



1946's *Gilda* features the every-which-way romantic triangle of Rita Hayworth, at her most electrifying, plus Glenn Ford and George Macready.

Lewin's faithful 1945 adaptation of Oscar Wilde's queer fable *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, both MacLaine's terminally desperate lesbian celibate in *The Children's Hour* and Claire Bloom's "beautiful and sophisticated" Greenwich Village lesbian in Robert Wise's 1963 version of *The Haunting*.

"I think it's important, historically and culturally, to note the whole range of portrayals, be they critical or affectionate, condescending or empowering, and I think all those things can be seen in many of these films," Barrios explains. "There's as much to learn from the dogs as from the gems, sometimes more!"

There's even a whole night devoted to films exploring in various ways that same-sex tension can arise behind bars, including *Caged* (1950), "the ultimate women's prison melodrama," and *The Strange One* (1957), with a young Ben Gazzara as the head of a military academy and the object of a male underling's crush. (Among the few films Barrios wanted for the series but was unable to obtain are Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* and *The Sergeant*, a 1968 film with Rod Steiger as a repressed and conflicted gay commanding officer.)

As a queer film historian, Barrios acknowledges the trailblazing of the late Vito Russo, whose book *The Celluloid Closet* (and the much later documentary of the same title) was undoubtedly the first popular queer-centric study of film as it relates to sexual minorities: "Of course, without *The Celluloid Closet*, my work would not have been possible," he says.

Nevertheless, Barrios' approach, as demonstrated by the inclusiveness of *Screened Out*, has a somewhat different emphasis than Russo's sometimes doctrinaire demand for positive, celebratory queer celluloid images. The series includes such *Celluloid Closet* targets as 1961's *The Children's Hour*, with Shirley MacLaine as a schoolteacher tormented by her love for her colleague, Audrey Hepburn, and the Tennessee Williams-penned *Suddenly, Last Summer*, with Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift.

"It's good to take note of the time when [Russo] was writing *The Celluloid Closet*—the early '80s, coming off a ridiculously injurious era of gay representation in American films," Barrios says. "That was the immediate perspective he had.... It's always going to be the case that many of these films and characters are going to be divisive"—Barrios cites the over-the-top character played by Tyrell Davis in *Our Betters* as one at which "I've seen modern spectators flinch and cringe"—but "it's probably just in my nature to feel in many instances that the sheer visibility is the most important thing."

Barrios hastens to add that he doesn't shy away from citing some of the films "for the negativity, or the stupidity, of their portrayals," but he has an ultimately pluralistic and open-minded take on the historicizing of cinema from a queer perspective. *Screened Out* therefore includes both Monty Clift's "gay predator" in *Suddenly, Last Summer* and Albert

Barrios notes the ongoing tension between regressive and progressive attitudes toward queerness in the cinema, which has continued well past the immediately post-Stonewall moment where *Screened Out* leaves off, into the present. "You get something like *Brokeback Mountain*, which most people felt to be a major step forward...and then you're confronted with *Wild Hogs*, with stupid gay jokes and caricatures."

When asked whether he sees, overall, a trend toward progress for queers in film, Barrios demurs: "Seeing how this negativity [toward queers] continues even today is, I think, one of the most important reasons to see these films [in *Screened Out*]. You see something like *The Children's Hour*, made more than 45 years ago, and realize that we have not had a near-half-century of [uninterrupted] social progress since then. So I think it's necessary to see these films to not only chart how far we've come, but how far we—and I mean all of us—have yet to go." **jo**

Turner Classic Movies presents *SCREENED OUT: GAY IMAGES IN FILM* every Monday and Wednesday in June. For a complete schedule visit [www.tcm.com](http://www.tcm.com).

CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN is a Seattle freelance writer.



Shirley MacLaine (right) co-stars with James Garner in 1961's *The Children's Hour* as a schoolteacher tormented by her love for a colleague (Audrey Hepburn).

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