

Queer Cinema in the World. By Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt.
Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016; pp. xii + 393, \$104.95 cloth,
\$27.95 paper, \$16.49 ebook.

Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt attempt a formidable feat in *Queer Cinema in the World*: to take three charged yet indispensable concepts and theorize their interconnections. A tour-de-force analysis of the triangulation between “queer,” “cinema,” and “world”, this coauthored monograph largely succeeds in drawing out threads between crucial issues in cinema studies, queer theory, and global studies. To address such concerns, the authors draw on a varied, often eclectic corpus of films from around the world that includes the expected art house films, crowd-pleasing blockbusters, straight-to-video fare, and more. The book’s analyses account for cinema as text, social experience, and cultural institution, echoing current concerns in the field of cinema studies, such as a renewed interest in social histories of filmgoing or the so-called affective turn. Except for the introduction, each of the chapters is self-contained in its analyses and reiterates the main issues of the book as a whole. The writing is accessible, and the authors take care to define how they mobilize terms such as neoliberalism or homonationalism. As such, the book could be used for graduate courses, and individual chapters could be used in upper-division undergraduate seminars.

The introduction sets out the terms of Schoonover and Galt’s project and addresses the existing scholarship on queer film and world cinema. Most of the chapters consist of detailed close readings of the cinematic corpus that Schoonover and Galt have amassed. The authors choose not to group such readings by genre, national origin, or auteurs, categories that have long over-determined how films in general, and queer films in particular, are interpreted. Instead, chapters follow a theoretical thread across various film examples and single out a handful of these as exemplary of the pitfalls and possibilities of queer cinema in the world. Despite eschewing traditional forms of film categorizations, these readings tackle traditionally cinematic issues such as figuration, allegory, and time. Schoonover and Galt thus suggest that reconsidering queer film in a global context provides fresh insights into the field’s longstanding concerns.

In the process, Schoonover and Galt put forth an argument not only for queer films' capacity for worldmaking, but also for cinema's renewed potential in an age of digital interconnectivity and the collapse of medium specificity.

In fact, the most rewarding readings in *Queer Cinema in the World* consider the interconnectedness between cinematic text, its conditions of circulation, and its publics. For instance, Chapter 1 opens with an anecdote about the premiere of *La Partida/The Last Match*¹ (Antonio Hens, 2014) at the BFI film festival. *La Partida* is a film about young Cuban men who turn to sex work with foreign male tourists. At the BFI premiere, the Cuban actors of the film joined the Q&A period via Skype because the UK's restrictive immigration policies forbade them from attending in person. Schoonover and Galt zero in on this resonance between Western publics' tourist gaze within and outside the film text, noting the air of condemnation for Cuba's purported repressive stance towards homosexuality at the same time that the UK's own repressive measures went unacknowledged. Further, the authors note how the facts of the event's sponsor, Accenture, and the predominantly affluent white audience implicate this piece of international cinema in labor outsourcing and Othering across its producers and audiences.

"Queer" in this book stands for more than representations of nonnormative sexual identities. It is a capacious category that also encompasses resistant formal strategies, counter-reading practices, and, more broadly, a critique of globalization as a homonormative capitalist project. Throughout, the authors pay careful attention to the myriad ways in which LGBTQ political issues have become implicated with neoliberal impulses, particularly around discourses of human rights and within the international film festival circuit. Likewise, the book astutely draws out how cinematic productions and their circulations implicitly perpetuate the trope of the Gay International, where a Western-inflected sense of "liberation" destroys indigenous sexual worlds through an expansionist logic. The strength of Schoonover and Galt's analysis lies in the fact that they draw on other scholars' already deep theorizations of the category of queer in situated contexts. In doing so, the authors build a meta-analysis that asks, what is it like to think "queer" in a global context? This provocation is no small task, and the book succeeds when its precise close readings lead to compelling conclusions around this question, like in the analysis of homophobic movies from Nollywood, Nigeria's global video industry, in Chapter 4 or in the critique of "faux slow" cinema, which purports to adopt a slow cinema style without committing to the style's political impetus, in Chapter 6.

Queer Cinema in the World manages to successfully expand, nuance, and revitalize both "queer" and "cinema," but it is the "world" part that often remains reified in these analyses. The authors most often mobilize "world" (as well as cognates such as global, transnational, and international) to refer to the geopolitical order of the planet humans inhabit. Other times, "worlds"—in plural—come to

signify the practices and imaginaries that shape human's social lives. The oscillation between both definitions functions like so: drawing on films produced in the world (geopolitical order of the planet), the authors conclude that cinema has the potential to figure new worlds (practices and imaginaries for alternative orders). For instance, in the conclusion to Chapter 3, the authors write, “[i]t is allegory that enables these modes to coexist, representing both dystopian and utopian gestures at once, speaking on the world stage while also figuratively transforming it” (166). Likewise, Chapter 5 ends with the affirmation that “queer cinema redistributes the sensible to articulate the stakes of belonging in the world for queer people” (257). That queer cinema can change the terms of engagement with the world, that it can force new worlds to emerge, is a valuable conclusion that acquires heft as it resonates throughout the various threads followed in each individual chapter.

Still, the chapter on queer film festivals (Chapter 2) stands out because it is the one that most starkly manages to theorize these dual conceptions of “world” in tandem. Film festivals have long been written about but seldom theorized. Schoonover and Galt contribute to this emergent literature by articulating how queer film festivals in particular create spaces and publics that forge different experiences of being in the world. The chapter analyzes three festivals: the MIX NYC festival, the Batho Ba Lorato Film Festival in Botswana, and the KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival. In their programming and event organizing, these festivals work towards creating alternate queer worlds (MIX), mainstreaming queer film (Batho Ba Lorato), or combining both impulses (KASHISH). Each festival's strategies speak to their situatedness in both issues of local import and gestures towards global resonance, and ultimately, all three examples demonstrate how queer film festivals at once belong to the world *and* build worlds. Further, the authors close the chapter with a discussion of festival posters in conversation with human rights discourse surrounding LGBTQ issues in the international sphere. The result is a multifaceted exploration of queer film festivals as sites for negotiating between present formations and future possibilities and, in turn, for articulating the radical potential of queer cinema to transform the world. In short, this is the affirmational conclusion that *Queer Cinema in the World* promises, and delivers.

Juan Llamas-Rodriguez

University of Texas at Dallas
USA

NOTE

1. Antonio Hens, *La Partida* (Malas Compañías, Doce Gatos, and El Azar, 2014). Performed by Reinier Díaz and Milton García.