

APC Podcast 2.1: Jonathan Katz on What's Left of Queer Theory Now?

Key terms & concepts

Queer Theory: Animated by a commitment to the radical contingency of the term 'queer' and thus subjectless critique, queer theory's scope and approach are notoriously difficult to define. At a minimum, queer inquiry challenges understandings of gender and sexuality as singular and stable. This critique extends also to the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy underwriting traditional lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) studies. Conceptualizing sexuality and gender as part of wider relations of power and normalization, queer thought explores a wide range of pathologized sexual subjects and desires beyond the figure of the homosexual. This includes non-normative heterosexual subjects such as sex workers, single mothers, and a multiplicity of queered racial 'Others'. Queer theory's refusal of a clearly bound referent object has produced insight not only on the mutually constitutive relationship between 'normal' and 'perverse' sexual subjects and practices, and thus the contingent and political character of sexual norms and heteronormative logics, but has made possible an engagement with 'regimes of the normal' beyond the sexual, nationally and transnationally.

Queer theory has produced some of the most innovative scholarship on a range of core concerns in political science and international relations, including war, geopolitics, globalization, sovereignty, colonialism, nationalism, citizenship, norm diffusion, migration, austerity, and the welfare state. While the rise of queer theory is commonly associated with 'the poststructuralist turn' of the late 1980s/early 1990s, this concern with destabilizing—queering—fixed notions of sexuality and gender can be traced back to at least the 1970s and the scholarship of lesbian feminists, most of whom self-identified as black and women of colour theorists. In politics and international relations, scholars such as Spike Peterson and Cynthia Weber published explicitly queer work as early as the mid-1990s. Most recently, debates have focused on the increasing inclusion of LGBT subjects in liberal states and markets. Under rubrics such as 'homonormativity', 'homonationalism', and 'pinkwashing', queer theorists examine the ways in which these reconfigurations of sexual norms and normativities ('the respectable LGBT') shape national and transnational political and economic orders.¹

Queer Studies : The study of sexual identity and its related cultural history. It emerged as the academic response to the Stonewall Riots in 1969, initially as a challenge to the academy, but very rapidly became a standard inclusion (albeit in a very tokenistic way) in most humanities and social sciences faculties. It would be an exaggeration to claim that Queer Studies has become mainstream, but its exceptional status is certainly a thing of the past. As a field it has become substantial enough to generate several subfields including Asian Queer Studies, Black Queer Studies, Queer Cinema, Queer Nation, and Queer Theory. Although the obvious point of focus for Queer Studies is gay and lesbian people, the deeper purpose of Queer Studies is to challenge the efficacy of such labels to begin with. It questions why society should allocate resources and grant privileges according to sexual orientation. In this respect, its² approach, which tends to be highly interdisciplinary, mirrors that of Postcolonial Studies, feminism, and race studies.

¹ (2018). queer theory. In (Ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations*. : Oxford University Press,. Retrieved 1 Oct. 2018, from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199670840.001.0001/acref-9780199670840-e-1743>.

² Buchanan, I. (2018). Queer Studies. In (Ed.), *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*. : Oxford University Press,. Retrieved 1 Oct. 2018, from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198794790.001.0001/acref-9780198794790-e-571>

The Gaze: For Michel Foucault, the process of being objectified and subordinated when we are surveyed by those with power. In Western society, the way in which (heterosexual) males have traditionally felt free to survey females visually; women have frequently been represented as the passive objects of this objectifying and 'active' gaze. This is both a symbolic reflection of dominant power relations in patriarchal societies, and at the same time a performance and mode of maintenance of such relations. Only since the mid 1980s have men themselves also begun to be publicly depicted as objects of the gaze, notably in advertising. The study of the gaze in visual culture is termed gaze theory.³

90s contemporary art movements and AIDS

ACT UP is a diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis. <http://www.actupny.org/>

Art in America: Before and After AIDS Crisis: <https://www.widewalls.ch/art-aids-hiv-america/>

AIDS, Art and Activism: Remembering Gran Fury: <https://hyperallergic.com/42085/aids-art-activism-gran-fury/>

Works by Jonathan Katz

[Hide/Seek : difference and desire in American portraiture](#)

[Passive Resistance: On the Success of Queer Artists in Cold War American Art](#)

[The Silent Camp: Queer Resistance and the Rise of Pop Art](#)

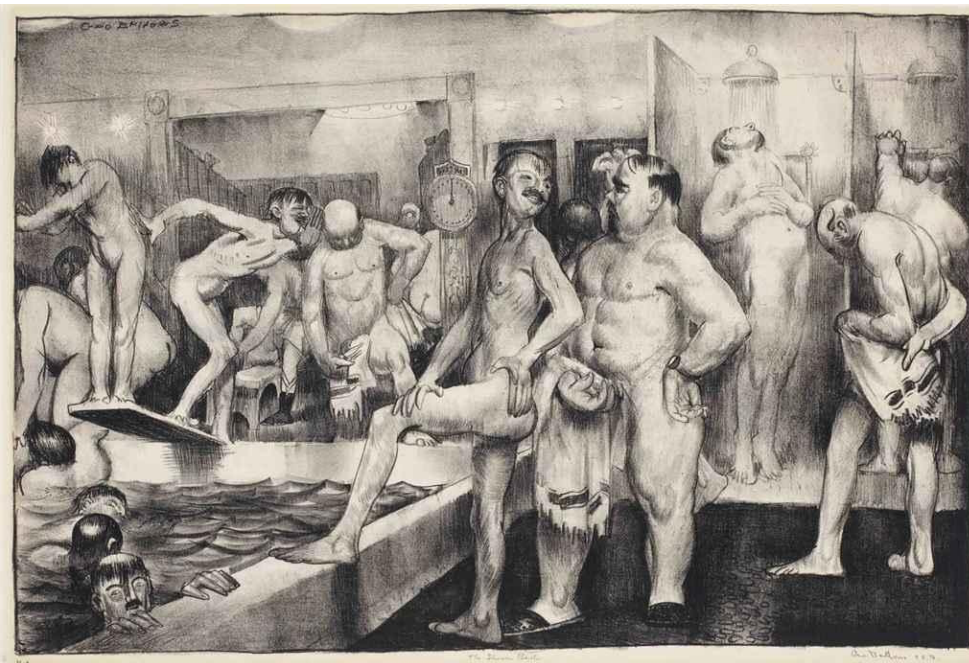
[John Cage's Queer Silence or How to Avoid Making Matters Worse](#)

[Art AIDS America / Jonathan David Katz, Rock Hushka ; Bill Arning \[and twelve others\].](#)

[The invention of heterosexuality / Jonathan Katz ; foreword by Gore Vidal ; afterword by Lisa Duggan.](#)

Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture

<http://npg.si.edu/exhibition/hideseek-difference-and-desire-american-portraiture>



George Bellows

Shower-Bath, First State, 1917
lithograph

L. 15 7/8 x 23 3/4 in. (403 x 603 mm.)

³ Gaze.Oxford Reference. Ed. Retrieved 1 Oct. 2018, from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095845418>.

⁴ <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Shower-Bath--First-State/50F3B31F0F034AB1>