

## ABSTRACT

**RESEARCH PROJECT:** Awakening in Twilight: Reading the Queer Melancholic Aesthetic of

*Rift* (2017) as a Didactic Mode

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Departing from psychoanalytic readings of melancholy, this essay examines the 2017 Icelandic horror film *Rift* (*Rökkur*) directed by Erlingur Thoroddsen through an aesthetic framework of melancholy influenced by literary studies of queerness and trauma. Using that framework, this essay argues that *Rift* evokes reflection in both its protagonist, Gunnar, and spectators by occupying liminal landscapes, spatial topographies, temporal boundaries, and generic delineations, requiring both Gunnar and spectators to reevaluate their reductionist notions of normative categories. Through reflection, Gunnar reorients his ontology toward otherness, radically enacting that orientation in the final moments of the film. Mirroring *Rift*'s protagonist, spectators' own melancholic reflections prompt similar evolutions in ontological perspective and invite radical enactments thereof.