



Queering Blood Purity:

Abjection, Muggleborns, and MSM

My connection to the topic

Ian McLaughlin (he/they)

Pansexual, gender-non-conforming cisman.

Former blood donor (potentially returning to the practice)

Scope and Focus

Introduction

1. Definitions and Frameworks
2. Queering Blood Purity
3. History of Blood Donation and MSM
4. Continuing Issues

Definitions and Frameworks

Wix

- “Wizard” and “Witch” are gendered terms.
- “Wix” (plural “wixes”) will be used to refer to general magical humans
 - E.g. “Many wixes see Muggle blood as dirty.”
- “Wixen” will be used for their society
 - E.g. “Wixen society has many such prejudices.”

Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM)

- Clinical term
- Actions based label
 - not about attractions or orientations
 - May or may not refer to trans people based on context.
 - Includes transmen or transwomen depending on context
- At high risk for HIV infections
 - 1 in 6 infection rate
 - Higher for Men of Color
 - Compare to 1 in 524 for heterosexual men and 1 in 253 for heterosexual women

Hegemonic Masculinity

“the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy,” which is taken to guarantee “the dominant position of men and the subordination of women”

Abject: Etymology

- From the Latin “ab-” (away from) and “iacere” (to throw)
- Compare to
 - “subject” (thrown under; the individual; or the actor in a sentence)
 - “object” (thrown in a direction, either as target or projectile; parts of the world around the subject; or that which is acted upon)

Abject - Origins

- Developed as a theory by Julia Kristeva
 - *Powers of Horror* (1980)
 - An understanding of horror from a feminist/psychoanalytic perspective
 - Derived from the Freudian rejection of the mother's body
- Expanded upon by Elizabeth Grosz
 - *Sexual Subversions* (1989)
 - *Volatile Bodies* (1994)

Abject - Definition

Definition

- That which “threatens the boundaries of the autonomous subject”
 - E.g. “vomit, shit, menstrual blood, corpses”
 - They remind us that “the body is not only corporeal, but also has tenuous boundaries.” (Kristeva)
- “a sickness at one's own body, at the body beyond that clean and proper thing, the body of the subject. Abjection is the result of recognizing that the body is more than, in excess of the clean and proper” (Grosz)

Abject


TL;DL: Our bodies are “icky goo sacks” that are “leaky and porous and decaying” and we want to eject and reject those aspects of ourselves.

HIV triggers the fear of the abject.

Further, within hegemonic masculinity, the idea of MSM, which requires a penetrable (and therefore subordinate) male, is abject.

Queering Blood Purity

Blood Purity: The Standard Reading

- Metaphor for White Supremacy
- Author's intention : race = fantasy species
 - House elves (Dobby)
 - Goblins? (Griphook)
 - Giants (Hagrid/Maxine/Grawp)
- However “Blood” joins “breed” becomes the metonym for genealogy and race via muggleborn wixes

Blood Purity: The Queer Reading

- Real World Blood Purity
 - Some things “belong” in blood
 - Some things do not

- MSM are associated with having HIV/AIDS “lurking” in their blood

Blood Purity: The Queer Reading

- Ted Tonks and Andromeda Black
 - Their daughter carries on her fathers “impurity”
 - Not recognized as “niece” by Bellatrix & Narcissa
- Similarly, 25-30% of infants born to women with HIV/AIDS carry the virus from birth (if untreated)

Blood Purity: The Queer Reading

- Hermione Granger
 - “Brightest Witch of her Age”
 - “Despite” being muggleborn
- Introduction to “Mudblood”
 - Dirty Blood
 - Meant figuratively
 - Applies more literally to HIV/AIDS

Comparative History of Blood Donation/MSM and Muggleborn Sentiments

HIV and Blood Donation in America

- 1981
 - **A cluster of unusual pneumonia cases among gay men**
 - Initially dubbed “gay cancer,” then Gay-Related Immune Deficiency (GRID)
- 1982
 - **Renamed AIDS**
 - **Public scare about tainted blood begins**
- 1984
 - **Ryan White, age 13, infected by blood transfusion**
 - Virus identified
- 1985
 - **First test developed**
 - **Screening of donated blood begins**
 - **Ban on blood donations for people “increased risk for AIDS”**
 - Rock Hudson dies of AIDS (first celebrity death)
 - Ryan White barred from school
- 1992
 - AIDS is #1 cause of death for men 25-44
 - AIDS deaths in San Francisco hit 2,332
- 1998
 - National treatment guidelines established
- 2007
 - Total AIDS deaths in America 562,000
- 2010
 - 30 percent of new infections were among heterosexuals
 - **Blood donation ban for MSM lifted, replaced with 3-month required celibacy period**
- 2023
 - **Time-based deferrals and screening questions *specific to men who have sex with men (MSM)* and women who have sex with MSM eliminated**

Muggle-borns in *Harry Potter*

10th Century

- Most wizards consider “Magbobs” especially gifted
- **Hogwarts founded**
 - Slytherin advocates for pure-blood only students
 - Creates the Chamber of Secrets

16th Century

- Corvinus Gaunt helps maintain the **pureblood supremacy built “in the walls” of Hogwarts** by protecting the entrance to the Chamber

1943

- **Tom Marvolo Riddle opens the Chamber, leading to the death of a muggle-born student**

1962

- Nobby Leach elected as first muggle-born Minister for Magic
 - Several members of the Wizengamot resigned in protest

1968

- Nobby Leach forced to resign

1970

- **Voldemort and the Death Eaters rise to power with a Pure-Blood Supremacist Agenda**
 - All muggle-borns to be either killed or kept “in utter bondage”

1997

- **Voldemort takes control of the Ministry, instituting the Muggle-Born Registration Commission**
 - All wixes who could not prove magical heritage sentenced to Azkaban
 - Widespread propaganda that muggle-borns “steal” magic from “real” wixes

1998

- Voldemort’s final defeat

Comparison of MSM/AIDS and Muggle-born Histories

- Banned from blood donation
- Prejudice built into social and legal institutions
- Painted as predators
 - Male sexuality is seen as necessarily predatory
 - AIDS adds another level of danger
- Banned from spaces
- Prejudice built into the walls of Hogwarts
- Painted as predators (stealing magic from “real” wixes)

FDA's New Guidelines

The new guidelines

- “recommendations for assessing blood donor eligibility using a set of individual risk-based questions to reduce the risk of transfusion-transmitted HIV”
- “These questions will be the same for every donor, regardless of sexual orientation, sex or gender.”
- “It will potentially expand the number of people eligible to donate blood, while also maintaining the appropriate safeguards to protect the safety of the blood supply.”
- “This policy eliminates time-based deferrals and screening questions specific to men who have sex with men (MSM) and women who have sex with MSM.”
- “All prospective donors who report having a new sexual partner, or more than one sexual partner in the past three months, and anal sex in the past three months, would be deferred to reduce the likelihood of donations by individuals with new or recent HIV infection who may be in the window period for detection of HIV by nucleic acid testing.”
- “those taking medications to treat or prevent HIV infection...will also be deferred...Although HIV is not transmitted sexually by individuals with undetectable viral levels, this does not apply to transfusion.

The new guidelines

- Meant to level the field
 - Same questions for everyone
 - “Individual risk-based approach”
- Meant to increase blood supply
 - Allows for MSM in long-term monogamous relationships to donate

Will this expand the donor pool?

- “All prospective donors who report having a new sexual partner, or more than one sexual partner in the past three months, and anal sex in the past three months, would be deferred.”
 - N = had a new sexual partner
 - M = had multiple sexual partners
 - A = participated in anal sex
 - D = may donate blood
 - P = taking medication to treat or prevent AIDS
-
- The quote above translates to
 - $((N \text{ or } M) \& A) \text{ or } P > \sim D$

Will this expand the donor pool?

Theoretical Donors

- Monogamous donor
 - Only disqualified if participated in anal sex with a new partner or are medicating to treat or prevent AIDS
- Promiscuous donor
 - Only disqualified if participated in anal sex or are medicating to treat or prevent AIDS
- Polyamorous donor
 - Only disqualified if participated in anal sex or are medicating to treat or prevent AIDS

Is this anti-discriminatory?

- The questions are non-discriminatory
- $((N \text{ or } M) \& A) \text{ or } P > \sim D$
 - If P is true then $\sim D$ must be true
- Rather than disqualify all MSM, this new policy disqualifies anyone taking any AIDS treatments or prophylaxis.
 - These drugs are mostly marketed to queer people in general and MSM in particular

Is blanket exclusion of people who take medication to treat or prevent AIDS reasonable?

- People who are treating AIDS or are taking post-exposure prophylaxis **can still pass on the HIV virus via blood exposure**
- People who are taking pre-exposure prophylaxis may still have HIV in their system since it **only helps to “stop HIV from taking hold and spreading throughout the body.”**

Why restrict blood donation for people who MIGHT have HIV/AIDS?

- All blood is tested for HIV
- ART, PrEP, and PEP may cause false negatives because they keep HIV at “undetectable” levels.

Conclusion

To Sum Up

- MSM have been discriminated against because they trigger a fear of the abject in people who subscribe to hegemonic masculinity.
- Blood Purity in *Harry Potter* works as analog for heteronormative standards
 - Both groups are abject to the hegemonic powers of their respective worlds
 - Histories of MSM and muggle-born discrimination are similar
- The FDA's new guidelines for blood donor screening are a major step forward, and possibly the best that can be done right now.
 - We must keep an eye on how future developments can help make blood donation more equitable

WHAT YOU DID WAS MAGICAL



THANK YOU

Sources (excepting HP series)

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Image Credits

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Color notes

Green: HEX 618f69

Blue: HEX 9ec4cb

Plum: HEX 620062

Lavender: HEX ab9bc8

Purple: HEX 8b3a67