

Editor's Note

What is queer theory? Or, better yet, what is queerness? Language struggles to grasp at the spaces within which queerness exists, the time that it sifts through, the identities that it shapes, resists, troubles, and grounds. Queer theory aims to give definition to these abstractions, to drag the margins to the fore, and to render in vivid lines the contours of queerness. Queer theory provokes and troubles hegemonic notions of who we are as so-called normative or non-normative subjects and how we should behave. It resists the violence of identity politics and seeks to destabilize the heteronormative and cisgendered ideological constructions at the core of such a discussion. It is no more and no less than a challenge to the idea that gender and sexuality are part of the essential self.

The groundbreaking work of queer theorists such as Lauren Berlant, Leo Bersani, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Jack Halberstam, David Halperin, and Jose Muñoz (to name but a few) has transformed cultural theory in the last twenty years, where now queerness as a concept exists to be dismantled, reassembled, negated, reinstated, and, most importantly, questioned. The diversity of the articles in this issue, only two of which deal directly with the topic of what could strictly be called queer cinema, is reflective of the far reaching impact of queer theory and its many and varied applications.

This issue of *Cinephile* aims to further expand the framework within which queer theory exists today. We believe that the application of queer theory to film provides an especially fascinating avenue for pushing such scholarship toward new horizons and it is our hope that these articles will be at turns passionately defended and argued vehemently against. As *Cinephile's* first issue to focus on theory as a lens through which we better understand cinema, we hope these articles will take part in the ongoing ontological and epistemological conversations that lie at the heart of queerness.

We begin with an article by Lee Edelman that employs queerness as a disturbance in the order of meaning. In turning his gaze to *The Lodger* (Hitchcock 1927), Edelman explores Hitchcock's confrontation of queer negativity as the counterpart to the fetish. Next, Shi-Yan Chao profiles two documentaries from People's Republic of China, *Snake Boy* (Chen and Li 2001) and *Mei Mei* (Gao 2005). Chao

discusses the demonstration of queer agency through drag performance in relation to each film's subject, and explores how this performance is played out against the parameters of temporality and spatiality, or, as designated by Chao, queer chronotope. In an essay that bridges discussions of Irish cinema, the road film, and queer theory, Allison Macleod offers an interrogation of queer space and queer mobility in *I Went Down* (Breathnach 1997), positing that the film's queerness offers a disruptive portrait of masculine identity. In an essay that explores the intersection of queer theory with discussions of race and migration, Mario Obando Jr. offers a close analysis of Eugenio Derbez's recent film *Instructions Not Included* (2013). Obando enlists theorist Jasbir Puar in conjunction with critical Latino/a studies to assess the film's formation of queerness as conviviality. To end, Derrick King employs Alain Badiou's theorization of love as a radical act in conjunction with Jose Muñoz's theories of utopianism and futurity to recast the role of the queer rom-com in the 1990s.

I have many people to thank for helping this issue come to fruition, and I fear there is neither the space nor the words available to express my gratitude with any justice. Thank you to the authors who contributed such outstanding work to this issue, and to the tireless editorial board whose suggestions were invaluable to each article's publication. To the talented artists who contributed to this issue, you have my endless admiration and appreciation: Max Hirtz, whose beautiful images are perfectly coupled with each essay within these pages and Kerry Grainger, who produced this issue's teaser image and its flawless cover. My heartfelt thanks is also offered to The Department of Theatre and Film at UBC, especially Christine Evans, who is perhaps also owed an apology for the barrage of texts every time something went wrong.

I hope there is something within these pages that provokes and challenges you and leads you to question your assumptions about your own and others' identity. I hope that there is something you enjoy. And, finally, I hope that there is something that prompts you to take part in the conversation. After all, the question as to what queerness *is* remains open.

—Claire Davis