



## On Alastor, Aromantic Asexuality/Asexual Aromanticism, and “Good” Representation

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*This autie-ethnographical personal essay explores the author’s experience in the Hazbin Hotel (Season 1, 2024; Season 2, 2025) fandom as an arospec acespec vis-à-vis Alastor, who is aromantic-coded and semi-canonically asexual, with his asexuality being more embraced by the fandom than his aromanticism. He is also coded as having antisocial personality disorder and potentially autism. This essay interrogates what characters get to be considered good representation and what this implies about what real people get to be considered palatable within and outside of communities they/we nominally belong to, particularly in regards to aspec characters’ and real aspec people’s experiences of empathy or lack thereof.*

### **Content warning for ableism, saneism, arophobia, and acephobia.**

I have something to say about Alastor from *Hazbin Hotel*.

At the time of publication, I’ll have spent over a year saying it. Saying it in fanfic, in over 50 collages, in tumblr posts, in comments on Archive of Our Own (AO3), in messages to my friends. In memes. In art that made me cry. In every way I know how—and I *learned* how to do digital collage for a fannish challenge, because I had something to say.

It is only natural, as an academic, for me to write an essay too— a proper one, not just one of my very long Tumblr posts on these themes.

It is only natural, as an autistic person, to say what I need to say over and over. To borrow from autistic scholar M. Remi Yergeau, in one of my favorite essays of all time, “Clinically Significant Disturbance: On Theorists Who Theorize Theory of Mind,” this essay is a project I am embarking on “perseveratively, and echolalically, but mostly perseveratively” (2013, n.p.). I write in autie-ethnography, which is to say, from my own personal experiences as an autistic person.

I have something to say about Alastor.

I have something to say that I need to say loudly, because I’ve been saying what I have to say about asexuality, aromanticism, and autism specifically *vis-à-vis* antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) too quietly for too long.

I have something to say.

I hope you’ll listen.



And When I Say People, I Really Mean You (Yockey 2008, 41)

When I say I have something to say about Alastor, I really mean I have something to say about aromanticism, asexuality, autism, and ASPD. And when I say *that*, I really mean I have something to say about *me*.

It is not surprising that I like *Hazbin Hotel*. My oldest autistic special interest is musicals. It kicked off and was at its zenith when I was in middle school, and continued through high school. Getting into *Hazbin Hotel* has felt like a wonderful resurgence of being this passionate about something that isn't my *other* main special interest, politics. That said, part of the reason *Hazbin Hotel* has my autism by the balls is I've always been partial to Heaven versus Hell stories where we aren't rooting for Heaven; and that's because politics as process is who gets power, how they get power, when they get power, and why they get power. On the implicit flip-side, politics is who *doesn't* get power, how they're deprived of power, when they're deprived of power, and why they're deprived of power.

The plot of *Hazbin Hotel* is largely immaterial for this essay, but in a nutshell, Charlie, the Princess of Hell, wants to redeem Sinners by making them better people at the Hazbin Hotel so they will be spared Heaven's yearly genocide of her people. There's an ensemble cast with a host of other characters, but the character under analysis here, Alastor, is her facilities manager.

Rooting for a secret third option, *à la Good Omens* (2019); or Hell, *à la Hazbin Hotel* in Heaven vs Hell conflicts appeals to me as a queer person who went to Catholic school and was told I would go to Hell for my queerness—even at my most aroace, I've always been angled lesbian, and I knew that. As an autistic person too, there's appeal in rooting for the scrappy underdog we're told to hate just because they're different or didn't follow rules that don't make sense.

It is not surprising *Hazbin Hotel* became one of my special interests: Alastor is aroace. I always knew I was different from my peers growing up. I never got crushes; I didn't understand the appeal of porn; I didn't understand what “hotness” was. For a long time, I denied the possibility I was asexual, because that sounded like some made up bullshit Tumblr sexuality to me. You were either gay, straight, or bi, everyone was, and you could be anywhere along that line. I understood the Kinsey scale (1948), and I understand everyone was *on* it. Option X though? At first, I'd never heard of it. And then: No, no, that wasn't me. I was normal. I might be gay or bi, but I was normal. Relatively normal.

I never heard of aromanticism or the split attraction model in middle school. I insisted I couldn't be asexual because I'd had a crush (the fact that I had consciously picked my best friend to play-act having a crush on didn't matter, shh). One of my friends even pointed out it was a spectrum and I could be something like demisexual, and I went no, I don't experience *any* sexual attraction though. *I'm not fitting in any of these boxes*. I shut out the idea of it being a spectrum. I was normal. I was going to be so normal.

I ended up looking up the term asexual shortly after middle school to prove to a friend I wasn't.

That was not in fact what I proved. I discovered the split attraction model, I discovered aromanticism, I discovered graysexuality and grayromanticism; and my world turned upside down. Suddenly, everything made sense.

It became a huge part of my identity. I talked about it constantly. In retrospect, I turned the autistic power of a thousand suns on it, another special interest exploding onto the scene.



Being aroace, though, only explained *some* of why I was the way I was.

In my senior year of high school, my then-partner “Key” received a formal autism diagnosis.

Key and I were inseparable in high school. I transferred to a small private high school, where we met, because I was miserable at public school. For all of the grief my private Catholic schools in small-town Oregon gave me, I was in small classes in small schools where teachers had more time to devote to individual students. The first semester of ninth grade at public school was loud and overwhelming. When I say I was miserable, I mean it.

After a semester of me being so unhappy that it was making it unpleasant for my mom to be around me, my mom let me transfer to that private school after I did a shadow day there. She never let me forget how much more expensive private school was in a big city than in the small town we’d moved from. Nonetheless, I was very happy to transfer.

A year older and a grade ahead of me, Key decided to take me under his wing a bit. He invited me to my new school’s ballroom dance club, and it was a true testament to my desire to make friends that I decided to go. I’ve never been a graceful person, something my mom picked on me constantly for, but I ended up having a lot of fun. Outside of the lunch break dances, a lot of us would go to social dances nearby outside of school. It was great.

I decided to spend the next academic year in Germany. That private school was expensive, and mom wanted me to try the local public school again. The other option was living in Germany with my little sister’s dad.

The summer before I left for Germany, Key and I watched the first two seasons of *Star Trek: The Original Series* (1966) together. School got out before my summer job at Trackers started, so we had a good few weeks to really get into it. Once my job started, I didn’t have as much time to meet up and watch, but we still watched on the weekends.

I remember hanging out with Key in his living room, the day we were going to watch “Amok Time.” We knew it was a Big Deal for Spirk (the relationship between the characters Spock and Kirk), and we were savoring the anticipation of watching. We’d only get to watch it for the first time once, you know? So we were sitting in their living room, hanging out with his little sister, “Pie.”

Pie asked us who our favorite character was. “Spock,” he answered. He said Data would probably be our favorite when we watched *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987), because we were both probably autistic.

*“We’re both probably what?”*

*“I mean, I’m probably autistic, and anyone who’s friends with me like you are probably is too.”*

I excused myself to use the bathroom. I didn’t actually have to use the toilet, but I needed to not be there.

Key was waiting for me on the landing when I came out.

I think he asked me if I was okay, and I asked him what he meant by what he had said earlier. I think he said he meant what he’d said, that he was probably autistic and that meant I probably was too, it ran in his family, but we didn’t have to talk about it. I remember him asking me if I wanted to go to Vulcan/watch “Amok Time” now, and I remember feeling relieved when I said yes and he accepted that answer and moved on.

We didn’t talk about it again for over two years, until he was getting his formal diagnosis.

When that was in the works, he joked that once we knew about him, we’d know about me.



I pushed my feelings about it down. It could wait until we knew about him.  
And then we knew about him.  
And my world turned upside down again.  
Being aroacespec and finding the language for it and other people like me online  
meant there was nothing wrong with me. I was just queer; those were my orientations.  
Being autistic, though?  
Being autistic was always going to be another story.

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I always knew I was different from my peers growing up.

I missed social cues and sarcasm, had a hard time reading body language and facial expressions, and was overly literal. I didn't have very many friends, or really any friends at all, for a lot of elementary school. I never really learned how to tie my shoes properly, and to this day I still can't. I was picked last for every team sport in PE in middle school unless one of my friends was the captain.

I didn't like playing with other kids in kindergarten, and had to be pushed into it by my teacher. To my surprise, I liked it with one other kid. (Shout out to you, Samuel, you were a real one.)

I learned to read before anyone else in my class. I was constantly reading under my desk and wanted to read during recess too, but at some point the teachers made me stop. I was supposed to play.

Apparently, I played with toys wrong too, beyond wanting to play alone. I didn't line my toys up or sort them, but I would make tableaux with my dolls and imagine what they were doing. When my grandma and mom invited one of the neighborhood girls over to play dolls with me to try to make me more normal, she and my family were confused why I still wanted to play the same way I always played. I was confused why it would be different just because someone else was there.

One of my friends in middle school was diagnosed with Asperger's (the terminology at the time) when he was little. I wondered a lot about how similar we were.

So, no, it's not like it came out of the blue when Key said we were both probably autistic the summer after ninth grade.

What made it devastating was the fact that it didn't.

What made it devastating was that I'd been thinking about it for years. That I'd watched a documentary on autism with my mom and she'd say casually eugenicist and ableist things and the next morning make fun of me for needing my breakfast to be just so, just like the people in the documentary.

I couldn't be one of the people with Asperger's in the documentary though. Math was my least favorite subject in school, and I wasn't a wiz with computers either. Who knew if I'd be good at data entry? I'd never done it before. I could talk okay too.

I couldn't *really* be autistic. I was just *bad* at things.

Once in an argument in high school, my mom snapped at me “Stop being so aspie!” and I replied “What if I can't? What if I can't 'stop being so aspie' because I am?”

She responded “You'd love that, wouldn't you, because then you'd have an excuse.”

I stormed out.

My mother doesn't remember this. But I do.

I remembered all through high school. Every time I wanted a reason for why subtext or



social cues or fine motor control or loud/bright places or anything else were hard for me, well—I just wanted an excuse, didn't I?

Aphobia and emonormativity (emotional normativity) against neurodivergent experiences of emotion have the same roots: being socially disciplined for not feeling the “right” emotions. I'd argue that much, if not all, attitudinal aphobia is emonormativity: feeling certain feelings (romantic ones and sexual ones) is an integral part of what makes someone normal. Failure to experience them, or failure to experience them “normally,” is failure to be a person correctly. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. rattling off a list of things autistic people can't do and including “they will never go on a date” is not a coincidence or an outlier: it is the epitome of the overlap, the quintessential attack on a perceived non-normative emotional existence as a failure to live up to amatonormative ideals. Amatonormativity is “the widespread assumption that everyone is better off in an exclusive, romantic, long-term coupled relationship, and that everyone is seeking such a relationship” (Brake 2025, n.p.), which just so happens to be core to the reproduction of the family as a site of enclosure. We are failures to live up to fascist ideals of normal that reproduce fascist social fabric.

It is disheartening to watch other autistic people engage in the same eugenicist rhetoric and throw autistic people with higher support needs under the bus, who *will* never use a toilet unassisted, to take another example from RFK Jr.'s speech (2025), and it is disheartening to watch some of us respond to his claim about us never going on dates by pointing to their marriage instead of going “Hey, what the fuck is his problem? What's wrong with never going on a date if you don't want to?” It is, however, unsurprising. The tendency has been there for a long time, so much so that “aspie supremacists” are a well documented phenomenon, one that I feel no need to rehash here. We have a huge problem with shamefully distancing ourselves from people with the *other* low empathy disorders, ASPD and narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). This essay is in large part a documentation of my unlearning that, and I at least get to say that I'm divesting from that as a young adult. Watching my antisocial and narcissistic friends be used as punching bags, boogeymen, and meat shields by people who should damn well know better is infuriating.

As an autistic person who has been perceived as low empathy and as an aroace(spec), I am defined by absence. *I* do not like defining myself in terms of absence, but this is how society defines these things, particularly asexuality and aromanticism.

For my own part, I adore Tumblr user trickstersaint's poem, “an aromantic person is someone who (fill in the blank here)” (valentine 2024, n.p.). My aromanticism is “an explosion of frameworks,” not an absence (n.p.). In that same vein, even if I am no longer all the way asexual, I feel I see asexual shrimp colors from when I was more ace, ace ways of looking at sex that are freer and more expansive than allosexual people's generally are.

Autism is more complicated. Autism (and I do mean *autism*, not *autistic people*) is usually talked about in terms of *symptoms*, presence. But the autistic trait my mom and grandma beat me over the head with the most was my lack of empathy.

Lack is a funny word. It's commonplace, yet carries, in my mind, a distinctive negative connotation. Rarely does one hear about a “lack” of fascism, or killer bees, or bed sores. My “lack” of empathy was simultaneously pathological and my fault. I did it on purpose, but also couldn't change even if I wanted to. I was intrinsically, fundamentally, irredeemably bad; except no I wasn't, I had to try harder; but also every time I tried my hardest and it still wasn't enough, it was proof that I could never be enough; but also, I still had to *try harder*. If I wanted to stop being treated this way, I had to *try harder*.



When I was growing up, my mom and grandma pejoratively described me as a “psychopath” a lot. Even at the time, I knew that either I wasn’t and they were saying that just to hurt me, or I was and it wasn’t my fault. (I also couldn’t understand how my family being cruel to me on purpose wasn’t worse than me messing up accidentally.)

As a result, I grew up going “Fine, I may be low empathy, but that doesn’t mean low *compassion*, or that I don’t *care*. I care so, so much.”

I understand now that what I meant by “you’re just saying that to hurt me” is “you’re trying to pathologize the care, compassion, and empathy I *do* experience out of existence.”

Alas, kid-me didn’t have that strong of a handle on ASPD. It was still important to me that I *wasn’t* a “psychopath” or a “sociopath.” I didn’t have one of the actually bad-as-in-evil disorders. At worst, I had mild Asperger’s, you know, *bad at* social cues and can’t tie my shoes disorder, not *bad* as in *bad person* disorder. I could be good. I could be good. I was going to prove I could be good.

Even with that desire in me, I knew I hated how my mom talked about “psychopaths,” even when I wasn’t being described as one, even when I had (temporarily) proven my goodness.

If you construct low empathy people’s sheer *existence* as inherently immoral, then you are telling us the most moral action we can take is to kill ourselves. I remember pointing this out when my mom was expounding on the inherent evil of “psychopaths.” I said something to the effect of “Do you want them all to kill themselves? Is that what you want them to do?”

The reaction I received compelled me to say well, I guess if they felt bad about it, they wouldn’t be psychopaths, would they?

Knowing what I know now, that the suicide rate for people with ASPD is so much higher than the general population’s, I am extra angry about this. This should be no less of a tragedy than the autistic suicide rate being sky high too.

And while people with ASPD don’t experience guilt, that doesn’t necessarily preclude shame and self-loathing (though some don’t experience that either). And no one deserves to feel that way about things out of their control, about their internal emotional experience, which is not intrinsically harmful. I reject an uwu-soft-bean-noooo-don’t-feel-bad-about-yourself characterization of my experience as a prosocial (and egotypical) autistic person who forgets to remember to empathize with other people as I also reject an “I don’t like that. You need to kill yourself. You genuinely need to kill yourself” (3000s n.d.) attitude towards people with ASPD doing... the same damn thing, or doing their own thing a little to the left of mine.

I tried not to think about it very much in high school, just like I tried not to think about autism in high school. When I say “just like,” I mean it was the same anxiety. Autism was the *nice* explanation of what was wrong with me; it wasn’t just that I was bad at things but something was actually for real wrong with my brain. “Psychopathy” was the scarier one. These were not two separate anxieties.

Accepting I was autistic was like a dog that stalked me for nearly as long as I could remember finally catching me. ASPD was its shadow.

*“I would know if I was autistic, right?”*

*“Well...”*

And that’s when Key told me about James Fallon (he couldn’t remember his name at the time, but that’s definitely who he was talking about), the man who discovered he was a psychopath (the term he used) after scanning his own brain for research purposes. He’d had no idea.

*“But that’s different.”*

*“Why?”*



“I’m not a bad person.”

“Who’s saying psychopaths are bad people?”

“Everyone,” I wanted to say.

I was going through a “family emergency” at the time: My sister was in an in-patient program after nearly killing herself, and right before finals of my junior year too. Key dropped it.

By the time I was in “Ethics for Second Years” class (my third year at university because I spent a year in International Development & the Environment before transferring to Politics and having to start all over), I was better about this stuff. Better, but not yet the person I am now writing this essay.

I hated how my professor talked about “psychopaths” during our week on them. I hated how pathologizing our readings were. I hated how the readings and the lecturer treated empathy as having inherent moral value. I hated how they treated “psychopaths” as intrinsically evil and blurred the lines between internal experience and harmful behavior.

During the lecture, he asked for comments. I started saying how I wasn’t comfortable casting people with ASPD as intrinsically bad. I pointed out that ASPD is either a trauma disorder, or—and before I could get to “something you’re born with”—was cut off with “Oh, so you’re saying that because bad things happened to him, he can be an asshole and it’s not his fault?”

“No.” I pointed out he didn’t let me finish. I said some people are born that way. “Oh, so if you’re born an asshole, you can keep being an asshole?” He never let me rebut that.

Not in class, anyway. I wrote my formative essay on the gendered construction of emotion vs logic in Western mainstream philosophy and applied a disability feminist lens *vis-à-vis* autism and ASPD.

I did not get the highest marks on that paper, because it wasn’t what he wanted. I am glad I wrote that paper though, and that he had to read it.

Despite my attempts to stick up for people with ASPD in class, I remember asking my then-partner “Cirque” if they’d still love me if I had ASPD—not if I were suddenly changed, but if it turned out I was one all along.

They said they loved *me*, and whatever label applied to my brain wouldn’t change that.

I talked about it with my other then-partner—it’s more complicated than that but it’s not worth getting into here—“Cup.” They thought it was silly. I’m so good. Of course I don’t have ASPD. They never thought about whether I had ASPD. They wondered about themselves, though.

Then I felt guilty. I can’t express insecurity about my experience of empathy as legitimately a personal failing without hurting other people dealing with the same stigma, without harboring the belief that there is a bad way to be, a bad way to experience or not experience empathy.

I didn’t feel safe in that polycule. I pushed it down like a lot of other things. I had other things on my plate. We broke up after the COVID vaccine roll-out.

Then in early 2024, I watched *Hazbin Hotel* and met Alastor.

This time, I was ready. This time, I can say that my “lack” of empathy is an explosion of frameworks—or rather, all the work I put into my relationship with empathy had finally made so much gunpowder ready for a lightshow.



## Fireworks

My “lack” of empathy is an explosion of frameworks, and my involvement in *Hazbin Hotel* has been an explosion of fanworks and friendship. Shut out of society by COVID eugenics and dealing with chronic fatigue from Long COVID, getting into the *Hazbin Hotel* fandom and making friends has been, honestly, one of the best things that ever happened to me.

I’m being flowery when I say I met Alastor (because I don’t actually mean my plural friends with Alastor fictives in their systems). But I *did* meet some lovely people.

It started with RadioStatic Week. I’d very much liked the show, but the “your life is about to change” moment came with RadioStatic Week.

RadioStatic is the ship name for Alastor x Vox. Alastor styles himself as the Radio Demon, and Vox has a TV for a head. (Ship naming conventions in the *Hazbin* fandom could fill their own essay. I, personally, have come to be charmed by it.)

I watched *Hazbin Hotel* in an all night binge—I couldn’t wait another week to watch the next four episodes with the rest of the watch party. By the time Rosie said “I know *you’re* an ace in the hole!” in episode 7, I thought I might have been so delirious from exhaustion that I made up aspec representation I desperately wanted. But no, it was real— even if shitty, in that it conflates asexuality and aromanticism. (The joke is that Charlie is too young for Alastor to be *dating*, unless she really is outright implying “you two fuck! jk haha I know you don’t do that” when she followed that up to “Come now, Alastor, she’s much too young for you.”)

I can hardly blame viewers for missing it. I’m sure lots of people still don’t know that ace is slang for asexual. I rewatched the show in my target languages, German and Spanish, and in the dubs, the reference to his asexuality isn’t translated— though oddly enough, while the *dubs* choose to preserve the idiom, the subtitles choose to preserve the reference to asexuality.

And given fandom’s preoccupation with shipping? I assumed I wouldn’t be seeing much aroace Alastor in the fandom.

And then RadioStatic Week happened. And I saw someone else had tagged their work with Aromantic Asexual Alastor.

And they weren’t alone.

And the works were *good*. They were sensitive and nuanced and thoughtful. Aromantic asexuality got to be more than a throw-away joke.

I hadn’t made it up. Rosie *was* joking about Alastor being aroace.

And I wasn’t the only one who wanted to read and write stories about an aroace character where that’s a focus.

I have *never* been in a fandom as aspec as *Hazbin Hotel*’s. To be fair, I have never been this *involved* in fandom before. Even if my *Star Trek: The Original Series* special interest was *stronger*, it was me going hogwild with Key doing things like LARPing marrying each other as Kirk and Spock and celebrating our wedding anniversary every year until we broke up. Part of the *reason*, though, is fandom’s focus on shipping that is typically amatonormative and aphobic. Scrolling through a fandom tag leads to reading a slew of posts such as: “Friends don’t look at each other like that!” “They *obviously* have chemistry [they interacted with each other].” “Friends don’t do that [a basic kindness] for each other.” “Haha yeah they’re totally just friends [said with sarcasm].”

*Hazbin Hotel*, though, has a HUGE, active, thriving aspec fanbase. I’ve never seen this in another fandom before. I’d seen a handful of other people read Spock as acespec on Tumblr before, and that was about it. But this? It was nothing like this. This was a plethora of aspec



Alastor works created by a plethora of fans who were aspec themselves, as well as some who weren't.

It's honestly been *healing*. I've never been the main character in fandom before.

It isn't all sunshine and purple-and-green rainbows though.

Let me be clear, before I launch into my next point, and pre-empt the most uncharitable readings imaginable of what I'm about to say next:

Again, I can hardly fault people for *missing* the joke about Alastor being (aro)ace in the show. And not everyone who writes fanfiction or makes fanart engages with the social media of people who create the show itself, or other fans. (Although writing this made me consider how difficult it would be to be posting to AO3, or especially Tumblr, and miss that Alastor is aroace from engaging with the fandom, especially this far out past release of the show. But nonetheless, I leave room for the possibility of not knowing, which is not a moral failing.)

And I am not advocating for laws prohibiting anyone from writing Alastor as anything other than strictly aroace. That would be absurd. I state this plainly anyway, because I cannot fathom what people who kick and scream about being “allowed” to write Alastor as experiencing romantic or sexual attraction can possibly *mean*. No-one is taking your work off AO3 or Tumblr or any other site for it. The state is not going to exercise its might over you for it, and certainly not because aspecs have our hands on the levers of state power (we don't).

To the point I have been circling around making: aspecs are allowed to not like when people erase Alastor's asexuality or aromanticism in their work. And here I do mean *allowed*, because when I say I find it in bad taste and arophobic, I am not advocating for censorship. I am advocating for people to examine why they don't find aromantic or asexual stories worth telling, but I am not advocating for their work being scrubbed off the platforms they're hosted on. I'm not advocating for them not being “allowed” to write that. Strange as it might sound to alloromantics, “I find you writing Alastor as alloromantic arophobic” does *not* mean “I want your free speech taken away.” It is an enormously bad faith interpretation. It is reminiscent of fascists who use generative art and data theft machines, misleadingly called generative “AI,” demanding they not only be *allowed* to use art and data theft machines that use enormous amounts of electricity and poison the air, but be *praised* for the slop they generate via prompts. It is not enough to be “allowed”: they must be *celebrated* for it. It is an articulation of right to comfort, a pillar of white supremacy culture as articulated by Tema Okun (2021), in all things. Discomfort for being racist/arophobic is Not Allowed. White people/alloromantics must Feel Good All the Time. Fandom is for fun!!!!

I specify aromanticism there because that interaction did indeed happen between me and an alloromantic ace. If I am being entirely honest, the worst interpersonal arophobia I've experienced has often been from alloromantic aces, and I'm not alone in the aro community in reporting that. That, however, could be the subject of an entirely separate essay, so for brevity's sake I will leave it at: alloromantic aces are often very quick to throw aromantics under the bus to prove they are *not* us, and are relatively normal compared to us.

That enormously bad faith interpretation of “I think you erasing Alastor's asexuality or aromanticism to be in poor taste” stems from a desire to not only be *allowed* to create certain types of art, but to have that art celebrated regardless of content. It is an expression of right to comfort grasping for specious arguments.

It is instructive that that particular clash happened around Alastor's *romantic* orientation. I have encountered so many alloromantic aces who write Alastor as such, and seen so many fics where Alastor is ace and not aro. Fics where Alastor experiences sexual attraction



seem to me to be rarer, though they are certainly out there. I should, however, offer the disclaimer that I have not systematically researched this; this is my sense from having been in the fandom as an aroprime (as in, my aromanticism is more important to me) aroacespec person.

In cases where Alastor experiences sexual or romantic attraction, he is sometimes tagged with a gray-a identity. First, let me be clear that I am myself gray-a, and have dabbled in writing gray-a Alastor myself. (I’ve written a very small ficlet where Alastor is gray-aro like I was about Key; and I sometimes write Alastor as into kink but not into bodies per se, which is how I experience my a/sexuality currently.) I think gray-a people exploring their identities in fic is wonderful. I’m also very aware that there is no way of knowing who is gray-a among authors and other creatives, and I absolutely do not want to create a fandom culture in which people feel obligated to come out to be socially “allowed” to write particular identities.

I *do* wonder how many of those creatives *are* gray-a. (And yes, I’ve still never asked anyone if they are because of what they write, because that’s an awful thing to do.) It is hard for me to believe they *all* are. I would also feel more inclined to be charitable if they read to me like they *actually* wrote Alastor as gray-a, as moving through the world as someone gray-a, instead of Alastor sans the thing that barred them from writing their ship the way they wanted to. Alastor’s asexuality and aromanticism aren’t orientations to these people: they’re *obstacles*, as tumblr user wastraffamser (n.d.) said.

Being gray-aromantic, for me, was not becoming “basically alloromantic” when I got a crush and went on to date Key: I still identified as part of the aro(spec) community, and I often referred to myself, and still do, as aro simply as an umbrella term to identify with my community. I *moved through the world* as an arospec. My life had been shaped by being (strictly) aromantic up until that point, and the way I approached *dating* was informed by my time in the arospec community. Having broken up with Key, and not having experienced another crush since them, I very much identify with the aro community. In fact, while grayro is technically a more accurate term than “aromantic” for me, I still often identify as aro, just aro, because I don’t want people to think there’s any realistic chance of me developing another crush on them. (If it happens, it happens, but my point is that people generally aren’t as obnoxious about the possibility of an allo gay man or allo lesbian developing a crush on the “opposite” gender.)

It shines through when aspec people are exploring where he might fall in a gray area. It shines through when people approach that with care. (And it comes through when people think of grayromanticism as an aromantic basically unlocking alloromanticism and becoming more normal.)

For what it’s worth, alloromantic aces who made it this far: if you think arospecs don’t have an issue with it, at least, not the ones *you* know, please consider:

1. You have probably made it clear that you will accuse aromantics who call you on your arophobia/aro erasure of espousing pro-censorship views, or strongly imply that we hold them.
2. You have probably made yourself at the very least grating to be around for aromantics who are bothered by this.
3. We talk amongst ourselves (and alloromantics who Get It) when you’re not there. “The aromantics I know don’t have a problem with it!”: Are you sure, or are you just so insufferably arophobic on this topic that we don’t talk about how we actually feel about it with you anymore?



Let me address the other “argument” that comes up here: this is all silly fandom bullshit, and there are REAL issues queer people face.

Let me first say that this argument does not necessarily imply that aros qua aros aren't queer. People may truly bring this up to mean aromantic issues outside of fandom.

This “argument” is still largely if not entirely whataboutism.

I am deeply aware that aro liberation is feminism and anticapitalism. I have been active in aro community for about a decade at this point. I am *deeply* aware of arophobia outside of fandom culture. I can talk at length about some of my favorite points from aro Tumblr about amatonormativity, capitalism, and feminism; for example. But that's beyond the scope of this essay.

Which brings me to my final point on this topic: this is an essay about fandom. This is a discussion that occurs in fandom about fandom. One might as well point to *any* more serious issue outside of fandom and say “Why aren't we talking about that?”

To talk about erasure of Alastor's aromanticism (or asexuality) in fandom is “fandom wank.” To talk about the more serious issues alluded to in underhanded what-aboutism is “drama.” The end result is capitulation to alloromantic entitlement.

It is also not lost on me that the alloromantic ace who crawled into my DMs about it was a bootlicker for cops suppressing anti-Zionists in Australia, and wanted to not talk about it in the fandom server we were in. Because isn't fandom a space for centering not just alloromanticism but *fun*? Aromantics are spoiling “our” fun. Vivienne Medrano, the showrunner, has outright stated that she will not confirm Alastor's aromanticism because she doesn't want to ruin people's fun (Ashely Nichols Art 2019, 1:48:54). We simultaneously are excluded from being people who might want to have fun with a character who is like us in a meaningful way that is extremely rare in English-language television, and we ruin other, “realer” people's fun by expressing that desire. Right to comfort for alloromantics strikes again.

I deeply believe that, for example, border control only allowing spouses, in marriages they deem legitimate, and blood ties thought of as “legitimate” family is horrific and intrinsically arophobic, and I think border abolition as a goal is far more important than addressing aphia in fandom culture, and reading *Against Borders: The Case for Abolition* (Bradley and de Noronha 2022), the book that articulated that link between marriage and borders to me, is probably a better use of your time than arguing with arophobes on Tumblr. But when I am talking with other fans about fandom culture, I am *talking with other fans about fandom culture*.

I and other aspecs also deserve a space to take a break from The Horrors without being barraged by subtle or overt aphia. Yes, I worked on the fundraiser I manage for a Palestinian in Gaza today. Yes, I also played around in fandom and worked on this essay today, because I cannot burn myself out on addressing the violence of settler-colonialism and borders 24/7. I deserve to exist in fandom spaces, where I go for fun, without defending my existence as intrinsically rich and worthwhile as alloromantics' and allosexuals.'

It is not lost on me that the people who insist that this is trivial are people who spend hours and hours of their lives in this fandom. The aspec people behind our computer screens and phone screens engaging with allo people in this fandom are real people, and the time we all collectively sink into this is real.

I somehow doubt that the person trying to “both sides” cops and anti-Zionists in Australia would be keen to talk about how *Hazbin Hotel* handles genocide. One of my former friends pointed out that establishing angels at the head of the hierarchy in Heaven did not know



that Heaven is committing genocide is, frankly, fucked. Since writing this, season 2 has come out, and it has doubled down on woobifying or at least generating sympathy for genocidares. In a time when genocide is occurring in Gaza, Sudan, and the Congo.

When the genocide in Gaza is backed by tax dollars from America, where Medrano and so many of the fans live. The United States is more indirectly implicated in the genocides in Sudan and the Congo too.

Since watching “Fantasies of Nuremberg” (Geller 2025), I am particularly incapable of not seeing *Hazbin Hotel* as fascist apologia, whether the writers intended it to be or not.

Season 2 disappointed me, and on something as important as “Does the show actually know how to engage with genocide at all, a thing that the show hammers home over and over it is about?”

I leave the nigh-rhapsodic tone I wrote this in before its release as a testament to how beneficial this show was for me in terms of interpersonal connections and internal processing. Those particular halcyon days are over for me, but many of the friendships I forged here that have endured are not.

I used to participate in a broader section of the fandom. I’ve shrunk it down to the people who are on the level about being aspec, including being aro, and being neurodivergent, including “the scary ones.” I’m better off for it, though it was painful to let go of community I *had* felt at home in and then realized I was seen as a lesser person in.

Who is afraid of the Radio Demon?

Who is afraid of my present and past friends?

These are not unrelated questions.

Who is afraid of the Radio Demon being “bad” representation?

Who is afraid of my sociopathic aroacespec friends, for simply existing as sociopaths, or for making us prosocial aspecs look bad?

Who is afraid of interesting stories?

Not the people who I will be building community with as queerphobic, ableist fascism comes to bear on us all.

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