The Queer Cinema of Derek Jarman: Critical and Cultural Readings


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Abstract

Derek Jarman has been called the "godfather" of the early 1990's cinematic movement now known as "Queer Cinema". "Queer" rejects labels, challenges fixed ideas of gender and sexual identity and refuses the status of a tolerated minority, and queer imagery dominates Harman's cinema. Yet there has been little attention given to this rich vein in his work. This is the first book to view Jarman's cinema through the analytical prism of "queer". Niall Richardson takes up queer theory and its debates, as well as the tension between theory and activism, to apply these issues to Jarman's cinema in critical readings of his films, with special attention given to Caravaggio, Edward II and Blue. Richardson enters the debates about queer sexuality and particularly the dynamics of sadomasochism in sexual relations. He considers alternative regimes of gender and sexuality, desire and its relationship to the body, and the political impact of such images. Although Jarman's films have often been praised for being allegories of political resistance, this book argues convincingly that the "queer" status of his cinema is as much indebted to the representation of alternative paradigms of gender and sexuality as it is to his portrayal of tendentious political battles.
Derek Jarman, Kicking The Pricks, 1996:108. Derek Jarman (1942–1994) is Britain’s most singular director and one of the most compelling artists to explore the moving image. In his short but expansive career, he completed 11 feature films that eschew conventional narrative and more than 60 Super-8 and 16mm montage films. I am tired tonight. My eyes are out of focus, my body droops under the weight of the day, but as I leave you Queer lads let me leave you singing. I had to write of sad time as a witness — not to cloud your smiles — please read the cares of the world that I have locked in these pages; and after, put this book aside and love.