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Shute

Gay Character Types

1)

Sissies are typically described as homosexual men who wish they were a straight woman. Evidence for this can usually be found in a character’s feminine clothes (like the crossdressers from the one in-class example of the two men who had to fit in with an all-women’s choir), a character’s general helplessness around men, either in the sense of dependency or in an erotic way (as in Ruby Rhod from *5th Element* (1997) and Bethany from *Jumanji (2017),* respectively), and in a character’s use as comic relief throughout the film. Jack Black’s character Bethany from *Jumanji* (2017) is a perfect example of a sissy character type according to these criteria. While his clothing is not as overtly feminine as the cross-dressers, it would be difficult to describe his clothing as masculine. He wears a strange safari hat, very circular glasses, and a plaid shirt and bowtie (at least in the CPR scene). He needed the hyper-masculine Dwayne Johnson to tell him how to perform CPR, and got aroused after hugging his male friend, highlighting both his helplessness around men and his character being used as comic relief.

2)

Butches are typically described in the opposite way: as a homosexual woman who wishes they were a straight man. Evidence for this can usually be found in a character’s masculine clothing, (The female lead in *Morocco* (1930) is introduced wearing a suit and top hat), masculine mannerisms (Calamity Jane looking down the singer’s dress and carrying a gun even got her called “mister” in *Calamity Jane* (1953)), and in the hostility and threat they present to straight male characters/audiences, challenging them for female attention (The character from *The Haunting of Hill House* fighting for her friend’s romantic attention against a male colleague comes to mind). Amy Jolly from *Morocco* (1930) is a great example of a butch character type. She wears a suit and top hat, as mentioned above, but she also flirts with other women in her act as a nightclub singer, which can be interpreted as both a masculine mannerism and as her emasculating straight men. Although not mentioned above, another key aspect of her character is that a man ends up “containing her” (in this case having her fall for him), and then subsequently abandoned her, leaning into the all too common trope of the Butch’s screen time ending in heartbreak or disaster.

(I’d reference more modern examples that aren’t from class but no matter how hard I tried to think of a character I came up with nothing, sorry!)