

## Queering Contemplation: Finding Queerness in the Roots and Future of Contemplative Spirituality

**Cassidy Hall**

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Exploring what contemplative spiritual practice might look like if it grew beyond entrenched eurocentric, heteronormative, and patriarchal traditions, *Queering Contemplation* envisions embracing and celebrating the vast array of human experiences and perspectives.

Self-identifying as a queer white woman whose worldview is informed by her privilege, Cassidy Hall undertook to learn from people of color, disabled people, those with nonnormative gender identities and affectional preferences, women, and others at the margins of society. While the term “queer” has often been restricted to sexual identity contexts, Hall expands it to include unconventionality, oddness, eccentricity, and other characteristics that make it unpredictable, freeing, and resistant to outside control—traits that are anathema to a patriarchal, domination-based society. Such queerness, she suggests, lives in the heart of each human being and at the center of contemplative practice itself. With this in mind, her book explores potent questions including of who determined what contemplation should look like; of whose voices have been excluded, and why; and about what might happen if spiritual practice were opened up, widened, and made more inclusive.

Hall’s answers to such questions demonstrate that “queering” contemplative life deepens it, enriches it, and makes it more nourishing for the human spirit. While appreciating that contemplation requires periods of silence, stillness, and solitude, the book also presents the practice as generous and vast enough to include one’s whole, authentic self and all of the wondrous, unique variations of human experience. It embraces community, celebration, noise, and even dance. Using her own experience as an example, Hall writes, “My queerness and my contemplative life have become a union of joy, pleasure, and infinite possibility.”

*Queering Contemplation* is a sensitive and compelling text that examines what contemplative spirituality might look like if infused with “queerness.”

KRISTINE MORRIS (May / June 2024)

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