



# American Queer, Now and Then

*David Shneer, Caryn Aviv*

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queer [adj]: 1 differing from what is usual or ordinary; odd; singular; strange 2 slightly ill; 3 mentally unbalanced 4 counterfeit; not genuine 5 homosexual: in general usage, still chiefly a slang term of contempt or derision, but lately used by some as a descriptive term without negative connotations --Webster's Dictionary queer [adj]: used to describe a 1 body of theory 2 field of critical inquiry 3 way of proudly identifying a group of people 4 way of seeing the world 5 sense of difference from the norm -- David Shneer and Caryn Aviv, *Queer in America, Now and Then* Contrasting queer life today and in years past, this landmark book brings together autobiographies, poetry, film studies, maps, documents, laws, and other texts to explore the meaning and practice of the word queer. By this Shneer and Aviv mean: queer as both a form of social violence and a call to political activism; queer as played by Robin Williams and Sharon Stone and as lived by Matthew Shepard and Brandon Teena; queer in the courthouses of Washington D.C. and on the streets of hometown America. Contextualizing these contemporary stories with ones from the past, and understanding them through the analytic tools of feminist social criticism and history, the authors show what it means to be queer in America.

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