

WORLDS

Introductions to Queer Theory

Three videos by Antke A. Engel and Filmfetch (Tali Tiller, Magda Wystub), Hagen 2021



Video still (Engel/Filmfetch 2021)

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<https://e.feu.de/queer-theory-videos>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5Ago3RloT8&t=1s>

WORLDS – Introductions to Queer Theory

Voiceover

Queer theory is a critique of power which challenges binaries. Differences are more complex than opposites. We can desire complexity. And desire interferes with heteronormative power. But power also regulates desire, bodies, fantasies, the world.

Written text appears across the screen and recedes into the distance:

The queer rebels who attack from their subcultural base have scored another victory. The heteronormative empire is tottering. The spies have gained possession of secret plans to make gendered oppression last for ever. Will they save queer folk and bring sexual justice to the galaxy?

BALL (ki-wi)

What? The “good” queer rebels and the “evil” mainstream? If only it were so simple. We draw a boundary (hetero/homo, male/female, white/black, healthy/ill), divide people into one group or the other and have a snowball fight. Whoever’s snow melts first will sink into the sea. Lost.

// FN: Cohen 1997; Vujanović/Popivoda 2008

{CURLY BRACKET}

Luckily there will soon be no more snow.

JAGGED SHAPE

Yes, and conflicts are complex: Sometimes they’re about homophobia and transphobia in the middle of society. Sometimes they’re about racism, classism, ableism within queer movements. And sometimes they’re about how racism uses sexist clichés.

// FN: Haritaworn 2015; Dietze/Hashemi Yekani/Michaelis 2007

CONE (u-m/m-u)

That’s exactly why we need precise analysis of how the double helix of power and desire is formed differently in each case.

// FN: Engel 2011

[SQUARE BRACKET/LIPS]

*Desire for power.
Desire for solidarity.
Resistance which desires.*

BALL (ki-wi)

Analysing power shows that there are not only boundaries between different identities, but also hierarchies.

// FN: quaestio (2000)

CONE (u-m/m-u)

Queer theory asks: does desire reinforce the hierarchies? Or does it undermine them? When is desire heteronormative? How does it become queer? But also: are the state and the economy permeated by desire? Do they only know two genders? Do they make sex a state affair?

// FN: Probyn 1996; Heiliger 2015; Ludwig 2012

JAGGED SHAPE

You're talking theory. Others live or survive in worlds you can't conceptualise. In love, lust or suffering. Or all three.

Be concrete! Do you know queer subcultures? Which ones? Who do you share the world with? What do you know about the desires of the children who mine cobalt for your mobile phone?

// FN: Abbas/Ekine 2013; Chen 2014

BALL (ki-wi)

Yes, let's start close to life.

CONE (u-m/m-u)

Heteronormativity? People should form monogamous, heterosexual couples. They should then start families and bring up children.

// FN: Ahmed 2006; Chambers/Carver 2008; Edelman 2012

Children whom they will call their property. To whom they will leave their property – or whom they will teach to sell their labour, their bodies and their desires.

// FN: Wagenknecht 2003; Preciado 2020

{CURLY BRACKET}

In a queer time and place there is no norm of reproduction, but gaga feminism.

// FN: Halberstam 2005; 2012

BALL (ki-wi)

So does it make a difference whether these are hetero or rainbow families?

//FN: Nay 2017

{CURLY BRACKET}

Why don't we ask a rainbow trout?

BALL (ki-wi)

Hetero, homo – both raise the question of how reproduction and care work and forms of love are involved in the global economy.

[SQUARE BRACKET/LIPS]

Queers are part of the global care chain.

// FN: Cruz-Malavé/Manalasan 2002; Laufenberg 2012

JAGGED SHAPE

A Filipino woman cleans for a white, gay couple in Wuppertal. In Manila, the children of various women who have emigrated live together in patchwork households. Contact via mobile phone. The call centres employ Indian trans people.

BALL (ki-wi)

And you think there are not just different perspectives on the world, but different worlds?

JAGGED SHAPE

Yes, exactly. That's why it matters which perspective you speak from! Because your perspective doesn't just situate you, it also opens or closes worlds.

BALL (ki-wi)

Worlds interlock with each other. But they have different levels of power.

CONE (u-m/m-u)

Queer seeks to name these differences. They are multi-dimensional, ambiguous and conflict-ridden. Differences can be analysed with intersectionality.

// FN: Dietze/Hashemi Yekani/Michaelis 2007; Mesquita 2016

{CURLY BRACKET}

*Analysed! Always analysing! Queer theory is too cerebral.
People are drowning and fish are swallowing plastic.*

ALL

Become queer worlds. Worlds: one world, many worlds, to world, to be worlded (create worlds, become a world) = queer worldings.

BALL (ki-wi)

It's a shame that in German we don't have the English word "worlding".

//FN: Spivak 1990; Haraway 2018

JAGGED SHAPE

How would that help?

BALL (ki-wi)

Well, “worlding” emphasises the process whereby worlds emerge. Always more than a single factor: never only “humans”, “the patriarchy”, “capitalism” or “artificial intelligence”.

CONE (u-m/m-u)

Worlding and being worlded. Processes in which active and passive are not opposites.

JAGGED SHAPE

That sounds a bit too harmonious to me! This is about power! Where is the responsibility for change?

FN: Daring et al. 2017

CONE (u-m/m-u)

In the desire for different worlds!

BALL (ki-wi)

“Queer desire”? Desire which creates unexpected connections. Orientation without Orientalism?

// FN: Probyn 1996; Ahmed 2006

(ROUND BRACKETS) by CONE (u-m/m-u)

Desire which departs from violence?

BALL (ki-wi)

Nice idea. But unfortunately, “the nation” is often the object of desire. Then gays and lesbians join in with the patriotic love song.

//FN: Duggan 2003

[SQUARE BRACKETS/LIPS]

That’s what’s called homonationalism.

//FN: Puar 2007

JAGGED SHAPE

Queers who presume to subjugate the rest of the world – lovingly. Sexual politics which market LGBTI human rights as bestselling western exports.

// FN: Dhawan 2015, Weber 2016

BALL (ki-wi)

Or racist desire which blames homophobia and hate crimes on migrantised populations. So that the white so-called “majority” can claim tolerance for itself.

// FN: Haritaworn 2015, Çetin 2012

JAGGED SHAPE

I’d like to gobble up the rainbow flag.

BALL (ki-wi)

And then? Where would you go from there? And how?

JAGGED SHAPE

*Through the conflicts, towards queer sociality.
Billions of beings, single-celled organisms, multicellular organisms, non_human animals and cultural_technological artefacts share the planet. Do they create worlds – or are they prevented from doing so? Who creates? Who disables? Who resists?*

{CURLY BRACKET}

*Can we love nature ecosexually,
rather than heteronormatively producing a climate catastrophe?*

// FN: Mortimer-Sandilands/Erickson 2010; Reed 2015

BALL (ki-wi)

We need queer utopias. Visions of the future which allow us to move through the past and create a different present.

// FN: Muñoz 2009; Stüttgen 2014; Keeling 2019

[SQUARE BRACKET/LIPS]

Moving backwards as a strategy.

// FN: Boudry/Lorenz 2019

JAGGED SHAPE

*But the violence of the past isn’t over!
Slavery, colonialism, Nazism, and eugenics are still having an effect today!*

// FN: Povinelli 2011, McRuer 2006, Gopinath 2012

CONE (u-m/m-u)

Queer temporality calls the promise of progress into question. The future does not develop in a linear way. “Speculative fiction” experiments with the way the past could have branched off. And shows that freedom and solidarity could have emerged in the midst of violence.

// FN: Freeman 2010; Tinsley 2012, Hartman 2018, Macharia 2019

BALL (ki-wi)

Why should we grant a special cosmic status to humanity? How absurd is that – given the suffering and violence which humans have inflicted on other humans! How many are excluded from human status after being vilified as queer?

// FN: Butler 2009; 2010

JAGGED SHAPE

Racist animalisation and objectification. Ableist freakification. The pathologisation of trans and inter* people.*

BALL (ki-wi)

We need to break the status of the controlling subject. Because white, abled, Christian, cis straight masculinity is misunderstood as a sign of superiority?

// FN: Connell 2015

JAGGED SHAPE

Produce a crisis of masculinity. Draw attention to dependence and vulnerability. Decentre and denaturalise the masculine.

// FN: Waldmann 2019; Hashemi Yekani 2011

CONE (u-m/m-u)

Der klare Unterschied zwischen Mensch und Tier, Kultur, Natur, muss ad absurdum geführt werden.

[SQUARE BRACKET/LIPS]

*Gender is sex_underscoregender:
always simultaneously material, linguistic, natural, artificial
and techno-pharmaceutical.*

// FN: Preciado 2020

JAGGED SHAPE

Cyborg (simultaneously human_animal_machine_goddess) does not only question the categories of man and woman, but also the HUMAN.

// FN: Haraway 2012

[SQUARE BRACKET/LIPS]

non/human animals

// FN: Giffney/Hird 2016

JAGGED SHAPE

That's why we need worlds, open for odd-kin, for queer socialities and solidarities.

[SQUARE BRACKET/LIPS]

Multispecies, transhuman, humanimals, symbionts, hybrids

CONE (u-m/m-u)

Sympoesis, not autopoiesis. As in a pile of humus, change does not arise through solo action, but together. There is no autonomous action, and there are no beings that are clearly separate from each other.

// FN: Haraway 2018

BALL (ki-wi)

Instead of inter-action, intra-action. How is politics formed in intra-action? Is this queer politics?

// FN: Barad 2011, 2015

VOICEOVER

Pleasure in complexity, confusion and conflict – that's queer.

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