David A. Gerstner, “How Do We Look So Far? Notes Toward a Queer-Film Philosophy

DAG distinguishes theory and philosophy, and then how these terms should be related given the author’s interpretation of what queer-film theory as *expressed* **represents**: a “slippage between theory and philosophy, between the abstract and the material.”

JP: This is confusing but it amounts to the suggestion that **queer film-theory** is part of a challenge to the author’s belief that language itself embeds ‘hetero-ideology’, and hence that **theory itself is queer** because, in this case, it “de-naturalizes language….Queer theory lays bare the (heterocentric) device” **which is language/discourse** (on this view, culture is embodied through language) [700]

Upshot: in advancing a queer film-theory, these theorists are part of a materially real adventure (the reason is that for this branch of deconstructionist philosophy of language, **language is the lens through which reality is noticed, and hence through which it is determined in its nature**.

For this reason, any discussion of **ANY THEORY** necessarily entails **A RISK: That a living human reality will be hijacked and defanged** by the **dominant influences on culture that CONTROL LANGUAGE**.

All this raises a question: what is the point in a specifically queer philosophy of film?

JP: the article is hard to follow if you aren’t steeped in Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and other post-modern philosophers in the *continental* tradition, along with some other philosophers of language and culture that arose in the 20th century.

However, it can be simplified as presented by DAG: the project of any artform that addresses gay human beings must be to support and promote their experience, all in adverse cultural circumstances. Any theory of a queer artform had to beware of being coopted by the cultural that **controls language** (because theory *inevitably relies on language to be conveyed*).

Evidence: “….heteronormative and culture-industry ideologies work hand in hand since their fusion profits by the wish to sustain a progressive future. …. How might queer (film) theory resist such appropriation?” [701]

As DAG sees it, the proper task of any queer film theory is “the ceaseless disappropriation of every propriety” and this comes to the view that because the project of resisting appropriation is essential to the queer movement (which is not about *art* but about *forms of life that are multivarious*), since appropriation is antithetical to the queer project (read: to be incorporated into something that is actually foreign, and hence in conflict with what is being incorporated, i.e., each of the many differences between each of the specific forms of life that LGBTQ refers to).

DAG sees cinema as the artform that is by its very nature *moving,* and that since the same is true of the queer project, any queer cinema will also be moving, **even in respect to wherever cinema might be at any particular time and place**.

**II**

Teresa de Lauretis’s “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities, An Introduction” is perhaps where queer film theory began.

TdL “forcefully argues that to reimagine cinematic looks—via the camera, the filmmaker, and the spectator—is to, in fact, **queer the gaze**.” [JP emphasis; 702t]

**Queer-Film Theory/Philosophy and Didacticism in Artworks**

Given that Sections III through VIII deeply embed any investigation into what queer-film-theory or queer-cinema are by reference to what is clearly a politico-cultural-ethical project, to what extent **should art** address political-cultural-ethical projects?

DISCUSS!