

“Into The Spotlight”: A Comparison of Queer Representation in *Kinky Boots* and *Everybody’s Talking About Jamie*.



Figure 1: Two cropped screenshots of the official video recordings of both musicals, showing Jamie (left) from *Everybody’s Talking About Jamie* and Lola (right) from *Kinky Boots*.

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**Abstract**

For this paper, the author studies the queer representation of characters Lola and Jamie from the musicals *Kinky Boots* and *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, respectively. *Kinky Boots* is about Charlie, a cishet white man, teaming up with the black drag queen Lola to create drag queen footwear. *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* is about the gay teenage boy Jamie who wants to be a drag queen. The research question is as follows: How does the centring of the story in *Kinky Boots* compared to *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* result in different queer representations and its consequent messages on queerness? The findings of this paper are structured into four analysis segments, corresponding to four sub-questions, which are the following: How is the queerness of Lola and Jamie introduced and established in their respective musicals? How are the cishet and queer main characters developed in terms of arcs and introspection and who is centred in the story? How is queerphobia worked through in the musical's story? What messages on queerness are presented in the finale songs of the musicals? To answer the research question, the author operationalises textual analysis according to John Fiske's model of unpacking the way dominant ideologies (e.g., heteronormativity) are encoded into media texts. Data was gathered through creating a table of the songs from both musicals, as well as through carrying out close readings of different scenes. These scenes were: the introduction of the queer main characters ('Land of Lola' in *KB*, 'And You Don't Even Know It' in *ETAJ*), two specific scenes in which cishet characters exhibit queerphobic behaviour, and the finale songs of both shows. Based on the findings, the author concludes that with the centring of Jamie as a queer character in *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, the story is able to portray a wider variety of queer experiences in further depth than the story of *Kinky Boots*, where the centring of Charlie occurs simultaneously with reducing Lola to a glamorous representation of queerness, which leaves her unable to voice the more harrowing facts of queer life. The consequences of this difference are thus that in *KB*, heteronormativity prevails through not further exploring the violent and traumatic aspects of being queer in a heteronormative world, while there is more time and attention spend to these aspects in *ETAJ*. Placed within the context of kissing LGBTQ+ couples getting heckled on the street in the Netherlands, trans people being detained at airports in the US, non-binary identities not being legally recognised by the UK government, and the overall physical and psychological damage queerphobia can cause, it is important that these experiences are not ignored or brushed off with a sassy comment, which would underplay the severity of queerphobia.

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## 1. Introduction

In Western media there is a tendency to centre cisgender heterosexual ('cishet' for the rest of this paper) people in queer people's stories, such as making the 1969 Stonewall riots palatable for heterosexuals by having a 'straight-acting' main character in the film *STONEWALL* (2015).<sup>1</sup> Queer people are also often reduced to a background character or stereotype, for example transgender POC women being cast as prostitutes for TV series like *Law and Order*.<sup>2</sup> As Frederik Dhaenens argues, scholars need to be critical of queer representations that reproduce heteronormative discourses, although queer representations can also have the potential to challenge these discourses.<sup>3</sup> 'Heteronormativity' then means that the attraction to the opposite sex and the division of man/woman is considered the norm, a norm that is then policed and imposed on queer individuals.<sup>4</sup> Moving on to musical theatre on West End in the 2010s, the shows *Kinky Boots* and *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* feature a similar exploration of drag and genderfluidity in their representations of queerness.<sup>5</sup>

The musical *Kinky Boots* (from here on referred to as *KB*) is based upon the film with the same name from 2005, which was written by Geoff Deane and Tim Firth.<sup>6</sup> The film and musical are both based on the real experiences of Steve Pateman (renamed 'Charlie Price' for the film and musical).<sup>7</sup> The musical was written by Harvey Fierstein and the music was created by Cyndi Lauper.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nigel M. Smith, "Gay rights activists give their verdict on Stonewall: 'This film is no credit to the history it purports to portray'," *The Guardian*, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/sep/25/stonewall-film-gay-rights-activists-give-their-verdict>; James Michael Nichols, "'Stonewall' Director Addresses Controversy Surrounding Movie's Trailer," *HuffPost*, accessed April 4, 2021, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/stonewall-director-addresses-movie-trailer-controversy\\_n\\_55c4cf85e4b0d9b743dbdc1e](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/stonewall-director-addresses-movie-trailer-controversy_n_55c4cf85e4b0d9b743dbdc1e).

<sup>2</sup> Richard Dyer, *The matter of images: Essays on representations* (London: Routledge, 2013), 24; "Victims or Villains: Examining Ten Years of Transgender Images on Television," *GLAAD*, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://www.glaad.org/publications/victims-or-villains-examining-ten-years-transgender-images-television>; Sam Feder, *Disclosure*, *Disclosure Films*, 2020, 35:15-38:00.

<sup>3</sup> Frederik Dhaenens, "Teenage Queerness: Negotiating Heteronormativity in the Representation of Gay Teenagers in *Glee*," *Journal of Youth Studies* 16, no. 3 (2013): 305.

<sup>4</sup> Notably, Marchia and Sommer do not provide a singular, clear definition of the term, therefore my definition here is based on their discussion of its different conceptualisations. Joseph Marchia and Jamie M. Sommer, "(Re)defining heteronormativity," *Sexualities* vol. 22, no. 3 (2019): 267-295.

<sup>5</sup> Notably, shows like *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and *Rocky Horror Picture Show* also handle the topic of drag and genderfluidity, however these take place within an American context. Moreover, they did not have a production running long-term on West End in 2010s.

<sup>6</sup> N.B. the director named in the source for the recording is the director for the recording and not the stage performance itself. After all, my source is the recording itself, thus the director of the recording is the one to be credited here. *Kinky Boots*, directed by Brett Sullivan, (Adelphi Theatre, London: BroadwayHD, 2016); "Kinky Boots (musical)," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 21, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinky\\_Boots\\_\(musical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinky_Boots_(musical)).

<sup>7</sup> *Wikipedia*, "Kinky Boots (musical)."

<sup>8</sup> *Wikipedia*, "Kinky Boots (musical)."

The show ran on West End from 2015 to 2019, although it initially premiered on Broadway.<sup>9</sup> In the musical's story, the heterosexual, cisgender, white Charlie Price decides to sell drag queen boots (called "Kinky Boots") in order to save his late father's shoe factory in Northampton. His inspiration is the black drag queen Lola, who helps Charlie and the factory's employees learn about queer people and accepting others for who they are.

An important point to address here is that I shall use 'she/her' to refer to Lola, as this is the most commonly used set of pronouns for Lola in the musical. Markedly, there seems to be little consensus in existing literature on *KB* on whether the character should be referred to as 'Simon' and 'he/him' or 'Lola' and 'she/her,' since Lola is Simon's drag persona and Simon is a man who does drag.<sup>10</sup> However, in previous work (for the Utrecht University course 'Politics of Representation') I have pointed out how the representation of Lola's gender is somewhat confusing throughout the musical, with Lola being described in transcoded language.<sup>11</sup> Considering the lack of consensus on the matter, it seems that how one refers to Lola depends on one's interpretation of the character. Therefore, it must be noted that I use 'Lola' and 'she/her' and interpret her as a character that explores gender beyond the binary of cisgender thinking, without further labelling her here.

The musical *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* (from here on referred to as *ETAJ*) is based on the documentary *Jamie: Drag Queen at 16* by Jenny Popplewell from 2011, detailing the real life events of Jamie Campbell ('Jamie New' in the musical), who wants to attend his prom in drag.<sup>12</sup> The musical was written by Tom MacRae and directed by Jonathan Butterell with music by Dan Gillespie Sells.<sup>13</sup> On West End the musical has run since 2017 and it is currently under hiatus due to COVID-19.<sup>14</sup> In the musical's story, the openly gay Jamie explores the art of drag as he navigates his

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<sup>9</sup> Here it is important to understand that musicals have different 'runs' in different countries, but they often get revivals or (international) tours as well. Thus, a musical can be in the recent public consciousness for years or decades after it was first performed. Wikipedia, "Kinky Boots (musical)"; Sullivan, *Kinky Boots*.

<sup>10</sup> For example, two different authors who have written on *KB*, John M. Clum and Julie Grossman, do not refer to the character in the same way. Clum uses 'Simon' and 'he/him', while Julie Grossman uses 'Lola' and 'she/her', which means there is little consensus in existing literature on *KB* on how to refer to the character. John M. Clum, "'A Little More Mascara' Drag and the Broadway Musical from *La Cage aux Folles* to *Kinky Boots*," in *The Routledge Companion to the Contemporary Musical*, ed. Jessica Sternfeld and Elizabeth L. Wollman (London: Routledge, 2019), 173-181; Julie Grossman, "Musical Theater and Independent Film," in *Literature, Film, and Their Hideous Progeny. Palgrave Studies in Adaptation and Visual Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 136-141.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Zandvliet, "The Price of Representing Queerness: *Kinky Boots*' Representation of Lola Studied Through Critical Discourse Analysis," (VR3V14005 Essay, Utrecht University, 2021), 5-7.

<sup>12</sup> N.B.: the director credited in the following source is the director of the recording and not the director of the stage performance. See also footnote 6. *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, directed by Nick Morris, (Apollo Theatre, London: Serpent Productions, 2018); "Jamie: Drag Queen at 16 (2011)," IMDb, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2272884/>.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Butterell, Dan Gillespie Sells and Tom MacRae, *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, acting edition, (London: Samuel French Ltd., 2017), 9-139; "Everybody's Talking About Jamie," Wikipedia, accessed April 4, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Everybody%27s\\_Talking\\_About\\_Jamie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Everybody%27s_Talking_About_Jamie).

<sup>14</sup> Wikipedia, "Everybody's Talking."

relationships with his supportive mother and homophobic father. At his school, he is supported by his friend Pritti and most of their classmates, but he is taunted by classmate Dean.

What makes these two musicals fascinating to analyse together is their similarities and differences. For starters, both musicals take place within a British context, have appeared on West End in the 2010s, and feature drag queen characters that allow the musicals to explore queerness through drag. Additionally, in both stories the queer character faces queerphobia from several different cishet characters and both shows end with a finale that explicitly states a 'lesson to be learned'. However, the main difference between the two musicals, besides the overall storylines, is the fact that the main character of *KB* is Charlie, a cishet man, while the main character of *ETAJ* is Jamie, a queer boy. This then begs the question if the difference in the main characters' sexuality and gender identity has an influence on how the musicals explore queerness. Therefore, the research question of this thesis is: How does the centring of the story in *Kinky Boots* compared to *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* result in different queer representations and its consequent messages on queerness? This research question is further unpacked using the following sub-questions:

How is the queerness of Lola and Jamie introduced and established in their respective musicals?

How are the cishet and queer main characters developed in terms of arcs and introspection and who is centred in the story?

How is queerphobia worked through in the musical's story?

What messages on queerness are presented in the finale songs of the musicals?

With the centring of Jamie as a queer character in *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, the story is able to portray a wider variety of queer experiences in further depth than the story of *Kinky Boots*, where the centring of Charlie occurs simultaneously with reducing Lola to a glamorous representation of queerness, which leaves her unable to voice the more harrowing facts of queer life. The consequences of this difference are thus that in *KB*, heteronormativity prevails through not further exploring the violent and traumatic aspects of being queer in a heteronormative world, while there is more time and attention spend to these aspects in *ETAJ*.

## 2. Theoretical framework

My research relates to the debates on what 'representation' is, what 'queer' is and how it is used in the field of queer theory, and lastly the larger debate of how queer representation works in musicals, particularly in West End musicals from the 2010s.

### 2.1 Representation: Hall and Dyer

Firstly, according to Stuart Hall, 'representation' is a practice of meaning making that takes place in a particular historical, cultural context.<sup>15</sup> In his own words: "Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language."<sup>16</sup> What Hall says here is that in order to communicate about objects and things that exist in our world we use language.<sup>17</sup> It is then through the use of language that meanings are attributed to objects and concepts.<sup>18</sup> Meanings, concepts, representations etc. are thus not 'found in nature' or 'neutral reflections of reality', but rather part of a larger social-cultural process.<sup>19</sup> Seeing media representations as constructed through social processes is considered a 'constructivist' approach, one that scholars like Richard Dyer share with Hall in the discussion of stereotypes in media.<sup>20</sup> Dyer takes the work by Walter Lippman as his basis, namely the social studies definition of 'stereotypes' as a way of ordering groups in society through a 'short cut' that comes to stand for this group.<sup>21</sup> Dyer sees several shortcomings in Lippman's work, starting with Lippman overlooking that it is often the most powerful social group who decides who belongs to 'their group' and who falls outside this category.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it is often the group in power who is producing these stereotypical group representations, and in doing so they can shape a sort of 'consensus' on how this group is viewed in society.<sup>23</sup> Thus, research into representation must be mindful of the power structures and social-cultural contexts at play.<sup>24</sup> In queer representation, this means critically examining how heteronormativity as the dominant ideology might be reinforced through stereotypical representations of queer people.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon, ed., *Representation*, second edition (London: Sage, 2013), xvii-xxvi, 1-5.

<sup>16</sup> Hall, Evans and Nixon, *Representation*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Hall, Evans and Nixon, *Representation*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Hall, Evans and Nixon, *Representation*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Hall, Evans and Nixon, *Representation*, xvii-xxvi, 1-5.

<sup>20</sup> Hall, Evans and Nixon, *Representation*, xix-xxi; Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 11-49.

<sup>21</sup> Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 11-14.

<sup>23</sup> Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Hall, Evans and Nixon, *Representation*, xvii-xxvi, 1-5; Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 11-18.

<sup>25</sup> Dhaenens, "Teenage Queerness," 305 and 315.

## 2.2 Queer theory: Butler and Rich

Secondly, the idea of constructivism, as found in the theories by Hall and Dyer, also forms the basis for queer theory.<sup>26</sup> Queer theory is a scholarly field relating to media and culture studies, gender studies, social sciences, literary studies, history, and philosophy.<sup>27</sup> The term 'queer' has changed from being a derogatory slur to gaining a new meaning as a reclaimed self-identifying label for the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>28</sup> In the academic context, however, 'queer' is used as a critical lens to denaturalise and destabilise heterosexual norms in Western societies and binary gender roles and to question the power structures implicit in these norms.<sup>29</sup> Important figures in the field include Judith Butler and Adrienne Rich.<sup>30</sup> Starting off, Butler argues that gender is a performance mimicking and enacting the hegemonic gender norms that exist in society.<sup>31</sup> It is through the performance and repetition of gender that gender is established and reinforced – although this does not mean that we can choose to abandon our gender performance, nor can we choose what gender to perform.<sup>32</sup> As for drag, Butler argues, it has the potential to both subvert and reinforce gender stereotypes from heteronormative discourses.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, Rich discusses 'heteronormativity' in a more radical way, calling it 'compulsory heterosexuality' and declaring heterosexuality a political institution based in sexism and patriarchy, meant to keep (lesbian) women subjected to abusive men.<sup>34</sup> When applied more broadly to queer people, this term then shows how heterosexuality is presented as the only viable way of existing, while queerness is oppressed, suppressed and erased from history.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, with regards to my research it is important to keep in mind the potentially harmful implications of heteronormativity and how heteronormativity is present within media representations of queerness.

## 2.3 Conceptualisation of 'cishet' and 'queer'

Thirdly, it is important to indicate how I define 'cishet' and 'queer' in the context of this research project. When using the term 'cishet' as a shortcut for 'cisgender heterosexual', I mean not only the

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<sup>26</sup> Hall, Evans and Nixon, *Representation*, xvii-xxvi; Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 11-14.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Brooker, *A Glossary of Literary and Cultural Theory*, third edition, (London: Routledge, 2016), 235.

<sup>28</sup> Brooker, *A Glossary*, 235-236; Judith Butler, "Critically queer," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993): 22.

<sup>29</sup> Brooker, *A Glossary*, 253.

<sup>30</sup> Butler, "Critically queer," 17-32; Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 5, no. 4 (1980): 631-660.

<sup>31</sup> Butler, "Critically queer," 19, 21-22, 24.

<sup>32</sup> Butler, "Critically queer," 22.

<sup>33</sup> Butler, "Critically queer," 21-28. For more on Butler's conceptualisation of drag, it would be helpful to consult the following source: Judith Butler, "Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion," in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 85.

<sup>34</sup> Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality," 631-660.

<sup>35</sup> Applying Rich's work more broadly on queer people rather than only lesbians is also more inclusive of trans and non-binary individuals, as it seems Rich based her theory on a rather binary view of man and woman. Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality," 631-660.



romantic and sexual relationships between men and women, but also the strict binary division of a cisgender men and cisgender women as opposites.<sup>36</sup> In this context, gender norms (such as ‘men are strong,’ ‘women are dainty’) belong to a ‘heteronormative’ discourse, in which ‘cishet’ is deemed the norm. ‘Queer’ will be understood then as anything that deviates from the heterosexual cisgender norm, meaning both LGBTQ+ identities and the ‘queering’ of cishet norms that Butler and Rich exemplify.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary defines ‘queer’ as “being a person whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and/or whose gender identity is not cisgender.”<sup>38</sup> Admittedly, this description may make it seem as if ‘cishet’ and ‘queer’ are a dichotomy, while in reality there is a much more complicated and dynamic relationship between the two. However, focussing on this complicated relationship would risk studying numerous nuances of a problem too complex and broad for the scope of this thesis.

## 2.4 Queer representation in Western media and musicals

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the work that has been done studying queer representation in Western media. For starters, in television, the popular series *Glee* is known for a wide variety of queer characters, but Dhaenens argues these gay teens are often portrayed as helpless victims or as striving to meet heteronormative standards.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, he argues that *Glee* portrays a more positive, vibrant, and confident version of these queer kids as well, meaning their representation is not limited to a one-dimensional stereotype.<sup>40</sup> In the context of twentieth century cinema, Dyer describes the typification of gay characters, where their ‘gayness’ can be read in several visual signs of a film.<sup>41</sup> In this era of cinema, the subtextual presence of gayness was a way for closeted LGBTQ+ people to see themselves represented or to place themselves in the scene through what Dyer calls “gay subcultural perspectives.”<sup>42</sup> However, this typification of gay characters could also mean reducing these characters to their gayness.<sup>43</sup>

Another critical point here is that in the twenty-first century it is no longer enough for queer representation to be only subtextual, implicit, and invisible, as becomes clear from GLAAD’s invention of the ‘Vito Russo Test’ and from queer fans posting video essays on YouTube to discuss

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<sup>36</sup> “Definition of ‘Cishet’,” The Queer Dictionary, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://queerdictionary.blogspot.com/2014/09/definition-of-cishet.html>; “cisgender,” Merriam-Webster, accessed June 11, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cisgender>; “heterosexual,” Merriam-Webster, accessed June 11, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heterosexual>.

<sup>37</sup> Brooker, *A Glossary*, 235.

<sup>38</sup> “queer,” Merriam-Webster, accessed June 1, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/queer>.

<sup>39</sup> Dhaenens, “Teenage Queerness,” 305 and 315.

<sup>40</sup> Dhaenens, “Teenage Queerness,” 305 and 315.

<sup>41</sup> Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 19-49.

<sup>42</sup> Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 24.

'queerbaiting' in television shows such as *Sherlock* and *Supernatural*.<sup>44</sup> The concept of queerbaiting originated from fandom discussions, although it is now used in scholarship as well.<sup>45</sup> For example, Juan-José Sánchez-Soriano and Leonarda García-Jiménez argue queerbaiting is a prevalent marketing technique in Hollywood, with large studios such as Walt-Disney Pictures proclaiming that their upcoming film will feature a LGBTQ+ character, only for the queerness to not be explicitly stated or shown in the film.<sup>46</sup> GLAAD has tracked similar trends since 2013, using the Vito Russo Test as a queer counterpart to the Bechdel Test, which is a critical examination of the representation of women in media.<sup>47</sup> With the Vito Russo Test, GLAAD studies whether queer characters in major studio films are explicitly stated to be queer, have character traits beyond 'being queer', and are able to contribute to the story.<sup>48</sup>

Focussing on (stage) musicals, James Lovelock argues that there are three common tropes in representing queer characters in musicals, namely: the drama queen, the drag queen, and the dancing queen.<sup>49</sup> These tropes boil down queerness to being an over-the-top, sexually ambiguous drag queen who dies by the end of the story.<sup>50</sup> Lovelock adds that including a wider variety of queer people (bisexuals, asexuals, non-binary people, etc.) in the creation of musicals would open up these spaces to tell stories that go beyond tropes and stereotypes.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, John M. Clum describes the way three musicals represent their drag queen characters with a focus on their gender rather than sexuality, where the eventual story is then about exploring femininity through a male body.<sup>52</sup>

While there have been plenty of texts written about stories with queer characters doing drag or exploring genderfluidity, for example the musicals *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, there is not a lot of academic work to be found on more recent examples such as *KB* and *ETAJ*.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, it is important to be aware of how musicals with queer characters are in

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<sup>44</sup> Some notable YouTube creators on the topic are AreTheyGay, Sarah Z, Rowan Ellis, and James Somerton. "GLAAD Introduces 'Studio Responsibility Index,' Report on LGBT Images in Films Released by 'Big Six' Studios," GLAAD, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.glaad.org/releases/glaad-introduces-studio-responsibility-index-report-lgbt-images-films-released-big-six>.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Brennan, "Queerbaiting: The 'playful' possibilities of homoeroticism," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* vol. 21, no. 2 (2018): 189-206.

<sup>46</sup> Juan-José Sánchez-Soriano and Leonarda García-Jiménez, "The media construction of LGBT+ characters in Hollywood blockbuster movies. The use of pinkwashing and queerbaiting," *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 77 (2020): 95-116.

<sup>47</sup> GLAAD, "GLAAD Introduces."

<sup>48</sup> GLAAD, "GLAAD Introduces."

<sup>49</sup> James Lovelock, "'What about Love?': Claiming and Reclaiming LGBTQ+ Spaces in Twenty-First Century Musical Theatre," in *Reframing the Musical: Race, Culture and Identity*, ed. Sarah Whitfield (London: Red Globe Press, 2019), 187-209.

<sup>50</sup> Lovelock, "Claiming and Reclaiming," 188-191.

<sup>51</sup> Lovelock, "Claiming and Reclaiming," 191-192.

<sup>52</sup> Clum, "A Little More Mascara," 173-181.

<sup>53</sup> Matthew Henry, "A One-Inch Mound of Flesh: Troubling Queer Identity in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*," *The Journal of American Culture* vol. 39, no. 1 (2016): 64-77; Cameron Crookston, "Can I Be Frank with You?:"

conversation with heteronormativity, to ensure that cishet people are not foregrounded in a story about queer people. As my research starts from a constructivist view of media, I am critical of the real-life implications that the social construction of media representations can hold.<sup>54</sup> In this case, that means how reducing queerness to a heteronormative frame of reference does little to normalise or even celebrate non-normative bodies and identities.

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Laverne Cox and the Historiographic Dramaturgy of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*,” *GLQ* vol. 27, no. 2 (April 2021): 233–252.

<sup>54</sup> Hall, Evans and Nixon, *Representation*, xix-xxi.

### 3. Method

First of all, it is important to clarify that this research specifically studies the West End professional recordings of both shows (which were also shown in UK cinemas for a limited run).<sup>55</sup> Notably, the two musicals are here still approached as stage performances, meaning that for this paper these musicals are not classified as ‘films’ based on their recorded nature.<sup>56</sup> Parts of the analysis involve specifically studying lyrics or spoken lines, so the author consulted the official script for *ETAJ*, as well as a previously made transcript for *KB* (see appendix 7.1).<sup>57</sup>

To answer the main research question, textual analysis as exemplified by John Fiske has been used.<sup>58</sup> In this context, ‘text’ can be understood more broadly, including also audio-visual material such as television.<sup>59</sup> Through the use of textual analysis, Fiske argues, one is able to study the way dominant ideology is communicated through the different social, technical, and conventional representational codes in the text.<sup>60</sup> According to Fiske, social codes (clothes, behaviour) exist on the level of reality, which then get coded into a text (a piece of media) using technological codes (camerawork, music) to create conventional representational codes (narrative, dialogue) on the level of representation.<sup>61</sup> Both the levels of reality and representation inform and reinforce the ideological codes, such as capitalism or heteronormativity.<sup>62</sup> For this research specifically, Fiske’s explanation of textual analysis can then be used to study how heteronormativity as a dominant ideology is encoded within the text of these two musicals.<sup>63</sup>

The first step of my analysis was to compare the two queer characters from *KB* and *ETAJ* in terms of clothing, make-up, gestures, expression, and behaviour to get a grasp of how their queerness is communicated through social codes on the level of reality.<sup>64</sup> This was done through studying the songs that introduce the queer main characters: Lola in ‘Land of Lola’ (*KB*) and Jamie in

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<sup>55</sup> More recently, *Kinky Boots* was made available to watch worldwide for 48 hours on the YouTube channel ‘The Shows Must Go On!’, an initiative by Andrew Lloyd Webber to bring musicals to people’s homes during the COVID-19 crisis. “Kinky Boots The Musical To Be Screened In Cinemas Across The UK And Ireland,” LondonTheatre1, accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.londontheatre1.com/theatre-news/kinky-boots-the-musical-to-be-screened-in-cinemas-across-the-uk-and-ireland/>; “Everybody’s Talking About... Jamie in Cinemas,” Everybody’s Talking About Jamie, accessed April 3, 2021, <http://www.everybodystalkingaboutjamie.co.uk/everybodys-talking-jamie-cinemas/>.

<sup>56</sup> A recording or live viewing of a musical creates a different experience of the show, so it must be noted I have seen neither show live.

<sup>57</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 9-135; Zandvliet, “The Price,” 12-27.

<sup>58</sup> John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 1-20.

<sup>59</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 1-20.

<sup>60</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 11-14.

<sup>61</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 4-6.

<sup>62</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 4-6.

<sup>63</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 4-6.

<sup>64</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 4-6.

'And You Don't Even Know It' (*ETAJ*).<sup>65</sup> Additionally, I studied the lyrics and how the characters describe themselves, which helps reveal how the musicals present their queer characters to the audience. All of these aspects then helped answer the first sub-question about the introduction of the queer characters Jamie and Lola.

Next, I made a schematic overview of the songs from each musical, in order to get a general structure of the story.<sup>66</sup> I based my decisions on the standard of 'integration' in musicals established by Rodgers and Hammerstein, who argue that songs should further the plot, "flow from dialogue," and "express the characters who sing them."<sup>67</sup> In other words, songs ideally form the backbone of the story and reveal details about the plot and its characters. Therefore, creating a schematic overview of the musical's songs can indicate the musicals' general structure, relevant emotional moments, and story beats. In relation to Fiske's model, music then relates to the level of representation as a technological code.<sup>68</sup>

In the table for each musical (found in appendix 7.2 and 7.3), songs are ordered by appearance in the story and each song is numbered in the '#' column. The column 'Song title' contains the titles of each song and 'Sung by' refers to the characters who have solos and the ensemble singing backup.<sup>69</sup> The 'Context' column has information on relevant contextual details needed to understand the song in a nutshell. The column 'Function in plot' then explains how the song is related to the story and how it furthers plotlines or character arcs.<sup>70</sup> This category helps show whose storylines are often foregrounded in the different songs of the musical. I then used this schematic overview to base my findings on for answering the second sub-question about who is being centred in the story.

In order to answer the third sub-question, I analysed two scenes that show queerphobic behaviour, namely the scene in *KB* where Charlie has an outburst aimed at Lola on the level of her gender expression, and the scene in *ETAJ* where Jamie visits his father and gets called "disgusting" for putting on a dress.<sup>71</sup> Specifically, it is the queerphobic remarks in the dialogue that formed the focus here, in order to unravel the ideological codes of heteronormativity, homophobia and

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<sup>65</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 4-6; Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 13-18; See appendix 7.1, excerpt 1.

<sup>66</sup> See appendix 7.2 for the table of *Kinky Boots* and 7.3 for the table of *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*.

<sup>67</sup> Geoffrey Block, "Integration," in *The Oxford Handbook of The American Musical*, ed. Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf (Oxford University Press, 2013), 98-99.

<sup>68</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 4-6.

<sup>69</sup> The 'Sung by' column does not include characters with spoken lines, because if a character speaks in a scene but does not sing, it often means the character is being sung to. In other words: these characters are often not the one foregrounded in the song, or at least they do not get the opportunity to sing about their thoughts and feelings in that particular song.

<sup>70</sup> In the 'Function in plot' column, the note "cont'd" stands for 'continued'.

<sup>71</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 106-107; See appendix 7.1, excerpt 2.

transphobia. For *KB*, I also studied the consequences of Charlie's outburst in the scenes that follow afterwards to uncover what elements of the conflict are resolved and what is left unaddressed.<sup>72</sup> For *ETAJ*, I studied 'Ugly in This Ugly World', a song Jamie sings after talking to his father, with focus on how Jamie expresses his hurt and trauma regarding his father's rejection.<sup>73</sup>

Lastly, the finale and encore songs of both musicals were analysed, since the lyrics explicitly state a 'lesson to be learned', which reveals more on how queerness is represented in these musicals.<sup>74</sup> Notably, a finale song forms the conclusion of the musical, which means that the messages or themes presented in the finale will be the last impression the audience gets of the show.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, it is likely that the most important themes and storylines are highlighted in the finale, meaning that the main message of the musical could be deciphered from the finale song. Thus, the focus for this part was on deciphering the ideological coding present in the explicitly stated 'lesson' as well as the general phrasing of the finale song's lyrics, for example by looking at what associations the word choices evoke.

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<sup>72</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 3-5.

<sup>73</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 107.

<sup>74</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 131-135; See appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

<sup>75</sup> John Kenrick, "Elements of a Musical: The Score," Musicals101.com, accessed June 18, 2021, <http://www.musicals101.com/score.htm#Place>.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Introducing Lola and Jamie

Starting off, it is important to address how Lola and Jamie are introduced in their respective musicals and how their queerness is established. Although the opening song of *KB* shows a young Simon (Lola) skipping in heels, her proper introduction is in the song 'Land of Lola', where Lola is shown as a confident, openly queer adult.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, 'Land of Lola' is also the first time Charlie encounters Lola, so she is introduced to both Charlie and the audience at the same time.<sup>77</sup> In the song 'Land of Lola', Lola performs in her drag queen club and describes herself using phrases like: "I've got a lacy silken feel, with arms as hard as steel."<sup>78</sup> In this quote, "lacy silken feel" refers to her soft and feminine side, while "arms as hard as steel" refers to her muscly, masculine physique. Additionally, Lola calls herself "a potpourri of contradiction", which also hints at her complex identity.<sup>79</sup> Lola's costume for the scene reflects this as well: she wears (drag) make-up, a wig, a dress, heels, and breast forms to highlight her feminine side (see figure 2). Her masculine side is then communicated through not hiding her triangular body shape, broad shoulders, and muscular arms (see figure 2).<sup>80</sup> Therefore, Lola's queerness is made clear through both describing and showing the contradictions, or rather fluidity, of her gender identity. Notably, her sexuality is not mentioned here, although it is alluded to in 'What A Woman Wants', where Lola claims to love women instead of "blokes."<sup>81</sup>

In *ETAJ*, the opening song 'And You Don't Even Know It' is simultaneously the song that introduces Jamie. Sitting in a class about future career paths, Jamie starts to drift off into fantasies of becoming a drag queen.<sup>82</sup> In the scene before the song, it is established that Jamie is gay through dialogue: "Sorry Miss. Away with the fairies. Yeah yeah, gay kid, ha ha –."<sup>83</sup> The word 'fairies' (which can be used as a derogatory term for gay men) had caused his classmates to snicker, which is why Jamie's response is "gay kid, ha ha."<sup>84</sup> This line is then paired with Jamie leaning back dramatically, showing a limp wrist, as if to underline his own point (and joke) on being gay. Additionally, Jamie's

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<sup>76</sup> Whereas the opening song is more of a short hint towards who Simon (Lola) will become as an adult, 'Land of Lola' takes the time to explain the complicated identity of Lola. See appendix 7.1, excerpt 1, and appendix 7.2.

<sup>77</sup> See appendix 7.2.

<sup>78</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 1.

<sup>79</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 1.

<sup>80</sup> Some drag queens wear padding to create the illusion of broader hips, which balances out the broad shoulders of a male body, but in this case, Lola seems to only use padding to create the illusion of breasts. Therefore, Lola's masculine body features are not hidden away.

<sup>81</sup> Notably, whether 'love' here refers to romantic or sexual attraction is not clarified, and the use of words like "worship" and "adore" make it seem like this 'love' could also stem from women inspiring her drag queen career. Sullivan, *Kinky Boots*, 1:12:25-1:12:39.

<sup>82</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 9-18.

<sup>83</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 13.

<sup>84</sup> "List of LGBT slang terms: For gay men," Wikipedia, accessed June 24, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_LGBT\\_slang\\_terms#For\\_gay\\_men](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_LGBT_slang_terms#For_gay_men).

desire to do drag is expressed in the first (spoken) line of the song: “‘Cept the truth is, what I really want to be – is a drag queen.”<sup>85</sup> The rest of the lyrics mostly refer to Jamie’s dream of becoming a drag superstar.<sup>86</sup>



Figure 2: Screenshot of *KB* recording, this shot is the first time the audience gets a good look at Lola, at the start of the song ‘Land of Lola.’<sup>87</sup>



Figure 3: Screenshot from *ETAJ* recording, showing Jamie’s classmates divided into ‘camps’ of boys (left) and girls (right), with Jamie in the middle. The ‘catwalk’ formed by their desks is shaped like a cross, with a vertical line (on which Jamie stands) cutting the horizontal line into two sides (on which his classmates stand).<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 13.

<sup>86</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 13-17.

<sup>87</sup> Sullivan, *Kinky Boots*, 00:15:04.

<sup>88</sup> Morris, *Everybody’s Talking*, 00:06:09.



An interesting part of the song with regard to Jamie's queerness is the moment where the boys and girls are divided into two different 'camps', with Jamie standing in the middle (see figure 3). He acts as the moderator between the two groups, singing: "And the boys in the class go- And the girls in the class go-."<sup>89</sup> In the meantime, Jamie acts out both femininity and masculinity depending on which group is singing. As such, he forms a literal and figurative middle ground between the two camps of 'man' and 'woman', which hints at Jamie's aspiration to become a drag queen and explore gender. Lastly, it is important to note that Jamie's clothes do not contribute to introducing his queerness in the opening song, since he is wearing his (mandatory) school uniform: trousers, blazer, blouse, tie (see figure 3). Although he does wear make-up, heels, and dresses in a few scenes, Jamie mostly wears masculine clothing throughout the show.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, it is mainly through his behaviour and spoken lines that Jamie's queerness is established. Here, Jamie thus differs from Lola, whose physical appearance is much more important to establish her queer identity.

#### 4.2 Who takes the spotlight?

Although both Lola and Jamie are important characters in their respective musicals, this does not automatically mean they are centred in the story. Within the context of this paper, 'being centred' refers to being foregrounded and prioritized as a character, through the managing of storylines or introspective moments. For this sub-question, the answers will be based on the tables in appendix 7.2 and 7.3, which track the different character arcs throughout the songs of each musical.

Based on the table of songs, *KB* has roughly three character arcs, belonging to Charlie, Lola, and Don (the most openly queerphobic factory employee).<sup>91</sup> In addition, Charlie is the only main character with a romantic arc.<sup>92</sup> In addition, the table revealed Charlie has five solo songs (i.e. without ensemble or other singers): 'Charlie's Soliloquy' (all three versions), 'Not My Father's Son' (a duet shared with Lola) and 'Soul of a Man'.<sup>93</sup> Lola has two solo songs: 'Not My Father's Son' and 'Hold Me in Your Heart'.<sup>94</sup> In these solo songs, Charlie and Lola are able to express their feelings while singing alone, meaning that for the duration of the song, the audience's attention is focussed on that character. The character is then literally in the spotlight, thus being foregrounded. Thus, when Lola has two solo songs in contrast to Charlie's five, this means she has less opportunities to voice her thoughts and inner turmoil. What is more, a significant amount of the other songs Lola is involved in

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<sup>89</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 15-16.

<sup>90</sup> For example, at the start of the second act, Jamie strides into school with over-the-top make-up on after his first drag performance the night before. Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 87.

<sup>91</sup> See appendix 7.2.

<sup>92</sup> See appendix 7.2.

<sup>93</sup> See appendix 7.2.

<sup>94</sup> See appendix 7.2.

does not develop her character arc, but rather help others in their character arc.<sup>95</sup> For example, in ‘Sex Is In The Heel’ and ‘What a Woman Wants,’ Lola sings about femininity and masculinity as they exist within herself, which helps people like Don unlearn their assumptions.<sup>96</sup> However, Lola’s character arc, as established in her two solo songs, is about the relationship with her father.<sup>97</sup> This arc is not referred to in any of the other six songs she features in, excluding a short moment in the finale.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, Charlie’s arc is explored in three soliloquys, two other solos, as well as in non-solo songs such as ‘Take What You Got.’<sup>99</sup> Therefore, while both Lola and Charlie are main characters in *KB*, Charlie is centred in the story.<sup>100</sup> Here, it must be noted that there is nothing inherently wrong with Charlie being centred in *KB* – ultimately a story about his father’s factory – but it is important to study whether Lola is able to contribute to the story meaningfully, similarly to what the Vito Russo Test by GLAAD attempts to study.<sup>101</sup> However, Clum provides a more critical view on the musical and the centring of Charlie, arguing that *KB* presents Lola as sexless (due to lack of a romantic interest or storyline) while Charlie ends up with a girlfriend, thus endorsing heterosexuality.<sup>102</sup>

The song table for *ETAJ* reveals there are roughly three character arcs, belonging to Jamie, Margaret (Jamie’s cishet mother), and Dean (Jamie’s classmate and bully).<sup>103</sup> Of the songs in *ETAJ*, Jamie has three solo songs and Margaret has three solo songs as well, although one of these songs is a duet between Jamie and his mother (which I count towards both of their solo song totals).<sup>104</sup> Thus, the division of solo songs in *ETAJ* is more balanced with three to three, than in *KB* with five to two. However, *ETAJ* also features musical solos by Pritti (Jamie’s best friend) and Hugo (owner of the local drag store) that help Jamie along his journey, while not offering more than a glimpse into who they are as characters.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, beyond Jamie’s three solo songs, there are at least four songs in the musical devoted to furthering his character arc, whereas Margaret still has three solo songs. Ultimately, Jamie is the one being centred in *ETAJ* (as also the title of the show suggests), but his mother is given the opportunity to reflect on her thoughts and emotions as well. Thus, opposite to *KB*, *ETAJ* foregrounds the queer main character, while the cishet main character exists more to the

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<sup>95</sup> See appendix 7.2. A few songs that Lola sings in have not been marked as adding to her character arc, since these songs do not help Lola grow as a character. One could argue she grows by learning to work with others, but there is little reason to believe she could not work with others before, as she gets along with Charlie in their cooperation.

<sup>96</sup> See appendix 7.2, song 7 and 12.

<sup>97</sup> See appendix 7.2, song 9 and 16.

<sup>98</sup> See appendix 7.2.

<sup>99</sup> See appendix 7.2, ‘Take What You Got’ is song 2 in the table.

<sup>100</sup> Another indicator for Charlie’s foregrounding in the story is the fact that the musical starts with a song introducing Charlie, while Lola is only properly introduced about fifteen minutes later in ‘Land of Lola’.

<sup>101</sup> GLAAD, “GLAAD Introduces.”

<sup>102</sup> Clum, “A Little More Mascara,” 178-179.

<sup>103</sup> See appendix 7.3.

<sup>104</sup> See appendix 7.3.

<sup>105</sup> See appendix 7.3, song 3, 4, 7, and 10.

background. This of course does not automatically mean that *ETAJ*'s story is exempt from heteronormative narratives, much like the story of *KB* is not inherently heteronormative for its centring of a cishet main character.

#### **4.3 Representing queerphobia: the good, the bad and the transphobic outburst**

Moving forward, I shall address how a difference in cishet or queer perspective might have implications for how the story handles queer representation and queerphobia. Although both musicals have a 'queerphobic bully' character, namely Don in *KB* and Dean in *ETAJ*, who continuously attempt to antagonise the queer characters, the most notable storylines in these two musicals occur halfway through their second acts. In *KB*, Charlie loses his temper and insults Lola, and in *ETAJ*, Jamie gets rejected by his father. In the following I will address the nature of the queerphobic comments and the way the narrative then resolves the conflict.

In *KB*, Charlie spends quite some time arguing with his fiancée and employees before he turns to Lola.<sup>106</sup> However, his criticism of the employees' work is not on a personal level. When he addresses Lola, his remarks not only regard Lola as a person, but he is mocking her gender identity specifically. He calls Lola "daft" and argues she is fooling herself with the way she presents herself.<sup>107</sup> While these comments are queerphobic in themselves for denying Lola of her personhood and her right and freedom to present herself as she wishes and to be fluid in her gender presentation, Charlie's last remark stands out as explicitly transphobic. He says: "And Simon- yes. That's right: Simon. When you show up at the airport, try to look something like your passport photo, yes? For both our sakes."<sup>108</sup> What is important to note here is that this conflict takes place in the middle of the factory, with the other employees witnessing it. These employees have never heard Lola's 'real name' before, so they do not know who 'Simon' is, they only know Lola. This incident is similar to the experiences of trans people, who can get outed by other people who insist on using the trans person's 'deadname' (the name that was used before transitioning).<sup>109</sup> The fact Lola shared her real (or 'legal') name with Charlie, but not with her co-workers, means that Charlie crossed a boundary or possibly even forced her out of the closet by calling her 'Simon' in front of the others. Moreover, the mention of passport control in the context of airports also ties in with trans narratives. Trans people

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<sup>106</sup> The following analysis of Charlie and Lola's conflict has also been explored in a different context for a previous paper. For this paper, I made similar points about Charlie's transphobic remarks and the lack of consequences he faced for them, however I did not compare the scene to queerphobia in *ETAJ*. Moreover, the main argument, method, focus, research question, etc. of this previously written paper are also different. Still, it must be noted a similar interpretation of this scene has been written out for a paper before by the author. Zandvliet, "The Price," 8-9.

<sup>107</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 2.

<sup>108</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 2.

<sup>109</sup> "deadname," Merriam-Webster, accessed June 20, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deadname>.

can in fact face dangerous consequences such as detainment or jailing for presenting as their true gender while their passport holds a different gender marker and photo.<sup>110</sup> Thus, Charlie's mention of this very real and dangerous experience trans people go through is hurtful and threatening, no matter whether Lola personally identifies as trans or not. The point is, Charlie's insults here draw on the discourse of real-life trans experiences and in doing so his insults are explicitly transphobic.

The problem here is not the transphobia and overall queerphobic remarks, and the issue is not that it is the main character saying these hurtful remarks. Rather, the consequences that Charlie ends up facing for these comments are the issue, namely that there are none. The rest of the employees do not mention the transphobic comments specifically and they leave Charlie behind for reasons established earlier in the scene. When they eventually return to the factory to help Charlie again, the transphobia is not addressed, but rather Charlie is forgiven for his general hot-headed nature.<sup>111</sup> When Charlie apologizes to Lola via voicemail, he does not apologize for his anti-LGBTQ+ comments specifically, but rather for losing his cool in general.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, when Lola arrives to save the day in Milan in the final scene, the transphobia is not addressed, with instead Lola's reason for returning being summarised in the word "adulation."<sup>113</sup> Considering Charlie's transphobic remarks are not specifically addressed or resolved in the plot, there is also no opportunity for audiences to see how such comments derive from a larger context of transphobia.

However, Charlie's queerphobic behaviour being accepted by his co-workers is not all there is to it, rather it becomes important to ask here who is centred in the storyline following the conflict. After the conflict, Charlie gets the opportunity to reflect on his actions in 'Charlie's Soliloquy (Three)' and 'Soul of a Man,' while Lola does not get the chance to do so too.<sup>114</sup> Even though one could say it is interesting to delve into the circumstances that have led to Charlie losing his temper in front of Lola and the other employees, it still begs the question why this humanising approach to Charlie is not extended to Lola as well. Showing how Lola is hurt by Charlie's queerphobic remarks might help shed a light on the internalised hatred and trauma that queerphobia can evoke in queer people.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Lucas Waldron and Brenda Medina, "When Transgender Travelers Walk Into Scanners, Invasive Searches Sometimes Wait on the Other Side," ProPublica, accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.propublica.org/article/tsa-transgender-travelers-scanners-invasive-searches-often-wait-on-the-other-side?>.

<sup>111</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 3.

<sup>112</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 4.

<sup>113</sup> Specifically, Lola says: "Don't go thinking it was your sappy phone calls that got me here. I have come for one thing and one thing only: adulation." For further context (although there is not much context to be found for this remark), see appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

<sup>114</sup> NB: I have chosen to not further analyse the songs that Charlie sings after the conflict, as their lyrics do not specifically reflect on his remarks towards Lola, but rather his outburst in the factory in general.

<sup>115</sup> Daniel Lyons, "What Is Internalized Homophobia? A mindful and compassionate look at our own biases," Psychology Today, accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/queering-psychology/202002/what-is-internalized-homophobia>.

Yet, Lola is not given the chance to speak on her experiences here. Therefore, the centring of Charlie in this story means erasing the real-life consequences of queerphobia on LGBTQ+ people. Ultimately, Charlie the cishet white man receives the spotlight and faces little consequences for his actions (that have actively harmed a marginalised community). Meanwhile, the black LGBTQ+ Lola is reduced to the role of teaching others about the quirky world of queerness instead of having a clear, enriching character arc of her own.

In contrast, Jamie is able to reflect on his hurt and trauma in *ETAJ*. Jamie visits his father, who calls him ‘disgusting’ for wearing a dress and heels at his drag performance.<sup>116</sup> In a previous scene, Jamie had shared with Pritti how his father caught him in a dress when he was eight, and that what his father said then made him feel ugly.<sup>117</sup> What his father said then is the same word he uses in this scene: ‘disgusting.’ After getting rejected by his father and hearing the word again, Jamie sings ‘Ugly in This Ugly World.’<sup>118</sup> The lyrics feature no synonyms for the word ‘ugly’ throughout its many repetitions (thirteen times in eighteen lines), highlighting the ruminating nature of his thoughts: Jamie feels nothing but ugly. Another line that stands out here is “the kid who came out wrong,” which reflects the feelings of self-hatred that the rejection by his father has caused within Jamie.<sup>119</sup> Being told from a young age that Jamie is disgusting for being who he is, he has internalised the message to the point where he feels wrong for being born this way rather than realising that his father is wrong for being queerphobic. Notably, this song follows directly after Jamie gets rejected by his father, meaning that audiences can witness the immediate impact of not being accepted by a parent as LGBTQ+ youth.

Thus, the main difference in how these two musicals handle queerphobia lies in whose perspective is centred. In *KB*, Charlie is given space to reflect upon the conflict, while Lola’s side of the story is left unexplored. In *ETAJ*, it is not Jamie’s father who bursts into song to express what circumstances in his life have led to him calling his son ‘disgusting.’ Rather, the audience watches Jamie sing about how queerphobia affects him, they hear the story from the side of the queer person affected. In terms of representing LGBTQ+ experiences, it is important that both Jamie and Lola are able to represent themselves, however in the case of *KB*, Lola is mostly witnessed through the lens of Charlie’s cishet experiences. Placed into the context of these queerphobic conflicts, it becomes rather problematic to leave out the queer character’s perspective, considering the violence, trauma, and structural oppression that affects queer people.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 106-107.

<sup>117</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 104.

<sup>118</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 106-107.

<sup>119</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 107.

<sup>120</sup> Waldron and Medina, “When Transgender;” Lyons, “Internalized Homophobia.”

#### 4.4 Feel-good messages on queerness

Lastly, the finale songs of both musicals explicitly state a ‘lesson to be learned’ in their lyrics, which will be further examined here. Starting off, the finale of *KB* has a very vocal message of inclusivity and tolerance, stemming from the two different choruses in the song, namely the song starts with ‘Raise You Up’ and evolves into ‘Just Be.’<sup>121</sup> The first part (‘Raise You Up’) has lyrics like “Celebrate you, to elevate you,” which evoke meanings of helping another person reach greater heights.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, the word choice of “celebrate” could be understood as referring to celebrating queerness in the context of Pride parades and celebrating emancipation as a marginalised community. In the ‘Just Be’ chorus, this theme is repeated in lyrics such as “Celebrate yourself triumphantly,” which again could be taken as a reference to the tradition of Pride.<sup>123</sup> Additionally, the line “Never let ‘em tell you who you ought to be” conveys a rather explicit message towards its (queer) audiences: be who you are without worrying about what others think.<sup>124</sup>

The most explicit ‘lesson’ presented in the finale comes during the part of the ‘six-step program’ (referring to the ‘twelve-step program’ from Alcoholics Anonymous), where central characters provide one-liners on what the audience is to take away from their story.<sup>125</sup> These six steps are:

Pursue the truth

Learn something new

Accept yourself and you’ll accept others too!

Let love shine

Let pride be your guide

You change the world when you change your mind!<sup>126</sup>

The last line is sung by Don, the most openly antagonistic and queerphobic character in the musical. When Don appears in Milan (where the finale song takes place), he is wearing red “Kinky Boots,”

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<sup>121</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

<sup>122</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

<sup>123</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

<sup>124</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

<sup>125</sup> What the meaning or purpose behind this reference to AA is remains unclear, since the six and the twelve steps are different in their content. Moreover, the twelve steps by AA are explicitly religious, while religion has not been mentioned in *KB* and religion and LGBTQ+ communities have a difficult history (to say the least). Since alcohol has also not been mentioned in the musical, it seems this analogy or reference has no clear relation to the plot. “Twelve-step program,” Wikipedia, accessed June 21, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve-step\\_program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve-step_program).

<sup>126</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

along with the rest of his co-workers.<sup>127</sup> The juxtaposition of the man who insisted that masculinity depends on having a penis and wearing men's clothing now wearing thigh-high, fiery red boots without worrying about his masculinity adds to the message he sings in the 'six-step program.' Don has gone through a change of heart himself, so when he sings about the power of changing your mind, it sounds like he (as a character) is speaking from experience, rather than conveying a generalised message. Additionally, a line that stands out in the finale is the one Lola repeats from 'Not My Father's Son,' as she sings: "We're the same, Charlie Boy, you and me."<sup>128</sup> On the surface, this line is a hopeful message for equality, compassion, and acceptance, but runs the risk of oversimplifying the queer experience in order to achieve this feel-good message. After all, the 'gay panic defense' still exists as a legal defense in the US, many countries have the death penalty for being LGBTQ+, and in countries that have laws to protect LGBTQ+ people, heteronormativity is still prevalent e.g. through queer couples getting heckled for holding hands or kissing in public.<sup>129</sup> Thus, striving for equality must not come at the expense of ignoring the structural, legal, and social inequalities that still exist.

The finale of *ETAJ* has a message of being individual, being oneself, and allowing oneself to 'shine.'<sup>130</sup> The song starts with the four drag queens who helped Jamie singing the following lines:

So that's our story

But what's the lesson?

Well victory comes to those – who put a dress on!

Be individual

Don't act so samey

And don't fuck with a boy – whose name is Jamie!<sup>131</sup>

These lines express an encouragement to try new things and step out of your comfort zone. In other words, the drag queens argue that people should stop worrying about fitting in and trying to be like everybody else. Rather, being yourself and being unique is what makes you a "hero," a word Hugo uses to describe Jamie later in the song. In terms of queerness, some other lines stand out: "Out of

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<sup>127</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

<sup>128</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

<sup>129</sup> Cynthia Lee, "The gay panic defense," *UC Davis L. Rev.* 42 (2008): 471; "Hoe reageren mensen op zoenende stelletjes op straat?" BNNVARA, accessed June 24, 2021, [https://www.bnnvara.nl/artikelen/hoe-reageren-mensen-op-zoenende-stelletjes-op-straat?fbclid=PAAb1OkUWUzqFdy5Y5K8Oe\\_KzGz0fdZovCxyd\\_YluSt0zHUOMwBy3PkeFg](https://www.bnnvara.nl/artikelen/hoe-reageren-mensen-op-zoenende-stelletjes-op-straat?fbclid=PAAb1OkUWUzqFdy5Y5K8Oe_KzGz0fdZovCxyd_YluSt0zHUOMwBy3PkeFg).

<sup>130</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 131-135.

<sup>131</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody's Talking*, 131.

the darkness, into the spotlight” is reminiscent of how being LGBTQ+ used to be something done behind closed doors or underground clubs.<sup>132</sup> Being in queer in the ‘darkness’ was how the LGBTQ+ community has survived for centuries, but in recent decades it has become more accepted to be openly queer in public (i.e. to be ‘in the spotlight’). While in a literal sense, ‘spotlight’ likely refers to Jamie’s drag aspirations, it could also be understood as referring to the visibility garnered through queer representation in media and LGBTQ+ celebrities in the public eye.<sup>133</sup>

Another line related to queerness is “in a place where we belong.”<sup>134</sup> What this line speaks to more than anything is validation and the right to exist. Earlier in the show, a similar phrasing appeared in ‘Ugly in This Ugly World,’ where Jamie sings “There’s a place where I belong.”<sup>135</sup> Here, Jamie believes the only place he belongs is an ‘ugly world,’ expressing the internalised hatred he feels towards his queerness. Therefore, when Jamie repeats the line in the finale, not only is Jamie expressing his self-acceptance, but he includes the queer audience members in his statement. Surely “we” could refer to the general public: we all belong here, no matter how we may be different. However, in the light of Jamie’s struggle with being queer throughout the show, the line reads as an explicitly queer message. In this context, Jamie uses this line to speak to the queer people in the audience, to tell them “we belong.” Considering “In a place where we belong” belongs to the same chorus as “Out of the darkness, into the spotlight,” it is then likely that the ‘place’ Jamie refers to is ‘the spotlight.’<sup>136</sup> Therefore, *ETAJ*’s message in the finale – beyond a general ‘be yourself, do not be afraid to be unique’ – is that queer people belong in the spotlight and in the public eye.

Comparing the two musicals and their finale songs, it becomes clear both have positive, generalised messages on being yourself and celebrating individuality and uniqueness. For both musicals, this message can also be read in a specifically LGBTQ+ context. However, there where *ETAJ*’s main character is in direct conversation with queer audiences through using “we” to denote a sense of community, *KB*’s main character insists on the sameness and equality of cishet and queer experiences, thereby risking the oversimplification of queer oppression and discrimination.

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<sup>132</sup> Take here, for example, the gay subcultures Dyer discusses in his chapter on gay typification, Dyer, *Essays on representations*, 21.

<sup>133</sup> For example, the recent hit ‘MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name)’ by Lil Nas X has garnered a lot of attention for the way the black gay artist voices his homosexual perspective and religious trauma. At the same time, the backlash to scenes from the music video showing Lil Nas X giving a lap dance to Satan also indicates there is plenty of work to be done to normalise LGBTQ+ identities and their representation.

<sup>134</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 133-135.

<sup>135</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 107.

<sup>136</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 131-135.



## 5. Conclusion

All in all, the representation of Lola and Jamie as queer characters in their musicals *KB* and *ETAJ* respectively seems similar on a superficial level, although the differences in narrative and centring of the story result in two markedly different portrayals. On the level of their behaviour and clothing, both Lola and Jamie are established as queer through varying expressions of both femininity and masculinity, with Jamie established as a gay boy wanting to explore drag and Lola as a gender-non-conforming or simply gender-exploring drag queen. Another similarity is their finale songs sharing a strong positive message of being unique and oneself despite other people's opinions.

The first distinction to be made between the two musicals is that in *KB*, Lola is not centred in the story, but rather the cishet Charlie is. In *ETAJ*, the queer Jamie is centred, while his cishet mother plays a role in the background. In itself, it is not a problem for queer people to act as secondary characters to a plot, as Lola does in *KB*. However, the consequence is here that important elements of the queer experiences are overlooked, to the point that in *KB* Lola is reduced to the more joyful, sassy, 'entertaining' parts of her queerness. Compared to the role Jamie's mother plays in *ETAJ*, Lola has less room to explore her own character arc, and compared to other the storylines within *KB*, Lola mostly helps others along in their journey. Therefore, it seems at times that Lola is more a symbol or stand-in for queerness, rather than a queer *character*. However, taking into account the Vito Russo test, it cannot be argued that Lola does not play a significant role in the story, as she inspires, informs, and helps Charlie in creating "Kinky Boots" for drag queens. Yet, it can be said this role is very one-sided: Charlie, Don, and the factory workers learn about queerness through Lola's efforts and emotional labour, while she does not receive much agency in the plot in return. This then becomes a larger problem when Charlie's transphobic outburst takes place and Lola is not able to share her side of the story. Paired then also with the oversimplifying of queer experiences through the line "we're the same, Charlie boy, you and me" and *KB* holds little space for the more harrowing facts of queer life.<sup>137</sup>

*ETAJ* is then an example of how centring a queer person can provide space to explore the less glamorous parts of being queer, namely the violence, rejection, trauma, and the overall struggle, even when one has a supportive parent (his mother). This last point bears repeating: even with the support system of his mother, Pritti, and the drag queens, Jamie still struggles with his being queer because of discrimination and internalised homophobia. The point here is that having difficulty accepting oneself in a heteronormative society is part of being queer, although this message does not translate to Jamie being a miserable gay teenager throughout the show. Moreover, this message does not mean that *ETAJ* is exempt from heteronormative, or specifically cisnormative discourses.

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<sup>137</sup> See appendix 7.1, excerpt 5.

Notably, Hugo the drag queen tells Jamie “A boy in a dress is something to be laughed at – a Drag Queen is something to be *feared*,” a line Jamie repeats later in ‘Work of Art.’<sup>138</sup> The notion that men wearing dresses should be laughed at here suggests that only women and those pretending to be women can wear dresses, thereby nullifying the gender exploration that drag itself exemplifies. Although *ETAJ*’s story holds more space for queer experiences than *KB* and although *ETAJ*’s story addresses the effects heteronormativity has on Jamie, it is thus not exempt from heteronormative discourses.

It is interesting to note here that during the writing of this thesis, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2021 the UK government responded to a petition signed by over one hundred thousand people that asked to consider including ‘non-binary’ in the UK Gender Recognition Act.<sup>139</sup> The UK government’s response was to not reconsider the GRA.<sup>140</sup> This means that non-binary people in the UK, people that inhabit a similar genderfluidity to Lola, will not be able to legally identify as their true gender identity.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, heteronormativity is not only a buzzword used to criticise media, but it is an ideology that influences the way laws are made and countries are governed. Taking into account the constructivist approach of media scholars such as Dyer and Hall, social change can start with becoming aware of how media portrayals shape society. Therefore, when Charlie’s story is centred in *KB*, while leaving the impact of his transphobic behaviour unaddressed and Lola’s side of the story unexpressed, heteronormativity and the ignoring of non-normative voices is reinforced.

Due to the scope of this thesis project, the author chose to focus on the queer aspects of these musicals, although the intersection of queer representation and race is also an important factor that future research could explore. With Lola being a black character and Jamie being portrayed by both white and black actors, these musicals have paved the way for more black (LGBTQ+) actors to take on main character roles.<sup>142</sup> Another interesting tangent to be studied in future research is the way these musicals (and similar musicals such as *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*) reinforce gender stereotypes in their portrayal of femininity, for example by featuring only thin drag queens in *KB*.

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<sup>138</sup> Butterell, Sells, and MacRae, *Everybody’s Talking*, 40 and 64.

<sup>139</sup> “Make non-binary a legally recognised gender identity in the UK,” Petitions UK Government and Parliament, accessed May 30, 2021, <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/580220>.

<sup>140</sup> Petitions UK Government and Parliament, “Make non-binary.”

<sup>141</sup> Petitions UK Government and Parliament, “Make non-binary.”

<sup>142</sup> For example, the Broadway version of *KB* has featured Billy Porter and Todrick Hall in the role of Lola, both black gay actors. *ETAJ* has featured Layton Williams, a gay, mixed race actor.

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## 7. Appendices

### 7.1. Appendix 1: Transcript of relevant *Kinky Boots* scenes

What follows are excerpts of the musical's text, which I made for a previous paper for another course, although slight corrections and additions have been made.<sup>143</sup> For song lyrics, I have used the site Genius.com to as a source.<sup>144</sup> Spoken lines are noted word for word, to the best of my ability. I have noted the context and rough outline of different scenes: who does what, what is going on, and other relevant information. Notably, the excerpts have been listed in chronological order as they appear throughout the show. Certain parts of the song lyrics repeat chorus or other often used lines, so these repetitions have been cut to keep only relevant information in this transcript. I have used "(...)" to indicate the places where lines have been left out.

#### Excerpt 1: "Land of Lola."

Timestamp: 14:45-18:15

This scene takes place in the club where Lola performs, and during the song she has supporting vocals from her troupe of drag queens (here referred to as 'Angels').

[LOLA, spoken]

He's not the first man to fall for me and I promise, he won't be the last.

[LOLA]

Leave expectations at the door  
Just let your eyes explore  
My cinematic flair  
From my boot to derrière  
I've got a lacy silken feel  
With arms as hard as steel  
I am freedom, I'm constriction  
A potpourri of contradiction

Leave that humdrum place of glum behind  
Once you walk inside these doors, you're mine  
Now let me blow your mind  
And like shazam! and bam!  
Here I am, yes ma'am  
I am

[LOLA and ANGELS]

*Lola Lola*

And like je suis ooh-wee that's me Ebony

<sup>143</sup> Zandvliet, "The Price," 12-17.

<sup>144</sup> "Kinky Boots (Original Broadway Cast Recording)," Genius, accessed January 23, 2021, <https://genius.com/albums/Original-broadway-cast-of-kinky-boots/Kinky-boots-original-broadway-cast-recording>.

I am Lola *Lola*  
 Oh  
*Step in!*  
 Step into a dream  
*Where glam!*  
 Where glamour is extreme  
*Welcome!*  
 Welcome to my fantasy  
 We give good epiphany *We give good epiphany*

[LOLA]  
 So come and take my hand  
 And welcome to the land of

[LOLA and ANGELS]  
 Lola

[LOLA, spoken]  
 No need to be embarrassed  
 I like being looked at  
 And you like to look  
 I know a way to make us both happy

(...)

[LOLA]  
 Got Ginger Rogers' savoir faire  
 With the moves of Fred Astaire  
 I'm Black Jesus, I'm Black Mary  
 But this Mary's legs are hairy  
 I'm your cocoa butter bitch  
 Not just cookie cutter kitsch  
 I'll provide the unexpected  
 With a prize that's undetected

[LOLA and ANGELS]  
*Let Lola lift you to your highest high* Lift you to your highest highs!  
*Let's explore your flight of fancy tonight* Let's explore your flight of fancy tonight  
*She's gonna treat you right* I'm gonna treat you right!  
 (...)

**Excerpt 2:** Charlie's outbursts

Timestamp: 1:30:25-1:32:50

Before this scene takes place, Charlie has already been yelling at his factory workers for a while. He is under immense pressure, as is the rest of the company, to get the shoes ready for Milan. They have gone over budget, the shoes are not up to Charlie's standard yet, and Lola has decided to cancel the professional models in favour of her drag queen group who can do their own hair and makeup, to



save cost. Nicola, Charlie's fiancée, comes by to confront Charlie about their relationship, which causes them to break up. After snapping at everyone around him, Charlie has an outburst towards Lola specifically. In this scene, Lola is wearing makeup, a wig, heels, some sort of breastplate, and a dress. Their discussion is about Charlie wanting to hire women as models, while Lola wants to hire the Angels as models.

Charlie: "How do I get this into your head? We are marketing to the world's most sophisticated buyers."

Lola: "Half of whom probably watch the evening news wearing their wife's brassieres."

Charlie: "A newsflash for Lola: there are a whole lot of us who don't watch the evening news in brassieres."

Lola: "Well [indistinguishable] for you, but you ain't my buyers."

Charlie: "Then here's another newsflash: I am not flying all the way across Europe just to sell to your chums."

Lola: "We won't be selling to anyone if we can't get to Milan."

Charlie: "Then there is no reason to go if all we've got to show is a bunch of nancy boys stomping about in skirts. We need to show these boots on women."

Lola: "Women?"

Charlie: "You heard me."

Lola: "That was never the deal."

Charlie: "Well then the deal was wrong."

Lola: "What did that girl say to you?"

Charlie: "Look. I am not embarrassing the name of Price and Son by parading a planeload of misfits-"

Lola: "Misfits?"

Charlie: (cont'd) "-at the most influential footwear show in the world. Listen to me, Lola, these boots can be mainstream."

Lola: "Drag queens are mainstream. Just this morning I was offered a gig singing at a nursing home. A nursing home, Charlie, in Clacton."

Charlie: "And maybe that's just where you belong. Look at you, you're meant to be a businessperson. How many successful designers do you think go about camped up like the entertainment of low-rent [indistinguishable]"

Lola: "After all I've shared with you, you still think I'm wearing this for a lack of a pair of trousers?"

Charlie: "Look I get it, I understand. All of this froufrou, it protects who you really are, I heard you."

Lola: "You heard nothing."

Charlie: "I'm telling you, you don't have to hide! Once the industry sees your work you'll be able to stop all of this and have a normal life."

Lola: "You're a fool!"

Charlie: "Am I? I'd wager if we stood side-by-side and asked passers-by which one of us is fooling himself, most of the votes would swing your way."

Lola: "Ha!"

At this point, most of the factory's employees have gathered to watch the fight in disbelief. In the recording, there are close-ups of some of these employees.

Charlie: "Why am I the only one in here who believes in you?"

Lola: "You believe in my shoes. I am not my shoes."

Charlie: "No, you're a joke. You think you're being all mystical and deep representing the best of both sexes, but I'm here to tell you that all you are is daft! You say you want to be treated like a man, then start acting like one. Well, I'm sorry, but sometimes the truth hurts."

Lola: "The truth? The truth? We're done here."

Charlie: "And Simon- yes. That's right: Simon. When you show up at the airport, try to look something like your passport photo, yes? For both our sakes."

Lola leaves without a word, some female co-workers follow after her. The rest of the employees confront Charlie about what he said previously about the quality of the shoes, and when Charlie is still dissatisfied, they leave as well. None of the co-workers mention the fight with Lola, rather the focus lies on Charlie demanding too much of his employees in the name of impressing Milan, while he has no idea what Milan's industry is actually like.

**Excerpt 3:** Don has accepted Charlie

Timestamp: 1:40:27-1:40:43

After 'Charlie's Soliloquy (Three)', Charlie finds out that the factory lights are on. Inside, he finds his employees back at work. He is surprised and asks Lauren why they have returned.

(...)

Lauren: "Don done it. Lola challenged him to accept someone for who they are, and I'd say he rose to the occasion."

Charlie: "So Don got everyone back to work by accepting Lola?"

Lauren: "No, Charlie. You. Don accepted you."

(...)

**Excerpt 4:** Charlie's voicemailTimestamp: 1:42:00-1:43:53

Charlie is about to leave for Milan with Lauren and George, but tries to call Lola again, since Lola has not shown up for the taxi to the airport. Charlie leaves a voicemail for Lola. The following is what he says in the voicemail:

Charlie: "Hello, Lola. Guess who again. We're on our way to the airport, but there is a monumental hole where you should be, which is no surprise. Whenever you leave a room there is always a great big gap. Just how life with you is. Uh. Anyway, I- I want you to know that I don't blame you for being angry. The way I shot my gob off, I'd walk out on myself if I could. Leave it to me to finally find my passion and use it to hurt someone I love. Um. But forget me, forget Milan, forget the boots and the business. Uh, what I wanted to say was- If anyone ever tries to tell you you're something less than a man, then you have them see me. If being a man means being brave enough to take on the entire world, then you're the only man I've ever known. Certainly the best. You challenged Don to change his mind, but I'm the one who really needed that lesson. So, this is Charlie from Northampton telling Simon from Clacton he's so terribly sorry. Goodbye, Lola. And thank you."

**Excerpt 5:** FinaleTimestamp: 1:50:38-1:57:17

Charlie, Lauren, and George have arrived in Milan. Charlie gets on the catwalk to model the Kinky Boots, but struggles to stand up straight and walk forward. He trips and falls, and Lola appears. She is once again in full drag, with Price and Son's "Kinky Boots" on.

Lola: "Don't go thinking it was your sappy phone calls that got me here. I have come for one thing and one thing only: adulation."

Lola is joined by the Angels, of which each drag queen presents a different pair of the shoe line. The song "Raise You Up/ Just Be" starts.

Charlie: (spoken) "Thank you Lola!"

[LOLA]

Once I was afraid, but then you came along  
Put your faith in me and I was challenged to be strong  
When I lost my way, you were there to see me through  
Now let Lola lend some love and do the same for you!

[LOLA & ANGELS]

Feed your fire, to take you higher  
We'll light you up like a live wire

Celebrate you, to elevate you  
When you struggle to step, we'll take a helping hand  
If you hit the dust  
Let me raise you up  
When your bubble busts  
Let me raise you up  
If your glitter rusts  
Let me raise you up (and up)  
Raise you up  
Raise you up  
Raise you up

[CHARLIE]  
Never put much heart in anything before  
You strut into my life and help me go for something more  
Now I stand up for myself  
Now I stand out from the crowd  
Now I'm standing on high heels  
If Dad could see me now!

(...)

[LAUREN]  
I knew you had it in you  
I knew what you could do

[CHARLIE]  
You believed in me  
Let me be right for you

[LAUREN]  
Your stumbling days are done  
Now we're walking on air

[CHARLIE]  
I was a loose shoe but you need two to make a pair

[LAUREN, spoken]  
Wait wait wait wait hold it right there, buster! Are you saying you'd like to take me out?

[CHARLIE, spoken]  
Yes

[LAUREN, spoken]  
Are you saying you are Nicola are through?

[CHARLIE, spoken]  
Yes

[LAUREN, spoken]  
Are you saying you are *actually* available?

[CHARLIE, spoken]

Yes

[LAUREN, spoken]  
And you still like girls?

[CHARLIE, spoken]  
Yes!

[LAUREN, spoken]  
Oh... carry on!

[LOLA, ANGELS, CHARLIE & LAUREN]  
Feed your fire, to take you higher  
We'll light you up like a live wire  
Celebrate you, to elevate you  
When you struggle to step, we'll take a helping hand

Don appears in the thigh-high, red “Kinky Boots” of Price and Son. After his solo, all the other employees appear.

[DON]  
Look out, Milan  
Here comes Don  
And Don has brought some friends along  
When you start things out of certainty  
Then the ones you love  
Are gonna set you free!

[ALL]  
Feed your fire, to take you higher  
We'll light you up like a live wire  
Celebrate you, to elevate you  
When you struggle to step, we'll take a helping hand  
If you hit the dust  
Let me raise you up  
When your bubble busts  
Let me raise you up  
If your glitter rusts  
Let me raise you up (and up)

(...)

[LOLA]  
We're the same, Charlie Boy, you and me...

During this last line, younger versions of Charlie and Lola/Simon appear on stage, running to hug their fathers. Then they join the cast to dance in the background.

[ENSEMBLE]  
Just be  
Who you wanna be  
Never let 'em tell you who you ought to be

Just be  
With dignity  
Celebrate yourself triumphantly  
You'll see

(...)

[LOLA]  
Ladies—

[CHARLIE]  
—Gentlemen—

[CHARLIE & LOLA]  
And those who have yet to make up their minds

[CHARLIE]  
As people all over the world clamour for kinky boots  
It's time for us to get back to work  
But before we go, we would like to leave you with the Price and Simon secret to success:

[LOLA]  
Alright, now we've all heard of the 12 Step Program, have we not?  
Yes, but what you can do in 12, I want you to know that we all can do in 6! Ow, and it goes like this:

[ENSEMBLE]  
One! Pursue the truth  
Two! Learn something new  
Three! [NICOLA]  
Accept yourself and you'll accept others too!  
Four! [LAUREN]  
Let love shine  
Five! [CHARLIE]  
Let pride be your guide  
Six! [DON]  
You change the world when you change your mind!

(...)

After this, the cast sings and dances to the refrain a couple more times, and the cast bows for the audience.

## 7.2. Appendix 2: *Kinky Boots* song table

Schematic overview of the songs in *Kinky Boots*.

### Short clarification of the table:

‘#’: The number corresponding to the song, songs are ordered and numbered by order of appearance.

‘Song title’: The title of the song.

‘Sung by’: The characters who have solos in the song and the ensemble group that sings back up. This category does not include spoken text (some songs have spoken text in between sung lines), because often characters with spoken lines rather than sung lines are not foregrounded in the song.

‘Context’: Information on relevant contextual details needed to understand the song in a nutshell.

‘Function in plot’: This category explains how the song is related to the story and how it furthers plotlines or character arcs.

“cont’d”: a note in the ‘Function in plot’ column that stands for ‘continued’.

#	Song title	Sung by	Context	Function in plot
1	Price and Son Theme/ The Most Beautiful Thing in the World	Mr. Price, (Young) Charlie, Young Simon, Nicola, Ensemble	Mr. Price introduces his young son to the shoe making business. Through the magic of theatre, Charlie has suddenly grown up and is moving to London with his fiancée Nicola. Nicola points out an expensive pair of heels she would like Charlie to buy for their wedding. Young Simon (Lola) tries on heels, feeling happy and himself in them. Then Simon’s father yells at him to take them off.	Introduction to the main characters and the setting of the story. Start Charlie’s arc: not being passionate in shoe making and not wanting to become his father’s successor of the Price and Son factory, Charlie leaves home. Start Charlie’s romantic arc: his fiancée makes clear what she desires from Charlie for their wedding. Start Lola’s arc: She feels more at home in women’s clothing, but her father disapproves.
2	Take What You Got	Harry, Charlie	Charlie visits Harry (an old friend and son of his father’s friend) to ask for help with the factory. Harry gives him life advice instead.	Charlie’s arc cont’d: his dilemma becomes clear in this song: should he move to London, or stay behind and take on his father’s legacy (and save the factory)?
3	Land of Lola	Lola, Angels	Out on the street, Lola is accosted by men. Charlie	Lola’s arc cont’d: the first introduction of Lola, the drag

			comes to the rescue, but as Lola swings her boot in self-defence, Charlie is hit. He is taken to Lola's drag queen club. Lola performs a song introducing herself, backed up by her Angels. The song describes who Lola is – 'a potpourri of contradiction'.	queen persona of Simon. She describes herself in all her genderqueer-ness. Charlie's arc cont'd: he is plunged into a new world of queerness, one he is unfamiliar with.
4	Land of Lola Reprise	Lola, Angels	Lola continues her performance at the drag queen club, after having a chat with Charlie backstage. During the song, the focus switches between foreground and background. In the foreground is Lola's performance, in the background is Charlie's office. In parts of spoken dialogue, Charlie fires his employees.	Charlie's arc cont'd: Feeling like he cannot save the factory, Charlie fires his workers. Then, Lauren gives him an idea to save the factory. Charlie's romantic arc cont'd: Nicola is upset with Charlie, they start to drift apart from this point onward. Meanwhile, the sung parts speed up time in between the spoken parts.
5	Charlie's Soliloquy (One)	Charlie	Inspired by Lola, Charlie returns to the factory starting to design and manufacture a pair of boots.	Charlie's arc cont'd: working with the tools and leather he grew up with makes him feel connected to his father and childhood.
6	Step One	Charlie	Charlie takes the risk to make drag queen boots and goes through the process of design to final product during the song.	Charlie's arc cont'd: This song shows Charlie taking on more of a leadership role within the factory.
7	Sex Is In The Heel	Lola, Angels, George, Ensemble	Lola arrives in Northampton to review the boots Charlie made. In the middle of the factory, surrounded by Charlie's employees, Lola (in full drag) explains what makes boots and heels sexy. One of the workers, Don, reacts strongly to Lola. Lola makes a joke at his expense, outing herself as being a man in drag. The Angels provide backup singing and dancing.	Lola's arc cont'd: Lola's appearance in Northampton has implications for her personal safety as a queer person. Charlie's arc cont'd: Charlie learns more about drag queens and what they like about heels, which helps the process of designing drag queen footwear. Start Don's arc: Don is met with the confident, openly queer Lola and his first reaction is disgust.
8	The History of Wrong Guys	Lauren	Lauren, the worker who gave Charlie the idea to find a niche market to sell to, sings about	Start Lauren's romantic arc: this song first reveals her infatuation with her boss.



			having a crush on Charlie. During the song, Charlie promotes her to an executive position.	Moreover, this song provides comic relief.
9	Not My Father's Son	Lola (as Simon), Charlie	Lola, in men's clothing, is hiding in the bathroom. Trying to fit in by presenting as male did not work out for Lola. Charlie comes to comfort her. Lola shares her rocky relationship with her father, which Charlie can relate to. The last few lines of the song are sung together.	Lola's arc cont'd: Lola shares she does not feel confident in men's clothing. She also explains her relationship with her father. Charlie's arc cont'd: Charlie shares how he has very little passion for shoemaking. Both of their arcs connect: neither of them has become the man their fathers wanted them to become. Yet, these expectations still weigh them down.
10	Charlie's Soliloquy (Two)	Charlie	Nicola and her boss reveal that Charlie's father wanted to sell the factory. Charlie continues his plans for making drag queen boots, nevertheless.	Charlie's arc cont'd: Charlie is now fully committed to the factory, no longer worrying about what his father had planned for him. Charlie's romantic arc cont'd: Nicola is not understanding Charlie. Their future plans are shifting apart further.
11	Everybody Say Yeah	Charlie, Lauren, Lola, Ensemble	The factory has completed its first pair of "Kinky Boots." The factory workers all rejoice together, excited about their future. The Angels provide background dancing.	This song provides an energetic, positive, hopeful song to end the first act with a bang. It highlights the success of their first pair of "Kinky Boots."
12	What a Woman Wants	Lola, Don, Ensemble	Don is being queerphobic, and this is not the first time. Lola is fed up and involves the female workers in the factory in their conversation, asking them what they desire in a man. Don interjects with more traditional interpretations of manhood based on 'biological reality' of "penis equals man". The women list qualities such as 'compassion,' 'sensitivity,' and 'tender touch'.	Don's arc cont'd: Don is very uncomfortable with Lola's presence and is confused by who Lola is. He is confronted with the meaning of manhood being more complex than he thinks. This song starts the storyline of Lola and Don challenging each other.
13	In This Corner	Drag Queen, Lola and her supporters, Don	As part of Don's challenge, Don and Lola fight in a boxing match. Their supporters shout out insults to the other party.	Don's arc cont'd: Don realises Lola let him win. He seems to change his mind about Lola somewhat.

		and his supporters	Don starts to lose to Lola, but eventually Lola lets Don win.	
14	Charlie's Soliloquy (Three)	Charlie	Charlie reflects on his actions, after losing his temper with Lola, Nicola, and his employees.	Charlie's arc cont'd: Charlie is left alone to reflect (continues in next song) Charlie's romantic arc cont'd: the engagement with Nicola is broken off.
15	Soul of a Man	Charlie	Despite his efforts to be a good leader, Charlie has messed up and let everybody down. He voices his admiration for his father while reflecting on his own mistakes.	Charlie's arc cont'd: Charlie taps into his self-doubt, as he strives to be more like his father, who he feels possessed the "soul of a man."
16	Hold Me in Your Heart	Lola	Lola performs in drag in the nursing home of Clacton (where she grew up) The song holds themes that relate to Lola's relationship to her father.	Lola's arc cont'd: Lola is coming home as her true self, in a triumphant albeit emotional song.
17	Raise You Up/ Just Be	Lola, Angels, Charlie, Lauren, Don, Ensemble	Charlie walks out in "Kinky Boots" during the Milan show, but stumbles. Lola arrives in Milan and the presentation of their "Kinky Boots" becomes a success. Each character concludes their arc, shortly reflecting on what they have learned. Charlie and Lauren take a moment to confess their feelings and kiss. Don walks out in "Kinky Boots," having brought the rest of the factory along. Young versions of Charlie and Lola (Simon) appear on stage, running to hug their fathers. Present-day Charlie and Lola connect, repeating their musical theme. The song ends by offering the audience clear-cut steps on how to be more open and tolerant in a 'six-step program' (based on the 'twelve-step program').	Lola's arc completed: Lola chose to take her opportunity to shine in Milan. Charlie's arc completed: Charlie has learned from Lola not to worry about what others think and be confident in who he is. He has proved himself as a competent leader. Lola and Charlie's arcs on father/son relationships are highlighted. Charlie and Lauren's romantic arc completed: the two become a couple. Don's arc completed: He has learned from Lola, daring to walk in "Kinky Boots" confidently without it harming his masculinity. Don also sings one of the 'six steps,' showing he has changed his mind. The song provides a conclusion to the plot while repeating main themes.

### 7.3. Appendix 3: Everybody's Talking About Jamie song table

Schematic overview of the songs in *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*. The "(+ Reprise)" indicates that the reprise took place in the same scene (location, context, etc.) as the original song. The "Bus Station Reprise" is a standalone reprise, taking place several scenes after the original song's appearance.

#### Short clarification of the table:

'#': The number corresponding to the song, songs are ordered and numbered by order of appearance.

'Song title': The title of the song.

'Sung by': The characters who have solos in the song and the ensemble group that sings back up. This category does not include spoken text (some songs have spoken text in between sung lines), because often characters with spoken lines rather than sung lines are not foregrounded in the song.

'Context': Information on relevant contextual details needed to understand the song in a nutshell.

'Function in plot': This category explains how the song is related to the story and how it furthers plotlines or character arcs.

"cont'd": a note in the 'Function in plot' column that stands for 'continued'.

#	Song title	Sung by	Context	Function in plot
1	And You Don't Even Know It	Jamie, Miss Hedge, Kids	Jamie regards his future plans of becoming a drag queen star. His classmates and teacher do not know he has these dreams. Themes of 'boys versus girls' with Jamie standing in the middle.	Introduction of Jamie as a character. Start of Jamie's arc: he wants to be a drag queen, but is not quite confident to take the stage yet.
2	Wall In My Head	Jamie	Jamie reflects on his upbringing. His father's words have created a wall in Jamie's head. Prompted by trying on his new red pumps (a birthday gift).	Jamie's arc cont'd: a peek into his difficult relationship with his father and his own queerness.
3	Spotlight (+ Reprise)	Pritti, Girls	Pritti encourages Jamie to wear his heels to prom, along with a dress. Themes of 'spotlights' and audiences waiting for Jamie. The girls from their class sing backup, although they are in a separate classroom and not involved in the scene.	This song shows Jamie has a supportive friend who believes in his dreams. The song's themes could also be a metaphor for being visible as an openly queer teenager.

4	The Legend of Loco Chanelle (+ Reprise)	Hugo, Drag Queens	Hugo explains the story of his drag queen persona, Loco Chanelle. There are several characters portrayed by the Drag Queens from <i>Legs Eleven</i> (the local drag club).	Jamie's arc cont'd: he is introduced to the local drag scene, which allows him to explore queerness through performance, 'camp,' and the fluidity of gender.
5	If I Met Myself Again	Margaret	Margaret (Jamie's mom) reflects on her past with Jamie's father. Although she has regrets, she does not regret having her son.	Margaret's arc start: first glimpse into her relationship with her son and her son's father.
6	Work of Art	Miss Hedge, Dean, Kids, Jamie	Miss Hedge challenges Jamie to walk the school corridors with his badly drawn eyebrow make-up, in order to teach him a lesson. Dean provides taunts. Jamie takes the opportunity to shine, promoting his upcoming drag show.	Jamie's arc cont'd: he shows he is not afraid of other people gawking and takes the chance to perform. Dean's arc touched upon: first time he has a (meaningful) solo.
7	Over the Top	Loco Chanelle (Hugo), Drag Queens	After Jamie's encounter with Dean in a spoken scene, he does not dare to go on stage. The drag queens of <i>Legs Eleven</i> help him 'prepare for battle' and find his drag queen persona (and name).	Jamie's arc cont'd: the drag queens provide encouragement for Jamie to feel confident in his queerness. They help him fulfil his dream of performing in drag.
8	Everybody's Talking About Jamie	Kids	The kids from Jamie's class gossip about his performance in the drag club. Wild rumours are spread.	Furtheres the plot, showing Jamie's popularity is growing. Provides comic relief.
9	Limited Edition Prom Night Special	Jamie, Ray, Margaret	Jamie and Ray are excited about Jamie's new prom dress. Margaret is worried she may have let her son go too far, since the dress is (too) over the top.	Margaret's arc cont'd: she is worried about her son and does not want him to get hurt. She seems to ponder whether she is being a good mom.
10	It Means Beautiful (+ Reprise)	Pritti	Pritti tells Jamie that the Arabic version of his name means 'beautiful' and lifts his spirits. During the song, Jamie shares that his father caught him trying on a dress once and his father's choice of words made Jamie feel ugly.	Jamie's arc cont'd: the root of Jamie's insecurities with his queerness and the problems with his father are revealed.
11	Ugly in This Ugly World	Jamie	After talking to his father, Jamie sings about feeling ugly. His father had told Jamie that he felt disgusted by his son.	Jamie's arc cont'd: this song shows the impact and damage of his father's homophobic remarks.

12	He's My Boy	Margaret	After Jamie storms out, mad at his mother for lying, Margaret reflects on the two men in her life. She touches on the difficulty and hurt that comes from being a single mother to a teenage boy.	Margaret's arc cont'd: having to learn to let go of her son as he explores the world, she is reminded of her love for her son.
13	And You Don't Even Know It – Bus Station Reprise	Jamie	Jamie arrives at a bus station, visibly drunk. He is attacked by strangers on the street, who call him 'queer' to insult him. Hugo saves him.	Jamie's arc cont'd: in his lowest moment, he falls victim to a hate crime and queerphobia.
14	My Man, Your Boy	Jamie, Margaret	The two have made up, and they sing a duet as they reconfirm their love and admiration for each other. Jamie apologizes for distancing himself and not appreciating his mother's support.	Both Jamie's and Margaret's arcs connect here: they both do not need the love and approval of others (such as Jamie's father), they simply need each other. Notable here is the use of 'beautiful' in contrast to the theme of Jamie feeling 'ugly' in song 11.
15	The Prom Song	Kids	Prom night is here and the kids from school sing excitedly. The song ends with Pritti arriving in her prom dress, impressing her classmates.	Provides comic relief. This song is a tonal shift to bring the show out of the serious and emotional scene before it.
16	Finale	Ensemble (Drag Queens + Kids)	Different characters sing, touching upon important messages and repeating important lines. It ends with calling Jamie a hero and star.	Jamie's arc completed: he is the star of the show and is confident in his queerness and over the top personality, as these combine in his drag queen persona. This song relays the message to be learned to the audience, providing a conclusion.
17	Out of The Darkness/ A Place Where We Belong	Jamie, Ensemble	Jamie, dressed more fabulous than before, leads this final song. The bowing begins. It ends with Jamie claiming the spotlight before exiting the stage.	Encore to the finale. Repeating the main message.