, and fusion—which are strictly prohibited in Homeworld. In doing so, the characters actively work to create a space on Earth where queerness is the norm, constructing a queer utopia.

Firstly, the societal rigidity of Gem society estranges us from heteronormativity, and the deviation by the rebel Gems works toward a queer utopia on Earth by demonstrating an alternate way of living. This is specifically shown through the character development of Pearl and Rose, as they navigate through the beauty of Earth in the episode "Now We're Only Falling Apart". Rose and Pearl are Gems from the alien Homeworld, who originally came to Earth to colonize the planet. On Homeworld, both Gems had a predetermined role; Rose (originally known as Pink Diamond) was one of their monarchs, in charge of overseeing the colonization of outer worlds, while Pearl was her servant. In this world, every Gem is expected to follow their intended purpose, enforced by "harsh hierarchies and regulatory laws" that prohibit intimacy through execution and humiliation (Kennedy 238). Whenever a Gem defies this role, even if accidentally, they are destroyed and immediately replaced by another. Though this alien world seems detached from our reality, it echoes the same heteronormative binaries present in our society. For instance, Homeworld's class structure mirrors the concept of "heteronormativity", which categorizes people into binaries as to who they should be attracted to for the rest of their lives. Scholars like Judith Butler define this as a kind of "heterosexual matrix", whereby one's attraction and gender identity is determined by societal expectations, "primary philosophical and cultural paradigm[s]

that contributes to LGBTQ+ invisibility" (Kurowicka 73). And similar to Homeworld, deviation from one's determined role is heavily stigmatized: "Nonheterosexuals…are presumed to be abnormal and therefore…regarded as appropriate targets for hostility" (Worthen 17). Coming from this background, Pearl and Rose initially focus on fulfilling their mission. They quietly monitor the incubation of the Gems on Earth, and when Rose tries to start a friendly conversation with Pearl, asking if she ever imagined running a colony would be this uneventful, she maintains her role of a follower: "I could imagine it, if you would like me to my Diamond." Here, even the act of free thinking and imagination is controlled by what Homeworld's standards decide. In this regard, Pearl is a "norm follower", playing into the heteronormative structure laid ahead of her. Rose, however, is a symbol of defiance of these norms, a "norm violator". She leaves behind her identity as one of the Gem rulers and reinvents herself into her alter ego, Rose Quartz. This defiance is further seen when they traverse the space of Earth together, as Rose remarks in awe "So…this is Earth", while interacting and cherishing the organic life there. Rose's admiration for Earth is fundamentally queer, as she defies her colonial purpose in favor of an alternate way of living. Pearl, however, is still stuck in Homeworld's binary mindset; while Rose is lost in the beauty of Earth, Pearl explains: "And this is just a small portion of the resources available for making Gems on this planet." Yet, as they further explore the terrain around them, Pearl begins to engage in this unorthodox appreciation of life. She joins Rose as a rebel and together they attempt to drive the unaccepting alien Gems out of Earth. This is catalyzed when Pearl confesses to Rose: "But I've been imagining things, even when you haven't asked me to. I imagined that I ran away and met you here on Earth." Contrary to before, Pearl now engages in her own form of free-thinking, imagining an alternative intimate future with Rose. In other words, through Rose's encouragement and example, Pearl learns to break away from Homeworld's heteronormative

standards, living a more fulfilling queer life in the process. Yet, even after this queer exploration, Pearl still maintains fear about the way they're living; shortly after confessing, she follows up with "Isn't that ridiculous? Tell me to stop" and "I need to be replaced immediately." However, Rose affirms this intimacy, telling her "Please don't ever stop!" In this way, Rose and Pearl create their own kind of queer community, a space created as a means of protection from an unaccepting world and a network of "shared understanding" and "mutual bonds" (Drushel 12). Through Rose's status as a "social deviant", and Pearl's transition into this deviation, they create a place where free expression outside of Homeworlds' rigidity is encouraged, a kind of queer utopia. Earth functions as the catalyst and embodiment for this space, breaking away Pearl and Rose from a heteronormative mindset, and being a place they construct through their continued queer expression. By doing so, the show illustrates the complicated journey behind defying heterosexual binaries, while demonstrating the beautiful kinds of worlds that can be created through this deviation.

This deviation of social norms also works towards a queer utopia, by providing viewers an understanding as to how the bridge between queerness and heterosexual can be achieved. This is shown through the character development of Peridot, and her confrontation with Earth and the Crystal Gems. Peridot, much like Rose and Pearl, initially came from Homeworld for colonial purposes. However, after a series of battles and confrontations with the Crystal Gems, she is captured and forced to remain on Earth. In this new environment, Peridot has to navigate the unorthodox ways of life on Earth, which, unlike Homeworld, is teeming with strange creatures and practices that she finds disturbing and incomprehensible. For instance, when she encounters Garnet, a cross-Gem fusion that remains fused for the sake of intimacy, she fails to understand why she doesn't use her "combined size and strength to do anything!" (Season 2, Episode 26,

"Log Date 7 15 5"). Garnet violates her understanding of fusion and where it's permissible, since where she comes from, fusion is only used for practical purposes, such as getting stronger. When Garnet offers to aid her understanding by fusing with her, she reacts in fear and shock, exhibiting similar "moral rephrens[sion]" and straight reactions to queer intimacy (Carilli 5). Yet, Peridot manages to overcome her ignorance. She chooses to dance with Garnet—the method by which fusion is realized—and even though they don't end up fusing, Peridot leaves with a better understanding of Garnet. "I have attempted a fusion with the fusion Garnet. I had hoped to gain a better understanding of fusion. Instead, I gained a better understanding of Garnet" (Season 2, Episode 26, "Log Date 7 15 5"). Peridot stands as a metaphor for straightness, as she never ends up performing queer acts such as fusion. In fact, in later seasons of the show, she remains the only Crystal Gem who chooses not to fuse. However, her attempt to go outside her comfort zone to understand queerness gives viewers who are comfortable living inside the "heterosexual matrix" an example of how to understand those outside of it. The show presents Peridot's disgust as unproductive and negative while portraying her active curiosity as commendable. This understanding is crucial in the construction of safe queer spaces, which, as Bruce E. Drushel explains, hinges on "tacit understanding" whereby "such understanding is not a finishing line, but the starting point of all togetherness" (Drushel 13). Likewise, Peridot works toward this tacit understanding, unlearning the harmful lessons and binaries of her Homeworld and leaving space for compassion. Her background as an alien from a rigid world is crucial to this development, as it creates a barrier of understanding she must overcome. The use of this alien identity is similar yet different from other works of SF, where "in taking on a sense of otherness, they are disempowered" (Wolmark 27). Although initially, Peridot's "otherness" disempowers her by depicting her as an antagonist, the show condemns not her alien identity, but her lack of

understanding for others. This contrasts with the typical portrayal of aliens as irredeemable villains, and though it would be tempting to associate heteronormativity with this evilness, *Steven Universe* presents these aliens as capable of taking agency in understanding those different from them. In doing so, the show encourages the diminishment of human intolerance, by showing how even aliens from other worlds can overcome their ignorance. In other words, Peridot's navigation of queerness, and the sensibility it generates, allows straight individuals watching the show, "who do not identify themselves as gay or queer to become compatriots of the LGBTQ community" (Carilli 5), while also serving as "a teaching tool for how people can behave if they want to treat queer people right, even if their initial response is confusion or shock" (Kennedy 245). Thus, *Steven Universe* realizes a more accepting queer community on Earth, while encouraging viewers, even those who don't identify as queer, to aid in the construction of a queer utopia in the real world.

Additionally, through the malleable bodies of the Gems, the show represents queer forms of expression and works toward a space where this expression is normalized. In particular, this is done through the concept of shapeshifting, and the Gem's unorthodox appearances. In the show, the alien Gems take on colorful and wildly expressive appearances, similar to what Theresa Carilli defines as a "queer aesthetic", being a "louder-than-life expression" that makes use of "vibrant colors" and "performative storytelling" (Carilli 7). These bodies don't conform to our understanding of gender and sexuality, as although they present themselves as feminine, their bodies are never definitely labeled nor restricted to a specific body type, existing on a spectrum of "masculine" and "feminine" traits. In particular, "they are free to assume any shape or form…*Steven Universe*'s bodies are not bound by the laws of photorealistic physics, and this malleability allows the show's heroic bodies to resist…cookie-cutter molds" (Cooley 48). These

non-traditional alien bodies play into the queer SF tradition, where it's common to have worlds with “futures not organized around binary gender” (Kurowicka 73), breaking away from limited views of gender as being binary. What further complicates their identity is how they can change their form through the practice of “shapeshifting.” Due to their bodies being a type of artificial projection, the Gems have complete control over their form, being able to transform into animals, objects, or anything else they can imagine. In the real world, queer people can face a distinction between what bodies they were assigned with at birth, and what they identify as beyond that body. Yet, through shapeshifting, this distinction becomes collapsed, as the Gems can take on whatever shape they desire. Though all these Gems are capable of changing their bodies in these ways, how the character Amethyst does so is unique and queer. Unlike other Crystal gems, like Bismuth, who uses shapeshifting to turn her body into tools, or Garnet, who uses shapeshifting to make her fists larger, Amethyst uses this alteration of the form for more aesthetic purposes. For instance, Amethyst frequently alternates between masculine and feminine bodies. Specifically, in the episode “Tiger Millionaire ", Amethyst sneaks out to explore her alter ego of Purple Puma, a pro-wrestler with a masculine-presenting appearance. Unlike Amethyst, Purple Puma has a deeper voice, chest hair, and is referred to with male pronouns. By doing so, Amethyst engages in a kind of queer “playfulness, rooted in identity,” taking “expressive risks” to explore who they are (Carilli 7). Through this alter-ego, Amethyst manages to leave behind the identity assigned to her at birth and reimagines her identity. This is different from the other Gems, who despite making use of shapeshifting, use it for utilitarian purposes, and maintain their standard appearance. Her body defies the kind of “gendered sight” that has become common in our world, whereby individuals are categorized as male or female based on physical appearance (Kennedy 235). Her need to escape from the Gems to engage in this expression shows how this

kind of aesthetic exploration is stigmatized; in fact, when the Gems do find out, they scold her and force her to come back. This sentiment is seen in other interactions, like when Pearl remarks; "Just because you can shapeshift, doesn't mean you should" (Season 1, Episode 6, "Cat Fingers"), or when Peridot calls her shapeshifting an "insult to your intended form" (Season 3, Episode 87, "Too Short to Ride"). The Gem's responses to shapeshifting are not unlike real-world challenges to queer identity, whereby this expression is labeled as "freak" or "pervert" behavior, met with confusion and frustration (Kennedy 236). Yet, as the show progresses, this queer alteration of the body becomes something that gives Amethyst strength; the show presents it as an empowering ability that can be used to fight for freedom. For instance, when Amethyst uses her shapeshifting to turn into Purple Puma again, Bismuth praises her as "very creative" (Episode 98, Season 3, "Bismuth"), citing it as an example of why the Crystal Gems are so "powerful", and "important". This challenges other views of gender non-conforming bodies as being viewed as "monstrous, grotesque, and improbable" (Ristola 106); on the contrary, *Steven Universe* affirms it as praiseworthy and inventive. Though Amethyst is still using shapeshifting for a specific purpose—in this case, to win a fight—she puts a special spin on the practice, turning it into a mode of queer expression for herself. Hence, the Crystal Gems begin to recognize Amethyst's malleable body as not something wrong, but rather praiseworthy. Indeed, by the end of the show, she even manages to persuade Pearl, who previously condemned her fluctuating body, to shapeshift aesthetically in the follow-up series episode "Snow Day". In short, through her bodily expression, Amethyst manages to build a space on Earth where this queer form of exploration is destigmatized, changing the conceptions of those around her and contributing to the construction of Earth's queer utopia. Her use of shapeshifting and the

unorthodox appearance of the Gems communicates to viewers the importance of continued queer expression, even in the face of stigma, aspiring to create a world where this is normalized.

Finally, *Steven Universe* works toward the concept of "queer utopia" through its portrayal of "fusion" and future vision, utilizing them as an analogy for queer discovery. Within the show, fusion is a process by which the alien Gems can combine with one another to form a new individual. Often, fusion is used as a metaphor for romantic relationships, platonic relationships, and even toxic relationships. Specifically, fusion is used as a mode for the Gems to explore various relationships with the people around them. The fusion of Ruby and Sapphire, referred to as Garnet, exemplifies the concept of queer exploration, and how that ultimately works towards the construction of a queer future on Earth. Ruby and Sapphire are two other Homeworld Gems, who were sent to Earth to put an end to Pearl and Rose's rebellion. Sapphire is a high-ranking Gem thanks to her ability to see the future, yet her body is fragile, requiring Ruby, a simple foot soldier, to protect her. Within the Homeworld class system, they both had a clear role set for them; Ruby is to protect Sapphire as she delivers her premonition to the monarch, Blue Diamond. Since Sapphire can see into the future, she's able to see everything that her life will entail, a form of linear vision where all the events she sees are predetermined. This determinism is reflected when Garnet narrates: "She saw her whole life laid ahead of her, and she already had accepted all of it" (Season 2, Episode 22, "The Answer"). Sapphire makes no effort to defy the future laid in front of her, even when she predicts her eventual demise shortly after she delivers her message. Consequently, Ruby was sent to protect her, to try and avoid this unfavorable future, even if it's in vain. This magical concept of future vision serves as a metaphor for the heteronormative lives that queer people are forced to endure. Though this future sight is queer in the sense that it's a non-traditional method of interacting with time, its rigidity calls out a "single

set of normative expectations by all participants" that heterosexuality encourages (Worthen 13). Within our world, queer people are expected to adhere to heteronormative life markers, such as getting married, having kids, and creating a nuclear family, a type of determined existence not unlike Sapphire's view of the future. Like the real world, Sapphire feels no choice but to conform to this future, even if it ends in her unhappiness and demise. What ends up breaking Sapphire away from this restrictive future is Ruby, specifically, their fusion as Garnet. Indeed, Ruby fulfills her mission of changing the future, yet not in the way that was intended; in a split moment, Ruby throws herself onto Sapphire and unintentionally, they fuse. Their fusion and the exploration of their new identity is fundamentally a queer experience, as they create a new path and an identity for themselves aside from societal norms. This creation of new possible paths is reflected in future vision's transformation; Garnet still possesses Sapphire's ability to see into the future, but thanks to Ruby's spontaneity, their future vision allows them to see thousands of possible paths. No longer is there a strict binary to follow, rather, it allows her "to see into the pools of possibility, granting…insight into the possible realities our actions move us towards" (Season 5, Episode 15, "Pool Hopping"). As Moore describes, "Garnet's understanding of the future is also queered…it is the queer love in her life which allows Garnet to imagine the future differently, seeing paths out of the stagnant colonial and heterosexual present in which both Ruby and Sapphire were trapped"(Moore 11). The complexities of this exploration are further articulated when they look at their new body in awe and confusion. After being held to Homeworld's strict standards for so long, their inability to comprehend the capacity to fuse in a new way represents not knowing that queerness is even an option. Like with real-world heterosexual expectations, Homeworld's binaries force the Gems into a mind state that closes off unorthodox experiences. Within their society, fusion is reserved for strictly practical purposes

(fighting off rebels, gaining strength) and is only acceptable if done between the same kinds of Gems. This mirrors how heterosexual relationships are viewed by our society; standard and necessary. Hence, Garnet's fusion between two different Gems, which serves no practical purpose besides experiential, is inexplicable, new, and queer. And like in the real world, this queerness is met by societal rejection: the other surrounding Gems exclaim things like "unbelievable", "disgusting", and "this is unheard of!" (Season 2, Episode 22, "The Answer"). As Fen Kennedy explains, "Fusion, there-fore, sets up an analogy for discussing queer behavior and responses to it, including reactions that include disgust and violent homophobia"(Kennedy 239). In short, through Sapphire's future vision and Garnet's intimate fusion, Steven Universe presents queer forms of intimacy opposed to heterosexual narratives. Their exploration and defiance of societal norms demonstrate to viewers how queer intimacy can be transformative, confusing, scary, but ultimately beautiful.

Faced with this kind of societal rejection, Ruby and Sapphire decide to construct a space where their queer intimacy is permitted, through their escape to Earth. This exploration is primarily done in the form of a love song, which parodies animation's use of romantic songs—like Disney's love trope—yet reimagines them to transcend the portrayal of "a heterosexual and fantasy like version of love and relationships" (Hughes 16). As they encounter the strangeness of Earth, they reflect on the strangeness of their fusion: "And it wasn't quite me, and it wasn't quite you. I think we made something entirely new" (Season 2, Episode 22, "The Answer"). Their confusion highlights the disparity between what society wanted them to be, their original selves, and this new, perplexing form of queer expression they've discovered. As the song progresses, Ruby initially blames herself for seemingly ruining Sapphire's future,

pulling her into an alternate path where they're consistently in danger from a norm-conforming society:

"I'm so sorry,"

"No, no, don't be,"

"And now you're here forever!"

"What about you?"

"What about me?"

"Well, you're here too. We're here together," (Season 2, Episode 22, "The Answer").

Rather than accept this blame, Sapphire instead chooses to focus on the significance of them defying these societal standards together. She directs their focus not onto the intolerance of the outer world, but on the importance of their presence in this "strangeness" that they've created. This acknowledgment allows them to explore their queerness through their fusion once more. Yet this time their fusion is not an accident, it's a deliberate attempt to connect and understand one another, engaging in a kind of queer worldmaking. It is then that they meet the rebel Rose Quartz, who, unlike the other Homeworld Gems, celebrates who Garnet is and asks her for the first time how she feels. She replies: "I feel lost, and scared, and…happy," all words that hold to the experience of exploring one's queer self in a hostile world. Through Earth, Garnet finally finds a space where her expression is tolerated and even encouraged, by those who similarly engage in queer lifestyles. And throughout her life, Garnet transforms into a mentor for others undergoing queer exploration. For example, in the episode "Alone Together", Steven and Connie fuse into a previously thought impossible half-gem, half-human individual. Up to this point, the Gems doubted his ability to fuse, since his body is half human and half gem. Yet it is this "strangeness" of Steven's body that allows him to fuse with his human friend Connie, and

create something “entirely new”. Similar to Garnet, Steven fails to conform to the standards of the life that the Gems have created. Even among their queer practices, their fusion, named Stevonnie, is unprecedented. In contrast to Stevonnie’s excitement and joy, characters like Pearl remark: “This is unprecedented…it’s impossible, or at the very least inappropriate...you two should unfuse this instance.” Pearl, though herself living a queer lifestyle, exhibits the same kind of discomfort that the Homeworld Gems from "The Answer” had about Ruby and Sapphire. Garnet recognizes this similarity and resonates with both the excitement and societal backlash behind their exploration. Recognizing that in her past, her own queer experience was condemned as inappropriate, Garnet reassures Stevonnie as to the importance of their expression: “Stevonnie. Listen to me. You are not two people, and you are not one person. You are an experience. Make sure you're a good experience. Now, go have fun!” In short, Garnet engages in the further construction of the queer space that permitted her to discover herself all those years ago. She centers Stevonnie’s identity around being an enjoyable experience, promoting the free expression of intimacy she embodies. Hence, Garnet’s spontaneous fusion echoes queer forms of intimacy, both in its strangeness, divergence from societal norms, and the happiness it brings. Her escape to Earth allows her to build this queer life for herself, and for others around her, constructing a world that’s accepting of their relationship. In this way, *Steven Universe* promotes the unhindered exploration of queer intimacy, even in the face of societal rejection and violence.

Hence, *Steven Universe* constructs a queer utopia within its fantastical world, to address the societal conditions of queer people. This representation within television is crucial, not only to reassure members of the LGBTQ that their identity is valid, but also to close the gap between the straight and queer community through improved understanding. This kind of media teaches “people, and especially young people, to recognize and relate to queer people and practices in

kind and accepting ways, whether or not they self-identify as queer" (Kennedy 237). Though *Steven Universe*'s utopic world is purely fictional, it gives us a view as to what kinds of worlds we can build in our future, ones where differences don't separate us, but unite us into an accepting community.

Works Cited:

Steven Universe. Created by Rebecca Sugar, Cartoon Network, 2014. *HBO max,* www.max.com.

Carilli, Theresa. "Locating Queerness in the Media." *Locating Queerness in the Media,* edited by Jane Campbell, et al., Lexington Books, 2017.

Cooley, Kevin. "Drawing Queerness Forward: Fusion, Futurity, and *Steven Universe*." *Representation in Steven Universe*, edited by John R. Ziegler, et al*.,* Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2021, pp. 45-67. https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-31881-9.

E. Drushel, Bruce. "A State of the Union." *Locating Queerness in the Media,* edited by Jane Campbell, et al., Lexington Books, 2017.

Elizabeth Moore, Mandy. "Future Visions: Queer Utopia in Steven Universe." *University of Florida*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2019, *SOPHIA, https://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&context=rdyl.*

Kennedy, Fen. "Change your mind: Stevonnie's new body schema and queer literacies in Steven Universe." Journal of Visual Literacy, vol. 40, 2021, pp. 233-249, https://doi.org/10.1080/1051144X.2021.1974774.

Kohnen Melanie. *Queer Representation, Visibility, and Race in American Film and Television.* Routledge, 2015.

Kurowicka, Anna. "Asexual and Genderless Futures." *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Science Fiction,* edited by Lisa Yaszek, et al., Routledge, 2023, pp. 72-77.

Marie Hughes, Lauren. “Someday my Prince Will Come: How are gender roles enabled and constrained in Disney Music, during Classic Disney, the Disney Renaissance, and Modern Disney.” Oxford, May 2016. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/148695471.pdf.

Wolmark, Jenny. “Unpredictable Aliens.” *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism, and Postmodernism*, University of Iowa Press, 1994.

Worthen, Meredith. “Queers, Bis, and Straight Lies: An Intersectional Examination of LGBTQ Stigma.” Routledge, 1 April 2020.

Ristola, Jacqueline. “Globalizing Fandoms: Envisioning Queer Futures from Kunihiko Ikuhara to Rebecca Sugar.” *Representation in Steven Universe,* edited by John R. Ziegler, et al*.,* Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2021, pp. 89-112. https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-31881-9.

“Now We’re Only Falling Apart,” *Steven Universe*, season 5, episode 19, Cartoon Network, 2018. HBO Max, www.max.com.

“Log Date 7 15 2,” *Steven Universe*, season 2, episode 26, Cartoon Network, 2016. HBO Max, www.max.com.

“Cat Fingers,” *Steven Universe*, season 1, episode 6, Cartoon Network, 2013. HBO Max, www.max.com.

“Too Short to Ride,” *Steven Universe*, season 3, episode 9, Cartoon Network, 2016. HBO Max, www.max.com.

“Bismuth,” *Steven Universe*, season 3, episode 20, Cartoon Network, 2016. HBO Max, www.max.com.

"Tiger Millionaire," *Steven Universe*, season 1, episode 9, Cartoon Network, 2014. HBO Max, www.max.com.

"The Answer," *Steven Universe*, season 2, episode 26, Cartoon Network, 2016. HBO Max, www.max.com.

"Pool Hopping," *Steven Universe*, season 5, episode 15, Cartoon Network, 2018. HBO Max, www.max.com.

"Alone Together," *Steven Universe*, season 1, episode 37, Cartoon Network, 2015. HBO Max, www.max.com.