

**Furtive, Steady Glances: On the Emergence and Cultural Politics
of Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals**

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ABSTRAIT

Cette thèse décrit l'émergence des festivals du cinéma lesbien et gai aux États-Unis et au Canada, leurs significations et leurs dimensions politiques, à travers les contextes discursifs particuliers dans lesquels les festivals sont intégrés. Je propose que, si les festivals internationaux à caractère général opèrent dans des réseaux très bien définis, dans le cas des festivals organisés sur la base des catégories de sexualités minoritaires et de leurs communautés, la relation des films projetés au festival, les films du festival et aux spectateurs et aux spectatrices, et le festival à n'importe quel réseau de distribution de films, changent fondamentalement. Le but de la thèse est alors d'explorer ces changements et ces différences à travers une analyse comparative de certains festivals de cinéma organisés autour de catégories d'identités sexuelles minoritaires. Je propose que les festivals du cinéma gai et lesbien offrent un ensemble unique d'histoires et de structures qui diffèrent fondamentalement de celles des grands festivals de film internationaux. Les cas principaux étudiés ici sont des festivals à Montréal, New York, San Francisco et Toronto.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation charts the emergence of lesbian and gay film festivals in the United States and Canada, their meanings and politics, through the specific discursive contexts in which the festivals are embedded. I argue that while general international film festivals operate within a very well defined network, the added categories of minority sexuality and community crucially and fundamentally change the relationship of the films screened to the festival, films and festival to audience, and the festival to any network of distribution. The aim is then to explore those changes and differences through a comparative analysis of selected film festivals organized around categories of minority sexual identities. I argue that the lesbian and gay film festival poses a unique set of histories and structures that differ significantly from the general international film festival. The main case studies include festivals in Montreal, New York City, San Francisco and Toronto.

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INTRODUCTION

“It’s often the only place we can get our work screened and affirmed.” - Pratibha Parmar, Panel Discussion on New Queer Cinema

1.0 Introducing the Project

In *Furtive, Steady Glances* I argue for the importance of the lesbian and gay film festival as a cultural institution dedicated to an idea of community, situated in lived, urban space. This project charts the emergence of lesbian and gay film festivals in the United States and Canada, their meanings and politics, through the specific discursive contexts in which the festivals are embedded. I argue that while general international film festivals operate within a very well defined network, the added categories of minority sexuality and community crucially and fundamentally change the relationship of the films screened to the festival, films and festival to audience, and the festival to any network of distribution. The aim here is then to explore those changes and differences through a comparative analysis of selected film festivals organized around categories of minority sexual identities.

I argue that the lesbian and gay film festival poses a unique set of histories and structures that differ significantly from the general international film festival as described by Elsaesser, de Valck, and others. The main case studies include festivals in Montreal, New York City, San Francisco and Toronto, important cinematic cities in their own right.¹ *Glances* traces the emergence and rise of the

¹ See, for example, Lukinbeal (1998) on these cinematic cities.

gay and lesbian film and video festival in Canada and the United States over the last three decades through (1) the analysis of the competing discourses in the formation and development of the festival, for example, sexuality, politics of identity, public debate and policy, censorship; (2) the assessment of the significance of particular festival sites and venues within their respective urban, social environments as well as their role in the process of the festival's cultural legitimation; and (3) the analysis of the institutional support, namely governmental cultural policies and agencies and funding and private financial support.

In *Glances* I work through the three frameworks of spatial analysis, discursive analysis, and cultural policy, while situating the development of the lesbian and gay film festival in a constellation of overlapping economies, scenes, discourses, cultural practices, and spaces. While the project centers on North American festivals in a comparative continental analysis, there are also references to several select foreign festivals. I locate the film festivals in a cultural field, with competing internal and external tensions, for example, differing visions of purpose within the organization or larger community. I work through selected texts on public sphere theory to uncover and argue how such festivals trouble and contest the sharp division of private and public, since the festivals themselves are so deeply imbricated in the antecedent politics stemming from lesbian feminism and the gay liberation movement to current postmodern queer practices. Discourse plays an important role in my approach to the project. The "prose" produced in and around the festivals tells us much about the festivals

themselves, their staff, direction, anticipated audiences, but also about their social context, for no festival exists in perfect isolation. *Glances* confines itself historically to the period following the Stonewall riots of 1969, specifically from 1977 on, the founding year of the first gay film festival. The histories are rich and reveal competing visions and aims, and range from disputes over public funding to the so-called lesbian riots over the gender imbalance in festival programming.

The methodology follows from the theoretical framework. Concentrating on archival research, I have selected documents, for example, festival ephemera, press reviews, articles and catalogues. Their interpretation engages three general types of analysis, namely, spatial, discursive, and policy. The approach to the space of the festivals retains the tension between gay space, as used by cultural geographers (for example, Binnie 1995), and queer space, as found in performance studies (for example, Muñoz 1999; Halberstam 2003). Discursive analysis is used to interpret the documents and trace the changes in meaning of selected words and phrases, for example, 'community' and the idea of LGBT film festival itself circulating in each festival. Policy analysis situates the festivals within a larger institutional frame, particularly regarding public funding and censorship laws. I argue that the policy and legal framework undergirds and influences the limits of both the discourse (what is being said) and the spatial (sites permitted).

Glances is structured to move from the introduction of its problematic and methods to situating the project within the crucial professional discourses in the literature review. A history of the festivals situates them in the larger legacy of

international film festivals, other earlier community-oriented or alternative film festivals, as well as in relation to the development of associated social movements, and I argue that the LGBT festivals must be understood as a special hybrid between the international and community-oriented festivals. Next, I address the particular nature of the tensions between public and private spheres that constitute and characterize the festivals. The differences between the two countries along with their respective approaches to public funding and freedom of expression are sharp here; and I argue that in spite of these differences controversies still occur over the ostensibly private nature of the festivals – namely, the minority status of the group itself and public display of minority sexualities at another level. The following chapter addresses the question of imagined community and its changed, changing, and competing meanings in and about the festivals. I argue that the language of the festivals aims to reproduce selected strategies of inclusion that stem from the larger discourses of the social movement. Lastly, the final main chapter addresses the problems of taste, connoisseurship, and *cinephilia* that guide the festivals, in part, in their histories and evolving counterpublics, which I argue centers on the tension between professional art interests and community appeal.

Glances contributes to the hitherto under-examined history of this important community-oriented institution in Canada and the United States, with some limited potential for global claims. It aims to enrich the understanding of the significance of such organizations to their respective communities, as they have transformed since their emergence in the late 1970s. The project will provide a

critical synthesis of previous relevant work done on similar or associated institutions, while setting it in the context of Canadian and U.S. cultural policies and the associated cultural politics of the lesbian and gay movement.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

This project investigates the emergence of lesbian and gay film festivals in the United States and Canada, their meanings and politics, through specific discursive contexts that embed the festivals. I argue that while general international film festivals, according to Elsaesser (2005), operate within a very well defined network, the added organizational category of minority sexual identity crucially and fundamentally changes the relationship of the films screened to the festival, films and festival to community, and the festival to any network of distribution. The aim here is then to explore those differences through the comparative analysis of selected longstanding film festivals organized around categories of gender, minority sexualities and identity. I argue that the lesbian and gay film festival poses a unique set of histories and structures that both resemble and differ significantly with the international film festival.

The theoretical framework of the project has three distinct aspects, namely art worlds, publicity and the public sphere, and discourse. I survey the language of community, in its various guises, in the discursive formation, negotiations, self-definition and maintenance of the festivals themselves, but also in relation to space: namely the site of the festival. Anticipated community concerns tend to guide choices in programming, presentation, venues, program guide descriptions, types of sponsorship, etc., leading to, among others, such

apparently benign questions as “what can be considered a gay or lesbian film?,” “which community are we addressing?,” “how does the choice of venue or site influence the composition of the audience?,” and “how appropriate is this film, or program, to a general LGBT audience?” Lesbian and gay film festivals, always already staking a claim in sexual identities, began historically through the work of LGBT artists and activists, while the last decade or so has witnessed the strong influence of corporate sponsorship along with pronounced mainstreaming (for example, Sender; Bociurkiw); and, correspondingly, competing visions of audience and identification have come into being (for example, Gamson). The tension between professional artistic or engaged political work and conventional features appears to define the recent lesbian and gay film festival, all in the vague (and competing) name(s) of community.

Since Stonewall, the LGBT film and video festival and its cultures have rapidly and increasingly become important global phenomena, emerging throughout North America, first to large cities with significant lesbian and gay populations, then to smaller towns, and recently to most major cities around the world. The lesbian and gay film festival has shifted over the years from a strong base in the queer art and activist scenes to a broadened support base often accompanied by a more professionalized style and content. The festival network has become crucial to, if not mutually co-dependent on, the creation and circulation of films and videos with the theme of queer or minority sexualities. The annual festivals are as naturalized now as Pride parades and circuit parties, and are usually well

integrated into their respective host municipality's tourism and cultural funding policies.

Nevertheless, the histories of such festivals are fraught with internal and external struggle and contestation. The writing of individual histories often remains largely ad hoc and anecdotal, usually confined to reviews. Such festivals generally lay claim to speaking to and for, as well as calling forth, a sort of community based on sexual orientation through its activities as a cultural organization that selects and exhibits films of anticipated interest and as one that forms the context for social gatherings. The historical trajectory of this type of festival can be taken to be in part a series of crises in policy at all levels as well as in administration in the organizations, from their humble beginnings in private spaces to their current grand manifestation with financial support from major corporations and, in Canada, generally with cultural funding from all levels of government.

Attention to the festival's site, its physical environment of the architecture, interior design and cultural geographical location as well as to forms of administration and financial support will also inform my account of the changes in the organizations from crisis to crisis (compare with Elsaesser 2005). I work through Foucault's concept of heterotopia specifically in relation to the lesbian and gay film festival, and show how the event of the festival stubbornly retains an element of transgression, as Bakhtin contends in his work on the carnivalesque. Furthermore, I work through and contrast concepts of gay and queer space as a way of articulating the sites in relation to sexuality.

I adapt work in public sphere theory, notably Warner's theory of counterpublics and publics, while being informed by his study of the history of LGBTQ politics (Warner 2002). The festivals are well imbricated in these politics, from early lesbian feminism and gay sexual liberation through their transformation into the current postmodern queer practices.

While the question of its relationship to the process of cultural globalization is highly intriguing and important, the current study speaks only in passing to the international network of festivals. I am claiming at most a weak diffusion model that places the United States at its radiating center. I suppose lesbian and gay (or queer) film festivals outside of the country may have been inspired by the idea manifested by the San Francisco festival, but I will leave each relationship open to case-by-case studies and the cultural contingencies of their local sites. Similarly, it is not obvious that even those festivals in North America take Frameline's festival as their guiding model. I will leave this open to further research, again, case by case to avoid making unnecessary presuppositions, which I argue in the third chapter.

The theoretical framework for my work borrows aspects from and is in critical dialogue with Julian Stringer's recent work on film festivals (2003). He sets international film festivals in the theoretical framework of Howard Becker's functionalist art worlds, where an "art world" is a cultural formation constituted through the activities of all the players involved (Becker 1982). The art world of the lesbian and gay film festival would comprise the filmmakers, the programmers and festival workers, critics, queer scene journalists, festival-goers,

film distributors, among others. While this approach has a certain conceptual elegance and appears to work well in Stringer's rather synchronic analysis of contemporary international film festivals, I seriously question its adequacy in the case of lesbian and gay film festivals. Art world theory does not appear to adequately account for the differences in value, particularly prestige and stigma, between film festivals in the same network, or between types of film festivals in different networks. For example, certain international film festivals, such as Cannes or Sundance, far outshine others in, say, Sudbury or Lancaster. Furthermore, a premiere at Venice's Mostra or in Berlin would be much more coveted for (lesbian or gay) filmmakers in search of international media coverage and distribution contracts than a premiere at any gay and lesbian film festival. In place of Becker's art worlds, I am adapting Bourdieu's theory of fields of cultural production. Bourdieu states,

The field of cultural production is the area par excellence of clashes between the dominant fractions of the dominant class, who fight there sometimes in person but more often through producers oriented towards defending their 'ideas' and satisfying their 'tastes', and the dominated fractions who are totally involved in this struggle. This conflict brings about the integration in a single field of the various socially specialized sub-fields, particular markets which are completely separate in social and even geographical space, in which the different fractions of the dominant class can find products adjusted to their tastes, whether in the theatre, in painting, fashion, or decoration (1993, 102).

The struggle in the specific field of any circuit of film festivals strongly lends itself to such a framework for analysis. In brief, whereas the international film festivals have been sites of rebellion themselves, as they broke from the tutelage and close direction of governments to more (bourgeois-style) autonomous control, lesbian and gay film festivals have worked their way up from below. Never the darling of any government, they are a product of both the struggle with the state, for example, public funding and censorship laws, and internal debates, for example, over inclusivity and accountability. Moreover, Bourdieu clarifies the concept of a field further in his study of literature,

What do I mean by 'field'? As I use the term, a field is a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy. The existence of the writers, as fact and as value, is inseparable from the existence of the literary field as an autonomous universe endowed with specific principles of evaluation of practices and works. To understand Flaubert or Baudelaire, or any writers, major or minor, is first of all to understand what the status of writer consists of at the moment considered; that is, more precisely, the social conditions of the possibility of this social function, of this social personage. In fact, the invention of the writer, in the modern sense of the term, is inseparable from the progressive invention of a particular social game, which I term the literary field and which is constituted as it establishes its autonomy, that is to say, its specific laws of functioning, within the field of power (1993, 162-163).

The festivals and associated activities around them constitute their field of cultural production. In the final chapter, I extend the theory in the application of his key concepts of distinction and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1993) towards an analysis of the dynamic of taste in lesbian and gay film festivals but also between them and other types of film festivals.

Lesbian and gay film festivals work within a particular field of cultural production. The field typically contains various distinct tensions with regard to increasing or diminishing cultural capital. For instance, the filmmaker, her film, its funding agencies and the festival that screens it, all reciprocally validate and legitimize (or not) one another through mutual recognition. Regarding the urban culture of scenes, for example, a question of interest would be, how does being associated or belonging to one scene (instead of some other ones) produce cultural capital? I argue that the concept of field, its tensions, taste and cultural capital work to account for some of the changes in the lesbian and gay film festival over the last few decades, as values shift and taste cultures reconstitute themselves afresh and differences between types of film festivals.

Discourse plays a central role in my approach to the project. Recalling Thomas Elsaesser's description of a study of the Sundance Festival of Independent Film (Dayan 1997),

Each film festival, if we follow Dayan, consists of a number of cooperating and conflicting groups of players, forming together a dense latticework of human relations, temporally coexisting in the same time-space capsule. They are held together not by the films they watch, but by the self-

validating activities they engage in, among which the *production of prose* struck Dayan most forcibly (Elsaesser 2005, 101; my emphasis).

The “prose” produced in and around the festivals tells us much about the festivals themselves, their staff, direction, anticipated audiences, but also about their social context.

While it is important to state what *Glances* is positively aiming to achieve, it is also useful to note, for the sake of clarification, what it is not trying to do. Here I would like to state some of the limitations on the extent of my project. It is not an exhaustive history of the phenomenon of the LGBTTQ film festival. It is not a sociological study of the festival audiences. It is not a political economy of the festival network or film distribution. It can be seen in the light of globalization but only as a preamble for a future much larger study, or several smaller studies.

3.0 Methodology

As stated above, my approach to the material of my research specifically includes (1) the analysis of the competing discourses in the formation and development of the festival, for example, sexuality, politics of identity, public debate and policy, censorship. The discursive analysis will be used to interpret the documents and trace the changes in meaning of selected words and phrases, for example, ‘community’ and the idea of LGBT film festival circulating in each festival. (2) The assessment of the significance of particular festival sites and venues within their respective urban, social environments as well as their role in the process of the festival’s cultural legitimation. I address such questions as “How does site matter?” and “In what ways might sites produce meanings?” in

relation to the various festivals. (3) The analysis of the institutional support, namely governmental cultural policies and agencies and funding and private financial support, situating the festivals and their work within a larger institutional framework.

Methodology concerns how the researcher goes about researching, or what one does, and how the scholar makes claims through the analysis of the documents found in the research, or how inferences and interpretations are made. During my research, I located documents, for example, festival ephemera, press reviews, articles and catalogues, in various archives, special collections in public libraries, newspapers, and the like, in the four cities of my main case studies, namely Montreal, New York City, Toronto, and San Francisco, which I list as follows.

San Francisco: Frameline, San Francisco International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, the archive of the GLBT Historical Society, and special collections of the Hamel Gay Library Center in the San Francisco Public Library.

New York: Lesbian Herstory Archives, special collections of the New York Public Library, Fales Library at New York University, MIX: The New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film/Video Festival and the New Festival: New York Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual Film Festival, as well as the International Gay Information Center (IGIC) at the New York Public Library.

Montreal: Archives gaies du Québec, Image+Nation Festival, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, and the médiathèque at the Cinémathèque québécoise.

Toronto: Film Research Library, InsideOut, Toronto Reference Library and the Film Reference Library of the Cinematheque Ontario and Toronto International Film Festival Group, and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

3.1 Case Studies of San Francisco, New York, Montreal and Toronto

Let us now consider the choice of the case cities of San Francisco, New York, Montreal and Toronto, and their associated festivals. Each of the four cities has its own rich film culture and relation to the history of cinema. Each of the cities has at least one important lesbian and gay film festival, with an important variety of styles of festivals within and between the cities. Evidently, different festivals pose different, sometimes overlapping questions and problems of interest to the study of the emergence and growth of the festivals. I would like to consider each of them briefly below in turn.

San Francisco (June) is the oldest lesbian and gay film festival in the world. This is also a recognition of the mythic importance of the city for its sexual counterculture. The festival began in 1977 with screenings at two community centers as a result of a small group of gay super-8 filmmakers and photographers keen to show and see one another's work and share with an anonymous audience. It was soon thereafter named Persistence of Vision and framed also as a part of the annual Pride commemoration of the Stonewall riots in June. The festival has kept its community orientation and functions as one part of the umbrella Frameline organization that also serves as an important distributor and producer of queer films and videos.

Two large lesbian and gay film festivals take place in New York City, namely the MIX Queer Experimental Film and Video Festival (1987-) (formerly November, now April) and the New York New Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film and Video (1989-) (more commonly known as NewFest, its shorter corporate name) (June), both of which followed the sudden decline of the defunct New York Gay Film Festival (1979-1987) (NYGFF), founded and directed by Peter Lowy. While the two current festivals appear to work well together – meaning that there is no real rivalry or bad blood between them, they have their origins in and serve two quite distinct parts of the lesbian and gay media arts scene. MIX is uncompromisingly artistic and activist in its ethos and programming, whereas the New Festival aims for a broader audience of non-specialists through its programming of mainly feature films with lesbian and gay content and themes. Here the two tendencies are allowed their own spaces, their own festivals, whereas in most other cities such explicit differentiation is simply not possible for financial reasons, where one festival would struggle to accommodate or would defer to another type of festival in the same city. Different taste cultures in New York are reflected in these three distinct festivals.

In Montreal there is the Image&Nation: Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film (1988-) (formerly October, now November), the longest running in Canada. The title speaks to the issue of nation/alism, hinting at the particular case of multilingual, multicultural Montreal within larger sociopolitical formations, more specifically Montreal in Quebec in Canada in North America. Here the narratives of (generally) French-speaking Québécois nationalism, (generally) English-

speaking Canadian federal nationalism and LGBT identity politics converge in complicated ways. The competing ideologies of nationalism, namely, Québécois and Canadian, but also sexual transnationalism, combine, contest, sometimes subvert, sometimes enhance one another throughout the festival's history. The provincial agency SODEC which funds all other major film festivals in Quebec, for instance, refuses to fund the film festival since, according to the funding agency and festival director Charline Boudreau, the festival is "sociological" in nature, not artistic (Straayer 2005, 585). The ideology of nationhood appears to be at play here.

Toronto's Inside/Out Festival (May) is Canada's largest lesbian and gay film festival in the country's largest city. Its artists' communities are particularly politically mobilized to counter the provincial and federal government's historically heavy-handed censorship laws and their enforcement (for example, Cossman; Johnson). While the entire art scene becomes suspect under censorship laws intended to eliminate degrading and child pornography, by some notion of community standard or category of obscenity, those group, organizations and scholars dedicated to the subject of sexuality and its study, are most concerned. LGBT bookstores and mail-order subscriptions have historically been under the constant vigilant surveillance of various levels of the state. Film screenings in Ontario have been notoriously censored for many years, from artists-run spaces such as A Space or Pleasure Dome to even feature films. Films have been refused entry, delayed and burned at various ports of entry by Canada Customs agents. The Toronto experience speaks to the issue of state surveillance and

censorship, both its laws and the culture of its enforcement (for example, Cossman 1995; Dowler 2001; Johnson 1997).

Glances is a significant but modest contribution to the growing area of film festival research. Its comparative aspect should allow it to cohere more easily with the studies of the festivals and festival circuits of other countries. By comparing and contrasting Canadian and American film festivals, important similarities and differences are uncovered. Not only do national identifications play off one another, but also local regional affinities, as well as metropolitan stakes.

4.0 Literature Review

In the past decade the academic gaze in film studies has turned and extended its purview to cover institutions of cinema, particularly exhibition, as part of an enlarged sense of its own disciplinary boundaries and its broadened cultural analysis of the medium beyond the screen in itself. There is a mounting number of publications dedicated to the culture of film festivals in many of their special facets, but notably in the light of trends in cultural globalization and the advent of post-national world cinemas. The texts that I review below speak to overlapping and sometimes quite specialized aspects of this phenomenon and in varying modes, from memoir to investigative journalism to academic analysis. I am aiming here to not only survey the research in the area but also situate my own project within it, anticipating where it might contribute and from what research it borrows. This chapter begins with research published on and approaches to the so-called international film festival, and then proceeds to others that address the

women's film festival and the lesbian and gay film festival. Admittedly, my categories for separating the many publications are more often for their heuristic value than essential to the texts, since so many of them are interrelated or overlap to various degrees.

4.1 International Film Festivals (IFF)

The title of 'international film festival'² has generally come to refer to a festival that aims to offer the "best" films of the preceding twelve months or so without any overly limiting categories, for example, nation, or themes, for example, mad love, outside of the special programs. The title has become increasingly problematic as a myriad of alternative festival networks has come into existence since the 1990s. Nowadays it would be difficult for any festival not to be international, just as it would be quite a challenge for any festival to exist outside of the many international, even global networks that enable, coordinate, and order the many festivals that are often vying for the same films to program. Festivals that are built on transnational categories, such as gender, sexuality or diaspora, or themes, such as labor and mountains, are thoroughly international film festivals, but each with a significant twist. Let us first consider the large international film festivals and important approaches to their study, and then draw relations between them and the new types with their more specialized categories and themes.

² See FIAPF's definition in Appendix II.

Julian Stringer's dissertation inspects the rhetoric of global phenomenon of film festivals (2003). His dissertation contains chapters on the film festival as institution, the relationship between nation and festival, cities and festivals, the so-called festival film, and festival communities. He is strictly interested in the analysis of the rhetoric of the festival publications, and not in interviewing any of the agents at work in the institution or at play in the reception, unlike the work of Marijke de Valck or Joshua Gamson below.

With some similarity, Thomas Elsaesser's work on international film festivals in relation to European film production and the development of global cinema. Elsaesser claims that in the European context,

the festival circuit [...] has become the key force and power grid in the film business, with wide-reaching consequences for the respective functioning of the other elements (authorship, production, exhibition, cultural prestige and recognition) pertaining to the cinema and to film culture. [...]The question [...] is how the festival circuit, in its turn, holds some of these manifestations of post-national cinema together, giving them a European dimension, at the same time as it makes them enter into global symbolic economies, potentially re-writing many of the usual markers of identity ().

He chooses to "concentrate on the history of the phenomenon and examine in passing some of its systemic properties." Furthermore, Elsaesser analyzes festivals according to three sets of indicators, namely "festivals as event, distinction and value addition, programming and agenda setting – that determine how festivals 'work' [...]" (94). He considers film festivals in the light of the history

of the concept of festival through the ages, which serves as a moment of “self-celebration of a community” (94). Such celebrations require an “occasion, a place and the physical presence of large numbers of people.” Elsaesser concludes his chapter with the claim that “on the festival circuit, Europe and Hollywood no longer confront each other face to face, but within and across the *mise-en-abyme* mirrors of all the film cultures that now make up “world cinema” (104).

While Elsaesser aims to establish the network of IFFs in Europe as a rival alternative form of distribution to the New Hollywood, many of the elements discussed above and elsewhere in the chapter are relevant to this study of lesbian and gay film festivals, especially as alternative networks of exhibition. *Glances* uncovers and works through such differences.³

Turning to a case study, I would like to concentrate here on de Valck’s article “Drowning in Popcorn” in (2005). De Valck addresses the culture and history of the celebrated International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR). She takes up, in particular, the question of cinephilia and reception in the festival through a sociological approach informed by Latour’s actor-network theory (ANT). She poses questions such as, Does the growing popularity of film festivals indicate an increased exclusion and marginalization of tastes, or an increased inclusion along with a more differentiated concept of cinephilia? De Valck traces IFFR’s founding as a festival with a strong emphasis on experimental work in 1972. By 2004 it has become arguably the second most popular festival in the world with an attendance of 355 000 spectators. De Valck proposes and briefly describes a

³ See my review article on the book in (Zielinski 2007b).

tentative taxonomy of festival cinephiles: the lone list-maker, highlight seeker, specialist, leisure visitor, social tourist, and volunteer, also allowing for combinations of types.

The Pathé multiplex has been the home of the festival since 1997, signaling the transformations of the festival itself, its growing popularity and linking the festival to its mass audience. These changes permitted a more flexible access to the festival, with last-minute on ticket buying, and familiarity with the logic of the multiplex that houses it. De Valck acknowledges festivals as venues for New Hollywood high-concept marketing strategies that provide alternative exhibition and pre-release niche building opportunities. According to de Valck, the cinephiles find the new site, the clandestine have been replaced by the highly commercial, disenchanting. She notes, “It is precisely this presence of lively discourse and expert mediation that continues to characterize festival cinephilia throughout its many transformations.” Furthermore, she posits this festival as a “multiplex of cinephilia,” that is, as of greater differentiation of taste, noting that “the IFFR has successfully adjusted itself to the globally dominant model of the media event and managed to use the changing interface of world cinephilia to expand its accessibility and address the needs of a variety of cinephiles” (de Valck 2005).

Kenneth Turan’s *Sundance to Sarajevo* (2002) is a first-person account that weaves together autobiographical accounts and anecdotes, often supplemented

with interviews.⁴ He begins with the claim that “[n]o one wants to speak against the Bible, but the sentiment in Ecclesiastes famously insisting ‘to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven’ in no way applies to the universe of film festivals.” Understood slightly differently, while there is no confined season of the year for one or many festivals, each one must choose its timing well and schedule itself in relation to others in its network or in its city or region. So, even though there is no precise season essential to any festival, festivals do depend on one another to succeed, and the choice of season for one festival may enhance or diminish its chances of success among others. In other words, the choice of “season” is not as free or arbitrary as it may first appear. Turan seems to demonstrate this through his journey to a dozen international film festivals.

Turan’s survey observes the rapid proliferation of film festivals worldwide with, for example, over 150 in Europe and thirty in New York City alone. Their numbers mirror their diversity, namely, those festivals with specialized themes of spoof films, comedies, mental illness, sexuality, *refusés*, and so on. In his discussion of how the culture industry uses film festivals, Turan refers to Piers Handling’s insight that festivals serve as an alternative distribution network. SONY, for example, makes use of festivals as alternative opportunities for advertising and public relations, often far less expensive than more conventional means for creating media buzz. For Cannes Turan starts with a description of its urban context, host city, 35 000 guests, the streets, parties, restaurants, the banality of

⁴ It is not an ethnographic study and lacks a bibliography, notes and index.

glamour, its notorious hierarchy of press passes, with gossip providing an important social glue next to extreme publicity for those producers that can afford the display.

While Turan's writing vividly brings to life the festivals that he has experienced as a professional film critic, for the academic, his text provides well-considered first-person accounts, introductions to particular festivals and their social contexts, but would require greater systematicity and analysis.⁵

4.2 Women's Film (and Video) Festivals

While much work has been done on the theory and poetics of women's cinema (for example, de Lauretis; Mulvey; Doane), literature in the area of women's film and video festivals is remarkably sparse with many gaps that will doubtless be soon filled in. Perhaps one of the most important feminist film critics is R. Ruby Rich, who was involved with the early organization of a women's film festival in Chicago, as discussed in her book of collected essays, with contemporary reflections added, *Chick Flicks* (1998). Apart from the recent testimonials by Alexandra Juhasz (2006) and Patricia White (2006), an important academic contribution to the study of women's video festivals is "Feminism 101" (Barlow 2003). Evidently, many of the women named here have also played crucial roles in the histories of LGBT film festivals.

⁵ See my review essay (Zielinski 2006), where I discuss Turan's work in relation to other current publications on film festivals.

4.3 Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals

The LGBT film festival as a cultural formation has received limited but increasing scholarly attention (for example, Straayer 2005; Bourcier 1998; Gamson 1996; Gatti 2006; Rich 1993; Searle 1996; Waugh 2006; White 1999).⁶ The publications tend to be either short analyses of particular festivals or broader studies. In the last decade the festivals have spread to major cities around the world and have become annual events, with striking similarities to the global spread of Pride parades. Their history is fraught with internal and external struggle and contestation, while the writing of this history has remained largely ad hoc and anecdotal or confined to journalistic reviews. As cultural organizations that select and exhibit films of anticipated appeal and as a context for social gatherings, the festivals speak to and for, as well as call forth, a counterpublic organized around identities of minority sexuality.

Ruby Rich's "A Queer Sensation: New Gay Film" (1992), an important text that serves to document in part the importance of festivals, but also articulate what it names the 'new queer cinema.' This piece of criticism, arguably, played a strategic role in the formation of both the new queer canon of films and the raising of expectations for new films and videos by lesbian and gay filmmakers.

⁶ I have left out Chris Straayer and Thomas Waugh's three forums on queer film festivals from this review, but refer to them in subsequent chapters (Straayer 2005, 2006, 2008). As important contributions, they offer a very wide array of viewpoints on the festivals from critics, programmers and festival directors, but are quite a challenge to summarize. I write on the first forum in my review article (Zielinski 2006).

Moreover, the text itself depends on the international film festival and fledgling lesbian and gay film festival circuits in the early 1990s, a fact whose significance is often neglected, but to which I return in the fourth chapter.

Jenna Gretsches unpublished master's thesis (1997) on Frameline and its San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival takes a strong postcolonial analysis and critique. Gretsches does a detailed analysis of the 1996 edition of the festival and more specifically the representational discourse that circulates through the festival publications and reportage on the festival. Gretsches claims that this festival

offers a perfect locale for investigating how U.S./Euro colonial histories of desire specifically organized around western epistemological frameworks of sexualized subjectivity, are being redeployed as a global discourse in the name of international multiculturalism. Further the festival offers a space to examine how such issues, along with a host of others centered around valorized marked categories of identity originating in the U.S., relate and are manifested within film production, distribution, exhibition and reception (1997, 4 f.).

Gretsches interrogates the categories of gay and lesbian and their use in the publicity and copy text of the festival through a postcolonial critique that engages sexuality and race in the context of globalization. She argues furthermore that lesbian and gay identity and visibility politics are particular to the United States. These categories, including notions of authenticity and community, she shows, are part of the discourse that supports the festival and its associated distributor

Frameline. Gretsche takes a strictly discursive analysis of the texts, without any consideration of how Frameline and the festival might be used, or how people of color might experience and negotiate it; and for those reasons the very focused critique comes across as remarkably one-sided. Some of my analysis of the North American festivals will borrow from similar sources as Gretsche's approach, but I will also include a larger historical dimension and will leave comments on the global aspects of sexual identity to careful speculation and further study.

Another contemporaneous study of the San Francisco festival, but differing approach, is Marc Siegel's article "Spilling Out Onto Castro Street" (1997), which takes into account the consequences of assigning location and festival sites in the cultural politics of lesbian and gay film festivals. More specifically, Siegel seeks to

shift our attention away from a discussion of any particular spectator's relationship to any individual film to a consideration of the spectator/consumer/community members' involvement at every level of festival activity, from purchasing tickets to attending parties to cruising the lines to milling about in the lobby to spilling out onto Castro Street (131-32).

In the first part of his article he addresses the relationship between the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and the LGBT community, while in the second he considers the importance of the identity produced through the festivals and cinema. His analysis centers on the politics of the festival's space through its choices of venue, particularly for lesbians and lesbian films. The politics of early

programming in the festival demonstrated a certain reluctance toward showing lesbian work, which made it scarcer than it should have been; and when it was screened it took place at much smaller cinemas. Siegel reposes the lesbian riots at the San Francisco festival as accumulated disgruntlement with the asymmetrical constraints put on lesbian representation in the festival. The Onodera film was perceived as a final straw. This important case has been cited at least three times in articles and will also play a crucial role in my chapters on the space of the festivals (IV) and the language of community (V).

The late 1990s witnessed a number of important scholarly attempts to study lesbian and gay film festivals.⁷ Patricia White's dossier on queer publicity (White 1999), which itself stems from a mixed panel of academics and film programmers at New York's New Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film, remains essential reading for any scholar that is working on film festivals of any sort. Its collective intention was to make "visible the critical and cultural work performed by the lesbian and gay film festival sector in a changing media culture" (73). The public panel discussion took place in May 1998 on the occasion of NewFest's tenth anniversary and includes a mixture of academics and curators and critics, including Patricia White, B. Ruby Rich, Richard Fung and Eric Clarke.

⁷ For example, Ferrelli (1999), co-founder of the San Diego festival, writes a rare ethnography of the festival in the context of a master's thesis. Perhaps ethnographic studies will become more common as researchers leave behind more textual analysis that stems from queer theory. This appears to be the wish of historians and sociologists, such as Duggan, Gamson, Namaste and Seidman.

Patricia White puts the emphasis on lesbian and gay festivals as contexts of reception. Like Marc Siegel above, she references Martha Gever's claim that such festivals work toward constituting lesbian (and gay) identities. While festivals are points of exhibition of queer work, festivals also constitute a counter public sphere that provides "a collective experience and a literal site of *critical* reception" (74). The festival and its programming produce an audience, bring it into visibility, to act as checks and balances on community inclusiveness as well as serve as statistics for market research and the economic development of the nascent niche. In effect, the circulation of the films within the international festival network produces a transnational audience (75). White posits that the New Festival envisioned cinema going as a civic duty, which I address in Chapters V and VI.

Richard Fung (1999), in the same dossier, writes on the institutional context of artists organizations and public funding, and particularly the politics of address. Fung writes as a programmer who has witnessed the 1990s wave of increased corporate funding, corporate-style management and professionalization of the festivals themselves. He contends that the festival addresses multiple audiences, namely lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, multiple publics ephemerally constituted through "desire, identification and disidentification." The recurring motif of inclusivity, a signature of politicized or community-oriented festivals, I consider in more depth in the last two chapters. Fung's notion of "dedicated programming" according to the representation of gender or race must find a delicate balance with principles of diversity and formal variety in order to

open up the horizon of the audience. The logic of representation or ethic of recognition has produced a highly sophisticated cultural entity.

Programming principles according to gender have always posed an interesting challenge to festival programmers trying to innovate. The differences between male and female work in the festival, according to White, reflect differences in “their histories of movie consumption, their cultural capital” (76). For White, institutional context matters. She discusses the case of MIX in 1993, which held screenings of erotica in an “adult entertainment” cinema; and that allowed women to transgress the gendered male space of the cinema. White argues that

in the rhetoric, the programming, the works, and the audiences, gender lines are increasingly problematized and blurred at lesbian and gay film festivals. The emergence of transgender film festivals is a sign of the vitality of festival culture rather than of its identity-based restrictions (76).

In the end, White understands the gender divide at the festivals as a “productive tension, a mark of multiplicity,” and moreover conceptualizes the lesbian and gay film festival as a queer public sphere that shows symptoms of the combination of mass entertainment and sexuality, together with femininity, in the rational-political public sphere. Importantly, White cites Judith Mayne’s notion of a “critical audience” cultivated actively by the festivals in relation to the specific addresses for each program of films (76 f.). These characteristics of the festivals will be interrogated briefly below and in detail in the chapters that follow.

Ruby Rich (1999), also in the same dossier, provides an analysis of the 1990s rapid growth in size and number of lesbian and gay film festivals and the reaction

of the audiences to various films or festival situations that she had experienced as a film critic at many festivals worldwide. Rich makes valuable insights through her well-chosen examples. She poses audience reception at the festivals as, “a particular point of stress. What happens when audiences reject programmers’ choices? Why does this dissonance occur? What are the implications and consequences?” (Rich 1999, 79). Moreover, she proposes an attitude or “spirit of adventure” on the part of members of the audience. I work through the issue of taste in the programming of LGBT film festivals as a special signature of this type of community-oriented film festival. I engage Rich’s questions in Chapter VI on the rival taste cultures in the festivals.

The contribution of Eric Clarke (1999) to the dossier is important to my project. Clarke articulates a cogent reworking of the German theories of the public sphere (Öffentlichkeit) through early Habermas and Alexander Kluge to Nancy Fraser and Judith Butler in the context of lesbian and gay film festivals but also in relation to his concept of the homoerotic.⁸ To clarify the concept of public sphere, he notes “publicness is a quality, not a place.” While physical spaces and their architectures and interior design may enhance or diminish sociability and the success of a public sphere, they cannot determine it fully. Reminiscent of Foucault’s remarks on freedom, publicness is a quality or activity. Clarke surveys contemporary queer television and claims that, “if the media seem to be “all about” homosexuality at the moment, homosexuality seems increasingly to be *all*

⁸ See also his book on the relationship between the public sphere and the homoerotic (2000).

about media” (75). The trouble with normal in popular culture, perceives Clarke, is that homosexual phantom normalcy keeps diversity at bay a type of homonormativity as represented in popular culture. Clarke’s work on the complex relations between private and public and homosexuality informs parts of my chapter on the counterpublics of lesbian and gay film festivals.

Ragan Rhyne’s recent dissertation, following the work of Miranda Joseph, provides a thorough materialist analysis centered on the non-profit category and funding structures of the festivals. She argues that “gays and lesbians themselves have articulated their politics, artistic practice, and discourse of community within (and against) the parameters defined by the demands of organizational sustainability” (2007, iv). She identifies four major economic shifts in the development of the festivals, namely the transition from informal screenings into professionalized nonprofit organizations (1977-1990); new relationships between the festivals and the commercial film industry, as well as the introduction of new forms of funding and sponsorship (1991-1996); the proliferation of the lesbian and gay film festival model globally, and the expansion of film markets into new markets in Eastern Europe and East Asia (1997-2001); and the emergence of cable television as an important means of distribution and sponsorship, as well as the increase in corporate sponsorship (2001-2006) (Rhyne 2007, vii). To be sure, Rhyne’s fresh approach provides many important insights into the festivals and their development from a political economy standpoint. My own approach puts its emphasis on quite other aspects of the festivals.

Jules Pidduck in her 2003 chapter essay “After 1980: Margins and Mainstreams,” intended as an update to Richard Dyer’s book *Now You See It* (1993), points out the significance of lesbian and gay film festivals, their spread and growth, in relation to the films circulating. To Dyer and Pidduck an important index to the increase in production of the films themselves is the increase in number of their festivals (267). While Pidduck marvels at the variety of types of films screened at the festivals, she notes that for the urban audience,

feminist and lesbian/gay festivals have created an autonomous and relatively safe zone for the critical viewing of queer works [...] In many parts of the world, such zones are part of a concerted political project to seize the means of self-representation in the face of widespread cultural invisibility and stereotyping (267).

In the highly differentiated LGBT community, the film festival is a rare occasion, “one of the few yearly events that convenes audiences from across lines of gender, language, ethnicity and generation” (267). She also situates the development of art and activist video at the heart of the emergence of the festivals, which I discuss in the final chapter. The accessible, inexpensive nature of these media enabled the production of much work on self-representation from the late 1970s on (268). She makes particular reference here to Canada’s “distinctive ‘public access’ tradition”, which opened up new artist-run distribution networks outside of the commercial ones. Pidduck understands the festivals as “nodal points” in a “network of film and video makers, distributors, post-production facilities and audiences” (268), and what I would call part of the

specific field of cultural production of LGBT film festivals. The relevance of the festivals stems in part from the fact that the work shown within them would likely never been shown at other festivals or be put into distribution otherwise. I develop this aspect of lesbian and gay film festivals below in a discussion of the so-called festival film in Chapter VI.

5.0 Chapter Breakdown

I briefly sketch out below the content and main arguments of the chapters in order to clarify the project.

“Chapter I. Brief History of International Film Festivals and Their Politics” traces the history of the international film festivals from the founding of the first annual film festival in 1932 fascist Italy. The purpose of this chapter is not only to establish a concrete history for the festivals, but also to argue for crucial moments in the history that effectively liberalized the festival institution and opened it up to the emergence of community-oriented film festivals. The official, political aspects of the IFFs are analyzed, from the early strong nationalist cause to the Cold War division of allegiances between the capitalist West and the Soviet Block to the crucial 1968 introduction of arms-length autonomy of the festival and its director from the government in power. The significance of this change in cultural policy, first in France and then followed elsewhere, coincided with the empowerment of major grass-roots social movements and alternative lifestyle “revolutions,” which developed their own media institutions. While several studies have been written on the general history of IFFs or particular

festivals, I am the first to draw the historical relations between the IFFs and the community-oriented film festivals.

“Chapter II. Post-1968 Social Movements, Counterculture and the New Film Festivals” centers on the emergence of the new community-oriented film festivals in the light of the 1968 liberalization of the IFF version of the institution and the period of mobilization and protest politics. From the Civil Rights Movement, and the Afrocentric turn, emerged the Black film festivals. From the Women’s Liberation Movement, and its strong emphasis on film and media theory and critique, came the women’s film festival. From the so-called Sexual Revolution in the early 1970s came the erotic film festivals, which were organized on an ethos of changing the world through sexual relations and in many ways were important to the history of lesbian and gay film festivals. The 1969 Stonewall riots commenced a fundamental turn in gay and lesbian politics to a much more aggressive, public approach to gaining rights and freedoms under the law. The Gay Liberation Movement developed alongside the other movements, with various kinds of collaboration, particularly as more lesbians joined it. The chapter lays out and analyzes the resemblances between the movements and “revolution” and the emergence of their community-oriented film festivals, particularly as a context for the emergence of the first gay film festivals.

“Chapter III. On the Emergence and Rise of Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals” addresses the emergence of the first gay film festivals in the late 1970s, and outlines the histories of the four case cities of San Francisco, New York, Montreal and Toronto. Finally, the current global extent of such film festivals organized

around categories of minority sexualities is surveyed and shows how these festivals often dispense with the sexual identities of gay and lesbian.

“Chapter IV. On the Spaces of Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals” works through four theories of space in relation to the film festivals, particularly Foucault’s heterotopia, Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, gay space and queer space. While heterotopia and carnivalesque both work well in articulating the lived site of the film festivals, I argue furthermore that identity-laden gay space and performative queer space bring out together important aspects overlooked by the other approaches.

“Chapter V. Community Rules: LGBT Film Festivals and Their Counterpublics” provides the arguments for understanding audience more as counterpublic than as community, while adding to the arguments in Chapters II and III. To that end, I use Warner’s theory of publics and counterpublics in the analysis of the discourse that circulates around the festivals. A theory of cultural scenes becomes part of the analysis to show how the lesbian and gay film and video scenes produced the festivals that in turn constituted their counterpublics, which to varying degrees reinvigorated their original scenes or left them behind.

“Chapter VI. On the Play of Distinction in LGBT Film and Video Festivals” engages Bourdieu’s concepts of distinction and cultural capital in order to address the unique operation of value within lesbian and gay film festivals and between them and international film festivals. I argue that the specific tensions between the queer cinephilic and queer popular taste cultures guiding the

programming of the festivals produce the signature of the lesbian and gay film festivals themselves, in sharp distinction to all other film festivals.

I. A Brief History of International Film Festivals and Their Politics

“What is this thing called Cannes?” – Kenneth Turan, *Sundance to Sarajevo*

1.0 Introducing the International Film Festival

Film festivals today are seemingly ubiquitous.⁹ It is difficult to name a city without one. Typically, cities support many more than one, while some smaller towns, particularly resort towns, may have their own. Altogether they work to form an unevenly-distributed global network. The history of the international film festival (IFF) proves very rich indeed. From the dozens of one-time festivals that peppered Europe in the late-19th and early-20th centuries to the emergence of the annual festival in Fascist Italy and elsewhere throughout the twentieth century, they have adapted themselves to remarkably different political contexts in different historical periods. The context of 1968 protests brought the institutional transformation of Cannes in 1969 that signaled the process of change not only in the international film festivals, but also in the opening up of new possibilities for quite a range of types of film festivals, especially those organized around identities stemming from the social or counterculture movements of the period. Recent studies of film festivals tend to focus on the development of international film festivals and do not address the profusion of other types of film festivals, such as the black, women's, LGBT or erotic film festivals, which also stem from that important 1968 juncture (for example, Stringer; Elsaesser; de Valck).

⁹ Common reference guides exist for lists of film festivals, for example, the websites of *Variety*, FIAPF or PopcornQ.

The aim of this chapter is not simply to recount the history of international film festivals, which has been done elsewhere,¹⁰ but rather to bring to attention the political nature of their origin and development in relation to their institutional changes. I later make use of the case of the international film festival as an institution for comparison with other types of film festivals founded after 1968, including community-oriented, erotic and lesbian and gay film festivals.

My history is told over the following three chapters (international film festivals, post-1968 new types of film festivals, and lesbian and gay film festivals) and aims to contribute to the deepening historiography of lesbian and gay film festivals, community-oriented film festivals and more generally international film festivals. While situating the lesbian and gay film festival in the larger institutional history of the international film festival, I am claiming that, on the one hand, the LGBT film festivals borrow importantly from the IFF, its structure, its functioning, and its similar development of its own international network, but also, on the other hand, that there are major differences regarding cultural capital that distinguish the types of festivals from one another.

2.0 On the Early International Film Festival: 1932-1946

Here I would like to outline the emergence of the international film festival as a crucial institution in global film culture. As film scholars Marijke de Valck and Thomas Elsaesser have recently pointed out, the early international film festivals were typically founded within a strong political ideology and served as

¹⁰ See, especially, the work of de Valck (2005).

showcases for the government in power to represent the nation and its place among other nations. I argue throughout the first three chapters that lesbian and gay film festivals stem from the international festivals, specifically as the notion of new types of festivals began to circulate more widely in the 1970s. These two types of film festival are related but distinguished from one another.

While there have been many early one-time film festivals, with the 1898 New Year's Day festival in Monaco recognized as the very first (de Valck 2003, 1), the original *annual* film festival was founded in the majestic port town of Venice nearly three decades later. Film festivals took place in Italy, Germany and Czechoslovakia, with the first prize-giving one in 1907 Italy organized by the Lumière brothers from France (Kennedy 1991, 15). The introduction of sound, particularly spoken language, in film immediately restricted the hitherto rather easy circulation of films and enhanced their linguistic and national significance. Films with natural language had to have translated versions in order to travel more freely. De Valck (2003, 2007) and Elsaesser (2005) argue that the rise of the European film festival circuit is best understood, in part, as a protectionist measure by European countries against the perceived and real threat of early Hollywood dominance from the First World War on.

The world's oldest regular (biannual till 1935, then annual) film festival, also known in Italian as the Mostra d'Arte Cinematografica, opened the evening of August 6, 1932, on Venice's luxurious Lido. Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was the opening film. De Valck traces the film festival under its

institutional umbrella of Venice's established Art Biennale (1885-)¹¹ and where it was placed by the minister of finance Count Volpi di Misurate the president of the Biennale in 1930, appointed by fascist dictator Benito Mussolini (2003, 1 f.). The Biennale was eventually expanded to include music, poetry and theatre, but cinema was the most popular and the newest art form to be recognized as such. Mussolini was renowned for his passion for the cinema. His brother was one of the executive directors of the Italian film industry, who also persuaded Benito to fund the creation of the Mostra in order to support of the concerted development national film industry. The choice of Venice as the site for the festival aimed to help correct the declining tourism industry in the city (de Valck 2003, 2 ff., and Kennedy 1991, 15).

Mussolini was concerned to control precisely where and how potentially subversive foreign films were to be seen in Italy. De Valck writes,

For Mussolini it was important that the foreign movies could be controlled in this safe cultural space [Mostra]. They were kept outside free circulation on purpose. [...] Mussolini believed in cinema as a powerful vehicle for propaganda. He believed that by organizing an international festival event where different countries showcase their national cinematic prides, he would have a powerful international instrument under his control to legitimize the national identity of Fascism. (2003, 2)

¹¹ Where it is held today.

In 1935 the festival fell under the direct control of the Ministry of Press and Propaganda and changed in nature, and by 1939, writes de Valck, “the Mostra became a political manifestation” (2003, 2-3).¹²

While Kennedy traces the idea of the festival back to 5th century BC Greece as a hybrid event combining art and religion, he sagely noted,

Ever since Venice, these events have been informed by a staggeringly complex blend of aims and motives. They’re at once commercial, cultural and ideological – and try sorting out one element from another in the white heat of Cannes or Venice attendance! (1991, 15)

Indeed, film festival towns were in part chosen for their tourist appeal but scheduled there outside of tourist season proper is developed in great detail by Elsaesser (2005), de Valck (2003, 2007), Turan (2002) and Stringer (2001) elsewhere.¹³ Kennedy’s astute observation hints at the complicated tensions at the heart of any early international film festival with its ambivalent aims, contradictions, politically-directed programming and prize awarding, and attempt to define the nation that it claims to represent.

As fascist mandates became more and more evident in the jury process at Venice and favored Italian and Nazi German films with strong nationalist themes,

¹² Much has been written on the relationship between fascism and mass spectacle, from Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin on. Film festivals have had a special appeal to authoritarian regimes since the 1930s.

¹³ I consider below Elsaesser’s work on the choice of which town for contemporary international film festivals.

other countries questioned their own participation in the festival. In 1936 Nazi propaganda minister Goebbels was honored, and France was devastated by its failure to win any award for Jean Renoir's film *La Grande illusion*. In 1938 the Mussolini Cup was shared between Leni Riefenstahl and Mussolini's son for their respective propaganda films. The dissatisfied and disillusioned French, Americans and British countered with the practical plan of a similar film festival in the little resort port town of Cannes in 1939, chosen for its "sunshine and 'enchanted milieu'" along the stunning French Riviera (Gilles Jacob in de Valck 2003, 3). The festival was eventually organized to open on September 1, 1939, but that turned out to be the day Nazi Germany invaded Poland, which commenced the Second World War. The festival was thus interrupted and deferred until after the war, but not before screening the film, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (USA, William Dieterly). Following the war the Cannes festival took place in 1946 in all its splendor and parties, with many American films that had not been released in Europe during the war. In the light of Cannes' antagonistic founding as a response to fascist Venice was the notable recognition given to the Italian anti-fascist, neo-realist film *Roma, Città aperta* by Roberto Rossellini in 1946 (de Valck 2003, 4). While Venice toned down its emphasis on glamour and decadence after the fall of Mussolini, Cannes has become renowned to much of the world for precisely that glitz and scandal on the Côte d'Azur (Turan 2002, 13 f.).

Major changes in the geopolitical landscape followed the Second World War, which brought changes to the very idea of the international film festival. Its

purpose was no longer simply to represent the nation, but also moreover the associated sphere of influence, either Soviet, Western or non-aligned.

3.0 The Multiplication and Growth of IFFs from 1946 to 1968

There was a significant surge in the development of new film festivals in Europe immediately following WWII: apart from Cannes (1939, 1946-),¹⁴ there were Karlovy Vary¹⁵ (1946-, formerly Karlsbad), Edinburgh (1946-), Berlin (1951-), Oberhausen (1954-), London (1956-) and Moscow (1959-), among others. There was such a surge in new film festivals that a special international festival rating system was devised to set apart an elite group of festivals from the rest. Venice and Cannes gave themselves this status first, and then select others followed. The designation of “A” (or “on the A-List”) to a festival meant it was an international film festival (IFF) that screened only premieres and included a competition. The category was developed in the early 1950s and managed by the FIAPF (Fédération internationale des associations de producteurs des films)¹⁶ (de Valck 2003, 7). The A-list film festivals invited governments to submit films on behalf of their “nations” for consideration. Committees or individuals designated in a country’s government, typically within the ministry of culture, put together a selection of their respective country’s films for nomination. The festivals were particularly sensitive to possibly injuring the “feelings of other

¹⁴ Vanessa Schwartz’ recent book *It’s So French!* (2007) addresses this period, but came to my attention too late to include in detail here.

¹⁵ The first few editions took place in the spa town of Mariánské Lázně (formerly Marienbad).

¹⁶ See Appendix I for the list of FIAPF festivals.

nations,” and thus censored any films that might insult another nation represented at the festival, which led to many international diplomatic disputes, despite the careful precautions (de Valck 2003, 7). The festivals were an extension of the nations through their respective governments.

The Cold War left its mark on the institution of the international film festival, to be sure. With the Iron Curtain defining the political players of the war, there were plenty of careful strategic decisions made on the choice of location and site of the festivals, beyond the earlier emphasis on tourist sites. During the Cold War, for example, West Germany had its own in West Berlin, initiated and strongly supported by the United States. This festival was conceived from the beginning to serve in part as a form of political agitation against neighboring communist East Germany, particularly before the Berlin Wall was built in 1961 (Fehrenbach 1994, 234 f.). Before Eastern access to West Berlin was curtailed and the city became even more isolated and landlocked from West Germany, the festival had chosen its cinemas very strategically, that is, as close to the East Berlin border as possible to allow easy access. Moreover, it kept its ticket prices low and affordable in order to encourage East Germans to attend, and in 1963 the festival devised a plan to televise several films in order to create a cultural bridge to the then walled-off Soviet-controlled eastern side. This festival as the “Western cultural showcase in the East” perhaps most impressively demonstrates the Cold War ideologies at play, situated geopolitically at the frontiers of the Soviet Bloc and the West.

The Soviet side also had its main festivals, particularly one in Karlovy Vary, in former Czechoslovakia, begun in 1946 and then taken over by the newly installed communist regime in 1948. Another one was formed in Moscow in 1959. To be sure, the film festivals of this period were integrated into Cold War, nationalist geopolitics and provided the institutional context for the showcase of bloc or national cinemas along with the omission of others, for example, the West Germans often complained of being shut out of the main prizes at Cannes.

4.0 On the 1968 Protests in France and Their Influence on the Structure and Purpose of IFFs Worldwide

Il n'y aura pas de Cinémathèque sans Langlois, comme sans lui il n'y en aurait pas, cela semble clair à tous les esprits. On peut espérer que l'oeuvre de Langlois, un moment compromise, sera sauvée de l'incompétence de ceux qui la convoitaient (Editors, Cahiers du Cinéma, March 1968, 5).

(There will be no Cinematheque without Langlois, just as without him there would not have been one. We can only hope that the work of Langlois, now compromised, will be saved from the incompetence by those who covet it).¹⁷

The year 1968 is pivotal in the history of international film festivals. Granted, the year of worldwide protests exceeds the history of film festivals, however in France cinema was taken very seriously and played an important role in the

¹⁷ My translation unless otherwise stated hereafter.

development of the protests. One decade before at the festival in 1958 created a major wave in French film culture, when

[...] the film critics of the Nouvelle Vague, Godard, Truffaut, Chabrol, Rohmer and Rivette, criticized the film industry and film festival in Cannes for not giving attention to the medium as art in general and to young, new and alternative *auteurs* in particular. Deeply dissatisfied with the state of French cinema the film critics started to direct movies themselves (de Valck 2003, 8, emphasis in original).

Since then, film festivals have become a natural arena for protests, especially by young upstart directors. The site of the festival provides the space for the proclamation of this and many subsequent manifestos for various “new waves” of cinema. The Nouvelle Vague filmmakers challenged Cannes’ strong signature cultivation of glamour, political interests and commercial cinema over all other concerns. To be sure, scandal and intrigue had become a significant part of Cannes’ signature from its early years on to the present, so the addition of protest did not seem entirely out of place.

During the tumultuous year of 1968 France was engulfed in a series of continuing major protests and labor strikes across the country. Anti-Vietnam War protests had mobilized groups around the world, and particularly in Europe and North America. In France that February the minister of culture André Malraux infamously dismissed and replaced Henri Langlois the beloved founder and head of the Cinémathèque française in Paris. The sudden dismissal caused a prompt protest by French and sympathetic foreign filmmakers (Godard, Truffaut,

Resnais, Beri and Lelouch, as well as Bergman, Welles, Warhol, and Kurosawa, among others) and many cinephiles.¹⁸ The filmmakers and critics quickly formed the Committee for the Defense of the Cinematheque and set up an office at the festival itself. Part of their protest included a large-scale meeting, which leveled a vociferous critique at both the government and the highly exclusive festival. The members of the decade-old Nouvelle Vague, particularly Godard and Truffaut, and other younger filmmakers demanded more recognition of auteur films, new filmmakers, the reinstatement of Langlois at the cinematheque, and generally less government interference in the festival. Surprisingly, they quickly won the concessions without resistance from the government. As one critic writes,

Film festivals were never the same again. Out of the events of 1968 grew the important parallel events of Cannes and Berlin, the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs and the Young Film Forum. Prizes remained, for several years, disreputable. Venice foundered, never wholly to regain its old glories (Stapleton 1983, 16).

The precedence set at Cannes released festivals from the grip of national governments into the hands of the autonomous individual ‘festival director,’ modeled on the artistic director, as the innovation became, in most parts of the world, a standard role and standard arm’s-length relationship between the festival and the government. It was under his, and rarely her, connoisseurship

¹⁸ See “L’Affaire Langlois” in the March 1968 issue of *Cahiers du cinéma* for a chronicle of the February events and transcripts of the press conference and long list of signatories.

and discretion that films were selected and screened in the festival. The responsibility for the festival rested in the hands of the festival director, no longer in the hands of the minister of culture of the government in power. The value of the artistic merit of individual filmmakers (as auteurs) and films then, generally, replaced political considerations based on nationalist agendas.

In 1969 the changes to Cannes were fundamental, particularly the addition of the new con-competitive program of screenings “Quinzaine des réalisateurs” (English version: “Directors’ Fortnight”) for younger, less known filmmakers or more radical films took its place in association with the festival. Similar changes took place at other A-list festivals, including Venice’s further shift to the left and Berlin’s 1971 introduction of the famous Internationales Forum des Jungen Films (International Forum for New Cinema).¹⁹ Effectively, the heaviness of government interference and policy-directed programming lifted. Cinephiles won their space, beyond the cinemathèque, in which to seek out new exciting cinematic experiences, new directors, new films, and so forth.

The festivals at the same time continued to develop as market places for the film industry. Cannes established its own market place in 1961. Others followed.

¹⁹ In 1962 ‘New German Cinema’ (Jünger Deutscher Film) was proclaimed through its members’ manifesto, named after the Oberhausen Film Festival where it was first read. That festival is renowned for its uncompromising dedication to experimental films. For years it would only screen ‘independent’ films, which then meant non-commercial films without government funding. In 1995 the Dogma group of filmmakers chose Cannes to proclaim their “vow of chastity.”

Curiously, in the early 1970s pornographic films had a strong presence at the Cannes market, since few other film markets had opened up. As criteria for the films permitted in the market changed, a plot was requested as part of the entry process, and other types of feature films replaced the pornography industry. Television made its way into the Cannes market in the late 1970s. Around the same period the Berlin festival developed its own “Filmmesse” (film market or trade fair). The timing of the markets had to be tightly regulated by FIAPF since any changes to one festival may interfere with the success of another. For example, Cannes’ position in May might put it at risk if, say, Berlin or Milan shifted to a period just before it.

One important case concerns the development of international film festivals nearly simultaneously in Toronto (1976-) and Montreal (1977-), the two largest cities in Canada.²⁰ Scottish émigré William Marshall, the co-founder of the non-profit Festival of Festivals (now the Toronto International Film Festival), addresses the cultural ambivalence at the origin of TIFF as it was perceived by the federal, and reluctant municipal, funding agencies as competing directly with the Montreal World Film Festival (Festival des films du monde) run and effectively owned by Yugoslav émigré Serge Losique.²¹ In the Canadian case, the prospect of two international film festivals in a country with relatively little film

²⁰ Toronto and Montreal are also the two Canadian cases for the study of lesbian and gay film festivals in the third chapter. Both cities are important players on the national level of film production in the country, and also serve “runaway” continental film and television production from the United States (Droesch 2002).

²¹ The original Yugoslav version of his name is Srdjan Lošić.

production or film identity seemed to the cultural bureaucrats seriously misplaced (Marshall 2005, 12). It is a case of two very different visions of international film festivals brought about by two equally different groups of festival organizers, namely Toronto's "sons of communists"²² film producers and directors versus Montreal's uncompromising Euro-cinephile, in parts of the country already in competition with one another over limited federal resources. There was also the fear that the Toronto festival would be perceived as encroaching upon a cultural territory better suited to Montreal in Quebec, a city that carries myths of being "more European than the rest of North America"²³ and "more sensitive to cultural issues than any other city in Canada."²⁴ The aims of the festivals were sharply at odds,

The Festival des films du monde was born [...] with an international mandate to support national cinemas around the world and without any particular commitment to locality or Québécois culture. It has a mandate to support cultural diversity and understanding among the nations of the world, to promote the cinematic arts, to encourage encounters between

²² Co-founder William Marshall refers to himself and the other co-founders as "sons of communists" since their fathers were committed labor organizers.

²³ Historically, Toronto was known as the "North American Ulster" for its particular Protestantism, while within Canada Catholic-influenced Montreal had its reputation as a "sin city" of relaxed mores.

²⁴ Johanne Sloan's recent anthology (2006) is centered on the Montreal-Toronto rivalry and the very possibility of comparing cities. Thomas Waugh also gives a queer reading of these two cities and their respective films in his article (2001).

international film professionals, and to stimulate the development of the film industry at home and abroad (Marchessault 2007, 245).

Whereas the Montreal festival takes a strong international aim, whose motto is “we bring you the world,” with little care for the films made locally, the Toronto festival has quite another approach. Marchessault and Gupta compare these two festivals,²⁵ and argue that

Montreal’s and Toronto’s film festivals can be differentiated by how they have engaged with the local. In the case of Losique’s festival, the local and Canadian culture have been refused over and over again, whereas TIFF has incorporated a relation to locality into the core of its identity, especially since 1984 with the establishment of the Perspective Canada Program, which is not dispersed into a multiplicity of specialized screenings (Marchessault 2007, 246).

While TIFF became such a success that it quickly gained entry²⁶ into the FIAPF listing as a non-competitive IFF, Montreal’s FFM is still negotiating its accreditation as a competitive member of FIAPF.²⁷ Where these festivals, and others like them around the world, left some slack in their programming, other

²⁵ An important question that these writers pose and seek to answer is “What can film festivals tell us about the character and cultural status of a city?” (2007, 242).

²⁶ As *Variety* claimed early, the festival “second only to Cannes in terms of high profile pics, stars and market activity” (21 September, 1998).

²⁷ See the FIAPF list in Appendix I. Note that as it stands, the Montreal’s festival is scheduled completely during the Venice festival, an obvious conflict that will have to be resolved.

festivals were formed to accommodate the neglected films and videos. The dawn of the independent film, low-budget local and foreign productions, found spaces for screenings – in Montreal, it remains Claude Chamberlain's well-known Festival du nouveau cinéma (1971-),²⁸ renowned for his friendships with various art film directors,²⁹ and in Toronto, it is the Images Festivals of Independent Film, Video, New Media and Installation (1987-), run by committees with strong programming emphasis on artistic or experimental use of film and video. One of the few generalizations that stem from the comparison of Montreal and Toronto, in particular, is the style of managing the film festivals. Whereas many of Toronto's festivals are organized as non-profit entities with functioning committees guided by accountability, Montreal seems to foster a strong correlation between the solitary founder of the festival and the festival itself, for example, Losique and his FFM and Chamberlain and his FNC. The festival brand could not be imagined without the accompanying personality of the founding festival director. As we shall also see in the chapters below, different festivals are organized according to quite different structures, influenced by their specific politics.

²⁸ Another part of the analysis of the Montreal film festival scenes might include the influence of Chamberlain's festival on Losique's mandate. Perhaps local films were already screening at and aligned with the older festival?

²⁹ Especially, Wim Wenders and Atom Egoyan.

5.0 The Commercial Promise of the Independent Films in the 1980s & 90s

The 1980s brought a major surge in the number of film festivals globally. As Elsaesser writes in his analysis of important global shifts,

[...] the 1980s saw a shift in the traditional centers of gravity, with the festivals in Asia (notably Hong Kong), in Australia (Sydney), but above all North America (Sundance, Telluride, Montreal, Toronto) gaining in status, eclipsing some of the European festivals and setting the global trends that are followed by other, smaller festivals but which also influence national circuits of distribution and local exhibition: the art houses and specialized venues (2005, 91).

As films traveled around the world to various festivals, new audiences were established outside of the commercial exhibition network. A few new innovative distributors recognized some commercial potential in this niche. Perhaps the most famous of those is Harvey Weinstein and his Miramax company. Weinstein took the independent film circuit very seriously and gave it his company's full attention. Other similar distributors include Sony Picture Classics (USA), Castle Communications (UK), Sixpack (Austria), and Fortissimo (Netherlands), among others. As Elsaesser writes, "Festivals effectively select each year which films will fill the few slots that art-house cinemas or the dedicated screens of the multiplexes keep open for the minority interest cinema" (2005, 91). The lower budget independent films make use of the festival circuit as part of their marketing strategy, simply since there are little funds for conducting separate advertising campaigns especially to the magnitude of Hollywood budgets. Not

only would word-of-mouth and newspaper film criticism help make the films known, but would also add the value of well-earned festival prestige, for example, opening night, gala and various awards. Any of the latter would figure into the promotional material for any film – generally, the more buzz and prestige, the greater the promise of its success in distribution. Cultural capital gained at prestigious festivals is routinely converted into economic capital through the successful film's advertising and publicity.

This also had the consequence of producing a higher level of differentiation among festivals. New film festival concepts and themes were imagined and realized during the 1970s and continue to multiply today, as discussed below in Chapter II. Moreover, film was finally recognized not only as a business, but also as an art form in the context of the festival circuit. Effectively, the *auteurs* had won big with the introduction of new categories in the festivals that recognized young filmmakers and less commercially viable films, arm's length relationship to the government in power, and the introduction of the autonomous festival director as connoisseur.

6.0 On the Global Festival Network of IFFs and Beyond

The study of international film festivals brings to attention the strong relation between national and international politics and their founding. Moreover, the temporality of the festivals is in part guided by the seasons of the host town. In fact, many of them were timed to occur just outside of high-tourist season, while others were also set in de-industrialized centers across Europe, for example, Oberhausen, Brunswick and Bradford. Elsaesser argues, "festivals cluster a

combination of economic, cultural, political, artistic and personality-based factors, which communicate with and irrigate each other in a unique kind of arena” (2005 86).

In the early 1970s festival administration shifted from the government-directed minister of culture to festival director (Marshall 2005). Auteurs now represented the nation, no longer does the federal bureaucrat constitute nations through his selection. The auteur-director became the privileged and honored category at the festivals. In the end, the emphasis on countries shifted to individual auteur directors and programmers, who to varying degrees ended up representing their respective nations.

As rituals film festivals can be understood as annual gatherings that reflect on the current state of cinema. Generally, festival as carnival presupposes an active audience, while festival as ceremony presupposes a passive one. To be sure, festival audiences follow variable, overlapping scripts. This self-generating and self-reflexive dimension, like Michael Warner’s formulation of public, produces the vibe or ‘buzz’ of the festival, which is kept afloat with rumor, gossip and word-of-mouth. Access to various parts of the festival is highly regulated, limiting the experience of the members of the audience, but which also piques attention. The sociability produced by the festivals helps to bring the festivals themselves to life.³⁰

³⁰ See, notably, de Valck’s study of the Rotterdam festival (2005), or Turan’s survey of one dozen festivals (2002).

Contemporary festival directors have an 'idea' of world cinema for their festivals, cities and countries, and operate usually under the pretext of choosing only the best work of the past year, but also acting strategically to hold onto their power and sway. Festival programming's claim of art for art's sake, the "best" films remains firmly at the core of festival programming. Diverse agendas compete with one another and are carefully accommodated; and these negotiations always exceed the claim to art for art's sake.³¹ The boundary of established taste remains invisible within the festival but is constantly reconfirmed. The festival's prose, in its publications, the discourse around the festival, and the general publicity that contains both, all contribute to sustaining the festival. Films and festivals mutually confer cultural capital upon on another, and constitute a special kind of public in the form of a self-confirming and self-celebrating audience.

Some scholars, such as De Valck and Elsaesser, question the current value of national cinemas themselves in Europe in the light of European economic integration and claim that European cinema has become post-national, particularly following the 1970s growth in international co-productions. The co-productions effectively blurred any easy attribution of the category of nation to films around the world. However, even a film wholly made without one country may be conceptualized for export, namely to be seen as a film characteristic of the country but from without. The lives of co-produced films are also tied to categories at international film festival and how to brand the film.

³¹ I return to the issues of taste and cultural capital in Chapter VI below in the context of lesbian and gay film festivals.

The reasons for founding a festival in a particular city include the aim of renewing the urban setting that was ailing from post-industrial decline, for example, Oberhausen and Rotterdam (85).³² From cities in economic decline they became cultural capitals. For cities to keep their new media industries they must provide a “culture-rich environment” that stimulates and inspires the creative work force. In order to encourage such an environment, urban planners seek to instill permanent events, hence the idea of the programmable city, broader than a festival city. Various events held regularly across the calendar year satisfy this. The annual film festival would be one element among many others. International festivals have grown to resemble one another more and more as they have secured their site, identity and dates within the annual calendar of festivals. The flow of journalists and programmers from one to another brings with it a homogenizing effect to the local service industries. The festivals together as a type of de facto distribution network,³³ “the festivals – with some degrees of difference in their ranking – act collectively as a distribution system not so much for this or that film, from this or that country or director” (Elsaesser 2006, 91).

Regarding the global network of film festivals, could a major film festival exist in isolation from all others? Even small film festivals make good use of program

³² Curiously, both of these festivals were founded to be dedicated to screening experimental films.

³³ Other scholars use slightly different concepts, for example, Stringer’s circuit from Becker and de Valck’s network from Latour.

guides and gossip from other festivals, if not also arranging to rent films collaboratively to lessen their individual costs, and so on.

Julian Stringer puts much emphasis on the host city of the festival its global aspirations and its relationship to the overall international festival circuit. Stringer claims,

[...] cities have sought to establish a distinct sense of identity and community – an aura of specialness and uniqueness – through promoting their film festivals within the terms of a highly competitive global economy. Cities and towns all around the world have found it necessary to set up their own events so as not to be left out of the game (2003, 137)

While Stringer points out several insights into current global exhibition and festival culture, he leaves out of his analysis any measure of prestige or cultural capital. What is crucial to distinguish here are the different levels and types of festivals. The official (A) list of film festivals regulated by the FIAPF confers a very important cultural capital to any films that screen within this circuit. Most film festivals in the world fall outside of that highly elite circuit and serve primarily as “festivals of festivals,” namely as festivals that serve those who can not attend the A-list festival or festivals for whatever reason. While these B-list festivals may in fact be popular and festive, they do not confer the same status or cultural capital to the films as the exclusive A-list festivals or equally notable festivals that are not part of the FIAPF, most notably in independent film circles the Sundance Film Festival.

Stringer puts much weight on the global nature or aspirations of the city and its festivals, however many details should be brought out in the analysis. Any consideration of Sassen's theory of global cities should also discuss how to adapt it from New York, London and Tokyo to other cities.³⁴ It turns out that very few Alpha global cities have A-list film festivals, and many A-list film festivals are located in cities or towns without aims to rival or attain global city status anytime soon. The resort towns of Cannes, Venice and Park City do not even make the GAWC list of global cities. Evidently, cities now treat festivals very seriously in terms of their urban strategic planning and development. Richard Florida, for example, blends urban planning with tourism in his theory of the creative city and 'creative class' (2002, 34), in which each city can be measured for its creativity quotient according to various indices, which include number of cultural festivals and percentage of gay and lesbian inhabitants, among others. Many cities have adopted versions of Florida's theory as an index guide their cultural policy decisions.

7.0 A Snapshot of Types of Film Festivals³⁵

Festivals are the Olympics of the show-business economy, even though not all are as market-oriented as the Cannes Festival. What compete at festivals are less individual films than film concepts, film ideas, sales

³⁴ See Appendix III for a list of global cities ranked by GAWC.

³⁵ An extended, altered version of parts of this section was published in my review article "Film Festival Fever: Recent Testimonials" (Zielinski 2006).

angles, or what Stephen Heath called a film's "narrative image" (Elsaesser 1993, 52f.).

Elsewhere Elsaesser discusses his idea of festivals as a "parliament of national cinemas" (2005). Long ago Cannes and Venice vetoed an early idea of an open circuit of competitive festivals as part of an Olympics of Film between nations (de Valck 2003). Their strategic veto was intent on retaining their cultural capital as important festivals in the world. The FIAPF then served to regulate which festivals could become "A-List" (and consequently those that remain "B-List"). After a film's premiere the film is free to travel and collect accolades and awards or critical condemnation as it circulates through various festivals around the world. Many exist, and there are complicated reasons for screening at one or another, depending on the nature of the film, its imagined audience and publics.

As Marchessault and Gupta write on the growth of film festivals in Toronto,

Over one hundred small and medium-sized documentary, queer, experimental, student, and community-based film and media festivals have appeared since the mid-1990s as a challenge to corporate culture. These festivals indicate the overall health and vitality of the cultural scene in Toronto, where film festivals can be seen to extend the public sphere, to diversify and democratize local media cultures through expressions of difference (2007, 251).

To be sure, film festivals have been proliferating in cities across North America, and in many places around the world, forming and expanding publics and counterpublics locally and globally through their international circuits. Los

Angeles film critic Turan's 2002 memoir on his favorite dozen film festivals surveys the incredible variety that exists nowadays, but still only touches the tip of the iceberg. He observes the rapid proliferation of film festivals worldwide with over 150 in Europe and thirty in New York City alone. Every major city has at least a dozen different film festivals, but typically many more. Their numbers mirror their diversity, namely those festivals with specialized themes such as spoof films, comedies, particular language or culture of origin, films made by women, silent films, mountain films, mental illness, sexuality, *refusés*, documentaries, and so on.

The Sundance Festival (originally named the 'US Film Festival' in 1978, new name from 1985 on in Park City, Utah) is the "flagship of the burgeoning American independent film movement" (Turan 2002, 76) which has the current setting of a mountain resort village of six thousand inhabitants that welcomes twenty thousand festival-goers annually. At Sundance cultural capital is premium, and unknown directors can become famous immediately. Perhaps the complete opposite of Sundance is the ShoWest Festival in Las Vegas which serves as a film trade show-festival at which the late Jack Valenti gave his annual address. At ShoWest participants also try to anticipate audience taste trends and hone their marketing strategies through various industry strategy workshops. Its primary aim, according to Turan, is to bring together exhibitors and distributors in one event. While Turan outlines, in another chapter, the effects of the collapse of the Soviet Union on the Havana festival, he sketches out a hopeful post-civil-war Sarajevo with its own festival alongside. On a brighter note Turan also describes

the wondrous Arctic Midnight Sun festival in Finland that runs nonstop, twenty-four hours a day, with endless summer Arctic sunshine and sponsored Finlandia vodka (182). The diverse litany of types and styles of film festivals, while here finite, hints at the incredible differentiation of festivals worldwide. To be sure, each one has its own story, its own place among all other film festivals globally and regionally, and each has its own set of relations and tensions that stem in part from the ethos of its origin.

Another film festival insider William Marshall, the co-founder of the Toronto International Film Festival, dedicates a whole chapter to his list of recommended festivals³⁶ (2005, 78-91). Every month of the year has between five and seven possible festivals that made it to his list, which is admittedly already quite a shortened list. The list includes, among many others, various short film festivals (Flickerfest), the several counter-Sundance festivals (Slamdance, No Dance), IFFRotterdam, the Floating Film Festival on a cruise ship in the Caribbean, London's Green Screen on environmental issues, Local Heroes International Screen Festival in Winnipeg and Edmonton, Pan-African Film and TV Festival of Ouagadougou organized in Paris and Brussels, even Roger Ebert's Overlooked Film Festival (by invitation only), Worldfest Houston, San Francisco International Film Festival, DreamSpeakers-the First Peoples World Film Celebration in Edmonton, Vevey's International Comedy Film Festival, Provincetown International Film Festival, International Festival of Free Flight in St Hilaire du

³⁶ Many others are listed at *Variety's* website www.variety.com and the officially accredited ones are listed at <www.fiapf.org>.

Touvet in France, and so on. Festival connoisseurship is certainly the professional right of the critic but also that of directors and distributors, among others. All those professional players must have good reasons for attending any festival wherever, since the competition between the many festivals sheerly for their attention is very strong.

Moreover, there are many film festivals that address specific diasporic or ethnic groups, for example, Iranian, Jewish, Italian, and Black, which take place in parts of the world typically where major communities are concentrated. There are many other types of film festivals, organized around gender or sexual identities, including erotic, lesbian and gay, bisexual and transgender. While the international FIAPF has accredited only forty-eight festivals worldwide, it would be impossible to list, let alone study, the thousands of “other” film festivals around the globe.

Concluding Remarks

The story of the international film festival proves very rich indeed, and is only recently starting to be written. From the dozens of one-time festivals that peppered Europe in the late-19th and early-20th centuries to the emergence of the annual IFF in the political context of Italian Fascism and throughout the twentieth century, they have proven themselves in different historical periods with strikingly different political contexts. The latent or manifest political and social aspects of the film festival particularly come to light in 1968, that very special year of rebellion, which ushered in many important changes to the structure and operation of the IFFs, first in France, and then elsewhere within a few years. As

the nationalistic and Cold War ideologies wore on, new generations or waves of filmmakers begged to differ with the heavy-handed government directives to the management and content of the festivals. With the changes brought in 1969 at Cannes and elsewhere thereafter, younger auteur filmmakers and more radical films could be screened. The newly-empowered role of the festival director effectively became the auteur of programming, upon whose shoulders all criticism of the festival now fell. Thus, the very idea of 'film festival' had changed fundamentally. It had liberalized, opened up to a new constellation of possibilities and constraints, centered on a new set of coordinates. To be sure, Venice, Cannes and Berlin, among others, had set the stage for the large international film festivals, but other "stages" were being imagined.

While nations first created film festivals in designated cities in order to forefront the cinema of the host country among the films representing other national cinemas, the festivals that make up any given city today intimate the culture of the city itself. The structure and organization of the IFFs have changed fundamentally, from the early strong emphasis on government control and international diplomacy to an arm's-length distance from the government in power, greater control of the festival director, and greater recognition of the art or auteur film. As we will see in the coming chapters, the practice of committee-run festivals returns to certain new types of community-oriented film festivals, borrowing the tactic from feminist media theory, in the attempt to represent as best as possible the festival's imagined constituency and resulting publics. Curiously, the tourism industry has been with IFFs since their beginnings in

Venice and Cannes, and more recently this aspect has been integrated into various indices that attempt to measure and rank the quality of life in any city. In North America this might mean that today municipal governments might actively encourage and fund in part various cultural activities, including film festivals, in order to demonstrate their competitive measure alongside all other cities that are also competing. Increased funding possibilities and an encouraging municipal politics enable a greater number of potential cultural activities in any such city.

The types of film festivals worldwide have become extraordinarily differentiated since the 1970s, but especially since the late-1980s. In the following two chapters I work through how these new constellations effectively brought into existence new community-oriented film festivals, organized around race, gender and eventually sexuality, but on quite different terms and with very different politics, as we shall see in the third chapter.

II. 1968, Social Movements, Counterculture and the New Film Festivals

1.0 1968, A Year of Protest

In this chapter I argue that the events of 1968 around the Langlois affair, and the institutional changes that they motivated, are pivotal in the history of international film festivals and crucial to the new types of film festivals that emerged subsequently.

The events were, of course, situated in the context of major social turmoil and vociferous protests in France and throughout most of the West, with some spilling over into the Soviet sphere, particularly the Prague rebellion and its brutal quashing. In France the government replaced the founder and head of the Cinémathèque française, which prompted a series of direct responses from French and foreign filmmakers and cinephiles (*Affaire Langlois 1968*). Their protest included a critique of the highly exclusive Cannes Film Festival. The Nouvelle Vague filmmakers demanded a stronger recognition of auteur films, young filmmakers, and less government interference, and quickly won concessions from the government without resistance. The precedence set at Cannes released the idea of international film festivals from the tight grip of national governments into the hands of the head festival director or programmer, modeled on the position of the artistic director. It was under the connoisseurship and discretion of the festival director that films are selected and screened in the festivals to this day. Furthermore, this also had the consequence of producing a higher level of differentiation among festivals. New film festival concepts and themes were imagined and realized during the early 1970s and continue to

multiply today, as described in the last chapter. More specifically, this chapter lays out the main community-oriented film festivals associated with social and counterculture movements of the late-1960s and early-1970s as well as the context of emergence of the gay and lesbian social movement and its film festivals.³⁷ The main argument shows how the different social and counterculture movements developed similar, if not analogical, theories and politics of representation that became manifest in the community film festival project itself.

While Chapter I traces the development of international film festivals (IFFs) from the 1930s, post-1947 and 1950s Cold War, 1960s, 1970s, this chapter concentrates on the influence of the protest year 1968 in relation to select social and counterculture movements, whose members developed theories and politics of representation, especially aimed at countering the hegemonic images from Hollywood. Such questions then arose, such as “How should a women’s film be constructed in order to avoid any inherited male biases?,” “How should African-Americans mobilize themselves to become more involved in the culture industry?,” and “How might new types of erotic films help to revolutionize repressive societies?” Many other questions certainly followed.

Even though international film festivals before 1968 surely had political aspects integrated into their very structures, the new socially-oriented film festivals, alongside the IFFs, were formed with certain politics of representation at their core however they took their direction not from governments and international

³⁷ The following chapter below addresses the history of the specific lesbian and gay film festivals.

politics, but rather from oppositional social movements, from the ground up. As I argue below, their aims were corrective and self-affirming in nature. They were decidedly corrective of the representations produced by the culture industry and in circulation in the mass media, while at the same time they worked to affirm the groups that they claimed to represent. Much of their individual critiques found resonance in the emergence of lesbian and gay movement, its identity politics and critical theory of representation as well as the associated film festivals.

2.0 The New Socially-Oriented Film Festivals after 1968

The tumultuous protest year of 1968 not only sparked a restructuring of the festival at Cannes and other international film festivals, but also signifies an important moment for social movements of the period, a moment of empowerment as each sought out new ways of reaching their membership. One of these innovative media strategies was the community-oriented film festival. Many were in part founded with the intent of contributing to and fostering a sense of community among its constituency, directed towards forming and sustaining a social movement, and in part providing a place to screen work that would otherwise not find an audience. Important examples are the Black film festivals and women's film (or video) festivals. Gone from the new festivals was that heightened emphasis on glamour and spectacle that many of the IFFs cultivated proudly, as the former aimed to perform a more active social, even revolutionary, role.

I would like to outline some of the very basic aspects of these new festivals and then return to each type in more detail in sections that follow. Black film festivals

were formed in order to address the systemic exclusion of African Americans from filmmaking and representation in the popular media, while women's film festivals were organized around a specific allegiance to gender as an identity, at first. The women's film festivals provided the exhibition space for films by (and for) women and were created as a corrective to the studied systemic exclusion of women from filmmaking at most levels. Both groups sought to take control of their representation by creating professional networks for those involved in the media, teaching the necessary skills to members, creating supportive institutional frameworks for the production, distribution and exhibition of their films and videos. The associated film festivals are simply one aspect of these larger projects. Another, but quite unique, self-declared revolutionary movement was the so-called sexual revolution which aimed to challenge conservative sexual mores of the 1950s, in part constituted by them in its oppositionality. In a general sense, the sexual revolution defined itself as sexual liberation, a liberalization of attitudes towards sexual practices and all sexualities. Thus, thitherto taboo pornographic films and films with explicit sex acts were boldly produced and found new audiences, new publics and counterpublics, outside of the conventional ones confined to urban working-class-oriented sex cinemas. To be sure, the sexual revolution had a middle-class sensibility to it and differentiated itself from older more hesitant practices. The importance of this revolution includes the development of new modes of pornographic film, the creation of erotic film festivals and its special empowering place in the history of lesbian and gay cinema, as argued below.

Let us now turn to these three new types of annual film festivals – Black, women’s and erotic.

2.1 The Civil Rights Movement & Black Film Festivals

The Civil Rights Movement was one of a few longstanding social movements in the United States. While from the 1940s till the 1960s it was concerned with the social integration of blacks into mainstream America, more Afrocentric interests later became popular as a means to develop the community and its culture from within (Yearwood 2000, 46-47). Popular culture, and particularly its representation of African-Americans, was a constant issue for the movement.³⁸

The Black Arts Movement has its origin in black protest art and practices, and “black protest aesthetics flourished with the urban explosion of the late 1960s and 1970s during the consciousness, nationalist and racial awareness movements of the period” (Yearwood 2000, 48).

In the anthology *Black Cinema Aesthetics*, Tony Gittens³⁹ makes a plea for black independent film and furthermore makes the case for establishing a supportive infrastructure to encourage and sustain the production, distribution and exhibition of the films. Black independent filmmakers, according to Gittens, are to “celebrate the black culture” and “herald the tremendous achievements of blacks

³⁸ An excellent anthology of essays and source material on black cinema in the United States, from the 1920s on, is Lindsay Patterson’s 1975 *Black Films and Filmmakers: A Comprehensive Anthology from Stereotype to Superhero*.

³⁹ Gittens is the founder of numerous film institutions, especially the Black Film Institute, African Film Festival, Independent Black Film Festival, and the Young Filmmakers’ Workshop, in the District of Columbia.

as a people despite severe handicaps and disadvantages [...] Black cinema must be used to pull ourselves out of the Harlem experience” (1982, 118). He maintains that “[t]he responsibility of this black film industry would be to develop audiences for black films,” which requires special attention to exhibition. Gittens argues, “unless we can bring the films to the public in our communities, an independent black cinema will have difficult time surviving” (118). He writes on the important social effects that such a cinema would have on African-Americans: “healing the psychological wounds of a history of oppression,” “[providing] moral upliftment and advancement for black people,” and “[extending] ethnic and national pride in our people” (118-120). To be sure, the notion of healing after oppression is a common motif that other movements borrow, particularly the women’s liberation and gay liberation, as we will see below. Similar resonances are noticed in the desire to improve the material and moral situation of the movement’s constituency, and the very notion of pride itself, which certainly also found a positive response in gay liberation.

On the issue of reception, James Snead argues that

[t]he majority of recent black independent films since the sixties have the feeling of intimate conversations between filmmaker and audience, and deal with issues *within* the black community, without special regard for a theoretical white viewer [...] The viewer achieves [...] an understanding of a complex black world from within, rather than a caricature of it from without (1994 117, emphasis in original).

According to Snead, a significant shift in the self-representation of African-Americans in narrative cinema occurred in the 1960s and carried on through the 1980s. This was a shift of narrative emphasis away from the ethnographic, outsider's approach to an articulation of the experiences of being African-American primarily *for* other African-Americans. This is known as the *Afrocentric turn*, a crucial moment in black politics in the United States. No longer was the need felt to explain and account for the black experience to the larger (white) America. Black culture was to be produced by black people according to the pressing issues of the community itself.

While the cultural politics may have been under transformation in the late 1960s, there is ample evidence of elaborate institutional support in the form of Black-owned cinemas that provided for Black film exhibition. Streible studies the case of the Harlem Theater, 1920-1973, which had been located in Austin, Texas (1993). Such Black film theaters, and their circuit, existed in the United States from the early years of the 20th century, and offered a parallel universe of American films that received attention through specific Black reception. Streible writes,

the [Harlem] was able to book prestige films like *The Ten Commandments* and the reissued *Gone with the Wind*. Very few all-Black productions were booked, but whenever Hollywood vehicles for Black stars of the 1950s (Dorothy Dandridge, Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, and so on) became available they met with success at both shows, particularly at the Harlem (1993, 229).

Moreover, Streible describes the multiuse of the space of the cinema for other types of performance. He notes the rise of the talent shows,

Live shows featuring touring Black variety groups continued to be popular, but were hired with less frequency as the [1950s] wore on. A particularly popular act was a group known as the Brown Skin Models, who appeared several times at the Harlem for midnight weekend performances. But as professional touring groups began to dwindle on the film circuit, they were replaced at the Harlem by talent shows. Local performers would compete, on a weekly or monthly basis, for prizes given by area businesses (1993, 229).

These Black cinema circuits provided a remarkable cultural alternative to other cinemas that did not have the extra pressure to integrate other non-cinematic events into their programming. The Black cinemas were able to respond to their nearby communities and furnish them with a variety of performances and events as well as programs of films chosen with community tastes in mind.

Regarding the decline of the Harlem Theater in the 1960s, Streible brings to attention the slow process of racial desegregation, as he argues,

[the decline] was [due] to the changing social conditions in Austin and the nation. Up through even the late 1950s the White Interstate theaters had a written policy which instructed employees to inform customers that “this theater does not cater to Negro patronage at this time.” [...] But the incident-plagued trend toward public integration persisted throughout the decade. As African-Americans generally became accustomed to using

what had been White-only facilities – such as movie theaters – the ability of the Harlem to compete for the Black audience lessened. With the potential for African-American citizens to attend any theater or drive-in in town, the need for an exclusive Black theater became more and more irrelevant to many residents of East Austin (1993, 231).

The social changes in the 1960s, in particular desegregation, diminished the need for the Black cinema circuits and effectively produced their decline, according to Streible, not only in Texas, but across the nation. With such a steep decline in potential Black film exhibition spaces, the time was ripe to offer other institutional support to exhibition, namely in the form of the black film festival and the black independent film movement of the late 1960s.

The vibrant creative period of the late-1960s and 1970s also saw many African-Americans attending film schools and studying film and media at universities in unprecedented numbers (Snead 1994, 115). Regarding the influence of this period and the founding of several important film institutions, Yearwood writes,

[t]he appearance of black film festivals complemented the new cultural environment. In 1969, Pearl Bowser organized the First Black Independent Film Festival in New York. [Bowser recounts,] 'Films that had not been seen in more than 40 years were located and put on exhibition [...] to reopen an area of American film history that scholars had ignored or just passed over' (2000, 49)

Black independent cinema was about to pass through a renaissance. Bowser's knowledge of past films and the programming ethos made for exciting

retrospective screenings of films of interest to black history nearly forgotten. This festival intentionally took the step to look back in order to envision the promise of the future of a black cinema. By opening up these archives of ignored films, black critics and filmmakers were compelled to address the particular question, why were the films not written as a part of American film history, and how could this be corrected?

With the addition of an Afrocentric position to black American cultural politics, namely notions of an essential Blackness, a definite Black culture, Black aesthetics, among others, emerged and were explored. These new interests joined the steady concern over systemic exclusion from and marginalization in the culture industry. The idea of the black film festival emerged during this period, alongside other vibrant cultural initiatives, such as poetry readings. Instead of merely trying to compete to screen their films at national or international film festivals, the black film festival offered a radical new opportunity for black filmmakers to show their films in concentration (Yearwood, 60). This new public forum opened up professional and funding networking possibilities, direct address to the members of the associated communities and immediate responses from the members on the film themselves, but also the much needed critical recognition from the black press and beyond.

While the Black film festivals are definitely a result of the social transformations taking place in the 1960s, many exist today in most major cities in the United States. The Newark Black Film Festival, in New Jersey, was founded in 1974 and is the longest-running festival in the country. While the festivals were founded on

the mandate to showcase films by African-Americans, many have expanded their purview also to include films by Africans or members of the African diaspora based anywhere in the world.⁴⁰

The name of the Newark and other similar festivals suggests the era of its founding and possibly its cultural politics, namely the use of 'black' in the 1960s and 70s compared to 'Afro-American' to the more recent preference for 'African-American' and the more general 'people of color,' which applies more generally to all people marked by race outside of the presupposed, invisible "white norm." Many other African-American or people of color film festivals now exist.⁴¹ The enlarged category of people of color in such festivals owes much to the earlier and continuing black and women's film festivals.

Moreover, I would also suggest that many of the current cultural, ethnic regional, for example, Asian, Italian or Jewish film festivals, that appeal to specific ethnic or linguistic diasporic communities also owe much to the early minority community festivals that stemmed from respective social movements. Similarly, as gay liberation adopted its ethnic model and became boldly homo-centric, the

⁴⁰ See, especially, Manthia Diawara's article "New York and Ougadougou: The Homes of African Cinema," which addresses global aspects of black cinema and its festivals (1993).

⁴¹ A very recent crossover phenomenon is manifest with OutFest's Fusion: The Los Angeles LGBT People of Color Film Festival (2002-), which bridges categories of sexuality and visible minorities, and similarly for San Francisco's Queer Women of Color Film Festival (QWOCFF 2004-).

emergent gay film festivals over a few decades developed broader inclusivity through its expansion to 'LGBT.'

Let us now turn to the very important women's liberation and women's movement and the formation of the new women's film festivals.

2.2 The Women's Movement & Women's Film Festivals

The women's film festival was one of the very first dedicated film festivals to issue from a large social movement. Not only were the festivals aiming to redress the problem of the gross under-representation of women in film by creating an empowering, nurturing forum for women filmmakers, they were also spaces for the celebration of the experience of being a woman.⁴² Curiously, almost nothing has been published on the emergence or culture of the women's film festivals in relation to the women's film movement, save the accompanying contemporaneous festival reviews in the press and the occasional feminist film journals (see discussion in Citron 1978, Rich 1998, White 2006, Juhasz 2006).

In her "Prologue: Angst and Joy on the Women's Film Festival Circuit," film critic and professor Ruby Rich recounts some of the important aims and challenges of the early festivals. She writes that the early women's film festivals were each

[...] first and foremost a research project [...] They were the only chance, like those signs for gas before crossing the desert – in this case, emerging

⁴² A few important texts from this period are Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1974) and Claire Johnston's "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema" (1973), among many others.

from a century-long desert. Far from the marketplace, cabals of programmers were volunteering time and energy and literally rescuing films from a life on the shelf: they were dusting off the case to show women's work for the first time in months, years, decades, *ever*. Women wrote one another around the world, passing on tips of filmmakers rediscovered or long-lost prints reclaimed. No wonder the air of expectation and momentum hung over them (Rich 1998, 29)

Issuing out of the countercultural framework, the festivals took on the quality of intense "experimental laboratories" that produced "a new feminist cinematic consciousness while simultaneously putting into practice the political commitment behind the activity" (Rich 1998, 31). Moreover, Rich acknowledges the disparity of the views of the many women involved,

they were broad coalitions, mixing contradictory communities and constituencies in a volatile combination. There was lots of disagreement and a bit of consensus, along with inevitable coups, resignations, and takeovers. That was the tenor of the times (Rich 1998, 31 f.).

Rich provides here a useful portrait of the festivals in all their complexity. She was then and still is quite active as a festival organizer and programmer, critic, guest speaker, among other occupations, from the early women's film festivals right up to today with her constant support of lesbian and gay film festivals, as discussed below.

The Ann Arbor Women's Film Festival began in 1970 and lasted till 1974. Edinburgh (Laura Mulvey) and West Berlin (Heike Sander) had their first in 1972.

Toronto's version started in 1973 – the first in Canada – with a retrospective program titled “Women and Film (1896-1973)” (Armatage, 3). The cherished Festival international de films de femmes de Créteil, located just southeast of Paris, commenced in 1979 and remains perhaps the longest-standing women's film festival in the world. According to the festival's website, it serves also as an important archive of women's films, with more than 10 000 films catalogued. While many of the early women's film festivals have come and gone during the 1970s and 80s, there has been a resurgence of interest more globally since the 1990s with many new women's film festivals springing up in Asia, Middle East, and elsewhere.

Recent writing on women's film festivals is, noticeably, almost always in the past tense. Patricia White titles her article “The Last Days of Women's Cinema” (2006) and is part of an “archive for the future” in the feminist film journal *Camera Obscura*, and responds to Claire Johnston's 1973 “Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema” as a way to discuss the importance and strategies of archiving such a cinema. She focuses the history of the idea of a women's cinema from the 1972 Women's Cinema Event, organized by Laura Mulvey and Lynda Myles, in the context of the Edinburgh Film Festival. White observes that “[y]et the canonization of “Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema” in feminist film scholarship tends to elide this festival context” (2006, 145). Through her retracing, White shows how crucial such institutions and practices were to the development of women's cinema and the women directors of today. As a warning, White also observes, “[w]hile media produced by women has increased

exponentially in the intervening decades, concern with a feminist restructuring of the social and material relations of production and exhibition is much less salient” (White 2006, 146), which brings us back to crucial institutional support, for example, festivals and film programming, and tactical practices, for example, academic writing and popular criticism, without which the shape of women’s cinema or films by women would be truly reduced.

In Alexandra Juhasz’s response to the same question of an archive for women’s cinema, she argues that a proper reflection on the past should enliven the future and tasks at hand (2006, 53), and notes in passing that “the American women’s film festival is largely a thing of the past” (2006, 53). According to Juhasz, the challenge is to bring women film and videomakers in dialogue with professionalized feminist scholars (54f.). Although Juhasz admits that women’s film festivals, and other feminist practices, have diminished or dislocated from their lively theoretical debates, she writes at length on the prospering women’s cinema movements elsewhere in the world, especially at the Women’s Film Festival in Seoul, South Korea, where urgency is very current (56). As a final rather encouraging prescriptive, Juhasz suggests that

[f]eminist media scholars could return to a relevant and even prominent position in this lively field if we dared to reconnect our thriving but stand-alone culture with the world and work of nonacademic women and alternative feminist media (57).

It is useful to note that the three women scholars quoted above contributed actively to the women’s cinema movement but contribute perhaps even more

importantly to lesbian film studies, to the extent that the two can be separated. The crossover on the festival front between women's film festivals and lesbian and gay film festivals has been part of the very fabric of both festival circuits from their beginnings, a crucial intersectional moment that is common to many of the socially-oriented film festivals, to be sure. While Rich has worked for several decades as a film critic and helped to bring about the first women's film festival in Chicago, she has written extensively on the rise and decline of new queer cinema, among other topics (Rich, 1998). White's studies on lesbians in Hollywood cinema will remain part of the LGBT canon of texts in cinema studies, while she remains affiliated with NewFest as a programmer (White, 1999a and 1999b). Juhasz has herself bridged critical writing and social practice as a documentary videomaker.⁴³

The women's film festival circuit was strongly tied to the women's cinema movement in the West. As female filmmakers became more integrated in the film industry, the need for such festivals waned. However, while the need for such festivals is definitely not as pressing as it was in early-1970s North America, women's film festivals are now being organized in other parts of the world where women's voices are demanding to be heard and images seen.

While Black and women's film festivals stemmed from social movements, the so-called sexual revolution produced a few film festival organized around the theme of erotics during the albeit brief period of "porno chic" in the early 1970s. Their

⁴³ See, for example, her book *AIDS TV: Identity, Community and Alternative Video* (1996).

importance to the formation of lesbian and gay film festivals lies in their unwavering commitment to representations of sexuality.

2.3 The (“Second”) Sexual Revolution & Erotic Film Festivals

According to historians of (western) sexuality, there have been two principal sexual revolutions, namely the first during 19th and early 20th centuries up to and including Freud and the second during the 1960s and 70s,⁴⁴ from the invention of artificial birth control (“the pill”) in 1960 till the AIDS crisis of the early 1980s.⁴⁵ The second sexual revolution is most crucial to this chapter. This revolution was primarily a type of youth movement that aimed to liberalize sexual mores in North America and Europe. The new medical technology of female contraceptive and abortion radically freed women from the constraints of reproduction and permitted a heightened degree of sexual experimentation. The conservative mores of the 1950s were shaken through growth and heightened publicity of various activities, such as nudism, interracial coupling, increased open sexual promiscuity, the “free love” of San Francisco’s famous Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, which all combined with the general anti-establishment ethos of

⁴⁴ According to the OED (1989), it was in the 1960s that the new meaning for the word ‘sex’ was made popular in the sense of ‘to have sex (with),’ beyond the old biological sex.

⁴⁵ The election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, Ronald Reagan in 1980, along with the AIDS epidemic from 1981, cast a conservative chill on public discourse and funding, especially regarding minority sexualities.

the era,⁴⁶ from the Hippies and their defiant use of psychedelic drugs and the Summer of Love on (Allyn, 2000).

With the surge of interest in all things sexual, pornographic film became more frankly discussed and viewed by young sexual revolutionaries. During the late 1960s, the legal definition of obscenity was altered in a few U.S. cases to obtain only if it was “*utterly* without redeeming social value.” The slippery nature of “social value” enabled an effective loophole to materials that until then had been designated “obscene.” Obscenity charges were dropped unless they involved the attempt to sell material to minors or used very sexual images in its packaging (Redrup v. New York, 1967) (Pornography 2007). The conservative backlash over the relative liberalization of obscenity helped to bring Richard Nixon to power in 1968. He had weighed into the controversy but once elected, did little on the issue. The changed definition combined with post-Kinsey frankness in the public discussion of sexual conduct set the stage for the explosion of sexuality, and its representation, to come. Not only was there a marked increase in pornographic production, particularly longer and even feature-length films,⁴⁷ it was also accompanied by formal innovations in narrative and techniques borrowed from experimental art cinema, and expanded institutions, such as the

⁴⁶ Important radical theorists of the era were psychologist Wilhelm Reich and Marxist Herbert Marcuse.

⁴⁷ *Deep Throat* (USA, 1972) and the controversy around it would be a classic case study for this period was hugely popular and notably piqued middle- and upper-class interest in the pornographic.

adult cinema for films rated XXX and pornographic peep booths in sex shops.⁴⁸ Moreover, there was the brief development of the so-called erotic film festivals, for 'erotic' has always been the polite, even *classist* word for pornography. In any case, during the early 1970s, 'porno' was in and hip. Film critic Richard Corliss reminisces on his professional experience of the period,

The receptiveness of the establishment to the outlaw sub-art in the early and middle 70s was evident at the two major film festivals I took part in, Cannes and New York. In Cannes' unofficial sidebar, known as the Market, Mary and I saw *Behind the Green Door*, Lasse Braun's *Sensations*, Max Pecos' *Dictionary of Sex* and Metzger's *Score*, where, after a screening of the film's soft-core version, we were invited to stay for an alternate final reel featuring hard-core sex. (Metzger went on to direct one more arty hard-core, the excellent Paris-shot SM drama *The Image*, before turning to light-hearted New York porn under the pseudonym Henry Paris.) The Market was just that: a film showcase to lure international buyers. But the porn movies on display fit snugly into the tone of the official Festival. They were serious (if not successful) works, as ambitious as they were lubricious.

At the New York Film Festival, films with intense sexual elements were occasionally part of the 20-some features in the official program. In 1971,

⁴⁸ For example, the notorious *Thundercrack* (USA, 1975), written by underground experimental filmmaker George Kuchar and directed by Curt McDowell, see (Edwards 2007) for articles on this film and others outside of the mainstream.

the year I joined the festival's selection committee, we showed Dusan Makaveyev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, which had a hint of hard-core. The following year, the Festival had Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (Brando, butter), as we discoed fearlessly through the 70s, we brought in a porno documentary from France (*Exhibition*) and a Japanese drama (*In the Realm of the Senses*) that had hard-core sex and a pretty explicit castration. The clear implication: these pictures were chosen to be in the Film Festival, so they had to be art (Corliss 2005).

Evidently, pornographic film had its own discreet place in the international film festivals, both Cannes and New York, during the early 1970s, but has long since fallen out of fashion, at least in the major film festivals. "Porno chic" was a fast fleeting trend that lasted only a few years at the beginning of the decade.

Pornography as a subject for academic study has receives periodic attention.⁴⁹ It has received extended attention in the work of several feminist scholars, notably Linda Williams and Laura Kipnis, as well as Eric Schaefer and Thomas Waugh, among others. Recently, a special issue of the cinema studies journal *Velvet Light Trap* (spring 2007) was dedicated to the subject, edited by Peter Lehman

⁴⁹ Eric Schaefer's article "Dirty Little Secret: Scholars, Archivists and Dirty Movies" (2005) is an excellent example of an attempt to recover pornography as a worthwhile subject of study within academia, while Waugh's 1997 article on the resistance to the publication of his book *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* provides important insights into the challenges still confronted by academics who research and publish in the area.

and Linda Williams. Some of the recent work on pornographic film concerns the early 1970s and the emergence of three erotic film festivals in the United States and western Europe. As Schaefer writes on this special idealized moment in the history of cinema,

[t]he New York Times Magazine [in 1971] labeled "the dirty movie" as "another aspect of hip culture," claiming that many of the young filmmakers working in the Bay Area were using porn "to make a statement" and characterized Alex de Renzy as the "Jean-Luc Godard of the nouvelle vague in porn." Arlene Elster, who ran the Sutter Cinema in San Francisco, spoke of the films as part of a move toward greater openness that appealed to the young, and the San Francisco Erotic Film Festival, which she and Lowell Pickett sponsored, was said to be an expression of their idealism (Schaefer 2002, 15).

An important contribution from the sexual revolution was the erotic film festival, however briefly they existed. "Porno chic" was all the rage among the chattering classes.⁵⁰ While very little has been published on these highly specialized thematic festivals, Elena Gorfinkel's recent article studies the erotic film festivals in Amsterdam (1970), San Francisco (1970) and New York City (1971) of the 1970s. Gorfinkel situates her study of the emergent erotic film festivals'

hybrid reception sphere within the history of the sexual revolution and the development of publicly screened hardcore pornography, as well as within

⁵⁰ Corliss' article "That Old Feeling: When Porno was Chic" (2005) address the early 1970s with some subtlety.

the contexts of broader public debates around the liberalization of screen permissiveness. I will also map out the emergence of the erotic film festival as a site for taste formation and erotic consumption across different modes of film production such as the sexploitation film, the experimental film, the independent film, and the hardcore pornographic feature. Exemplary of a moment in which the furor over sexuality and sexual explicitness in film had reached a fever pitch, this case study looks at the ways that these festivals mobilized a discourse of sexual liberation alongside a rhetoric of aesthetic innovation, positioning themselves outside of the market of the more mundane porn shops and storefront theaters selling a seedier version of sex to an older generation of "skin flick" consumers (Gorfinkel 2006, 59-60).

The three festivals only lasted a few years each and were constantly embroiled in controversy and legal battles over the acceptability of the contents of the films for public exhibition. These festivals justified their worth by appealing to aesthetic innovation in order to distinguish their film programs from the conventional pornographic fare of the day. The careful decision to use 'erotic' over 'porn' also hints at this attempt to differentiate one taste and exhibition culture from another as well as demographics defined by age, gender and class. Moreover, the festivals revealed their local contingent cinema-going cultures, as Gorfinkel compares the two American festivals,

[w]hile the San Francisco festival took on a tone that invoked artistic elevation and the privileging of the erotic as an aesthetic form within a

logic of "sexual expressionism," the New York erotic film festival established a slightly more brash, mercantile, and brassy reception environ, while simultaneously partaking in the language of erotica and art, no doubt seen as a benefit for legal protection, marketing purposes, and cultural credibility (2006, 71).

Each city brought to its festival its own expectations of what such a cinema and festival should be. While the cities and their cultures can be seen as enabling environments (or not), the newer film technology also offered new opportunities.

Schaefer makes an observation that the then more readily accessible technology of 16mm film (over 35mm) permitted the filmmakers to experiment with the medium far beyond the earlier sexploitation films.⁵¹ He writes,

[w]hether as producers, talent, or viewers, individuals associated with 16mm sex films were encouraged to think of their involvement as a countercultural act. The new, franker 16mm movies marked the convergence of the revolution in film aesthetics and the sexual revolution [...] The number of companies making 16mm films for the adult market proliferated rapidly. This growth not only signaled the importance of 16mm film in the adult market in the late 1960s but also demonstrated the

⁵¹ Evidently, the enabling aspect of the smaller, more affordable medium, compared to 35mm, applies equally to other groups trying to make films on small budgets, for example, black, female, lesbian or gay filmmakers.

comparative ease with which one could move into the field (Schaefer 2002, 16).⁵²

This opened up opportunities for the abovementioned convergence of modes of cinema, including experimental, ethnographic, and sexploitation, among others, while also assembling together a broad range of sexual acts and sexualities.

Early gay pornography has received significant scholarly attention for the special role that it served during the underground, pre-Stonewall period.⁵³ Jack Stevenson offers a fascinating and rare glimpse of early stag films from the 1910s on and programming at various gay pornography cinemas in the United States into the 1980s. His article is particularly compelling in its insistence on the special relationship between gay pornographic or erotic film and the gay (and lesbian) cinemas that emerged in the 1970s and 80s. Describing the remarkable increase in production of lesbian and gay themed films during the 1990s, Jack Stevenson claims that

[t]his relatively recent "legitimization" of gay film has come only after decades of struggle for the freedom to create, circulate, and access gay erotic images a struggle that has culminated in the freedom to view these images in the public environment of the movie theater. In this context, the

⁵² Especially in the case of pornographic film, there is a similar logic in the democratization of media technology with the subsequent development of VHS video and digital video. Amateur video porn producers now abound.

⁵³ For example, see Waugh's *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* (1996).

history of gay erotic film is all about the journey from the private space to the public space, and as such it parallels the history of gay liberation itself (1997, 24-25).

More generally, lesbian and gay historiography is deeply imbricated with the study of early lesbian and gay erotica, be it romance novels, drawings, or films, whose legacy also includes censorship battles, police witch hunts, political controversies, stylistic tendencies, and so forth.⁵⁴ Stevenson calls attention to the important change in gay pornography in the early 1970s, as films became feature-length and hardcore. He explains,

[t]he landscape was transfigured almost overnight as "beefcake" or "meatrack" productions, euphemisms for gay hard-core porn in the trade, began commercial exhibition at about the same time as straight hard-core features, albeit on a separate and smaller circuit. By late 1971, better-produced and more dramatically ambitious hard-core films began to appear in response to the lack of quality in the very first hard-core titles (Schaefer 1997, 28).

The early 1970s brought narrative feature-length hard-core pornographic films into existence and into vogue, heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual. While the 16mm technology may have helped early 1970s gay pornography, the advent

⁵⁴ Waugh's work on pre-Stonewall gay pornography addresses the specific questions of its formal character, namely sexual desire sublimated into physique or classical poses, among other strategies to avoid legal retribution, and distribution by post at great personal risk (1996).

of home video equipment in the 1980s dealt a fatal blow to the pornographic cinema as a commercial venue of exhibition, as Stevenson observes,

[b]y the mid-80s, gay commercial porn cinema had once again retreated behind closed doors as the emergence of home video allowed private accessibility to product, while the AIDS crisis prompted a police shutdown of public gay-sex institutions and effectively brought about the suppression of gay porn as a public experience (1997, 30).

Effectively, from the 1980s on, pornographic cinema was made available by other means than communal cinema-going, and sharply sequestered to the private sphere through home video formats, video disc, DVD, and more recently internet downloading and digital video streaming.

As a custom, a matter of taste or a learned fear of police harassment and censorship, it is very rare for any other type of film festival to screen a film with explicit sex acts or hardcore pornography, including those festivals organized around minority sexualities themselves. Those films that depict explicit sexual acts are generally framed as daring, rebellious art films that seek to test the boundaries of bourgeois taste. Even if pornographic films are not screened, there seems to be a constant supply of and interest in documentary films on the making of pornographic films and its industry.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ In Chapter VII, I interrogate the matter of taste with specific attention to the case of the LGBT film festivals.

If the hope and heady idealism of the 1970s sexual revolution may have paled, the original idea of a sexually-liberating festival of erotics and sexual pleasure has been in part replaced by the professional commercial pornography industry's various trade festivals, largely fed by the substantial number of videos produced in southern California. Since the early 1990s the new brand of erotic film festivals have spread to Somerset, UK, Barcelona, Brussels, Cannes, Buenos Aires, among others. Included in many of the current festivals are live sex performances, sex industry product booths, casting agencies, and sales of sex toys. Apart from the large emphasis on heterosexual pornography, the festivals are pansexual or even post-sexual-identity,⁵⁶ that is, screening pornographic films of a wide spectrum of sexual acts and sexualities.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, they are clearly aiming for market appeal over any sort of revolution.

An important faction from the sexual liberation counterculture movement was gay liberation, which depended in complicated ways on those social movements that came before it, to which we turn our attention now.

2.4 Stonewall 1969, Gay Liberation, Lesbian Feminism & Gay Film Festivals

In immediate response to a police raid, on the night of June 27, 1969, of The Stonewall Inn, a gay bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village, riots

⁵⁶ Porn actors, such as Annie Sprinkle, are well known for their openness to sexual pleasure of any sort, irrespective of any attached sexual identity.

⁵⁷ Canadian auteur Atom Egoyan's *Exotica* (1994) won the Best Alternative Adult Film Award at the Adult Video News Awards ("The Oscars of Adult") to the surprise of the director. The Las Vegas-based AVN Awards (1983-) are much more an awards show than a festival.

erupted and lasted a number of days. This event became quickly known as the Stonewall Riots. The name Stonewall has itself become synonymous with defiant protest against police harassment of gay, lesbian and transgender bars in New York City, and across North America. Contemporary Gay Pride parades⁵⁸ derive from this specific protest and are often synchronized to commemorate the specific date. The bar itself was frequented by drag queens, transgendered people, young male hustlers and runaways, and gay university students. According to Duberman, it was a gay bar with more edge than the usual middle-class cocktail bar and was accordingly at the outlying border of the gay scene, which made it even more vulnerable to police harassment than others (1993, 167 f.). Some writers contend that the mood of the Village was low from mourning the death of gay mega-icon Judy Garland days before, which contributed to the pugnacious spirit against yet another police raid. To be sure, it falls within the general anti-establishment critical ethos of the late-1960s, borrowing energy from the civil rights struggle, sexual revolution, women's liberation, among others. The event is now considered historically pivotal in the history of lesbian and gay culture in North America.

Historians acknowledge the importance of the riots, as (a symptom of) a radical moment of transition, in the titles of their books on lesbian and gay history, for example Rutledge's *The Gay Decades: From Stonewall To The Present: The People And Events That Shaped Gay Lives* (1992), Duberman's well-known, laconically-titled *Stonewall* (1993), Nardi's *Growing Up Before Stonewall: Life*

⁵⁸ In Europe, they are commonly called "Christopher Street" parades or marches.

Stories Of Some Gay Men (1994), Deitcher's 1995 *The Question Of Equality: Lesbian and Gay Politics In America Since Stonewall*, while Fone suggests a teleological approach in his *A Road To Stonewall: Male Homosexuality and Homophobia In England and America, 1750-1969* (1995) and similarly in Edsall's 2003 *Toward Stonewall: Homosexuality and Society In The Modern Western World*. One historical anthology names Stonewall but as a distant future marker *Long Before Stonewall: Histories Of Same-Sex Sexuality In Early America* (2007), and Carter's book *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked The Gay Revolution* (2004) captures the 'spark' motif and extends Stonewall to the entire movement.⁵⁹

Following the lead of so many historians, I take the Stonewall date and event as a provisional beginning of a larger movement for greater lesbian, gay and transgender visibility, and sexual identity politics, as it has become known. I would also argue that different cities experienced their very own 'Stonewall' at different times and degrees. They typically involved an unjust police intrusion or raid of a gay or lesbian space. The 1981 bathhouse raids in Toronto mobilized the local LGBT scene into action. Similarly, the 1994 raid of KOX bar's basement S/M Katakombes in Montreal stands for the city's Stonewall,⁶⁰ even though neither event is commemorated in its respective city. The responding protests to

⁵⁹ Two important documentary films that recount the history of gay and lesbian existence in the 20th century are titled tidily: *Before Stonewall: The Making Of A Gay And Lesbian Community* (Scagliotti 1985) and *After Stonewall: From The Riots To The Millennium* (Baus 1999).

⁶⁰ See Vincent Doyle's work on this event in his master's thesis (1996).

each raid lasted for days. San Francisco had its own riot in a Compton's Cafeteria, a particular location frequented by transgendered people, in the Tenderloin district in August 1966, which notably pre-dates Stonewall. It is important to note the character of the spaces violated by the police are often frequented by minorities within minorities, for example, transgendered people and young male street hustlers (rough trade) at the fringe of the urban lesbian and gay scenes. The bars, S/M rooms or steam baths raided were typically located at the fringes of the community, and not integrated with the larger gay mainstream. Many others elsewhere came about much later. Important here is the energy unleashed by the protests and how it enabled the imagining of community and the building of institutions. While these more local, city-based events have strong local meanings and resonance, they fail to capture the national or international movement in the way that Stonewall has come to be understood.

I would like to call attention now to the result of a constellation of discourses, particularly the widespread protests of 1968 that influenced changes in the French government's cultural policy regarding Cannes and the 1969 protests in New York at Stonewall. The dates in question here are spring and summer 1968 in Paris, but also more generally around the world, and summer 1969 in New York City. For many social and protest movements on the left of the political spectrum, 'May 1968' is understood as an important public challenge to traditional politics, which included various aims in different places, such as anti-Vietnam war, the civil rights and peace movements, several types of anti-

capitalism (Marxists, Maoists, Situationists) and trade unions, sexual revolution, women's movement, and gay liberation. To be sure, the 1969 Stonewall riots were informed by the 1968 protests and counterculture in the United States (Duberman 1993, 65 f.). The expertise for organizing gays and lesbians into a political movement came from lived experience in the earlier civil rights and women's movements. The daring protests, and its associated media spectacle, that grew from the spark of Stonewall empowered and contributed to mobilization of other groups and further protests. The June 1969 Stonewall riots have for lesbian and gay studies their own very place in the development of the movement, regardless of the continuing disputes over who did what and what precisely happened at the scene of the riots.⁶¹ In brief, while the international film festivals have their 1968 Cannes protests to which to attribute their institutional innovations, lesbian and gay film festivals can be understood to have their sources in part in those same protests but also in the homo-centric Stonewall riots.

⁶¹ There is some dispute over whether the spark that ignited the riots was caused by a butch lesbian, drag queen or gay man outside of the Stonewall Inn that night (Duberman 1993, et al.). My interest in the event rests on the fact that the protests were supported by the gathering crowds, and that the initial contestation was not simply quashed by the police, just as it always had been in the past. Such raids were, after all, routine in cities across North America. The reason why Stonewall is remembered is because people protested and won.

The commemoration of the riots has become institutionalized in many cities and towns around the world in the annual “pride” parade⁶² and events. The Greenwich Village events captured enough of the imagination of LGBT groups to become the honorary focus date for local marches, parades, and festivities, located far from New York City. Some commemorative events are named after the street on which the Stonewall bar was located, namely Christopher Street, particularly in Europe, while others choose variations on the gay liberation idea of self-acceptance and pride. On the one hand, the two major periods can be understood as connected through a defiant protest culture of the late-1960s that continued into the 1970s, but on the other hand constituencies may have overlapped somewhat but overall were quite separate.

2.4.1 Precarious Collaborations Between Genders – Gays & Lesbians

The movement organized around homosexuality is a complicated negotiation of several theoretical and political positions, including radical liberation from inherited categories of sexuality, the ethnic model of constituting all lesbians and gay men as a unified group under homosexuality, lesbian feminism and separatism, second wave essentialism and third wave anti-essentialism. Various qualities, theoretical and political motifs, and most specifically sexual identities, are inflected throughout the culture that the larger movement claims to represent. For example, quite *naturally*, lesbian and gay film festivals presuppose modern

⁶² Today in less accommodating parts of the world the word ‘parade’ is replaced by ‘march,’ which carries with it a less celebratory and more confrontational sense.

20th-century categories of 'lesbian' and 'gay,' which resonate with this historical period and not, say, the temporally and culturally distant Ancient Greek pederasty (Halperin 1990). Arguably, elements of any of the sources of the current LGBT movement above may be found across the culture in harmony or discord with one another at any particular moment. The dynamic between the genders with regard to the lesbian and gay movement reconstitutes itself in various forms in the associated cultural formations, especially including lesbian and gay film festivals, as is discussed in the following chapter.

Stonewall also marks the general divide between the quiet Homophile associations and the bombastic revolutionaries of gay liberation. While the earlier group (1940s-late-1960s) held to a behind-the-scenes diplomacy that aimed to acquire equal rights for gays and lesbians but also assimilation into the larger society, the generational rupture afforded by Stonewall inspired a more aggressive and public display of political action. Gay liberation makes some very radical propositions, the goals of which can be summarized as

eradicating sexual roles; transforming the family as an institution; ending homophobic violence; the demise of monolithic categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality in favour of a potential bisexuality; developing a new vocabulary of the erotic; and understanding sexuality as pleasurable and relational, rather than reproductive or as an index of status (Jagose 1996, 41).

According to the liberationists, conventional categories of sexuality and gender occluded more authentic, personal sexual essence, namely a wide-ranging

bisexuality or polymorphous sexuality.⁶³ They balked at assimilation and instead emphasized pride in their difference, following the earlier, similar Afrocentric turn in the civil rights movement and the presupposed sexual essence in second-wave feminism. The title of gay German director Rosa von Praunheim's film *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, but the Society in Which He Lives* (1971) speaks very accurately to gay liberation's point.

While gay liberation, which as a movement was mainly composed of gay men but also some lesbians, took its inspiration precisely where the so-called second sexual revolution left off, lesbian feminism stemmed from the women's movement and specifically interrogated the question of sexuality in terms of gender (as women) as well as the question of gender in terms of sexuality (as homosexuals). On the one hand, lesbians were thinking through their possible place in gay liberation with particular attention to the significance of gender, and the historical and cultural differences between men and women under the category of homosexuality. On the other hand, in the mid-1960s lesbians were beginning to be perceived as a threat to the gains of the women's movement – a “lavender menace,” as Betty Friedan called them, from within the women's movement. The acts of making critiques of both of the other movements worked to constitute the new lesbian feminism from around 1970 on. One decade later Adrienne Rich's well-known article brought to light the idea of “compulsory heterosexuality,” an antecedent to the current “heteronormativity,” as lesbians

⁶³ Altman's book *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation* (1972) serves as a standard reference for gay liberation thought.

continued to theorize gender with attention to sexuality (Adrienne Rich 1980). Common to both theories of gay liberation and of lesbian feminism were essential sexual identities with attempts at fluidity, that is, polymorphous bisexuality and the lesbian spectrum, respectively.⁶⁴ Both the identities and the impulses to broaden the definition from within have persisted.

The above discussion presents a brief portrait of the complicated, uneasy alliances between the various groups involved. Each group had its own internal political spectrum and set of allegiances. As we shall see in the third and fourth chapters, these tensions and contradictions become manifest through various cultural institutions that attempt to bring together gay men and lesbians under one rubric. The critique of gender and sexual identity and the birth of queer theory in the 1990s together pose additional new concepts and politics, as discussed below.

Gay liberation and lesbian feminism combined in various ways in the 1970s, but most strikingly was how their members were able to mobilize themselves into a movement based on equal civil rights, and this borrowed the idea of an ethnic model from the earlier civil rights movement. Liberation became tied to increased visibility, politics of representation, “outness,” and then political “outings.” A number of factors contributed to the formation of lesbian and gay film festivals in the late-1970s. The general post-Stonewall vigor and enthusiasm for standing publicly for gay rights came with more visible practices, which included the

⁶⁴ Jagose, among others, gives a much more detailed account of these polemics in (1996, 40-71).

interest in lesbian and gay representation in popular culture. Some of these practices centered on a critique and reappropriation of film and video, similar to the early black independent film and women's film movements, to which we turn in the next section.

2.4.2 *Alternative Parallel Exhibition Practices*

The idea and strategies of media activism were common to gay liberationists and lesbian feminists in the 1970s, and borrowed from other social movements. The social use of the media joined the lingering gay and lesbian cinephilia of pre-Stonewall urbane culture, but not without contradictions. Precisely here political action met cinephilic, and eventually popular, taste under the rhetorical umbrella of community.

A diversity of exhibition and activist practices has accompanied the various social movements. One such set of tactics has been the "clip-show" lecture and the series of screenings, both of which predate the annual festivals and persist sometimes in parallel and sometimes overlapping with the increasingly ubiquitous festivals. Perhaps the best known lecturer on this circuit was the late New York City-based activist and film critic Vito Russo, who toured his revealing reel of clips *The Celluloid Closet* from 1972 to 1982. The tour itself culminated in the book of the same name, published in 1981 (revised in 1987). In his lectures and book he approaches Hollywood cinema through a sort of critical archaeology of images and the contexts of production that exposes the not only the types of representation of homosexuals on the screen, but also telling behind-the-scenes insider gossip (on homosexuality) that is typically left out of "more tasteful"

academic histories of Hollywood.⁶⁵ His critical writings in *Film Comment*, and elsewhere, carried with them strong prescriptives and proscriptives for making a good film with homosexual characters or themes. In his discussion the “gay new wave”⁶⁶ of the mid-1980s he praises the films for their representation of the “gay lifestyle” as part of a banal, without any of the undue heightened sensationalism that Hollywood films with gay characters often included (Russo 1986, 34). Russo writes,

There is [...] a homosexual cinema. It neither concerns itself overtly with issues of gay politics nor does it present gay sexuality as society’s perennial dirty secret. The key to gay films, whether they are made by heterosexuals or homosexuals, is that they do not view the existence of gay people as controversial (1986, 34).

Russo posits a banality to homosexuality, namely that it ought to be considered normal by all. Of the gay films of the early to mid-1980s Russo observes,

There is an implicit understanding in gay cinema that homosexuality is not a sexual preference; that people are gay the way people are short or blond or Spanish. There is an understanding in such films that homosexuals are born homosexual and that homosexuality is not a

⁶⁵ Gavin Butt addresses the issue of gossip and sexuality in the art scene and art history in his recent book (2005).

⁶⁶ This phrase seems to come from critic Richard Goldstein’s 1986 review article “The Gay New Wave,” that surveys the state of gay and lesbian cinema during an apparent production boom.

chosen activity but a state of being. These films may reflect the fear, aggression, and bigotry of a society confronted with such truth, but it is not their view that such emotions are rational or even important to explore (Russo 1986, 34).

A strong sexual essentialism is evident in Russo's interpretation of the sexualities represented in the "homosexual films" that he is describing in the article. Within lesbian and gay films, homosexuality is represented as everyday and banal, and homosexual people as unambiguously, essentially so. The homo-centric position here is to advocate for better stories of gay and lesbian lives, if not that lesbians and gay men should aspire to make more films.

As discussed below, he became one of the co-founders of the lesbian and gay media watchdog group GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, 1985-), which manifested several of his opinions in a fairly doctrinaire manner.⁶⁷ Of course, Russo was not alone in giving such community-oriented lectures and programming such series of films.

Richard Dyer, Thomas Waugh and Ruby Rich, all cinephiles with academic affiliation, have been constants over the past four decades in their dedication to the representation of sexuality in film, among other topics. In the United Kingdom, film critic and professor Richard Dyer organized and gave public screenings accompanied by lectures. He has been publishing for several decades in mixed academic journals and community-oriented magazines on gay

⁶⁷ Russo taught a course based on his book at University of California at Santa Cruz in 1990, also the year of his death.

and lesbian cinema and culture, for example, camp and disco dance music. In 1977, for example, he organized a special series “Images of Homosexuality” at London’s National Film Theatre. As Brian Robinson, head film programmer at London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, notes, “[...] this was an epoch-making event and, as far as I know, a world’s first. More than thirty-five films were screened, and the British Film Institute (BFI) published an accompanying book of essays, *Gays and Film*” (in Straayer 2005, 580). In Canada, critic and film scholar Thomas Waugh was instrumental in organizing regular screenings of gay and lesbian films in Montreal and elsewhere in the country. He, among others, acted as a special bridge between the academe, art film institutions and lesbian and gay community activism from the 1970s on (Waugh 2000). Another important film critic and academic is California-based R. Ruby Rich, who has contributed much to the organization of film festivals throughout North America as well as the study of women’s cinema and more specifically lesbian film. As noted above, she was instrumental in forming the idea of the ‘new queer cinema’ wave of films that began in the early 1990s (Rich 1992; 1998; 2002).

These film critic/scholars, among others, have served as crucial mediators between their respective gay and lesbian communities and their professional area of academic film studies. Their work, understood collectively, is certainly important for its contestation and questioning of national canon formation, for the latter’s persistent, curious neglect of all films concerning the representation of homosexuality. Their articles and books not only speak to urgent concerns or quiet histories of the gay or lesbian scenes but also other questions in

contemporary cultural studies, and how they may be troubled or sometimes queered by these films. To be sure, these three critics still give and organize lectures, just as younger scholars have joined them.⁶⁸

2.4.3 The Case of GLAAD

Before discussing the formation of the important LGBT media watchdog and lobby group GLAAD, I would like to consider the compelling case of Friedkin's film *Cruising* (USA, 1980) and the unprecedented widespread, vociferous protests that were mobilized by community organizers across the United States and Canada.⁶⁹ The controversy over the production and release of the film reveals much about the end of the 1970s.⁷⁰ The debates focused on the ethics of representing a minority group in commercial cinema, and resemble very much the critical responses from black intellectuals and community leaders to the Hollywood-driven blaxploitation films discussed above. In fact, the black critics themselves coined the term 'blaxploitation' from 'black (economic and cultural) exploitation.' This highly sensationalized, but popular, filmmaking was not what most of these critics had anticipated to "lift black people from the Harlem

⁶⁸ For example, Jack (Judith) Halberstam would be considered a new addition to the set of queer and transgender lecturers, as well as Jenni Olson.

⁶⁹ Every LGBT archive that I visited between 2004 and 2006 had a thick file on its city's campaign against the film (Montreal, Toronto, San Francisco, New York).

⁷⁰ Wilson's article "Friedkin's *Cruising*, Ghetto Politics, and Gay Sexuality" (1981) is perhaps one of the most balanced academic analyses of the film's reception of the time.

experience” (Ross 1996, 18-21). Similarly, for many gay men of the period, they wanted less dangerous sensation from Hollywood, and more stories of everyday lives of lesbians and gay men (for example, Russo 1986).

Cruising is a slasher film set in the underground gay S/M leather scenes of New York City and adapted from the 1970 novel of the same name written by Gerald Walker. The novel itself was based on a series of violent murder cases in New York in the early 1960s. The press kit for the film goes to great lengths to describe the realism of the film, namely how the events depicted in it relate to various real homicide deaths on archive in the New York Police Department and how the director worked with two former police officers with significant experience in such undercover operations and areas of the city (West Village). However, the reaction⁷¹ to the film on the part of members of the gay community was mixed but the loud protests were certainly well organized and noticed. The critique of the film rests on the question of how the film represents the whole gay community through a sensationalized part – here, the underground S/M scene. Part of the critique claims that the film would also inspire copycat murders by nascent fag bashers, since the narrative centers on how the main character went undercover *and* succeeded at passing as a member of the gay S/M scene in

⁷¹ Pacino had not permitted a DVD release until finally in 2007. The director toured with the new release (and director’s cut) to various festivals and other screenings. The festival director of San Francisco’s Frameline mentioned that when the screening was announced there, he received many angry email responses from people emotionally upset at the prospect of that film screening in the context of Frameline.

order to find the serial killer responsible for the murders. The extras in the film were from the scene itself.

Cruising, and the protests generated around it, is one case among many, but certainly the most ambitious and international in scope. I mention it above to illustrate the nature of the debates in the gay movement at the time regarding the commercial media and representation in film. One of the major media watchdog organizations to address these issues was the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), of which film critic and activist Vito Russo was a founding member. GLAAD and other similar organizations⁷² are strongly based on a theory of representation that stems from identity politics. They were effectively born out of a demand for positive representations of their communities and actively countered any source of negative representations, including films and writings by LGBT people. Its current mission states,

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation (GLAAD 2007).

GLAAD has advocated such a politics of representation for many years, aiming to correct the types of images and narratives that are offered to the general public through the mass media. However, from time to time, gay and lesbian

⁷² Human Rights Campaign is the other large LGBT equal rights advocacy group in the United States.

artists and filmmakers themselves are challenged by the organization and labeled “anti-gay” or “homophobic” in spite of the artistic or cultural merit of their work.⁷³

One of the responses to the problem of commercial cinema’s particular representations of lesbians and gay men was the foundation of organizations such as GLAAD, which aimed to counter vigorously any “negative” mass media representations of LGBT people, regardless of who made them. Other responses were to build coalitions among diverse gay men and lesbians to produce films and videos that in some way represented the constituencies better from within. It is the notion of coalition building that I turn to next, as identity politics differentiated through the 1980s and created a significant number of competing identities organized around gender, race, and sexuality.

2.4.4 Excursus on the Invention of Queer Theory

In the brief discussion of the main elements of gay liberation and lesbian feminism, we noticed the unresolved certain tensions between their various positions, as they worked to form a tentative movement organized around the category of sexuality. Certain presuppositions continued regarding sexual identity, but as the 1980s continued, particularly under the shadow of AIDS and the pressure to act, new critiques proliferated from diverse and disparate parts of

⁷³ See, for example, Doyle’s article on the ambivalent reception of the television show *Queer as Folk* (UK, 1997) and GLAAD’s complicated response (Doyle 2008).

the movement, minorities within minorities in search of recognition and new theoretical articulations.⁷⁴

Queer theory⁷⁵ can best be understood as an important attempt to bring increasingly divergent groups together and produce provisional intersectionality. The word 'queer' was revived as a defiant reappropriation of the pejorative term in the late-1980s and early-1990s in the United States, while the idea of 'queer theory' followed in academic circles and was in particular developed most cogently by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler, among many other scholars in the humanities or literature. It stems theoretically from postmodernist notions of language and specifically performativity that escape the earlier formulation of essentialist identities, both gendered and sexual. In a sense, one is by virtue of what one does. Teresa de Lauretis brought the phrase 'queer theory' into academic discourse in her introduction to the published proceedings of a 1990 conference "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities," held at the University of California at Santa Cruz.⁷⁶ The original intent was to find a theoretical way out of the dilemma between liberal pluralism, on the one hand, and deviance, on the other, has remained queer theory's conceptual core. De

⁷⁴ Vincent Doyle's recent article (2008) is an ethnographic study of the current situation at GLAAD, its corporate culture and strong homonormativity, with some contrasts to its past.

⁷⁵ I address some of these issues in my article "Queer Theory" (2007a).

⁷⁶ See Eng, Munoz and Halberstam's introduction to a special issue on the current state of queer theory (2005), but it also curiously elides de Lauretis' early contribution.

Lauretis, for her part, abandoned the term nearly three years later, claiming that it had been re-appropriated by the very institutions that it was meant to challenge. Academic presses, for example, exploited 'queer theory' as a highly lucrative marketing tool during the 1990s.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, much important work has been done in queer theory, as it has evolved and diversified since its inception.

As an anti-essentialist theory of sexuality, queer theory questions and unravels normative categories of gender and sexuality through its critical practices. Its theoretical articulation owes much to the 1980s third-wave feminist reworking of the concepts of sex and gender in the light of post-structuralist social theories of history, power, and discourse as well as postmodern philosophy. As lesbian and gay studies became queer studies under influence of queer theory, lesbian and gay activism similarly went queer in order to address noted pitfalls with the earlier formulation of homosexuals as a social movement. Queer theory has informed and continues to guide activism concerning the politics of sexuality through a variety of cultural practices.

The relationship between the emergence of "queer" theory and cultural organizations, such as the film festivals, will be discussed in greater detail below (in Chapters IV and VI). In short, I will claim that the range of festivals often exhibit a tension between sexual identities and a greater sexual fluidity that might be considered queer. Lisa Duggan argued for a stronger political interpretation of

⁷⁷ Similarly, Rich introduced the phrase 'new queer cinema' in 1992 and subsequently questioned its value as she observed how the Hollywood Majors were so easily adopting the narrative and stylistics of queer chic (2000).

queer theory and against the limitations perceived in the earlier ethnic model (Duggan 1992).

3.0 Concluding Remarks

This chapter serves as a crucial part of my account of the emergence of lesbian and gay film festivals and argues that while the 1968 Langlois controversy in France may have altered the *status quo* of IFFs, the critical counter culture of the period, in particular the civil rights and women's movements and the sexual liberation counterculture, took greater control of film and other media and formed extensive networks for distribution, such as the film festivals, dedicated to issues relevant to their respective aims. The then nascent gay liberation and lesbian feminism movements emerged following Stonewall and owed much to the mentioned movements that preceded them. Multiple film exhibition tactics were used and are still used, including slide and film lectures, the thematic film series held at a cinematheque, public library, university, community center, private home, among other places, from Vito Russo's tours of the 1970s and 80s to Jack Halberstam today on FTM transgender culture. The shock and reception of *Cruising* compelled action and inspired the grassroots media watchdog group Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) brought into practice a codified set of criteria of what made a good lesbian or gay representation. Similarly, film series were a constant staple of urban or university town life. The new socially-oriented film festivals of the early 1970s were joined, by the end of the decade, with gay and lesbian film festivals, organized around categories of minority sexuality, which the following chapter addresses.

III. On the Emergence and Rise of Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals

1.0 The New Idea of Film Festivals of Minority Sexualities

This chapter traces the history of the emergence and rise of lesbian and gay film festivals from 1977 to the early-2000s.⁷⁸ These festivals emerged in urban areas with high concentrations of gay men and lesbians, particularly large coastal cities in the United States and the three largest cities in Canada, all in some association with the lesbian and gay movement's project for increasing visibility following Stonewall.

I tell the history of the festivals mainly through the concrete case studies of four North American cities, namely San Francisco (SF International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival), New York City (NY Gay Film Festival, MIX, New Fest), Montreal (Image&Nation), and Toronto (Inside/Out). Each city, along with its film culture, inflects its respective festivals with local cultural and artistic sensibilities and preferences, laws and cultural policy. Not only is each festival studied in relation to its city, but also in relation to its larger region and country. As argued in my introduction, I am making a claim for a weak diffusion model for the spread and rise of lesbian and gay film festivals. While today and worldwide it would be much more of a challenge to designate the San Francisco festival as the most influential of all lesbian and gay film festivals, since so many other types of LGBT and queer film festivals now exist and influence one another, the early festivals that I am taking as case studies clearly owe much to that festival. I also weigh

⁷⁸ A short, early version of this section was published as "Queer Film Festivals" (Zielinski 2008).

this with a particularist approach that acknowledges the contingent, local culture of each host city. The culture of film festivals already offers much variety to combine and recombine elements borrowed from many different types of festivals, their styles and structures, their themes and tones, among other aspects.

The last section of the chapter will consider some pressing questions raised by the increased globalization of the festivals in the late-1990s and early-2000s, as the certain festivals avoid the words 'gay' and 'lesbian' in their names and embrace 'queer' or other figurative or euphemistic terms.⁷⁹ While the emphasis in this chapter is on Canada and the United States, and their festivals, it is important to survey the extent of the globalization of these festivals in order to consider their collective capacity to serve as an alternative global network of distribution, which is a common function of fields of other types of festivals, as argued in Chapters I and II above.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the context of emergence of gay and lesbian film festivals specifically included the precedence of black, women's and erotic film festivals, which were formed in the late-1960s and early-1970s, each type in association with its respective movement. These new festivals were the newly-created social or community-oriented film festivals, each of which not only

⁷⁹ For example, the festival in Jakarta, Indonesia, is called "Q! Film Festival," and the one in Warsaw "Pryzmat Festiwal Filmowy" [prism film festival], without any explicit indication of the theme of minority sexuality – 'q' for queer, 'prism' for rainbow. Curiously, the websites for these festivals are written only in English.

associated with its social movement but also made distinct claims on its constituency and community appeal. The 1969 Stonewall riots and their reception contributed to the formation of gay liberation and lesbian feminism, which combined together to establish the gay and lesbian movement during the 1970s. Early participants in this movement often had important experience from their personal collaborations in the civil rights or women's rights struggles, or participation in the counterculture sexual revolution. Membership in such causes was highly intersectional.⁸⁰ Experience and expertise moved pragmatically between the groups, as causes became cogent to the members. Lesbians, for example, who helped to organized women's film festivals extended their work to organizing lesbian film festivals or collaborative lesbian and gay film festivals, as they perceived a need for or interest in such festivals organized around categories of minority sexual identities.

While the queer film festivals share certain similarities with international film festivals (IFFs), their histories differ significantly. In order to situate lesbian and gay film festivals within the larger institutional framework of film festivals, I would like to contrast them briefly to international film festivals. (Aspects of the differences will be covered in more detail in subsequent chapters. Moreover, even though the politics of the movement is highly important, I argue below that the LGBT film festival remains in negotiation with cinephilia and other impulses

⁸⁰ I am here using the concept of intersectionality, following Kimberlé Crenshaw's original meaning in Black feminism and more recently in queer studies (Eng 2005).

not fully tamed by the movement.) The lesbian and gay film festivals were founded by filmmakers or activists, while the international film festivals conform to a politics of organization from the top down, and were originally established by governments to showcase proudly their national culture to the world, as argued in Chapter I. The histories of lesbian and gay film festivals concern vociferous debates over public funding and support, sexual and gender categories, sexual practices and their representation, identities and community, issues of community accountability, as well as recurring censorship battles, particularly at Canadian international borders. The direction here is from community-grassroots up (and not directed by the government, top-down, apart from funding and censorship categories), for instance, gay filmmakers who simply wanted to show their work publicly or lesbian activists who wanted to get their word out. Instead of serving the interests of the nation state and its official culture, the lesbian and gay film festival has its rather humble origins in community-oriented interests, and claims to transnational sexual identities, generally against the grain of national culture or nationhood in any country. In stark contrast to the case of the IFFs, public funding and support for the lesbian and gay film festivals has been much more of a long difficult struggle. In the United States, for example, public funding is severely limited on the grounds that the festivals represent, effectively, special interest groups.⁸¹ In Canada, public funding has played a larger role in

⁸¹ That situation is a result of the 'culture wars' of the 1980s and 90s in the United States, especially embodied by the late Senator Jesse Helms' relentless crusade.

sustaining the festivals at most levels. Federal granting agencies are rather constant, but differences occur at the provincial and municipal levels.⁸² Remarkably, today lesbian and gay film festivals are often second largest only to the IFF in their respective city.⁸³ The festivals often informally share resources, personnel, expertise, films, and sometimes dispute the right to premiere a film. The two festival circuits form partially overlapping international networks, however unevenly developed. While the current IFFs claim to be presenting, in an unbiased manner, simply the “best” films of the world, the cultural capital of the lesbian and gay film festival remains suspect for its dedication to extra-aesthetic categories, such as sexuality and community, as is argued in Chapter VI.

With women’s film festivals already in existence since the early 1970s, gay film festivals came into being in the late-1970s in Canada and the United States. Appropriately, San Francisco remains their historic and mythic place of origin. Gay liberation and lesbian feminism combined in various ways in the 1970s, but most strikingly was how their members were able to mobilize themselves into a movement centered on achieving equal civil rights, and this borrowed an ethnic model from the longstanding Black civil rights movement. Both of these movements encouraged increased visibility, taking what was rightfully theirs as

⁸² The Canada Council for the Arts has been constant in its support, while at the provincial level in Quebec there is very little funding for Image&Nation as a “thematic” festival. See Chapters IV and VI.

⁸³ Such film festivals are measured by its number of films and days.

citizens, and being treated equally before the law. The 1970s sexual liberation counterculture influenced at least the formation of the gay liberation movement, which combined later with lesbians and bisexual women from the women's movement. Temporarily putting gender aside, the common issue that brought these groups together was the prospect of attaining equal rights and freedoms for homosexuals. The general post-Stonewall vigor and enthusiasm for standing publicly for gay rights came with more visible practices, which also included the critique of the representation of lesbian and gay people in popular culture (see Russo 1981; 1986).

An important aspect of gay and lesbian culture that cannot go without some notice is gay or lesbian cinephilia⁸⁴ as a collection of cultural practices performed by gay men or lesbians. The precise practices vary with quite a range, both between the lesbians and gay men but also within each group. A historically crucial type in gay or lesbian culture was the aesthete, who was very cultivated in the highbrow arts. The relationship between, say, a popular gay camp cinephila and a gay aesthete cinephilia might be quite complicated, extreme opposites or possibly overlapping in any particular person. Much scholarship has been written on gay and lesbian cultural and artistic connoisseurship, its practices and cultivation, for example, the height of gay camp culture before Stonewall.⁸⁵ This

⁸⁴ See Roger Hallas' article on gay cinephilia and films addressing AIDS (Hallas 2003).

⁸⁵ See, for example, (Dyer 1984), (Farmer 2000), (Harris 1997), (Russo 1979) and (White 1999b).

plays an important role in explaining the interest in forming, in this case, the festivals, their programming, their particular resonance with members of the audience. I address the relevance of gay and lesbian cinephiliacs to the foundation and culture of lesbian and gay film festivals in more detail in Chapter VI.

A related phenomenon is the typical overlap of expertise at various festivals in a given city, namely keen LGBT volunteers and staff. Many of those involved in the lesbian and gay film festival are often also involved in others at different times of the year. Their expertise is shared and dispersed among festivals at various levels.

The lesbian and gay film festivals were not the first or only ones to include films that represent sexual acts or sexuality. Pornographic films have been around since the beginning of cinema itself. As the previous chapter mentions, there were several important erotic film festivals during the early 1970s, inspired by the sexual liberation movement; and today there are many pornographic film festivals throughout the world. Similarly, women's film festivals were already in existence throughout North America; and to this day they provide an important context for films by women of all sexualities. What the lesbian and gay film festivals contributed to film culture was their heightened emphasis on homosexuality and homosexual desire, or what I have been calling 'minority sexualities' in its broadened sense, its representation in various forms and practices, and its cultural and sociopolitical contexts. This new type of festival, from 1977 on,

presupposed both a set of sexual identities and an engagement in a particular politics of visibility.

2.0 Brief Histories of Four Cities and Their LGBT Film Festivals

Much has been written on sexualized spaces, gay space and even queer space in cities. Sociologists and historians, such as Castells (1983) and D'Emilio (1983; 1992), among others, trace the increased concentration of gay men and lesbians, as they migrated to particular districts of cities, thereby transforming them. The significance of cities to gay and lesbian culture and their development cannot be understated.

I would like to lay out below the four main case cities (San Francisco, New York, Montreal and Toronto)⁸⁶ and their lesbian and gay film festivals. While each festival emerges from highly contingent concerns and discourses, some very local, others national or international in extent, much can be positively compared between festivals across the continent. A brief history of each festival will be provided, and the remaining chapters will concentrate on specific theoretical aspects posed by the festivals, as outlined in the Introduction.

2.1 San Francisco International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

San Francisco became a destination for gay men and lesbians following the Second World War until well into the 1970s. The first wave came about on account of the returning soldiers at the end of the Second World War, who found

⁸⁶ Apart from Montreal, the other three cities have an English-speaking base population and share many characteristics of North American urban culture.

the port city, among other port cities, appealing. Until then, the Castro had been a working-class Irish neighborhood. Gay and lesbian soldiers had no compelling reason to return to their small provincial towns, and so stayed on the coasts⁸⁷ where they could live, love with discretion and anonymity (away from home), and cultivate lively bar scenes. The second major wave of gay and lesbian migration to San Francisco came in the late 1960s, especially 1967's Summer of Love. The middle-class youth were attracted by the exciting, adventurous Haight-Ashbury scenes,⁸⁸ pleasant climate and inexpensive rent.

San Francisco's importance to the emergence of contemporary LGBT culture in the United States cannot be denied. Several important studies have been written on this development (Castells 1980; Stryker 1996). A confluence of countercultures by the end of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, particularly the city served as a crucial space for the sexual liberation movement, along with the associated women's and gay liberation movements.

San Francisco produced the largest and longest-standing annual lesbian and gay film festival in the world. Founded in 1977, the first gay film festival was organized by a small group of local gay filmmakers and photographers in San Francisco, primarily in order to show one another their work, and secondly to

⁸⁷ Other major cities that became home to the influx of gay and lesbian released from military service are Los Angeles and New York City, but much earlier in the century, and notably at the end of the First World War.

⁸⁸ Named after the intersection of the two main streets in the neighborhood, these scenes included Hippy communes and drug culture, peace movement, sexual revolution, among others.

screen their work publicly. According to Marc Huestis, after he took several courses on filmmaking at a local college,

“I started making a movie a month,” as did many of his friends. “I had four or five films and other people had some, so we just said, ‘Hey, let’s put on a show,’ which is how the gay film festival was born.”

Long before it was the huge, multivenue event it is today, the festival screened films at two gay community centers on Page and Grove streets (Wiegand 2003).

These filmmakers already knew, or knew of, each other informally through the local film and gay bar scenes. The photographers Dan Nicoletta and David Waggoner both worked at Harvey Milk’s famous camera shop on Castro Street, which itself served as a communal hub for the filmmakers, where they had their films processed and purchased supplies (Stryker 1996, 364). Effectively, the shop helped to bring together the nascent gay independent film scene.

The first festival was titled “Gay Film Festival of Super-8 Films” on February 9, 1977, and held at the Gay Community Center (Page Street). After the surprise success of the first set of screenings of the festivals, another date (March 13) was selected for those who missed the first and held at the Pride Center (Grove Street). Two more screenings were held at the Page Street Center. The festival was promoted by the filmmakers themselves who passed out flyers for the event and put up posters for the event throughout the Castro district.

The second edition “The Super-8 Summer Festival” then took place on June 13, 1978, back at the Pride Center with around one dozen mainly short films (Stryker 1996, 365). A small group from the original festival organizers founded Persistence of Vision, a support group to encourage gay filmmaking.⁸⁹ The date of the festival was moved to correspond with Pride festivities in June. In 1979 the third edition of the festival took place in June 19 at the Roxie Cinema (Mission District) with repeated screenings at another cinema, and a cable television broadcast of the program the following evening (Stryker 1996, 365). The collective changed its name from Persistence of Vision to Frameline, which it has remained ever since.

In 1979 Michael Lumpkin, then a film student at San Francisco State University, joined the festival and took over from the founding festival organizers to run the “Fourth Annual San Francisco Gay Film Festival.” Lumpkin made several important innovations in the festivals: invited directors, brought in international films, added lesbian films, addressed interracial issues, instituted party receptions, fostered collaborations with the nascent New York Gay Film Festival, and secured public funding. Stryker writes furthermore, Lumpkin “unquestionably reached out beyond the festival’s overwhelmingly gay white roots to broaden the content of previous programming” (1996, 365). In 1981 he moved the festival to the large, impressive Castro Theater movie palace (seating capacity of 1500

⁸⁹ The name ‘Persistence of Vision’ returned in the commemorative 25th anniversary year (2001) as the name of the conference associated with the festival.

people) in the heart of the gay village. To fill the seats, Lumpkin had to program the festival very strategically. His program included recent documentaries, retrospective screenings of classics, for example, *Mädchen in Uniform* (Germany, 1931), new feature films from Europe, experimental films, as well as “The Celluloid Closet” the famous lecture with film clips presented by critic/activist Vito Russo. The festival grew rapidly in the 1980s, expanding “its scope in an effort to be inclusive of the wide range of queer communities” (Stryker 1996, 366). Finally, in 1982 the word ‘lesbian’ was added to the name of the festival, after years of criticism on the part of women and their sense for recognition in the organization. Lumpkin’s move to the Castro Theater produced a major change in the nature of the festival itself. As he hastened to “fill the seats” he had to meet the challenge to program the festival to suit a broadened audience and special niche interests in a variety of different sized cinemas in the area. Filling the Castro has ever since remained a constant challenge to programmers at the festival. Films with the most popular appeal must be screened there at the best possible times.

Filmmaker Michael Wallin, whose film *The Place Between Our Bodies* screened in 1978, describes the development of the festival in terms of a process of “mainstreaming” from its early frisky experimental manifestation. He writes,

Yes, in a few years, the Lesbian & Gay Film Festival evolved, with a very different audience and purpose in mind. Even if the agenda was not precisely political, the goal was to broaden exposure to the general public of specifically gay and lesbian film, that general public being, of course,

other gay men and lesbians. However, these were people for whom their sexual orientation was a central part of their identity, but in a different way, perhaps, than for the disenfranchised queers flocking to *Thundercrack* [Curt McDowell, USA 1975] (Wallin 2009).

Wallin points out the different styles of being gay at the time, opposing the more conventional gay scene to the more alternative,

These were mostly mainstream, more conventional ("straight," if you will) gay men, who spent their time at the bars in the Castro dancing to disco and then meeting at the South of Market bathhouses to get their rocks off. Somehow, we offbeat gay boys disdained this scene, preferring to congregate at the Stud [...], listening to rock, getting stoned, and ending the evening pairing off for sex [...] (Wallin 2009).

The conflict of taste cultures and styles of being gay or lesbian has rarely been raised in histories of the individual festivals and communities, but has persisted to this day.

I argue later that taste has always played a very important role not only in the various lesbian and gay film festivals, but also between the various types of film festivals according to a particular distribution of cultural capital. The shift from the exclusive audiences of the early days of the festival to the expanded, much more egalitarian programming of today plays a crucial role in the development of this

festivals and most others, as will be discussed further in Chapter V on the language of community.⁹⁰

According to Lumpkin, his visit to the Berlinale in 1985 transformed the festival director's understanding and approach to his own festival for its subsequent 10th anniversary edition in 1986⁹¹ and beyond (Stryker 1996, 366). Lumpkin was hired fulltime, and other staff members were finally paid. The board of directors was given a policy-making mandate. Festival awards were enhanced with the addition of the Frameline Award for outstanding contribution to LGBT filmmaking. Guest curators were invited to contribute programs according to their expertise, for example, AIDS, women's cinema, and world cinemas. Lumpkin remained festival director for one decade from his debut in 1980.

This festival has received a number of significant changes, as new visions came with new executive or festival directors. In 1990 Tom di Maria became festival director and brought with him a new multicultural presence in staff, which altered the presupposed meaning of LGBT cinema importantly away from the "gay white male sensibility" even further. He increased the amount available through the

⁹⁰ One exception is MIX, which is unapologetically experimental, and others would be festivals founded explicitly to serve the larger community, and not simply filmmakers or artists.

⁹¹ Also the year of the so-called lesbian riot on June 25 at the Roxie Cinema, which will be covered in more detail in Chapter IV. The festival responded to the riot by putting the women already working for it in more visible roles, finding a greater number of lesbian feature films, and increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the members of the board of directors.

completion fund, and made sure that women and people of color had a majority presence on the funding committee.

The 1990s also brought with them the funding challenges of the culture wars and the NEA⁹² (in 1992), following the Mapplethorpe controversy and the constant antagonistic work of right-wing politicians such as the late Reverend Jesse Helms. Under the combined directorship of Jenni Olson and the late Mark Finch, attendance increased from just under 20 000 (1991) to 55 000 (1994) and the number of programs more than doubled from 47 to 98 (Stryker 1996, 368), a period that also witnessed the impressive increase in LGBT film production and crossover successes, some of which became part of the New Queer Cinema (Rich 1992). The rapid expansion brought with it exaggerated structural problems and overspending which created a significant deficit to be carried over to subsequent years.

The year 1994 remained the most successful in ticket sales, which suggests that the festival had found its plateau in growth.⁹³ Moreover, on the important lesbian crossover film *Go Fish* (Troche and Turner, USA, 1994) as the opening gala film of the festival that year, Olson writes,

⁹² NEA stands for the National Endowment for the Arts, originally created in 1965 to fund artists and cultural organizations in the United States. The culture wars led finally in 1996 to a policy shift away from funding individual artists but continued its support of arts organizations.

⁹³ Richard Dyer presented on porn star Ryan Idol that year.

A choked up Rose Troche explained to 1500 delighted lesbians (okay, there were lots of gay men there too), “I made this film for you guys.” The film opened the next day in San Francisco for a very successful run and remains one of the top ten lesbian releases in terms of box office grosses.

This marketing strategy continues today as many distributors clamor for opening and closing night slots at the major gay film festivals as a means of creating excitement and garnering exposure for their films in an increasingly saturated marketplace (Olson 2004).

The marketing technique had been long in place in IFFs, but was only a recently accepted idea at that time. The taboo of associating with LGBT organizations was showing signs of lifting for corporations, and the idea of the financially lucrative “gay niche” was gaining currency in marketing strategies throughout the 1990s in North America (Sender 2004).

While the festival was quite a popular success in 1994, it had also accumulated a significant deficit that the organizers feared crippling. Tragically, on January 14, 1995, festival director Mark Finch, clinically depressive, committed suicide. Boone Nguyen and Jennifer Morris took over as programmer for the next edition, while Michael Lumpkin and Tom di Maria, veterans from past festivals, stepped up to contribute their expertise (Stryker 1996, 369).

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Frameline’s festival filmmaker and co-founder Marc Huestis was commissioned to make a documentary film that told

the story of festival from the beginning.⁹⁴ Huestis tells his story mainly through interviews and talking heads, and covers all the events mentioned above, among others. The festival, today under the umbrella media distribution organization of Frameline,⁹⁵ stands as the largest and longest running in the world.

A largely unrecorded and parallel history is that of the San Francisco Gay Video Festival of the same year (June 17-19, 1977, Gay Community Center, 32 Page Street) and produced only one edition, which included videos by lesbian and gay men.⁹⁶ There were plans for panels on “gay and media policy” that would bring in legal experts and video artists from out of town. The politics and aesthetics of video at that time were strongly rooted in community cable television, activism, performance and video art. Much of the description is centered on the issue of the access of gay (and lesbian) videomakers to television. This festival had a notable gender parity and cultural diversity, as seen in the list of videomakers: Jeff Fraenkel, Linda Lama, N. A. Diaman, Don Lehman, Barbara Hammer, Jean Mundy, Jon Rome, Dan Smith, Nany Angelo, Candace Compton, Cathy Zheutlin,

⁹⁴ The film is not in distribution but available from the director himself.

⁹⁵ Frameline acts as a distributor and contains the film festival under its mandate. Gretsich's critique (1997) concerns as much the festival as Frameline's strategies for distribution.

⁹⁶ The festival's founding director was (Mr.) N. A. Diaman, with important connections to the Queer Blue Light Gay Video Revolution collectives in San Francisco and New York City. A significant dossier on the festival is filed under the name of 'P. Diaman' in the archives of the SF GLBT Historical Society.

Michael Moneil, Gok Mon Jone, and Dennis Carlson. Moreover, the approach to programming did not segregate videos according to the gender of the maker.

More generally, such festivals pepper most major cities from the 1970s on, but typically merged with the local “film” festival, following a logic of community inclusiveness (and the overcoming of any modernist claim to medium specificity).

In short, this process led to the new extended name of ‘film and video festivals.’⁹⁷

To be sure, the decision to combine festivals of different media into one of mixed media but similar community ethos continues to the present, especially since the invention and popularization of digital filmmaking technology. The failure of video festivals might be attributed to their much more specialized audience, the reduced pleasure of the video image (always in contrast to the cinematic image), and the perceived ease of access to the medium and its common confusion with television (never as inaccessible and precious as the cinematic image). These questions remain open for further research.

What I term the ‘corrective motif’ was at the heart of the early gay film or video festivals. While commercial cinema was content with stock gay and lesbian characters that strangely misrepresented the everyday experience of known life as a gay or lesbian person, those films and videos by and for lesbian and gay people had little opportunity for public screening. The early organizers of both festivals often complain that films and videos with explicit gay and lesbian narratives or concerns were not being screened elsewhere; and a new institution

⁹⁷ See Chapter VI on the transmedial combination of media particular to the lesbian and gay film festival.

for their exhibition was in need of being founded to share the works with a larger public, which motivated them to create the festivals (Diaman 1977). The idea of such a festival not only produced new screening opportunities for these films and videos, but also created and made use of the highly concentrated and social format of the festival to do so. This new annual festival added to the cultural “feasts” of the growing lesbian and gay community.

2.2 New York City: NY Gay Film Festival, MIX, NewFest

“City of orgies, walks and joys” – Whitman, *City of Orgies*

In his book *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London*, Mark Turner works through the texts of Whitman and the queer analysis of the ephemeral performance of cruising to reconstruct an imaginary New York, one that Whitman might have inhabited in the mid-1800s. Turner ponders,

Whitman was not alone cruising the streets of ‘Manahatta.’ But how far do the traces of cruising left behind in the notebooks and the glimpses of a city of encounters in his poems get us in understanding the street walking practices of others? (2003, 123).

New York as the largest city in the United States⁹⁸ and as a major port of entry, the city has always been a natural hub in the flow of people and financial activity. If Turner is correct, its robust urban culture has always enabled the possibility of a wide range of sexual encounters. Historian George Chauncey’s brilliant *Gay*

⁹⁸ See Sassen’s study of London, New York and Tokyo in *The Global City* (Sassen 2001).

New York (1994) works to reveal the vibrant sexual culture of the city from 1890 to 1940, and dispels any simplistic contemporary notion of the pre-Stonewall being totally repressive or “closeted.” During the 1920s, Greenwich Village became a notable destination for gay men and women, particularly those formerly in the military service following the First World War and then another major wave of gay and lesbian migration following the Second World War. The anonymity and freedom of city life appealed to the new denizens. Chauncey also shows how sexual practices were not restricted by sexual identity, for example working-class heterosexual male sexual mores were open to homosexual practices on occasion (131 f.), which began to be muted by the increased police surveillance of the 1930s (1994, 331 f.). The cramped living quarters of the burgeoning modern city contributed to a public sex culture that has remained.

The wave of lesbian and gay newcomers to New York just following WWII set the stage for a rapid growth in associated underground speakeasies, bars and cocktail lounges throughout the 1950s and 60s. The Mattachine and Daughters of Bilitis, antecedents of the gay and lesbian movement, were quietly lobbying legislators to change laws directed against homosexuals. As a new impatient generation of lesbians and gay men arrived to the scenes across the United States, they brought with them a new sense of urgency and new strategies for achieving change. For lesbians and gay men in New York, the late-1960s protests culminated in the 1969 Stonewall riots, which took place in Greenwich.

New York City defines American cinephilia.⁹⁹ The annual A-list New York Film Festival has been in existence since 1963. Hundreds of film and video festivals have come and gone in the city. Regarding lesbian and gay film festivals, New York festival was much larger than the one in San Francisco until the mid-1980s, when Lumpkin expanded his festival and usurped New York's dominance. In the 1980s and 90s, New York City had a succession of such festivals, namely the New York Gay Film Festival (1979-1987), then MIX Experimental Queer Film Festival (1987-) and the New Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film (1989-). Peter Lowy's gay film festival was part of the first wave of such festivals, and provided an important collaborator for the San Francisco festival, and other fledgling festivals, through into the mid-1980s. According to Gamson, MIX and the New Festival have happily coexisted for over a decade, appealing to quite different tastes in film (1996). MIX is an artists-run festival that explicitly seeks to push boundaries in the art of filmmaking and the representation of sexuality, for example, lower-budget DIY shorts and independent feature films, while the New Festival appeals to a less specialized, arguably, more mainstream sensibility, for example, high-production feature films.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Susan Sontag's well-known article "The Decay of Cinema" (1996) makes this case for the film culture of the city and its denizens.

¹⁰⁰ Similar festivals are now flourishing in Austin, Chicago, Houston, Kansas, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, New Orleans, among many others, as well as in the Canadian cities of Calgary, Kingston, Montreal, Regina, Toronto and Vancouver.

In 1979, the New York Gay Film Festival was founded by Peter Lowy, who served as its director until its demise in 1987.¹⁰¹

The New York Gay and Lesbian Experimental Film Festival was founded in 1987 by the experimental filmmaker Jim Hubbard and activist-writer Sarah Schulman, who were intent on creating a vibrant space for the exhibition of lesbian and gay experimental work. From its beginning the festival has been run by artists, unique among the lesbian and gay film festivals. The festival was in a response to New York Gay Film Festival had a strong emphasis on more popular genres and feature film and in part to the more experimental film festivals that did not provide enough screen time for the amount of lesbian and gay work available. The festival maintains its original aim to screen challenging work – noncommercial, innovative, short and long, but as long as the work challenges the boundaries of “respectability,” as Hanhardt mentions (2001, 40).¹⁰² From the first program guide, Schulman and Hubbard write,

we organized this festival because we believe that lesbian and gay people can have an especially rich relationship to experimental film [...] The experimental process mirrors, in many ways, the process of understanding a gay identity; both demand an endless re-imagining of the self and the

¹⁰¹ See chapter V for a more detailed discussion of the NYGFF.

¹⁰² With such an ethos the festival became an easy target during the culture wars over public funding and obscenity laws, for example, from 1990 till 1992 the festival lost its New York state arts funding, which forced the festival into an unexpected crisis.

world in order to envision and create what the mainstream believe should not and must not exist (MIX 1987)

Their politics were formed in the gay and lesbian liberation movement as well as in the renewed politicization of the lesbian and gay communities against the Reagan government's reluctance to respond to the AIDS crisis (Hanhardt 2001, 41).

The festival first took place at the Millennium (sixty films) but then moved to the Anthology Film Archives, both important experimental film spaces in New York City's Lower East Side and familiar to experimental filmmakers, local and from around the world. The festival was especially innovative for its vision for a place for gay and lesbian experimental film, but also for paying filmmakers for the exhibition of their films, instead of charging an application fee, and for their programming practice of mixing new and archival works together outside of the formal "retrospective" category.

Schulman retired in 1991, and then Hubbard left in 1992, the year he apprenticed the two co-directors Jerry Tartaglia and Marguarite Paris.¹⁰³ Effectively, the founding directors of the festival passed on the leadership to a long series of new artistic and executive directors. In 1993 the festival changed its name to MIX: The New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film/Video Festival, which reflected the changes within the organization but also the new reworked and expanded meaning of 'experimental' (MIX 1993). The festival's programming

¹⁰³ Others include Shari Frilot and Karim Ainouz (1993), Frilot (1994, 1996), Frilot and Anie Stanley (1995), Rajendra Roy (1997), and so on.

moved beyond its whiteness and became much more racially and ethnically diverse. The same year brought the first glossy festival program guide with advertising. This change introduced corporate sponsorship, for example, Absolut Vodka, into the festival and was debated. More public and private funding was secured.¹⁰⁴

For financial reasons, the length of the festival has been cut from ten to five days, from 1998 on, but has kept the printed program guide, corporate sponsorship, and the parties. The festival continues to redefine itself, as the concepts of experimental and alternative expand in meaning to include new margins and the revival of narrative and autobiography.

The NewFest (New York Lesbian and Gay Film Festival) was founded by Susan Horowitz in 1988, and the name of which tries to distinguish itself from the defunct New York Gay Film Festival. Programmers have included Patricia White, Jeffrey Lunge and Sande Zeig.

As with all of the early lesbian and gay film festivals, the film distribution companies were “leery of LGBT representation, and avoided contact with NewFest,” notes the co-founder Daryl Chin (2003, 9). The consequences of this then presented significant challenges for securing films for the gala opening and closing. The British Film Institute saved the galas by providing feature films that had been produced under the special category of minority representation, for example, films by Beeban Kidron, Ron Peck and Derek Jarman. Foreign films

¹⁰⁴ Andy Warhol Foundation for the Arts, Astrea National Lesbian Action Foundation for the Visual Arts, among others.

played an important role in giving the festival content during its early years. In 1989 the German film *Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia* by Ulrike Ottinger was introduced by Beirut-born French star Delphine Seyrig which closed the festival. According to Chin, the major breakthrough came when British actor Tilda Swinton introduced Jarman's *Wittgenstein* (UK, 1993). As Chin recounts, "Soon, many well-known filmmakers and stars would start to come to the festival" (Chin 2003, 9). Apparently, the taboo of actors and film companies associating with the LGBT festival had lifted, and just after the flood of New Queer "crossover" films.

Not only was the NewFest dedicated to lesbian and gay feature and documentary film, but it also included historical programs that surveyed the New York Underground Cinema (1996) and the vintage gay pornographic films of Wakefield Poole as late night screenings (NewFest 1996). In 1999 the NewFest hosted the well-known panel on lesbian and gay film festivals organized by Patricia White took place. The presenters were a mixed group of scholars, critics and curators, but all of them had direct experience in programming for lesbian and gay film festivals, and included Eric Clarke, Ruby Rich, Richard Fung, and others. Selected papers from the conference were published in a dossier in the journal *GLQ* (White 1999a) (NewFest 1999).

New York City presents a cogent case of one city holding multiple lesbian and gay film festivals. Moreover, any city may hold more than one film festival organized around a theme of minority sexualities, which is becoming increasingly the case. 'LGBT' is always already a formal title that performs as a type of intersection of allegiances, sometimes wishful and sometimes real, but also

subsumes and presupposes many other tacit ones, for example, race, age, class, ethnicity and language. New York City provides a great example, but is far from alone. Many cities in fact have several such festivals, with varying degrees of overlap, typically now organized from within communities of color.

Not only is expertise shared among the festivals, the theme of minority sexualities too is found in many other festivals centered on racial or ethnic/cultural themes. There are festivals dedicated to transgender issues, queers of color, South Asian diaspora (Desh Pardesh), to name a few. The categories of sexuality and gender migrate among the various festivals, adapting to the dominant theme of each. Moreover, of course, even the local international film festival might succeed to win the right to premiere a film that has a lesbian or gay theme or narrative.

2.3 Montreal's Image&Nation

As a classics scholar, [Anne Carson] spends much of her time reading bilingual texts. When she is puzzled by some expression, she automatically moves her eyes to the left-hand page. But the reflex kicks in even when she is not reading a bilingual book. Looking to the left is no help. This, says Carson, is like looking for the “place before the zero.”

This experience would be recognizable to many Montrealers. Daily life in [Montreal] often seems to take place in a world of right-hand pages, of mixed and confusing expressions. French and English are in unremitting contact. To avoid interference, they must perform contortions of avoidance. And when these manoeuvres fail, the languages collapse into

echo, imitation, and crosstalk. The security of mother tongue, like the reassurance of a left-hand page, becomes an ideal – a goal as remote as “the place before the zero.” – Sherry Simon, *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*

Montreal is a city of two dominant colonial languages, the dynamic of which produces its linguistic signature. According to Simon, the linguistic politics and cultures of this “divided city” are more akin to various nineteenth-century cities of Central Europe, such as Prague or Lemberg, than any other city in North America today (2006, 21).

Following the Second World War, Montreal took its place as Canada’s hotspot for entertainment, cabarets and nightclubs – veritable “sin city.” According to Lajoie in his article on cinematic cities, while Montreal was perceived by the majority of French-speaking Quebecers as a place of working-class squalor and English domination, the 1960s brought a critique of the ideology of conservation,¹⁰⁵ and a “modern” enthusiasm for the large city as a possible site for new urban Québécois identities to emerge (Lajoie 2001, 38 f.).

During this period, there was also a significant shift in the location of the gay districts of the city. The years 1950s to 1970s¹⁰⁶ witnessed a de facto migration from the west (Shaughnessy Village) and downtown (east of the Lower Main) to the east, where today the “village gai” is concentrated in a working-class

¹⁰⁵ The ideology of conservation concerned the pursuit of “the authentic rural culture” over the decadent urban (and English) one.

¹⁰⁶ The work of Ross Higgins addresses precisely this period in Montreal (2000).

neighborhood (“Centre-sud”). The 1970s were a time of cultural contestation and becoming, particularly for the separatist movement, as its main political party, the Parti Québécois, which eventually took power in 1977.

The accompanying 1970s project of the francization¹⁰⁷ of the province, including Montreal, its largest city, aims to transform the surface of the city linguistically, by giving prominence to the French language as the officially preferred language of public discourse and give the majority French-speakers the right to work, shop and live in French.¹⁰⁸ The mission statement of the Office québécois de la langue française, founded in 1993, states,

The Office shall see to it that French is the normal and everyday language of work, communication, commerce and business in the civil administration and in enterprises. The Office may, among other things, take any appropriate measure to promote French (OLF 2008).

One of the slogans of the separatist movement was “maîtres chez nous,”¹⁰⁹ which was meant as a corrective to the other colonial power’s longstanding cultural and economic domination. Since the 1970s and the introduction of the language laws, not surprisingly, Quebec cultural policy has also been influenced

¹⁰⁷ Various laws and institutions were created to bring this about, for example, Bill 101 on education, and the Office de la langue française to enforce linguistic laws on public signage, which explains the clever choice of a bilingual name for the festival (Image&Nation, imagination, all three words shared by French and English) and other cultural organizations, see (Taylor 1993).

¹⁰⁸ See Charter of the French Language (1977) (OLF).

¹⁰⁹ Translated as “masters in our own home.”

by an ethos to protect the French language, which I discuss further below and in the final chapter.

Unlike in many other similar cities in North America, Montreal's gay village has been slow to gentrify, has very low density housing, without significant high-rise apartments or expensive condominiums in development. The demographics have remained very mixed, while the commercial street brims with gay-owned restaurants, gay bars, saunas, strip and dance clubs. This shift also signaled an effective merging of the different gay scenes, English-speaking and French-speaking, over the decades.

Image&Nation lesbian and gay film festival's first edition was held April 19-30, 1988, under the collective direction of the non-profit organization Diffusions gaies et lesbiennes du Québec, whose principal members included René Lavoie, Patricia Kearns and Pierre Chackal. The name of the festival was only enigmatically printed on the fourth page of the program guide as "Image&Nation Lesbiennes et Gais" (Image&Nation 1988, 4).

The first several editions were held at two public exhibitions spaces, namely the Cinémathèque Québécoise and Office national du film (National Film Board), both situated close to one another and within walking distance from the gay village. Subsequent screenings were also held at the Goethe Institut, a (West) German cultural center, also located near the other exhibition spaces and the village. During the late 1990s, the festival struck deals to use various commercial cinemas downtown along Sainte Catherine Street.

From the beginning, the festival has produced extensive printed program guides, replete with advertising from its many types of sponsors, from saunas and politicians to LGBT community groups to clubs and bookshops. In 1994 a larger guide format was used until 2000, when the guide was scaled down to pocket-book size. Such changes are attempts to balance costs with professional image, as is the case with all festivals, as will be discussed further in Chapter IV.

The 1988 program begins with a retrospective of gay and lesbian work, including Jean Delannoy's *Les Amitiés particulières* (France, 1964), Jacqueline Audry's *Olivia* (France, 1950) and Lionel Soukaz' *Race d'Ep, un siècle d'images de l'homosexualité* (France, 1979). While there was a clear effort to find French-language films and videos with gay and lesbian themes, there was also a significant presence of English-language work from the United States, United Kingdom and Canada. The festival included a homage to gay Québécois playwright Michel Tremblay as well as two entire days dedicated to the issue of the representation of AIDS in mass media. Needless to say, the festival was off to an ambitious start.

The co-founders of the festival played varying roles for the first several years. René Lavoie took over as (chief) festival coordinator in the second year and kept a programming committee of seven members. By the third edition, Lavoie had two assistants – Anne Golden and Pierre Chackal, as the festival grew in size and in acknowledgements particularly to individuals and organizations outside of Montreal. For the fifth edition, two new co-coordinators – Anne Golden and Allan Klusacek, who had both also been involved as programmers for a few years –

took over the position from René Lavoie, who remained as a programmer for the festival. The main festival coordinator changed many times over the years: Martin Fillion (1994), Yves Lafontaine (1995-1996), and finally Charline Boudreau with Katharine Setzer (1997-2008). The last team has been leading the festival for an unprecedented eleven years and counting. Boudreau has become the longstanding festival director, and Setzer the programming director. They work together exclusively to program the entire festival, apparently without any invited programmers. While this prolonged arrangement may bring increased stability to the organization, it is uncertain how else it might affect the innovation and appeal of the festival.¹¹⁰

Montreal's Image&Nation is not without its battles. Its administrators have consistently complained, from its early editions on, about and to the Quebec provincial film agency SODEC which refuses to fund the festival because its "sociological" thematic does not fit its festival funding policy.¹¹¹ In fact, in the program guide of the third edition (1990), the collective write that the festival persists in spite of the lack of funding from the provincial cultural granting agency.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ As mentioned above, politics in Montreal are framed by a question of language, stemming from the two dominant groups. In contrast to the rest of North America, discourses on the politics of representation and identity in Quebec have been slow to recognize the position of visible minorities (people of color).

¹¹¹ See Chapter V on the question of community in relation to funding categories.

¹¹² This is given more detailed analysis in Chapter VI.

2.4 Toronto's Inside/Out Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film and Video

One of the clichés of comparison, at least in English Canada, contrasts Toronto “the good” or “the city that works” with Montreal the city of “culture,” with its aura of European prestige. In this moral universe, Toronto stands as the fulfillment of bourgeois values of order and hygiene, versus the chaos and dissipation of cosmopolitan hedonism ascribed to Montreal. In short, Toronto is about work, and Montreal is about life. – Kevin Dowler, “To Squeeze a Single Sentence Out”¹¹³

Toronto has historically received the short end of the cultural stick whenever compared to Montreal. Moreover, historically, its northern Protestant ethics kept it diligent and working hard, with a suspicious eye cast on things cultural. Much has changed in Canada's most populous city.

In 1976, the city established itself through the Festival of Festivals (now TIFF) as an important node in the FIAPF network of international film festivals. Many other film festivals have followed. Its major counter festival of sorts is the Images Festival of Independent Film and Video (1987-), which has itself been a constant supporter of lesbian and gay experimental film and video art for many years. This festival also served as a major source for, or great aunt of, many other festivals stemming from politics of identity in the city, for example, community-oriented film festivals of various ethnic or racial groups, gender and minority sexualities.

¹¹³ In Johanne Sloan's anthology *City, Nation, World: Comparing Montreal and Toronto* (2006).

Historian Gary Kinsman traces the development of Toronto's gay village from the late-1960s and 70s (293). He writes,

The 1970s witnessed the opening of more gay commercial facilities, ranging from bars and clubs to baths, from restaurants to bookstores. It was the period when the "ghetto has come out." In Toronto, this visibility was intensified by the peculiarities of the emergence of gay space there and the city's geographical development. Toronto's gay commercial ghetto lies astride the Yonge Street strip and beside one of the city's most important commercial streets. The history of the gay scene in this area goes back at least to gay patronage of straight-owned bars along Yonge Street in the middle and late 1950s and the opening of the gay-owned Music Room in the 1960s (1996, 293).

The city's fervor for film and high concentration of gay cinephiles combined in the 1980s to produce the first series and festivals dedicated to the representation of lesbians and gay men. There were many single events and screenings¹¹⁴ that promised to become festivals but did not succeed. The current longstanding

¹¹⁴ I found a piece of ephemera, a simple flyer that announced the 1980 "First International Gay Film Festival" in Toronto, but could not find any source to confirm that the event ever took place. There is no record of it in any newspapers of the period. Its postal address is now a parking lot at the south end of the village. This of course does not mean that it did not take place, but rather that as an event it is left indeterminate, namely it *may* have taken place. Queer theorist José Muñoz argues in "Ephemera as Evidence" (1996) that such ephemerality and corresponding instability in meaning is a common dilemma in queer historiography.

Inside Out Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival of Toronto began in 1991. Programmer James Quandt of the former Harbourfront film series, and now head of the Cinematheque Ontario, organized his own in 1986. In any city, a number of false or interrupted starts in establishing such festivals have occurred, since community-oriented festivals in particular depend so precariously on their publics for support, recognition and survival.

The first edition of Inside/Out took place at one main exhibition space, namely the now defunct Euclid Theatre (394 Euclid Avenue), but in the second expanded to include also the National Film Board (NFB, 150 John Street) and the clandestine Cinecycle (317 Spadina Avenue), all within walking distance from one another but notably not convenient to the gay village. In late 1993 the Euclid was purchased by a private film company that used it to screen commercial films (Roche 1993, 20). The loss of this congenial exhibition space caused a crisis for securing a proper venue in time for the festival. In 1996 screenings were held at three different venues, namely The Metropolitan Cinema (formerly the Euclid), The Central YMCA and Jackman Hall (Art Gallery of Ontario). Along with a major change of from festival coordinator Joanne Cormack to executive director (a new title) Ellen Flanders, the exhibition spaces for the festival turned to multiplexes from then on. In 1997 the commercial Cumberland Cinemas (1 to 4) became the venue of choice. Since then, the festival has screened in similar multiplex cinemas in the city.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ The 1997 turn with Flanders at the helm received cautious enthusiasm and hope from critic Andrew Paterson in his review "Inside Out / Outside In:

Apart from constantly seeking new and improved exhibition spaces, a major crisis occurred in 1993 over municipal funding. However, as one of the festival staff downplays the loss,

The Inside/Out's Liz Czach remains confident that the lesbian and gay film festival will go on for a fourth year, despite their own loss this year of a \$4,000 grant from Metro Cultural Affairs. "Considering we're almost entirely volunteer, we could have used it, for sure," she says. "But all the other grants came through. We'll survive this." (Roch 1993, 20)

The city's change of mind on the grant received much negative press at the time.¹¹⁶ The funding was restored, and the festival continues to receive grants from all three levels of public cultural funding (municipal, provincial and federal).

Following in the steps of earlier festivals, Inside/Out has been consistent in its use of a printed program guide from the beginning, with all levels of sponsorship listed throughout. The size of the guides varied subtly over the years, but took on a glossy cover in 1997, which it has kept to date.

Inside/Out has taken the committee structure of the festival very seriously since its foundation. In view of its structure and publicity it is clear that it has a very strong interest in remaining accountable to its diverse communities in all respects

Ruminations on Queer Media Festivals, Arts Funding, Video Art, AIDS, Queerness and Community" (1997).

¹¹⁶ See, for example, Kevin Dowler's analysis of the decision and its consequences in his article "In the Bedrooms of the Nation: State Scrutiny and the Funding of Dirty Art" (2001).

of its operation.¹¹⁷ Inside/Out began and remains a collective, incorporated in 1990 by Gillian Morton, Paul Lee and Christopher Eamon. The first edition of the festival took place in March 1991, programmed by Marie Dennis and Jeremy Podeswa, with coordination by Joanne Cormack. Between the first two years its collective grew to twenty members. The second edition shifted dates to May 1992, and ran for ten days. Attentive to the appearance of so many gay feature films in the early 1990s, critic Christopher Harris writes in Canada's major national newspaper,

This January's Sundance Film Festival in Utah was noted for its unusually large collection of gay-themed films, and Podeswa says a number of those movies will get their Toronto premieres over the next 10 days. They include *Swoon*, Tom Kalin's take on the notorious Leopold-Loeb murder case (previously dramatized in Hitchcock's *Rope* and elsewhere); *The Hours and Times*, about a fictional 1963 encounter between John Lennon and Beatles' manager Brian Epstein [...] (Harris 1992, C7).

Clearly, the films of the nascent New Queer Cinema were making their way through the festival circuit at this time, and others were screening in town at Toronto's Festival of Festivals (TIFF).

Inside/Out has kept a strong attention to community accountability over the years. There are film and video selection committees that have representative members from diverse communities, rotating directorships, and functioning board

¹¹⁷ This is covered in detail in Chapter V below.

of directors. While this festival was founded primarily by film- and videomakers, it has moved away from its artists' run origins to more professionalized divisions of labor.

The variety of organizations discussed above all fall under the same general category of LGBT film festival. Let's now consider the structural elements of this type of organization.

3.0 Elements of the Organization of Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals

This section addresses important structural elements of the lesbian and gay film festivals, the crucial changes that have been made over the years, and the reasons why the changes were made. It begins with an analysis of Jenni Olson's short manual on how to organize a LGBT film festival as a generic, but telling, set of protocols and presuppositions, which is followed by a discussion of the variety of festival structures, their participatory ethos, public funding issues, and the professionalization of the festivals.

In her well-known book *The Ultimate Guide to Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*, Jenni Olson¹¹⁸ includes one chapter titled "Checklist for Programming" (Olson, 371-386). The chapter is full of highly practical advice on the many aspects of organizing such an elaborate event as a community film festival. It offers, writes Olson, "a few tips to help you plan your own gay and lesbian film and video

¹¹⁸ Olson has a strong background in organizing lesbian and gay film festivals in the United States, particularly in Minneapolis/St Paul and Frameline's festival in San Francisco. Her short manual on how to organize a festival was prepared for her PopcornQ section of <www.PlanetOut.com>.

program” (371). While she limits her categories to three: organization (who does what), calendar (when) and budget (how much), her list of topics includes,

organizing and producing your event, funding, staff and volunteers, programming, scheduling, booking, shipping films and videos, theater/space, promotional materials, catalog/program, mailing lists and mailings, advertising, sponsors, organizational newsletters, press releases and public service announcements, specialized letters to community groups, copresentations, follow up, press screenings, distribution of flyers and posters, interviews, tickets, speakers, opening night reception, after your event, programming and publicity resources, and more! (371).

She includes a remarkable amount of information in a few pages, and most of the advice would apply equally to any type of film festival. For example, Olson considers the psychology of scheduling,

You can usually fit at least two evening shows in during the week. Try not to start too early or too late: 7:00, 7:15, or 7:30 may be good for your first show, and perhaps 9:15, 9:30, or 9:45 (psychologically better than 10:00 which sounds much later) for your second. Remember to leave enough time between shows to get the audience in and out (preferably at least half an hour) [...]. (373)

Evidently, this presupposes a festival-going public mainly with 9 am-5 pm jobs during the week, with perhaps a few matinee or midnight screenings added over the weekend. Large festivals with large numbers of audience members worry

less about restricting themselves to only two evening programs during the week, but most lesbian and gay film festivals tend to follow this rule.¹¹⁹

Moreover, Olson's checklist hints at the complexity of a festival itself, namely the number of participants, of players, so to speak. The list lays out the number and types of people involved in this particular field of cultural production. It leaves open the relative power of those in the hierarchy of players, namely administrators, filmmakers, donors, advertisers, invited celebrities, and government representatives.

A number of structures are popular among lesbian and gay film festivals. On the one hand, there is the type with the permanent festival director with invited programmers,¹²⁰ while on the other hand, there is the committee-run festival that has limited-term positions that rotate and have a stronger claim to community involvement and responsibility.¹²¹ These can be considered the two extreme types, with much variety in between for particular festivals. Many of the early gay film festivals tended to be run by the original founder who also served a few other roles, for example, the New York Gay Film Festival, San Francisco Gay Film Festival, before it changed its name, and Toronto's one-time Inverted Image. This structure led to criticisms from the various communities that the festival

¹¹⁹ A-list IFFs would never program in such a manner, but smaller festivals would do so out of practical necessity.

¹²⁰ For example, Montreal's Image&Nation has a longstanding festival director, with limited guest programmers.

¹²¹ NewFest, Inside/Out and MIX would certainly fall into this category.

claimed to represent, namely lesbians and people of color. Effectively, the white gay male culture of cinephilia that drove these festivals became inadequate in accommodating the festival as a whole and its multiplying counterpublics. In order to accommodate such criticisms, the second structure was adopted by more and more festivals, and adapted from feminist coalition-building practices of collaboration.

Community involvement can take place at many different levels and capacities. There are always volunteers. Some festivals involve their audience members in the film selection committees that prescreen and review the submitted films, for example, Inside/Out and NewFest. The committee members stem from and effectively represent parts of the local LGBT community; and their collective vote and comments help the head programmer decide which films to program in the festival. This approach to selection was introduced into festivals in the late-1980s and 1990s to demonstrate a stronger sense of accountability through community representation.

Other festivals place their confidence in the connoisseurship of their auteur-style programmers to select films and group them into enticing, relevant programs. The programmer's role in this case is borrowed from the 1968 innovation at Cannes that gave the artistic director of the festival autonomy to select and program. Generally, the films and videos selected have an explicit LGBT theme, or appeal to a part of the LGBT communities, for example, camp films, which might not have any explicit sexual themes. Any borderline cases, for example, a film with a queer character in a minor role, are discussed in view of the particular

film's overall relevance to the programming of the festival. Other types of film festivals, especially international film festivals, would have no reason to open their film section process to their publics. However, many do offer a prize for the most popular film at the festival, namely an award that acknowledges the audience.

Other strategies of community involvement include guest curators or programmers, panel discussions, question and answer periods, parties, youth training, university scholarships, film completion grants, and various outreach initiatives to underrepresented communities.

Furthermore, the selection process provokes such ostensibly practical questions as "What are the criteria for programming a film in a LGBT film festival?" and "What is a queer, gay or lesbian film?"¹²² The questions seem rather benign and obvious until a borderline case arises and prompts lively debate among the programmers, administrators, sponsors, audience members, et al. Film selection and programming may be guided by strict content rules, imagined community interest, the programmer's connoisseurship, and so forth.¹²³ Nevertheless, there needs to be some justification for any particular film screened in the festival, which is often evinced in the film's catalogue descriptions.

¹²² Jamie June addresses in her master's thesis questions around the issue of criteria for programming specifically at lesbian and gay film festivals in the United States (2003).

¹²³ There has been some recent attention given to practice and theory of programming and curating film and video, see the edited journal issue (Marks 2004).

Styles of programming vary considerably between and within lesbian and gay film festivals. Berlin's LesbenFilmFestival, for example, puts its emphasis on lesbian themes, and aims to challenge any complacency regarding notions of 'community,' 'identity' and 'difference.' MIX was founded as an experimental film festival and guards that ethos still. In her 1994 article "What is the Role of Gay Film Festivals?," MIX co-founder Sarah Schulman makes the case not only for queer experimental work, but also the necessity for the very meaning of experimental film to change. The more experimental or artistic festivals consider formal innovation and social engagement important to keeping their festivals relevant in the face of the striking increase in queer visibility on television. Programmers seem keen to bring out themes of sexual fluidity and mixed gender screenings in preference to the segregated curating style of the past, while also keeping an eye on historical work.

The festivals have become embroiled in controversy over the years. Much of this centers on public funds received by the festivals or filmmakers, which cultural conservatives contest. Infamously, for example, during the culture wars of the 1980s and 90s, the LGBT festivals, filmmakers and their films were attacked by conservative politicians for public funding received from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The film *Tongues Untied* (1989) by gay African-American Marlon Riggs and PBS, which broadcasted it in 1991, became targets of the presidential candidate Pat Buchanan and the American Family Association. Conservatives used Riggs' film, and others, in their fight against the public funding of LGBT films, PBS and NEA. Such lobbying efforts severely diminished

the public funding of art or films, and festivals, with any theme concerning sexuality for several years.

Such controversy in Canada has been to a much lesser degree in comparison, but also much more broadly. State intervention in the form of censorship and public funding for the cultural industries is much more significant and accepted in Canada than in the US. In the Canadian situation, public funding and national identity are much more intertwined.¹²⁴ In short, on account of the significant amount of government funding for film such productions will always be open to public scrutiny.¹²⁵

The Canada Council for the Arts (1957-) underwent important policy changes in the 1990s, which led to a more inclusive ethos in favor of cultural diversity, for example, racial, ethnic, sexual minorities. Artwork and films that dealt explicitly with minority identities and concerns were acknowledged as valid art to be funded by the federal granting agency. These themes were permitted to leave subtext and become the dominant ones. The federal government has other agencies dedicated to commercial filmmaking, for example, Telefilm which

¹²⁴ The history of film policy in Canada has taken this approach for many decades, for example, see (Dorland 1998; Magder 1993).

¹²⁵ The long list of censorship charges in Canada regarding high art includes Eli Langer, Jana Sterbak's "Meat Dress," Barnett Newman's "Voice of Fire," and the spectacular destruction of Bruce LaBruce's Super-8 films at the border (see Cossman 1995). In 2008, the Conservative Bill C-10 attempts to cast a chill over film production on account of its threat to withdraw tax credits from film that do not follow "public policy."

developed from the Canadian Film Development Corporation, as well as certain tax-investment incentives for encouraging film production in the country. Different agencies have differing definitions of what constitutes a Canadian film, other provincial agencies have their own criteria for a film from their respective province, and municipalities likewise.

Funding also remains a constant concern for all festivals with the public to private ratio of support varying widely from city to city. All are experiencing the effects of the shrinking funding base and the rising competition from other community groups (Rhyne 2007).

In contrast to the robust culture of expression stemming from the First Amendment in the United States, Canada is working through its legacy of heavy-handed censorship and obscenity laws. The paradigm case involves Canada Customs and Vancouver's Little Sisters Bookshop. Festival tactics for obtaining the videos, for example, it is common practice to re-title the video something less explicit in order to avoid material being halted (and possibly destroyed, if found obscene) at Customs. To avoid problems of the classification of films not reviewed by any censoring agency, festivals negotiate and invoke the rule of admitting only those eighteen-years of age and older, thereby rendering all festival films *de facto* restricted.¹²⁶

The rapid growth in audience poses new problems for programming. While any festival may inspire some lively critical discussion regarding its programming,

¹²⁶ In Canada, Brenda Cossman's work is particularly useful (1995; 1997), while for the United States, see Carole Vance (1990).

according to active critics, the new and enlarged audience contains people with less cinephilic aspirations, and more popular taste (Rich 1999). The example of the decreased tolerance for low-production values is often cited, which typically means that lower-budget independent films lose out.

Since the mid-1990s there have been charges of corporatization, or making the festivals more similar to corporations in structure and operation as well as relying more heavily on donations from large corporations to keep the festivals financially afloat. Arguably, this process of corporatization would include the process of professionalization as an effect, since as the festivals work to harmonize with their sponsors they would also attempt to become more accommodating and intelligible to them. Moreover, professionalization can be understood as an effect of the sudden growth in the global network of lesbian and gay film festivals from the 1990s on. As the organizations expanded, they needed to rationalize their resources and structures. (The only officially artists-run lesbian and gay film festival remaining is New York City's MIX.)

There is a growing amount of literature being published on the 1990s trends in tourism¹²⁷ and marketing, especially in relation to the birth of the 'gay niche' (Sender 2004). Cities began to view the gay ghetto, its unique practices and "feasts," as a lucrative niche worth exploiting, in spite of the historical stigma

¹²⁷ Jon Binnie has studied how the "pink dollar or pound" is being chased in the tourism industry (Binnie 1995).

associated with these sexual minorities.¹²⁸ Uneasy disdain grew into pecuniary embrace and thus various ghettos were superficially renovated and enhanced (Engel 2006). Part of the process of professionalization brought with it a decreased emphasis on the local, and a related increased emphasis on the international. The common prestige measures of world, national, state/provincial, or city premieres, number of films screened, number of foreign films, number of screenings and days running, number of tickets sold, parties, degree of media coverage, even prizes and awards, played increasingly important roles.

The question of the professionalization of the LGBT film festivals has become particularly urgent.¹²⁹ As the festivals have emerged and developed into institutions through their global network of associations, the pressure to conform to intelligible international practices and structures. This development follows a similar pattern regarding international film festivals, according to Elsaesser whose study “concentrate[s] on the history of the phenomenon and examine in passing some of its systemic properties” (2005). Similarly, the lesbian and gay film festivals around the world constitute a global network of nodes, flows and exchanges. While the LGBTFFs are categorically more specific than IFFs, they are remarkably international in extent. Following Elsaesser’s claim, these festivals also, in part, form a network that serves as a special alternative means

¹²⁸ The index for the “Creative City” uses the number of gays and lesbians as part of the measure of a successful urban environment (Florida 2002).

¹²⁹ Ragan Rhyne writes on the professionalization of these festivals throughout the 1990s in her dissertation (2006).

of distribution, exhibition and publicity primarily in the face of Hollywood. In fact, they were formed largely for that very reason, namely in response to Hollywood's curious reticence and persistent distortion of narratives of lesbian and gay lives.

Current lesbian and gay film festivals have a distinct increasingly global network that, in a sense, parallels and at times intersects the (A-list) international film festivals, but clearly have a more specialized public.

4.0 Global Proliferation of Film Festivals on a Minority Sexuality Theme

Even though the aim of my project is restricted to a comparative study of North America and the development of the film festivals there, it is important to acknowledge and outline in brief the international context and network of lesbian and gay film festivals that have come into being. The following chapters will concern the specific contexts of Canada and the United States. Through the 1990s festivals with a sexual minority theme truly went global and continue to be created in a wide diversity of countries. What is common in the development of the festivals worldwide is their local contingency, their adaptation to their contexts of emergence, their social struggles, debates, nationalisms, taboos, idea of sexual representation, among other matters.

A question that poses itself in the light of the globalization of the festivals concerns not only where the festivals occur, but also their paucity or where they do not (or may not) take place. While welcomed in certain cities and countries, they are nonexistent or unimaginable in others. Let us now turn to those festivals in Europe, Asia and the Americas.

The vast majority of western European countries have at least one or two, with a few notable exceptions. Berlin has no LGBT film festival but similar programming is contained within its international film festival; but there is also the longstanding LesbenFilmFest, one of the few strictly lesbian film festivals in the world, and the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale), which has been very supportive of gay and lesbian themed films.¹³⁰ However, according to Brian Požun, “The oldest annual gay and lesbian film festival in Europe takes place not in Paris, Berlin, London, or Amsterdam. Rather, it is held in the former Yugoslavia, in the Slovene capital of Ljubljana” (2004). Quite remarkably, in 1984 Ljubljana’s lesbian and gay film festival began in former Yugoslavia, now Slovenia. According to its founder Brane Mozetič, the festival was better protected and supported under Yugoslavia’s culturally liberal variant of communism than it is today under its current populist democracy (Požun 2001). Apparently, this is the only case of a communist country supporting a gay film festival. Granted, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had a special non-aligned status and relative autonomy in relation to the Soviet Bloc, which in particular is made evident in its national cinema and institutions.¹³¹ Nevertheless, the culturally conservative residue of Soviet Bloc policies is still felt to varying degrees in those respective countries since their own capitalist-democratic reinvention since 1989. Even in countries

¹³⁰ It awards the “Teddy” (1986-) to the best three queer films in three categories.

¹³¹ Currently there is very little published on this period and area. It would be fascinating to see whether any samizdat groups in the Soviet Bloc were centered on work concerning issues of sexuality.

with very strong national cinemas, there seems to be little place for or desire to organize a film festival centered on minority sexualities.¹³²

Perhaps the strongest growth in minority sexuality themed film festivals has been recently in East Asia, including Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, China (at Beijing University, 2001-) and Taiwan. Hernandez (2003) reports on some of the challenges facing lesbian and gay film festivals in Asia (Beijing, Taipei, Jakarta). Soyoung Kim provides a brilliant analysis of the attempt to organize South Korea's first festival, which was met with strong government censorship. The festival itself was barricaded by police and forbidden to open. However, subsequent festivals have been permitted to take place and even promoted by government agencies, as part of an effort to save face on the international stage (Kim 2005).

With the fall of Indonesia's former President Suharto in 1998 came some cultural and social liberalization, and during this period the *Q! Film Festival* (QFF) also came into existence (2001-). According to the festival's website there is collaborative relationship between Q! and the lesbian and gay film festival in Hamburg, Germany. It is the only queer film festival that exists publicly in a

¹³² Exceptions might be the Czech Republic's Mezipatra Lesbian and Gay Film Festival that tours both Brno and Prague, and perhaps Poland's intermittent Pryzmat Festival in Warsaw. Frameline was involved in organizing the first LGBT film festivals in Russia and India on invitation from activists in those countries in the early 1990s (Stryker 1996, 369), but there is no trace of any subsequent ones in Russia.

mainly Muslim country (Arga 2007).¹³³ I suggest that the paucity of such festivals elsewhere in the Muslim world and in other countries has much to do with local laws or customs that ban homosexual relations.¹³⁴

Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the UK and the USA share a similar enough culture through the legacy of the British Commonwealth and white settler colonies, and share the institution of the lesbian and gay film festival. The special case of post-apartheid South Africa continues to demonstrate to the world its strong support for social justice issues and maintains the only LGBT film festival on the entire continent. Apart from some outreach activities on the part of the South African festival into neighboring countries, there are no references to any others. While South Africa is clearly working hard to regain face in the west after its nefarious apartheid regime, its festival is clearly also part of a larger project of national renewal under a rainbow of inclusivity.

New York City's MIX queer experimental film festival has at least two important global trajectories, namely MIX Brasil (1993-)¹³⁵ and MIX Mexico (now Mix Platino: Festival de Diversidad Sexual en Cine y Video) (1996-). Each of these festivals was started by a former staff member of MIX NYC, who returned home after New York. The São Paulo-based festival tours a selection of its films and

¹³³ I would argue that the films find other ways, other contexts for being screened, for example, within other festivals or privately.

¹³⁴ Joseph Massad's article "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World" addresses issues concerning (western-style) homosexuality in the Muslim Arab world.

¹³⁵ Co-founded by Suzy Capo.

videos throughout Brasil and even to other continents. While they had their original inspiration from MIX NYC, festival organizers have developed the idea in their own way, to their own local or national needs and expectations. These transformations include the inclusion of more popular feature films and a structure that allows the festival to tour its screenings through a set of cities in their respective countries. Furthermore, there are more mainstream lesbian and gay film festivals throughout Central and South America – Lima's OutfestPerú and Buenos Aires' DIVERSA. The Republic of Cuba's lesbian and gay film festival made its debut in 2005, sponsored by the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry and the National Center for Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS.

Precisely how they manifest themselves in these diverse locations, each with its own contingent constellation of races, ethnicities, social classes and local sexual histories, is difficult to predict.¹³⁶

Concluding Remarks

The emergence of the lesbian and gay film festival was motivated in part by an opening or liberating process within the festival institution from the late-1960s on and very importantly by the social movements outside of and far from the international film festival institution, particularly the civil rights and women's movements as well as gay liberation that quickly followed. While there was

¹³⁶ For more on the relationship between globalization, sexuality and sexual identities, see the work of Dennis Young and its critical responses.

remarkable overlapping expertise shared among these movements in the early period, the latter one borrowed and built on selected strategies of the former. This included various media practices, which included the development of the lesbian and gay film festival circuit. As Ruby Rich discusses in her history of women's film festivals, the politics of the festivals reflected much of the debates of the larger women's movement at the time. As some lesbians became disenchanted with the perceived and felt heteronormative impulse of the second wave feminism and began to align themselves with the struggle for the civil rights on sexuality through gay liberation, the idea of the mixed gendered homosexual film festival was brought into existence, namely the gay and lesbian, and then lesbian and gay, film festival. Lesbian separatists, also breaking away from the larger women's movement, founded festivals organized around gender and sexuality, which still exist in various parts of the world.

The general periodization of the North American lesbian and gay film festivals can be summarized provisionally as follows. The late-1970s were the founding years of the gay film festivals, which became gay and lesbian film festivals in name and substance in the early 1980s. The 1980s began between the assassination of Harvey Milk in San Francisco and the discovery of AIDS by 1981 and is marked by the feminist porn debates and the Reagan era's culture wars. Festivals were founded by filmmakers and programmers, mobilized in defiance of the right-wing political climate and government inaction towards the AIDS epidemic. While the controversies of the 80s continued into the 1990s, the invention of queer theory as a more optimistic response to some of the

theoretical and political problems. Moreover, the films of the new queer cinema rejuvenated in particular the festivals, which expanded in number and grew in size across North America. The festivals “professionalized” and expanded in size (audience count, number of films), as they fell into competition with other community groups in the non-profit sector. The late-1990s and early-2000s witnessed a strong globalization of film festivals with a theme of sexuality, which is still underway.

As the case studies of San Francisco, New York, Montreal and Toronto point out, there is a diversity of types of LGBT film festivals, differing in structure, audience, taste, and even concepts of sexuality and gender themselves. The following chapters study the festivals in greater detail in relation to publicity, discourse and taste.

IV. On the Spaces of the Lesbian and Gay Film Festival

1.0 Elements of Festival Space

In this chapter I address the question of the spaces of lesbian and gay film festivals through three specific approaches, namely (1) an analysis of several types of oppositional political spaces, drawing on Foucault's concept of heterotopia, (2) an analysis of particular spaces of transgression, and the limits of the extent of the concept, in Bakhtin's sense, and (3) a series of analyses of festival spaces in relation to their transforming, migrating, even fugitive counterpublics, through theories of gay and queer space.

Former Canadian Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau commented, at a press conference after introducing a major change to the Criminal Code on December 21, 1967, that effectively decriminalized consensual sexual acts, including homosexuality,

Well, it's certainly the most extensive revision of the Criminal Code since, uh, the, uh, new Criminal Code of nine- [sic], early 1950s. And in terms of the subject matter it deals with, I feel that it has, uh, knocked down a lot of totems and overridden a lot of taboos. And I feel that in that sense it, uh, it is 'new.' But I, it's bringing the laws of the land up to, uh, contemporary society, I think. Take this thing on, uh, on um, homosexuality. I think the, the view we take here is that, uh, there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation, and I think that, uh, you know, what's done in private between adults, uh, doesn't concern the Criminal Code. *When it*

becomes public, this is a different matter (transcript in Shewchuk 2004, emphasis mine).

While it was certainly an important feat for all sexual rights, especially those of lesbian and gay men, Trudeau's comment is an excellent example of the liberal divide between public and private, but implicitly begs the question of how sexuality is to be kept out of the public. According to Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant, among others, this is precisely the trouble with normal, to paraphrase the title of his book (Warner 2000) and their collaboration (Berlant 1998). Eric Clarke writes on and reworks the public sphere and its troubled relationship to sexuality, particularly minority sexualities (1999). The thorn in the conventional public sphere has been, according to Clarke, the *homoerotic*.¹³⁷ If publicity or "publicness is a quality, not a place," how do societies produce it and how might any society work to enable it? What are its virtual borders? The trouble with normal, the pressure of heteronormativity, in the sphere of popular culture is the production of homonormalcy, or as it has also been named homonormativity, as represented in popular culture in some of its narrowest senses (1999, 76). Homoerotic inflections in public have historically produced remarkable forms of repression and censorship. While the Canadian situation regarding private expressions of sexuality and sex acts, including "this thing [called] homosexuality," eased in 1967 and similarly in the United States, as discussed below, the difficult issue of the homoerotic in public remains to varying degrees.

¹³⁷ This article stems from his dissertation turned book on the relationship between the public sphere and the homoerotic (2000).

To be sure, the study of lesbian and gay film festivals, specifically, as cultural formations organized around categories of minority sexualities with partial public funding continue to pose and invite challenges in public debates.

Somewhat similar rights in the United States, but explicitly framed around the category of sodomy, only finally arrived nationally in 2003 after a considerable struggle in individual states. There such legal changes came much more slowly and unevenly state-by-state until June 26, 2003, when the US Supreme Court struck down the Texas same-sex sodomy law, and ruled that this private sexual act is protected by the Constitution (*Lawrence vs. Texas*). Importantly, this decision invalidated all then existent state sodomy laws elsewhere in the country inasmuch as they applied to noncommercial acts in private between consenting adults, while striking down an earlier decision from 1986 in which Georgia's sodomy law had been upheld (*Bowers vs. Hardwick*). While the sodomy laws in many (more liberal) states were eliminated in the 1970s, some applied to any gender combination or sexuality, and others were restricted to homosexual relations, the 2003 ruling invalidated all such existent laws across the country. To be sure, such battles were much more difficult in the United States than in Canada (2005 legal recognition of same-sex marriage), as was confirmed in the recent same-sex marriage debates and sharply differing responses on either side of the border.

The previous chapter traces the emergence and rise of lesbian and gay film festivals primarily in the United States and Canada, including their various structures, funding, as well as a survey of the global extent of such film festivals

organized thematically around minority sexualities. Part of the special signature of these festivals has been to question themselves and for critics to question their legitimacy and reason for existing (for example, Waugh 1982; Hays 1993). The future of the festivals in Canada and the United States is open and uncertain. While many issues were brought out in the analysis in Chapter III, in this chapter I address the specific issues concerning these festivals, as real counterpublics and public spaces, in what I call their festival space. I work through three conceptual approaches to the analysis of social space, namely Michel Foucault's heterotopia, Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivalesque, and finally the concepts of gay and lesbian space in the light of queer theory. While this chapter addresses the nature and articulation of the spaces of lesbian and gay film festivals, the following chapter addresses the question of the language of community that circulates through the publicity of the festivals themselves.

2.1 On the Heterotopic Aspects of Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals

The application of Foucault's concept of heterotopia to LGBT film festivals contributes significantly to a deeper understanding of the festivals themselves and the meanings of their spaces. Written in 1967, the essay *Des Espaces autres* (translated as *Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias* 1986)¹³⁸ falls into Foucault's early period, before the pivotal May 1968, and serves as a snapshot of Foucault's intellectual concerns and positions. Specifically, here his concept of

¹³⁸ The geographer Edward Soja (1995) develops Foucault's heterotopia into postmodern heterotopologies through the work of Jean Baudrillard, et al. For criticism of his approach, see (Gregory 1994).

heterotopia may be situated in dialogue with his contemporaries Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and Guy Debord, among others. The term 'heterotopia' itself in English is a neologism from the French 'hétérotopie' and responding to 'utopie,' etymologically stemming from the Ancient Greek 'heteros' (other or different) and 'topos' (place). Similarly, Lefebvre coined 'isotopia'; and de Certeau has his 'heterology'. All of these take 'utopia' as their model neologism, which has its own chosen etymology by Thomas More from the Ancient Greek, namely 'ou' –topia (outopeía) for no place or nowhere, as well as 'eu' –topia (eutopeía) for beautiful or good place.¹³⁹ It is from the translation into Latin that the Greek prefixes are reduced to the single 'u,' thereby condensing the two possible meanings and places into the one word.

Leading up to his concept of heterotopia, Foucault sketches a brief history of concepts of space according to specific historical epochs. The highly hierarchical medieval space is that of emplacement, which Galileo dissolved when he posited the scandalous "infinitely open space" or extension. In contrast to the 19th century and its emphasis on history and time, our epoch concerns space through the concept of the site. Briefly, general concepts of space in the West, then, have moved from the Medieval 'emplacement' to Renaissance 'extension' to 19th century 'teleological history' to the modern 'site.' Foucault defines the site through "relations of proximity between points or elements," for example, the series, grids or trees (23). He states that "space takes for us the form of relations

¹³⁹ This stems from More's 1516 book in Latin *De Optimo republicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*.

among sites" (23). Unlike time, Foucault claims that "contemporary space is perhaps still not entirely desanctified," but still carries with it the oppositions of private and public space, family and social space, cultural and useful space, as well as leisure and work space. According to Foucault, the constancy of those oppositions hints at the hidden presence of the sacred. The contemporary space of sites for Foucault is strongly heterogeneous, not an infinite homogenous void waiting to be filled.

Between utopia and heterotopia, Foucault positions the figure of the mirror. The hybrid experience of the mirror is both utopic and heterotopic. Its utopic aspect as a "placeless place" enables the subject to see herself in a place where she is not; but it also has a heterotopic aspect in as much as the mirror exists in reality. Foucault continues,

[t]he mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there (24).

The space of the cultural institution of the lesbian and gay film is richly articulated through Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Foucault's analogy to the mirror presents a utopic placeless place in the mirror but also exists as a physical device or medium confusing presence and absence, and thereby allows for the experience of heterotopia.

The figure of the mirror, which I take here as a institutional metaphor, resonates superbly with the experience of the community-oriented¹⁴⁰ lesbian and gay film festival, at which viewers experience a similar play of presence and absence at the event, in the screenings, waiting in line, cruising, etc., through the fleeting mechanisms of resemblances, empathy, identification, disidentification,¹⁴¹ and so forth. The films and community produce complicated experiential chains of familiarity and difference, somewhat according to such categories as habitus, gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual identification. In short, the festival itself takes place and produces a unique site.

Foucault outlines six general principles that constitute his concept of heterotopia, which I would like to think through in relation to the case of the lesbian and gay film festival:

1. Foucault claims that heterotopias can be found in every culture; and that they have two general categories: the crisis and the deviant (24 f.). (a) Crisis heterotopias are reserved for individuals in a state of crisis in relation to the ground of society, for example, rites of passage for adolescents, the aged, pregnant women. (b) Deviant heterotopias are “those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed,” for example, psychiatric wards, prisons, rest and even retirement homes.

¹⁴⁰ See Miranda Joseph (2002) for an excellent critique of the concept of community and its current usage.

¹⁴¹ José Muñoz theorizes the concept of disidentification in contrast to identification and anti-identification in his book (1999).

Arguably, the origin of the lesbian and gay film festival stems from a culture of sexual deviation or deviance, from gay liberation and lesbian feminism, both certainly contestations of various societal norms and laws regarding sexuality, gender, the private-public divide, among others, as Trudeau intimates at the beginning of this chapter. Moreover, lesbian and gay culture has developed its own institutions of crisis heterotopias within the larger formerly deviant frame, such as the refuge spaces of the bar, club, bathhouse, and nighttime cruising parks, to name a few. Here deviance would be a measure of the degree to which actions strayed from the norms set by the process of heteronormativity, as Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner have used it (1998).¹⁴²

2. With the second principle Foucault admits the possibility of history and change (25). Heterotopias are historically contingent and may change in function in any given society. Foucault gives the example of the cemetery and traces its changes in function to changes in meaning of subjectivity, body, death and hygiene over the last few centuries. As mentioned above, festivals and carnival have similarly transformed from ancient times throughout modernity, fracturing into an endless myriad of secular types. In recent times we see the bifurcation from 'film festival' to 'film and video festival' to 'gay film and video festival' to 'lesbian and gay film and video festival' to the 'LGBT film and video festival.' What will be the next

¹⁴² The more recent analogical formation of 'homonormativity' was made by Lisa Duggan (1992). The term aims to name the effect of the process of favoring middle-class values and concerns for respectability at the expense of minoritarian practices, for example, BDSM and public sex, when claiming to represent the whole LGBT community.

incarnation of this sort of community-of-sexualities-oriented film festival? Will the festival ever be able to accommodate fully transgender and transsexual concerns? How interested are transgender and transsexual persons in associating with such a festival? How will issues of ableism and ageism work their way through this apparent liberal logic of inclusion? To be sure, types of allegiances through intersectionality have been attempted, more specific festivals have also emerged to accommodate the interests of particular groups themselves, for example, OutFest's Fusion Festival in Los Angeles, the Queer Women of Color Film Festival in San Francisco, Tranny Fest: Transgender/Transgenre Cinema, and the San Francisco Bi Film Festival (Ross 2001), the last three all located in the same west coast city.

3. According to Foucault, "the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (25). This principle brings out the sense of differences, the "hetero," at the heart of the concept. Here he chooses the examples of the ancient theater and garden while mentioning the exhibition space of the cinema in passing. He notes, the "cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space" (25). I would elaborate further that the space of the screen opens up, in general, a veritable multitude of possible spaces and temporalities for juxtaposition with the rest of the room of the cinema. What of these possible spaces and temporalities are favored, and why? The physical room of the cinema, its space, accommodates a convergence of seeming strangers into an audience of

spectators, whose members perhaps share certain taste, education, age, class, race, gender or sexual identities and interests. It is likely that there is some prior relation between audience members who derive from the same scene, for example, shared spaces of bars and dance clubs, associations and community activism, dating websites, gyms, and many other experiences, if not shared then at least similar. The film festival as a constellation of multiple cinema venues adds another dimension to this analysis, in a sense, creating a set of relationships between the potentially diverse sites, their audiences and the programs of films. What films are screened in which venue? How do the sites relate to the host city in which they are embedded, for example, is the neighborhood friendly and familiar or alienating and dangerous?¹⁴³ What feelings might the site produce?¹⁴⁴

Festival space can at times have a rhizomatic logic. Space of one festival is often expanded and extended through outreach programs and collaborations in the form of co-sponsorships or co-presentations. Increasingly since the funding crisis of the early 1990s, LGBT film festivals have been finding new strategies to collaborate with other festivals in the same city as well as festivals in other cities, which are reciprocal in nature. Festival names and logos are printed in program guides of collaborating festivals, perhaps even displayed on the projection screen

¹⁴³ Brooke addresses this issue of spaces and feelings in her review article (1998).

¹⁴⁴ Cvetkovich has written several articles and one book on the idea of archives of feelings, see (1998; 2002; 2003).

before the sponsored screening. Moreover, for another type of example, the NewFest has a monthly series of LGBT films at the IFC Cinema (Independent Film Channel, founded by Sundance Festival) in Greenwich Village. Furthermore, MIX festival has its touring highlights of the festival that screen on university campuses across the United States.

4. “Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time,” or open onto *heterochronies* (26). The heterotopia begins to function fully once there is a break in traditional time. Foucault uses here the example of the cemetery, which is heterotopic for the individual right from the stark heterochronic moment of the death of a loved one. The museum, library or archive as a heterotopia, for example, is explicitly obsessed with accumulating time through artifacts and documents. In contrast to those in pursuit of time, there are those flowing, fleeting, ephemeral heterotopias such as the festival, “not oriented toward the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal [chroniques]” (26). Foucault proposes the examples of the circus that comes to the outskirts of town, constituting a vibrant site out of a previously derelict landscape; but there are also the temporal heterotopias of the tourist industry, such as vacation villages that simulate a tamed imagined vision of some earlier lifeworld. The festival and carnival,¹⁴⁵ in particular, have their origin in the religious celebration of the feast days of the saints through ritual. They add rhythm, punctuating the calendar year, provide

¹⁴⁵ Technically, ‘carnival’ designates a specific religious feast day or period just before Lent in the Roman Catholic calendar. There is just one such “feast of the flesh” a year, while there are many other festivals and feast days.

the social context for a collective gathering of people over a fixed number of days, and have an associated print culture and public. They also exist in relation to other regular feasts, festivals and events throughout the year. The modern secular festival inherits all those general characteristics. Like the circus, the film festival arrives to a city and takes place over a limited duration, and then disappears into the cultural memory of the city to return one year later anew. The film festival is primarily ephemeral in nature, although it is also supposed to provide a store of the best films of the year, typically accompanied with carefully composed retrospectives of glances at the past. The temporality of these film festivals includes the regularity of the annual event, but one that also coheres with competing film festivals in other cities as well as with other festivals and cultural events within the same city or region.

5. For the fifth principle, Foucault states that “[h]eterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable.” Unlike the freely accessible public place, certain heterotopias have compulsory entry, as in the case of the prison or psychiatric ward and sometimes with rites and purification. Others appear to be open to all but “generally hide curious exclusions” (26). Foucault specifies further, “[e]veryone can enter into the heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion—we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded” (26). Entry into the space may give the appearance of admittance but other forms of exclusion may be at play. I propose the well-known example of the gay dance club or bar with its subcultural codes specific to its scene, city and class, among other elements. Vivienne

Namaste gives the poignant example of the experience of transgendered people in Montreal gay bars, who are restricted to serving as entertainers for gay men, if they are admitted into the spaces at all (Namaste 2000). Physical entry into the site does not guarantee full admission. Diverse cultural codes must be learned and practiced. For a compelling film example, Al Pacino plays a heterosexual police officer in the infamous *Cruising* (USA 1980) who goes undercover as a gay man in order to infiltrate the underground gay S&M leather scene in New York City to solve a series of murders. The film shows us how he learned the specific codes of this subculture to pass, which made the film highly contested in the early 1980s, for many gay activists understood it then as a recipe for further violent gay-bashings (see Wilson 1981). The cost of admission, in this film, was outlandishly deathly; but it effectively brings out the complexity of highly coded social spaces and their negotiation on the screen and off.

One popular trend in lesbian and gay film festival programming is to sequester the spectators according to gender through its choice of films and videos, generally presupposing that the gay men will want to see films of gay men, the lesbians films of lesbians. A reduced version of the politics of representation is here enforced. Simply put, you are, want to become, or desire to be with whomever is on the screen before you. This style of programming certainly has a particular efficiency to it and falls in accord with the expectations of the broadened audience beyond the organic approaches of the early years of the festivals.

6. Foucault's final principle posits "a function [for the heterotopia] in relation to all the space that remains." He states that

[e]ither their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory [...]. Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled (27).

The first uses illusion to prove the real illusory, for example, the brothel, while the second role is to create a perfect real space, for example, Puritan or Jesuit colonies. Foucault posits these as two extreme types of heterotopia. The tacit promise of the politics of representation is partly of the first type, namely an attempt to prove what dominates in popular culture as an inaccurate representation of lesbian and gay lives, and to this end new community institutions, such as the film festival, are created to enable the production of more accurate representations. On the other hand, the festivals themselves in a sense become in principle those idealized spaces of the second type, namely a safe space of and for community members sequestered from the outside world.

Foucault's concept of heterotopia provides for a rich theoretical articulation of the unique space of the lesbian and gay film festival in all its contestations, vicissitudes and transformations over the decades. The unique place of community as a consequence and as a rhetorical moment within the queer film festival as a lived site will remain open for analysis and symptomatic of larger discourses at play in and about any particular festival. Recalling the figure of the

heterotopic mirror, the festival in part constitutes and in part distorts its public in its complicated chain of fleeting resemblances and disidentifications; its carnivalesque aspect promises unruly moments, however hedged; and its hybrid sexuality between queer and substantive identities will remain a volatile mixture.

2.2 Comments on the Carnavalesque

“The vilest form of obscenity these days is in our nation’s leadership.” (Riggs 1992)¹⁴⁶

Obscenity and indecency are not simply words mobilized in the debates over public funding of the arts, as Marlon Riggs responds above, but also legal categories that have been used particularly against homosexuals since the early twentieth century (D’Emilio 1992; 1983). In his famous opinion piece in the *New York Times*, Riggs provides a sharp analysis of the attacks against him personally, as a gay African-American living with AIDS who dared to express himself through films and comment on his situation, but also for securing some public funding from the NEA through the standard granting process open to all. Effectively, he turns their charges of “obscene” filmmaking back on to the political leaders of the time, as they pandered to the religious right. Similar arguments have been made previously and since, even if rarely to the same level of vehemence that the right-wing Buchanan and Helms, among others, had set.

¹⁴⁶ Writes Marlon Riggs, a gay African American filmmaker, in his *New York Times* article in response to Pat Buchanan’s and Jesse Helms’ vicious attacks on him, his documentary film *Tongues Untied* (USA 1989) and its public funding agency (NEA).

According to Mikhail Bakhtin's writings on the carnivalesque,¹⁴⁷ the cultural space of the carnival offers the possibility of social unruliness and limited rebellion, but always within the constraints set by the larger society or municipality that grants the permits and perhaps also provides the financial support. In their 1986 book *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* British literary theorists Stallybrass and White perform a critique of and reconceptualize Mikhail Bakhtin's 1940 doctoral dissertation *Rabelais and His World*. Written over ten years after his book on Dostoyevsky, which itself introduces his key concept of dialogism or polyphony, the Russian literary theorist's analysis of Rabelais centers on developing the concepts of the carnival, the carnivalesque and grotesque realism.

Stallybrass and White, in particular, challenge Bakhtin's apparent optimism for the carnival as a socially progressive vehicle for critique and social change. These writers seek to retrieve the ambivalence inherent in the (permitted) carnival, that is, where the so-called official culture concedes and grants permission to the festive gathering under its sphere of influence, where such gatherings effectively amount to an ephemeral contained, even sequestered, licensed event. As Terry Eagleton wittily quotes Shakespeare's Olivia, "there is no slander in an allowed fool" (in Stallybrass 13). In other words, how critical or

¹⁴⁷ Greg Nielsen has extended the work of Bakhtin well beyond literary studies and into the social sciences, see his *The Norms of Answerability: Social Theory Between Bakhtin and Habermas* (2002).

socially transformative could such licensed festivities be in view of the given hierarchy of societal relations?

Stallybrass lay out a sort of “general economy of transgression” through the symbolic categories of grotesque realism, while tracing out the binary of disgust-desire towards the grotesque from the Renaissance on. They envision transgression as located in a special nexus of overlapping hierarchies of the body, group identity, geographical space, and social institutions, especially in the light of the high-low cultural norms. Similarly, their project seems a sophisticated reworking of Gramscian hegemony. It is by generalizing their critical interpretation of Bakhtin that they introduce the broader category of transgression, which in turn includes the politically ambivalent sociocultural practice of the carnival, among many other practices (Stallybrass 1987, 5 ff.).

The concessionary aspect of the act of permission on the part of the state and the location of the carnivalesque in a context of transgression applies well to the particular case of the lesbian and gay film festival. Generally, film festivals, and specifically here lesbian and gay film festivals, perform to a degree the carnivalesque. In North America, the queer film festival has had an unruly past, faced with protests from religious and political groups, public funding rescinded or furnished according to the municipal, and the regional or federal political climate. Particularly in Canada, Customs arbitrarily but persistently invokes censorship laws (obscenity, indecency) against films and videos with themes of

minority sexualities.¹⁴⁸ For example, there is the fairly recent controversy over the biannual Queer City Film Festival (1996-) in Regina,¹⁴⁹ Saskatchewan, in 2000 when Christian fundamentalists protested against the festival's receipt of public funding. An elected official attended the festival and its workshops as an observer. The events were followed with a panel at the festival dedicated to freedom of expression, sexuality and morality (Pacholik 2001). Richard Truscott, director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation,¹⁵⁰ criticized a grant to Queer City Cinema 2000, the third biennial festival of lesbian and gay film and video. The festival had received \$4,500 from the City of Regina upon the recommendation of the Regina Arts Commission. The festival was later criticized by elected politicians Sask Party MLAs June Draude and Arlene Jule, who objected to public money being used to sponsor "pornography." The festival had received sponsorship from the public funding agency Saskatchewan Arts Board and communications company Sask Tel. The festival itself included a film screening and panel discussion on the meanings of pornography to members of the lesbian and gay communities. Moreover, Bill Whatcott's Christian Truth Activists picketed

¹⁴⁸ The responses to such festivals elsewhere in the world have involved police or military action, perhaps the worst extreme is the case of the forced closing of the first Seoul Queer Film and Video Festival in 1997 on the Yonsei University campus just hours before its opening (Kim 2005).

¹⁴⁹ Regina is a town that serves as a regional center in the Canadian Prairies.

¹⁵⁰ A neoliberal association that lobbies for reduced taxation and in principle against the use of taxes for cultural projects – culture is a matter left for the free market.

the opening night at the Regina Public Library.¹⁵¹ Here we notice the complicated combination of neoliberal economics, on the part of the CTF, and rightwing Christian fundamentalist protesting against homosexuality and more specifically homosexual pornography, even though ‘pornography’ was the theme of the panel discussion at the festival.¹⁵² This type of protest is remarkably rare in larger cities in Canada and the United States where anonymity and variety in daily life prevail. Perhaps these actions stem from a wish to shame those involved, which might be more successful in towns and smaller cities? In this case, the criticism and protest group, including elected officials, refuse to acknowledge the funding procedures set up by the state. They refuse the minor carnivalesque moment granted to the festival in as much as it was sponsored by the state and demand that its funding be rescinded on grounds of obscenity.¹⁵³ This is but a very small caricature of harsh challenges to the NEA throughout the 1990s, but in Canada the protests did not amount to anything important.

¹⁵¹ Anonymous source at <<http://library2.usask.ca/srsd/chronology/?year=2000>> (Celebrating 2000).

¹⁵² Gay filmmaker Roy Mitchell’s witty documentary *Christian Porn* (2000) was shot improvised on site at the festival, while he was visiting as an invited guest.

¹⁵³ Rushton (2002) argues that all art that is publicly funded must contribute to “the public interest” in order to avoid “controversy,” but does not elaborate on what that would entail for art and “the public.” Why should every artwork be subsumed under some fictive grand “public”? What is wrong with “controversy”? He seems to be suggesting that every citizen must gain something from every artwork that is publicly funded. A more pluralist approach exists in Canadian arts funding, which allows citizens to form opinions of art freely, both positive and negative.

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the cultural space of the carnival offers the possibility of social unruliness and limited rebellion, but always within the constraints set by the larger society that grants the permits and perhaps even provides the financial support (Bakhtin 1984, compare with Stallybrass 1986). The concessionary aspect of the act of permission on the part of the state is well noted. The full carnivals that Bakhtin describes throughout his *Rabelais* may compare in radical excess to the contemporary culture of the carnival in Brazil or New Orleans' Mardi Gras (Shrove Tuesday) carnival and, to a degree and much more secular in their history, the Gay Pride parades and marches along with the several days and nights of parties around them.¹⁵⁴ The modern film festival, of whatever sort, surely pales in comparison. It may share some of the ritualistic attributes and social aspects but remains much more sedate.¹⁵⁵

Nonetheless, the queer film festival specifically performs a degree of the *carnavalesque*. In Canada and the United States, the lesbian and gay film festival has had an unruly past, faced with protests from religious and political groups, public funding has been rescinded or furnished according to the municipal, regional or federal political climate. While the National Endowment for the Arts has been under constant notorious right-wing scrutiny over its purpose and

¹⁵⁴ Curiously, the parades are periodically accused of public nudity in Canada, which forces the organizers to tone down the festivities, and further self-police.

¹⁵⁵ Perhaps erotic film festivals, both historical and contemporary, might show stronger degrees of the *carnavalesque*, with their films centered on the explicit representation of bodily orifices and fluids and sexual acts, as well as the live sex shows at the festivals.

funding practices, the Canadian censorship and obscenity laws are routinely interpreted and persistently enforced by agents of Canada Customs against lesbian and gay films and videos crossing the international border (for example, Cossman 1995; 1997; Vance 1989; 1990). Will the queer film festival always carry with it the promise of a site for the unruly carnivalesque anywhere in the world? Its accented theme on (minority) sexuality (-ies) and consequent transgression of the hallowed binary of private-public seems to ensure it.¹⁵⁶

Laws and legislation regarding sexual conduct and their culture of enforcement may together act as an index of tolerance and acceptance. An important legal moment in Canada was December, 1967, also the celebratory centennial year of confederation, when the Liberal government at the time introduced a major revision to the Criminal Code that decriminalized consensual sexual conduct between adults in private. The consequences of this, in particular for the lesbian and gay movement, were welcomed and significant (Kinsman 1987). The longstanding problem between Canada Customs and the Little Sisters Bookstore in Vancouver is a cogent example that demonstrates the issue of the potentially unsettling relationship between laws, their interpretation and enforcement (Busby 2004; Cossman 1997).¹⁵⁷ Art galleries and film festivals are regularly tormented

¹⁵⁶ This was indeed the case in the earlier discussion of the uneven globalization of these film festivals.

¹⁵⁷ As a programmer with Toronto's Pleasure Dome, I and others organized a screening of the British physical dance troupe DV8's video *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men* (1989) at the Ontario Gallery of Art's Jackman Hall. The screening copy was held indefinitely at Customs; and we had no choice but to

by the threat and actions of censorship in Canada centered around the concept of obscenity or indecency (see Johnson 1997; Cossman 1995). Alternatively, the robust culture of freedom of expression in the United States generally has much less invested in government-regulated censorship, it is in principle up to the individual citizen to make an opinion.

The Stonewall riots in New York City 1969, Compton's Cafeteria riot in 1966 San Francisco, the 1981 bathhouse raid in Toronto, and the 1994 raid of KOX bar's Katakombes in Montreal represent the limit point for each respective gay community in the face of continuing police enforcement actions that exceeded a reasonable interpretation of the law and became harassment. Indeed, different cities and towns experienced their very own 'Stonewall' at different times. They involved an unjust intrusion of the police into a gay or lesbian space. The character of the spaces that were violated by the police were often frequented by minorities within minorities at the fringe of the lesbian and gay scenes. The bars or steam baths raided were typically those at the fringes of the community, and not integrated with the larger gay mainstream. Important here is the energy unleashed by the protests and how it enabled the imagining of community and the building of institutions. Even if the actions that take place in such spaces have not become more accepted as everyday or banal in the minds of the majority, but somehow, through some process of negotiation, the interpretation of

project the lesser quality press copy at hand. A common tactic of film and video programmers in Canada to avoid losing foreign films to Customs is to ask the distributor to rename the film on its case. That usually enables them to pass through.

the law and its style of enforcement have altered in a special dialectic with the management of the spaces themselves since those, and similar, brutal raids.¹⁵⁸ Have the bars and baths somewhat tamed themselves under the pressure of homonormativity, lessening their earlier transgressive nature? Or, has the state simply conceded and now permits the sexual transgressions as such even more? Their commemoration through synchronized Pride parades around the world speaks to this ambivalent concession, recognition and circumscription. The question remains regarding the extent to which the carnivalesque should be desirable as a guiding conceptual framework. This leads us to the concept of gay space itself below.

2.3 Gay and Queer Spaces, Festival Spaces in the City

The notion of lesbian or gay space carries with it a number of substantive presuppositions regarding identity and space. The notion of sexualized spaces, particularly gay or lesbian spaces, has been used by various cultural geographers, sociologists and anthropologists, such as Jon Binnie, Chantal Nadeau and Paul Hindle. According to Paul Hindle, in his “Gay Communities and Gay Space in the City” (1994, 11f.), gay space is treated as part of a real spatial territory, a sexualized space, where specific sexual identities circulate, such as in a gay village or community, in which case I question how gay or lesbian the space of the festival can be, as constellation of private and public spaces of

¹⁵⁸ To be sure, the events commemorated were the few times that gay men and lesbians dared to rebel and protest. The vast majority of raids, certainly before and many following Stonewall, were not resisted in such an organized manner.

exhibition and other festive events.¹⁵⁹ The festival space is ephemeral, fleeting, nomadic, unlike the experience of any local gay village. What sort of space is it? The term 'gay' or 'lesbian' comes already burdened with the heavy cultural baggage of identity, life styles, all increasingly commodity oriented, and so on. 'Gay space' presupposes a certain stasis, even a certain commitment to fixed territories, such as a particular gay village or gay bar.

It is precisely here that queer theory, and particularly Sedgwick's and Butler's performativity, would add flexibility to such conceptual frame; for people and their actions constitute the spaces in a complicated relation to the available buildings, architecture, commerce, laws, advertising, etc. I propose here a queering of space over gay space in this case, while acknowledging their likely perhaps inevitable overlap but, moreover, allowing for broader sexual formations and practices. While queer space relaxes the requirement of substantive identity, according to Butler (1999), it does not disallow it. It can in fact accommodate it.

Queer theory offers new ways of thinking about the space of sexuality. In naming queer theory in the early 1990s, its practitioners appropriated 'queer' against its longstanding pejorative grain, which lent it an emphatic edge. Many writers have commented on the etymology of the term 'queer,' especially in relation to its appropriation as an academic term, for example (Eng 2005; Jagose 1996; Sullivan 2003). Thanks to queer theory and its associated practices, 'queer' today has technical senses as an adjective, a verb and even a noun. Queer

¹⁵⁹ I address some of these issues in my article on gay/queer space in the Montreal village (Zielinski 2003).

theory has in turn produced 'queer readings,' where a reading is often a critical interpretation of some text, cultural artifact or performance in which presupposed stable categories of gender and sexuality are opened up and contested. 'To queer something' is to give it a new (queer) interpretation or critique. The substantive noun 'queer' is the most curious use of the term. Some people prefer to call themselves queers, rather than a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual or intersexed (LGBT) person, while others object to the term, finding it demeaning and a sign of self loathing. To be a queer, as in a queer person, may also fit into the framework of queer theory. In as much as the person identifies with queer subjectivity, as unstable and fleeting, she respects similarly the flow of sexualities and multiple allegiances and identities produced in life, in contrast to the stability that identities such as 'straight,' 'gay' or 'lesbian' purport to have. Lastly, 'queer' is sometimes used as an umbrella term that covers the whole span or some combination of LGBT; but this usage is largely for convenience and rarely engages any specific tenets of queer theory. Sometimes it is tacked on at the "end" as in LGBT. Instead of a 'LGBT film festival,' for example, some might say 'queer film festival' even though the festival, its structure and programming, might not show any signs of the influence of queer theory proper. In that case, it is used as a verbal umbrella term for convenience.

The main tenets of queer theory arose out of a number of distinct theoretical sources within the particular sociopolitical context of the late-1980s USA. In brief, queer theory was a response to the challenges posed to lesbian and gay liberation movements by AIDS, the culture wars and identity politics. Third-wave

feminism takes a radical anti-essentialist position to sexual and gender identity. Gender becomes, for third-wave theorists (for example, Butler 1990), a regulatory fiction that needs to be de-naturalized and uncovered as such. Borrowing from post-structuralist theories, queer theory recasts gender as fundamentally performative within language and undetermined by biological sex. This new concept of gender broke with the strong biological essentialism of second-wave liberal feminism, that is, sex defined in terms of the biological body, and appeared during the heated debates internal and external to feminism over pornography, censorship, sadomasochism, bondage, bisexuality, race, class, lesbianism, prostitution, among others (Sullivan 2003). Early researchers in the history and social formation of sexuality, often men from the gay liberation movement, collaborated with lesbian and bisexual women working within feminist thought. Thus, 'queer theory' became an attempt to resituate and perhaps resolve the several conceptual and practical impasses in feminist thought on sex/gender and identity, and correlated problems in lesbian and gay studies, which until then sexual attraction and identity were understood within the frame of a biological definition of sex. To be sure, academic queer theory has had its effects on community organizations and associated cultural institutions very broadly.¹⁶⁰

Those theories and activists in favor of collective identities, on the one hand, acknowledge and forefront the political efficacy of forming exclusive boundaries

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, various publications influenced by queer theory, such as (Berlant 1997; 1994), (Muñoz 1999), and (Warner 2000; 2002).

delimiting groups to those represented, while certain queer theorists, on the other hand, stand strictly against what they see the naïve acceptance of the heterosexual/homosexual binary implicit in the adoption of essentialist sexual identities, however oppositional, and seek instead strategies that avoid complicity with social hierarchy, normalization and its consequent exclusions. However, queer theory has been challenged for too strongly emphasizing the cultural and textual, while dangerously ignoring the subject as agent and the importance of group action.¹⁶¹ The ethnic model of lesbians and gay men, in which 'gays' and 'lesbians' are treated as 'natural' groups that deserve political representation, efficiently mirrors the practice of interest politics and the civil rights movements in the United States.¹⁶² Merit has been recognized in both positions, and hybrid theories and practices have been developed, notably following Gayatri Spivak's well-known notion of 'operational essentialism' that allows for provisional alliances and collective action while taking identity as a fiction (in Butler 1990).

With its origin in the humanities, queer theory has been used mainly as a critical approach to the interpretation of cultural texts and performances. Its application has evolved since its coinage well beyond literary and film interpretation to a range of disciplines including religious studies, law and history (see Jagose 1999; Sullivan 2003). Basic tenets of queer theory resonate in other cultural formations,

¹⁶¹ A variety of sociologists and historians have tried to bridge the divide between gay and lesbian studies and queer studies, such as (Duggan 1992; Gamson 1996; Seidman 1993).

¹⁶² The ethnic model is chiefly used in lesbian and gay studies, strictly not in queer studies.

which have, arguably, been in part informed by queer theory and its associated academic debates and activist context.

During the 1990s in North America marketing trends developed the notion of the financially lucrative gay niche (for example, Sender 2005; Engel 2001). In a sense the market place explicitly recognized the existence, economic potential, and perhaps legitimacy of gays and lesbians. The emphasis there was typically on gay males, as a target market, whose average income was calculated as significantly higher than that of lesbians. The early reports spuriously claimed that gay couples had on average higher incomes than their heterosexual counterparts, with accompanying higher expendable incomes. This marketing logic made its way into tourism discourse, which in turn informed the decisions of many city councils across North America on how to develop and financially exploit the allegedly lucrative local gay niche and integrate it into the overall image of the respective city as a desirable welcoming destination for moneyed homosexuals. The local gay villages were in turn adorned with (explicit) rainbow flags, banners and other rainbow motifs, pride parades were expanded and molted from community-oriented to product-placement, large circuit parties were promoted,¹⁶³ queer film festivals attained greater visibility and grants, among other organizations (Grundy 2003). Cities were convinced that the pink dollar was worth courting, and visibility was their guiding principle.

¹⁶³ See, for example, Mireille Silcott's chapter on the gay circuit parties in which she traces the development of the dance music, the culture around the parties and international "circuit" (Silcott 1999, 149-82).

These trends in cultural and tourism policy are part of the overall enabling *technè* that constitute the festival, and help to explain some of its changes. In her article “Divider and Doorways” (1998), Los Angeles-based artist Kaucyila Brooke intercuts autobiographical fragments into her insightful spatial analysis of crucial moments in the history of OUTFEST: The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Film Festival,¹⁶⁴ a festival that went through several telling name changes from its humble origins at the UCLA film archives in 1982. Brooke is particularly attentive to the significance of the choice of site, namely where in the city and in what buildings the festival is held, and how that can influence who attends the festival. Brooke writes as though she has witnessed the development of the Los Angeles festival first hand, from its origin as a small university campus event to its large Smirnoff-sponsored incarnation at the Directors’ Guild of America (DGA). Perhaps as an artist, she is sensitive to the specific programming changes at the festival, as it sought and found a broadened audience, unfamiliar to Brooke herself. The festival’s new logo-like name, shift in programming to feature films was part of the general “interest in increased professionalization” that pervaded the festival from within. The new festival directors “determined that New York and San Francisco audiences are more hungry for experimental work and that LA audiences expect higher production value” (1998, 51). Brooke traces the early exhibition spaces of the festival at UCLA, alternative art spaces and small

¹⁶⁴ Brooke notes how the current name of the festival drops “the *number*, the words *annual*, *video* and *international* from the title also signaled a change in focus away from experimental and international media and towards narrative films” (1998, 50).

theaters spread across Hollywood and West Hollywood. From 1988 on it was centered in Hollywood's DGA corporate-style building, as she writes,

The DGA is located in a relatively wealthy section of the city where the absence of street life forces reliance on the automobile. The hermetically sealed, air-conditioned interior of the physical building embodies the contemporary search for bourgeois security in Los Angeles. Here public street life becomes replaced with the privately owned space of the supermall and multiplex theater (Brooke 1998, 53).

For Brooke, this change in location of the festival has consequences for its audiences and social meaning. She writes, “[t]he festival does keep changing its relation to the screen and the street and therefore the participants’ experiences of its relation to Los Angeles (1998, 53). The move away from the small venues of the art scene and university to the corporate headquarters in Hollywood, according to Brooke, likely reduced access to the festival for people of color, given the neighborhood.¹⁶⁵ The shift to corporate funding, for example, Smirnoff vodka and Coors beer, fill Brooke’s glances through the lobby of the festival, one of the few remaining socially-designated areas. Moreover, she laments how the festival’s professionalization and corporatization have alienated her familiar cohort,

I don’t see the experimental video artist in her funky ‘70s hip bohemian clothes, I don’t see any members or former members of Paper Tiger TV, I

¹⁶⁵ She gives the statistics for the festival: majority aged between 26 and 45, 59% men, 41% women, and 75% white (1998, 54).

don't see the dyke who produced video with teenage mothers from South Central LA, and I don't see straight artist friends who produce and write critically about experimental media (Brooke 1998, 56).

Given the autobiographical aspect of her essay, nostalgia can not be far. Brooke's analysis and resulting portrait articulates a fundamentally altered festival space from the early days to its current manifestation but includes her altered relationship to it.

In her article "Queer Becoming Corporate, Corporate Becoming Queer: An Ethology" (2002), Marusya Bociurkiw makes a related analysis of the relocation of Toronto's Inside/Out Festival to the full-blown Paramount¹⁶⁶ Megaplex, situated in the heart of the Entertainment District, with parallel queues of ticket-buyers: one for the re-release of the first *Star Wars*, the other for the festival. The politics of space in fact matter to community. Bociurkiw captures some of the strangeness of the festival site in 1999 as she describes,

An enormous slice of space, unmoored subjectivities, a profusion of languages. It's the gala opening night of "Inside Out," Toronto's lesbian and gay film festival. The festival has the dubious honour of inaugurating Paramount's new 16-cinema big-box movie house - along with the re-release of *Star Wars [Episode One The Phantom Menace]*. It is for this reason that drag queens in sequined dresses and butches in leather

¹⁶⁶ Ironically enough, the name of the cinema has since changed to 'Scotiabank Theatre,' named not too subtly after its most recent owner, namely a Canadian bank.

minge with legions of children dressed as Darth Vader and Princess Leia. We ascend to the cinemas (all 16 of them) on the Paramount's monumentally huge escalator, just behind Mom, Pop, and the kids. From about a mile away, I spot some other queers, my ex-lover among them. They're the ones with all the hair product, the ones moving tentatively through this space. We mostly ignore one another, since the *Star Wars* sound effects, piped in on Dolby sound throughout the building make it impossible to talk. But my ex was never one to be drowned out. "It's all a big beer ad!" she shouts at me, down the concourse lined with franchise outlets for Belgian fries, popcorn, and, of course, beer. "[...] the films, the venues, the look [...] everything!" Mom and Pop appear startled, confused. In this boundaryless space, certain differences are unimaginable (Bociurkiw 2002).

Bociurkiw is herself an artist, like Brooke above, and notices the curious transformation of the festival through its newly chosen site. She makes explicit the cultural geography of the site, when she describes, "Queen Street West, with its history of independent art and community organizing, is barely a block away. We are folded back into relations of self and other, abjection and incorporation" (2002). Near the end of her essay Bociurkiw writes,

[c]orporate inroads into queer and independent culture didn't occur overnight like an alien invasion, but rather, like a slow shift in the ecology, a gradual reconfiguration of time, space and bodies [...] The early moments of communities of resistance were always about claiming space,

about creating homeplace – be it the front of a bus, the backroom of a gay bar in Greenwich Village, or the front steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery. No reason why queer-becoming-corporate-becoming-queer won't continue to move into new affective spaces and outrageous definitions of home (2002).

According to Bociurkiw, spaces do matter. Following Homi Bhabha, she notes his optimism of corporate recognition as partly libratory, but holds back to point out the constraints on that sense of liberation. The newfound freedom arising from, say, the new festival site, comes with limits and costs. Her interpretation of the concrete example of the Inside/Out's temporary move to the Paramount cinemas is nuanced and considers a range of important concerns, without fully condemning anything or anyone.

On the 1997 edition of Inside/Out, two years before the *Star Wars* encounter above, and its site critic Andrew Paterson¹⁶⁷ writes,

The collapse of the Metropolitan Theatre, which had been the poorly defined ghost of The Euclid Theatre – initially founded to showcase Toronto's independent media-arts producers and programming curated by that “community” but which had clearly failed to “progress” beyond that community or audience – provided an opportunity for the Inside/Out Festival to boldly increase its public profile. With increased and essential

¹⁶⁷ Paterson is also well known for his performance and video art, as well as his work as a curator, who has been involved in the art scene since well before the formation of Inside/Out.

corporate funding (Yes, Mary, Queers do fly Air Canada) the 1997 festival took place at two of the four Cumberland Cinemas on toney Bloor Street Central, where many viewers and producers alike are casually reminded of their own relative lack of disposable incomes. [...] Inside/Out Festival director Ellen Flanders wittily described the move as “bringing the back streets to Bay Street”¹⁶⁸ – the festival itself was hardly going mainstream but it was moving armies of perverts and their diversity of images into the mainstream – creating accessibility by means of presence (Paterson 1998, 12).

While the Cumberland Cinemas is a typical art house multiplex, it is also rented by the annual Toronto International Film Festival to screen films with an anticipated smaller audience. Moreover, the multiplex is located in a wealthy mixed commercial and residential part of the city known as Yorkville. Curiously, neither Bociurkiw’s Paramount nor Paterson’s Cumberland cinemas is located in or near the gay village or the artists’ run galleries and centers of the city, but both are centrally located and easily accessible by public transit. This change of sites in the late 1990s produced a new broadened audience, one unknown to the earlier festivals held in the artists’ run venues.

It is remarkable how contingent the exhibition spaces are for each festival in each city. For example, the San Francisco International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival quickly found its “natural” home in the resplendent movie palace Castro Theater in the heart of the predominantly gay district, with the Roxie its smaller scale

¹⁶⁸ ‘Bay Street’ refers to the financial district in Toronto.

venue nearby in the Mission. New York's MIX also quickly found its site in the Lower East Side's Anthology Film Archives, founded by Jonas Mekas in 1969 as a place of refuge for experimental cinema. MIX's uncompromising dedication to experimental work is matched perfectly by the similar mandate of the AFA. NewFest has been using the megaplex AMC Loews on 34th Street for several years, just north of Chelsea with its high population of gay men. Montreal's Image&Nation used to choose smaller public sites adjoining the Village gai, but since the late 1990s rents various multiplexes in the downtown area, including the Cinéma Parisien. As noted above, in the Los Angeles and Toronto cases (Brooke 1998; Bociurkiw 2002; Paterson 1997), even though such moves from the smaller artists' spaces to the multiplexes were prompted by economic challenges, on the one hand, and audience demographic changes, on the other hand, the changes in site had real effects on their respective festival spaces.

3.0 Reapproaching the Case of the "Lesbian Riot"

The sites of lesbian and gay film festivals, their festival spaces, have been important in the struggle for change within the organizations themselves, from within the festival-going counterpublics themselves. The so-called lesbian riot,¹⁶⁹ for example, at the screening of Miki Onodera's *Ten Cents a Dance: Parallax* (Canada, 1985)¹⁷⁰ in San Francisco's gay and lesbian film festival in 1986 has

¹⁶⁹ This example is very rich and will also be addressed in the subsequent two chapters.

¹⁷⁰ For a splendid analysis of the film, see Judith Mayne's *The Woman at the Keyhole* (1990, 225-228)

been discussed independently by Ruby Rich (1999) and Marc Siegel (1997).¹⁷¹ The film begins with a lesbian dinner scene over sushi, then to gay sex in a restroom stall, and finally to heterosexual phone sex. Members of the audience caused a disturbance, beginning in the “gay sex” scene, and stormed out as it became clear that the final one was heading straight (and not lesbian). The main result of the protest was a greater attention to lesbian programming within the festival.

One trend in lesbian and gay film festival programming is to sequester the spectators according to gender, presupposing that generally the gay men will want to see gay male films, the lesbians lesbian films. A reduced version of the politics of representation is here enacted. In as sense, you are, want to become, or desire to be with whomever is on the screen before you.

Rich’s article is a revealing series of analyses of lesbian and gay reception at queer film festivals from the early 1980s on, which shows how programming and audience expectations influence one another. Rich explores the trends of positive image representation, 80s lesbian suspicions of bisexuality, and the growing taste preference for glossy feature films over independent productions with lower production values, among other aspects. While Siegel situates the riot within the history of programming at Frameline’s festival, and its then skewed imbalance of gender content, Rich interpreted the event as stemming from non-connoisseurs who had missed the irony, and writes,

¹⁷¹ The “riot” is also discussed by a few of the staff members who witnessed the events in Marc Huestis’ documentary (2001).

The beginning of the movie was okay, but the absence of further lesbianism angered the audience, which as usual came to the festival expecting 100 percent lesbian content. The whimsy of the lesbian filmmaker's satire was lost on them, as was her avant-garde split-screen strategy (Rich 1999, 80).

The fleeting queer space turns lesbian. This example is but one of many that test and realign the queer film festival's sense of community from within its lived site.

While there is much evidence that the events that have been named the 'lesbian riot' did in fact take place, there has been little discussion of the choice of words in the naming of those events. The action of rioting is no small matter. I suggest that the naming is strongly gendered. Apparently, there is nothing as strange about men protesting a film, but when women protest they effectively transgress their presupposed polite social position. There have been numerous spontaneous protests by gay men at various film festivals incited by the programming, the choice or sequence of films, the film itself, but none of these, curiously, has ever been named a riot, not even those highly organized protests against *Cruising* in the early 1980s. However, as Rich points out, "[...] by the late nineties, gay male audiences had caught up to seventies lesbian-feminism and wanted positive images from their movies" (1999, 81). She describes the difficult reception of several films at various lesbian and gay film festivals, for example *Postcards from America* (McLean 1994), *Frisk* (Vervow 1995), *The Delta* (Sachs 1997), all risk-taking films largely influenced by the new queer cinema. "Hustling and drugs and alienation were not the image of gayness they [the festival

audience] wanted projected to America” (Rich 1999, 81). Nevertheless, none of the reactions to these difficult films was declared a riot.

Marc Siegel provides an analysis of the space of reception at the 1986 festival in San Francisco, including its two main cinemas, the large Castro Cinema (1500 seats) and the smaller Roxie Theater (275 seats), located in the working class Latino district within walking distance from the Castro. The Roxie is in fact situated closer to important women’s institutions in the city, namely the Women’s Building, Old Wives’ Tales Bookstore and the Osono Baths (Siegel 1997, 132). The area of the city was not foreign or unfamiliar to lesbians attending the festival. Siegel frames the “riot” as an event that erupted over several years of unfulfilled expectations on the part of lesbian spectators and their perception and relationship to the Frameline’s festival, which had only officially added the name ‘lesbian’ in 1982. He recounts,

At the Roxie that evening, the film progressed no further than the second section, the one depicting male-male sex, when some women in the audience became incensed. They stormed out of the theater, yelling and disrupting the screening for the other audience members. Frameline, whose staff [lesbians who were coordinating the screening] was verbally harassed during the riot, responded with a community forum a few months later on lesbian representation within the festival (Siegel 1997, 132).

The film simply served as a trigger for long simmering frustrations with the perceived and real privilege of gay films over lesbian. Siegel maintains,

The reaction to *Ten Cents a Dance* [...] cannot be fully understood outside of its festival context, namely that it was screened on a lesbian shorts evening at the Roxie by a festival programming committee already perceived as indifferent to lesbian concerns (1997, 133).

Minority representation at the festival then was confined to isolated and isolating programs at the smaller Roxie, for example, on issues of transgender, bisexuality, Jews, Latin Americans and Native Americans, each group sponsored by a related community association. Programming based on a principle of segregation according to the identity represented in the work tends to reduce the experience of a festival otherwise programmed¹⁷² (Siegel 1997, 133). Similar to Rich's closing wish for festivals that encourage a "spirit of adventure" on the part of the members of the audience (and films made) through their programming¹⁷³ (1999, 84), Siegel posits,

At a queer film festival, one finds therefore not only films but a festival of encounters, whether nostalgic, erotic, or informative which combine to create a particular film viewing experience. The identity that one affirms upon entering the festival can thus become redefined to include not

¹⁷² For example, once the films and videos have been segregated into their identity-based programs, the individual programs will tend to be "purified" of other identities, of certain alterities. The typical program of shorts, say, for "the boys" will lack any trans work.

¹⁷³ The program guide for the 1986 festival indicates that the film screened in a mixed gender program at the Castro (without incident).

merely a different relation to race, gender, or sexuality, but to cinema as well (1997, 135).

Siegel effectively queers the festival and seems as open and eager as Rich to experience with that “spirit of adventure” that entices so many to attend and constitute the festival space. This example is but one of many that test and realign the lesbian and gay film festival’s sense of community from within its lived site. Importantly, such actions compelled the heterotopic festival space of the lesbian and gay film festival to change its rules of programming, its ethics of film exhibition.

Concluding Remarks

The legal system creates special spaces of its own, namely a formal space of the law, and the quite different contingent spaces of its interpretation and enforcement. This is similar to cultural policy, and more specifically cultural funding policy, public or private. Foucault extends his work on social *technè* and architecture to the concept of heterotopia. These real places, Foucault contrasts with the purely imagined utopia of nowhere. Heterotopias, he writes,

have the curious property of being in relations with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect (1986).

Generally, film festival fall under the category of temporal heterotopia. Foucault’s analogy to the mirror, which presents a utopic placeless place in the mirror but also exists as a physical device or medium confusing presence and absence,

and thereby allowing for the experience of heterotopia. The example of the mirror resonates well with the experience of the community-oriented lesbian and gay film festival, at which viewers experience quite a similar play of presence and absence at the event, in the screenings, waiting in line, etc., through the fleeting mechanisms of resemblances, empathy, identification, disidentification, and so on. The films and community produce complicated experiential chains of familiarity and difference, according to such categories as habitus, gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual identification. In short, the festival itself takes place, producing a site, but not ever fully determined by its space. Once the festival ends, the show is over, and the particular heterotopia becomes restricted to memory, but also may in part mutate into quite another heterotopia in kind in the same physical space of the cinema with a quite different transformative potential.

Current interpretations of Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque place emphasis on transgression, namely the transgression of social norms, within a tightly circumscribed space for a finite duration. What is permitted was already permitted in advance. Laws, permits, agreements, and less directly, the policy of funding agencies, all perform this. It is in this way that these film festivals might be understood as participating in the carnivalesque, however limited and minor in degree, and this degree is firmly relative to local norms and mores. The carnivalesque helps us to understand the limits on public funding, as we saw with

the protests against the festival in Regina.¹⁷⁴ The event of the festival, its very space draws attention to its continuing negotiation with various levels of public and private funding agencies, city by-laws, exhibition spaces and their locations in the city, styles and principles of programming, concrete themes, and so on.

While the carnivalesque presupposes an endorsed transgression in its space, the concepts of gay and queer space articulate other important aspects of the experience of the lesbian and gay film festival. The unique place of community as a consequence and as a rhetorical moment within the queer film festival as an institution and lived site will remain rich for analysis and symptomatic of larger discourses at play in and about any particular festival. As a temporal heterotopia it in part constitutes and in part distorts its public in its complicated chain of fleeting resemblances; its carnivalesque aspect promises unruly moments, however hedged; and its hybrid sexuality between queer and substantive identities will remain a volatile mixture. In the following chapter, I work through the idea of the festival space as publicity, namely as a result of the “prose” (and images) generated in and around the lesbian and gay film festival, particularly its rhetoric of community.

¹⁷⁴ LGBT film festivals elsewhere in the world have exposed their transgressive elements, for example, most recently in Sarajevo and St Petersburg in the autumn of 2008.

V. Community Rules: On LGBT Film Festivals & Their Counter/Publics

Roger Hallas posits,

Gay film festivals have their roots in different spaces of exhibition where queer work has historically been shown – art cinema, underground cinema, porn theaters and consciousness-raising political contexts (gay liberation/lesbian feminism). Each type of exhibition posits a different kind of spectatorship (in White 1999, 76).

Within the lesbian and gay film festival circuit or field of cultural production, each festival has its own signature that intimates its own historically contingent formation and balance of influential “root” sources, as Hallas outlines so accurately. The emergence of these festivals has favored particular types of exhibition over others. Not only is it the film and video programming but also the prose generated in and around the festival that contributes to the formation of particular audiences. This chapter provides a textual analysis of the publicity or discourse of the festivals and shows how it produces the signature of the festival and works to constitute an imagined counter/public. In particular, of interest here is how the festival presents itself through its texts, how the media represents it, and how cultural policy defines some of its limits and categories.

The concept of community has recently been given some critical attention on how it is mobilized by various cultural and social groups. I will in part address the emergence of the festivals out of lesbian and gay film and video scenes that then worked to produce counterpublics or audiences for the specific festivals. The use of the concept of counterpublic over community, I argue, speaks more cogently

to the dynamic of film festivals organized around such categories of sexuality. 'Community' is far too vague, since it exceeds the film-going and festival-going members of the constituency. For the sake of clarity, I am concerned primarily with the use of the word, and more specifically how the concept is mobilized and claimed by diverse players.

1.0 Counter/Publics

In this chapter I consider the relation of publicity and community, or specifically the language of community in the context of the festivals. Building on discourse theory, Michael Warner provides a cogent theory of (reading) publics and counterpublics and the relation between them (2002), which extends discourse and queer theory. I would like to address the seven points that Warner regarding the nature of publics and counterpublics, which will play a central role in this chapter in relation to the festivals and their counter/publics. I then argue that the festivals and their originary counterpublics owe much to the activities of specific overlapping scenes of gay men and lesbians. The last main section addresses the specificities and commonalities of the cases in San Francisco, New York City, Montreal and Toronto.

In many introductions to the concept of the public sphere, the abstract French word '*publicité*' and the equally abstract German word '*Öffentlichkeit*,' with its etymological relations to '*offen*' ('open'), '*öffnen*' ('to open') and '*Offenheit*' ('openness'), are often discussed. '*Öffentlichkeit*' stems etymologically from the word for open, openness or openliness, rendering the best translation for the

English phrase ‘public sphere’ and more historically ‘publicity’,¹⁷⁵ ever since advertising appropriated the latter for itself.¹⁷⁶ The word ‘public’ itself has a convoluted etymology, a borrowing from Norman French and stemming ultimately from the classical Latin ‘*publicus*.’¹⁷⁷ That special phrase ‘public sphere’ tries to make up for the loss of the old meaning of publicity, but brings with it an unwanted spatial metaphor. The public sphere is not equivalent to any ‘public space,’ but in principle includes all public spaces and publicly circulating discursive media, among other things.

In the 1990s there was a revival of interest in the concept of the public sphere, largely prompted by the publication of Jürgen Habermas’ 1962 doctoral dissertation (*Habilitationsschrift*) titled *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1989) (*Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*). The first major critical response was from Marxists Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt in 1972 with their *Public Sphere And Experience: Toward*

¹⁷⁵ According to the 1989 OED the historical meaning of publicity is now obsolete in English, namely “[t]he quality of being public; the condition or fact of being open to public observation or knowledge” from the late-17th century.

¹⁷⁶ Discussed, for example, in Haas (1993) on the development of private advertising in public spaces and public announcements in early 20th century Germany.

¹⁷⁷ The 1989 OED states the meaning of *publicus* as “of or belonging to the people as a whole, common to all, universal, of or affecting everyone in the state, communal, authorized, provided, or maintained by the state, available to or enjoyed by all members of a community.”

an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere (English translation in 1993).¹⁷⁸ While debates over the concept of the public sphere had occurred in Germany a few decades earlier, they started anew in the English-speaking world, with such scholars as Nancy Fraser, Seyla Benhabib, Craig Calhoun, Thomas McCarthy, and Michael Warner, among others, from a variety of different academic disciplines.

Regarding the specific case of the lesbian and gay film festival, publicity is produced through the activities of festival organization itself, reviews and reportage in mass media, and funding and media policy. Festival commissions various forms of publicity for its main event, namely posters, catalogues and program guides, and advertising. Media such as newspapers, radio and television may carry advertising for the festival or reportage on it. Public cultural funding categories carry with them shifts in meaning that follow from pressures outside and inside the agency.

I would like to turn to the recent work of Michael Warner on the concepts of publics and counterpublics (2002). His concept of public stems from the idea of a public as mediated and produced through text (or image) and by the attention of the members of the public.¹⁷⁹ I will work through below each of his seven conditions for a public (and counterpublic). My aim here is to work through the

¹⁷⁸ According to academic lore, Oskar Negt was Habermas' main rival to replace Adorno at retirement from the University of Frankfurt.

¹⁷⁹ As a literary scholar, his main interest seems to be print culture and queer theory.

concepts of counter/publics in relation to lesbian and gay film festivals and particularly with regard to their rhetoric of community, their address.

1. A public is self-organized or autotelic ('self-directed' from the Greek words 'autos' and 'telos' respectively).¹⁸⁰ The particular public exists as a space of discourse by virtue of being addressed. When it, the anticipated public, is addressed, it is brought into being. In other words, the address constitutes its public, which is thereby brought into being. Effectively, we fill in the 'you' and 'we' of the address substantively and become part of its public as a part of a complicated play of interest, intrigue and identity. For example, a festival poster may be designed and accepted by various committees, then plastered in parts of a city. The poster furthers the work of the festival in as much as it works to constitute an audience, a public or counterpublic. The posters's locations in a city likely influence the degree of their success.

2. A public is a relation among strangers. Warner characterizes this relation as an orientation towards strangers, in a sense, it is a necessary medium of commonality. If it were a group of friends and not a public, there would be no strangers and a very different type of relation would obtain. Warner here refers to the early differentiation in German sociology between modern free association (*Gesellschaft*) and traditional community (*Gemeinschaft*), although he does not mention the latter. In modern society, free association is the rule, and its stranger relationality, as Warner calls it, remains normative. Stranger relations are the rule

¹⁸⁰ Compare with Niklas Luhmann's concept of autopoiesis or self-making, as discussed later in this chapter.

and remain intrinsic to the (modern) public event. In 1977, when the San Francisco filmmakers organized their screenings in the two community centers, they opened the event thereby to new, contingent stranger relations. They were no longer simply showing one another their own films in a private, domestic situation.

3. The address of public speech is both personal and impersonal. Warner provides us again with an apparent contradiction. Public speech, according to Warner, addresses both us and strangers simultaneously, for example, novels, lyrics, criticism, nonfictional prose, radio, television, film, and websites. An important result of such an address is how the members of a public obtain mutual recognition, relate their subjectivities to one another. Crucial to public address is the element of strangerhood in our understanding of ourselves as addressee. Unlike communicating person to person, Warner notes that “our partial nonidentity with the object of address” is essential to public address. To clarify this, Warner gives an analysis of gossip,¹⁸¹ lyric poetry, and sermons as examples of ostensible public address. The private act of gossiping bounds people through trust and shared secrecy, and dissolves the strangerhood of public address. Lyric poetry is not directed to a particular person but is rather indirect or perhaps overheard. Sermons appeal to eloquence to touch personally the hearer through some religious notion of spirit. However, in the case of the stand-up comedian’s “roasting” of an individual, the person roasted is the object

¹⁸¹ Gossip has become recently a part of the field of analysis, for instance, cultural theorist Will Straw on scandal magazines and print culture (2006).

of the address – it is primarily about her. Any film festival organized around categories of identity will engage the personal and impersonal as it speaks to those with varying degrees of commitment to the identities concerned.

4. A public is constituted through mere attention. If a public exists only by virtue of address, it also requires reciprocal attention from its members, or ‘active uptake’ as Warner names it. This can be as simple an act as showing up at a performance or film festival screening, which confirms thereby the existence of a public. The act of attention commences the public.

Although publics may rely on various institutions and media for communication, they have no institutional being and are virtual entities. One institution may dissolve, and another or others may replace it, perhaps retaining parts of the earlier public. As we will see below, New York City has had three important LGBT film festivals, but each cultivates its own distinct idea of what that type of film festival should be. The collapse of one of the festivals led to the formation of the third, namely the NewFest, which actively expanded its constituency. From the liberal framework of civil society, Warner borrows the liberal notions of personality and free, voluntary and active association or membership in the civil society. Here the attention and beginning of a public would be an act of volition on the part of its members. In short, public discourse craves attention. As Warner states, “The direction of our glance can constitute our social world” (89).

5. A public is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse. According to Warner no single text can create a public, rather it requires a multitude of texts and sometimes media in discourse. The public is an ongoing

space of encounter for discourse, where public discourse carries with it an interactive relation. Discourse for Warner here goes beyond conversation and commentary to include also utterance, response, citation and characterization, which is all meant to undergo circulation.

Circulation itself is a diffusion to strangers and has a specific temporality. In most cases the temporality of circulation has a well-defined punctuality, setting a rhythm and expectations, while also connecting the discourse to a regular scene. This punctuality helps to organize time. Examples would include cycles or flows in the publication industry, regular television programming, annual events such as carnivals and annual film festivals, monthly film screenings, and so on. The unique, complicated temporality of film festivals has been discussed at length in previous chapters. Film festivals participating in the international circuits must obey temporal constraints placed on them by those circuits, and must effectively fit in with the scheduling of the other players, if they want to be considered truly “international.” The festivals must also cohere temporally locally with other types of festivals and events in the same city, especially if they relate to an identity, for example, a festival competing with Pride events might be seriously compromised, or perhaps the film-going members might not be affected by the overlapping schedules at all. Apart from the temporal aspect of the calendar and the festival’s relationship to others, each edition of the festival has its own particular temporality, namely the number of screenings per day, the number of days of the whole festival, the number of repetitions of the films in the programming, among

other aspects, and all of this is set in relation to the temporality of the city that hosts it.

Reflexivity in circulation came about in the late-1600s by printing the letters and opinions of readers, while in 18th century Paris the gossip and scandal rags emerged. The study of such reflexive circulation helps one understand the sense of public at that time and place. Now we have so many media for this, such as television shows, radio, film, dance music, online gossip blogs and even still the print tabloids dedicated to celebrity culture. Community-oriented film festivals have a major stake in their counter/public's opinions. Praise and complaints are circulated throughout the festival and may have significant effects on the organization, its structure, its programming, its self-presentation, among other things.

6. Publics act historically according to the temporality of their circulation. Warner states, "a public can only act in the temporality of the circulation that gives it existence" (96). Some media are slow, others quick, but all depend on the specific rhythm that defines their respective temporality. Such differences influence their public accordingly. Whereas the conventional press, for example, is punctual and regular, the Internet's circulation is instead continuous. Web discourse, however citational, generally lacks the regularity and punctuality of the press and other media. Annual film festivals have a regularity and punctuality fundamental to their very definition, although they may shift their timing in the calendar to better accommodate their counter/public, other competing festivals, and so on.

Contemporary mass media can never be both one-directional and successful. They must take into account the nature of public discourse and perform part of its circulation. Warner studies the flow of slang, manners of speech, and informal phrases between publics and the mass media. He also notes the importance to marketing of the relationship between the mass media and the public through market research and advertising campaigns.

While the public may be autotelic and self-organized through discourse, it requires prior “forms and channels of circulation,” otherwise the public would not be intelligible to anyone. Warner also considers the question of style in relation to accessibility in what he terms the “differential deployment of style.” He compares this to Bakhtin’s notion of double-voicing: we have on the inside a technical jargon of words and gestures, while on the outside the language play would appear as a particular variant of the larger one. This is also reminiscent of Foucault’s heterotopia and its codes or rites of admission. For Warner counterpublics may stem from a scene. He notes, “all discourse or performance addressed to a public must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate and it must attempt to realize that world through address” (114).

In the case of the annual LGBT film festival, the idea that the film festival presents of itself is carried in the prose and images that it generates and circulates through various media. Its “idea” may aim to appeal to radical artists, middle-class mainstream, one gender, one race, among many other possibilities, as we investigate later in this chapter.

7. A public is poetic world making or autopoietic.¹⁸² Here Warner develops his notion of a counterpublic. Public discourse implicitly attempts to lay claim to a public with a particular character, with its own style and way of seeing the world, which is especially important to understanding lesbian and gay, even queer, culture, among other constituencies.

Warner lists some of the important performative elements, such as “the pragmatics of its speech genres, idioms, stylistic markers, address, temporality, mise-en-scene, citational field, lexicon, and so on.” He sketches out the dominant theories of the bourgeois public sphere in which public address is taken to be a type of rational-critical dialogue and its circulation flows as rational discussion, namely persuasion over poesis. Warner finds fault in these theories for their entire reliance on the framework of theories of language. Such theories define discourse as propositionally summarizable, whereby substantive content or meaning is considered at the exclusion of all poetic or textual qualities (115), and assumes that the act of reading is reproducible and uniform for all readers.

The state favors the rational-critical mode, also essential to early Habermas’ early theory of the public sphere, and subsequently privileges those publics that orient their discourse accordingly. Warner finds fault in this since it systemically delegitimizes all publics or counterpublics that follow modes other than the rational-critical. This coheres well with his analysis of the history of the gay and

¹⁸² His use of the term poetic comes from the Greek concept of *poiesis*, an activity as a means to an end, but in contrast to *praxis*, an activity as an end in itself.

lesbian movement, as it diverged from its radical anti-assimilationism and began to harmonize with the state through a discourse of legal rights (Warner 2000). It is precisely that tension between the anti-assimilationists and assimilationists in the case of the gay and lesbian movement that create a similar tension between public and counterpublic. The aim for a wider public through assimilation, and its associated condition of homonormativity, may marginalize those legitimate concerns of the counterpublic, much closer to the historical origins of the movement. When would LGBT counterpublics be accepted as simply publics, if ever?¹⁸³

Variety in publics follows from modes of address, style, spaces of circulation, for example, gay community newspapers and festival catalogues, which Warner names subpublics or specialized publics. Borrowing from Nancy Fraser's work on subordinated social groups and her critique of Habermas' rational-critical framing of the public sphere, Warner notes her elaboration of the theory of the public sphere to include also alternative publics or subaltern counterpublics (118). The modes of address, for example, have shifted in LGFFs, as frank "body language" used in advertising for gay sex services were toned down during the 1990s.

According to Warner, a counterpublic has the following characteristics: 1. Having an awareness of its own subordinate status, whose discourse out of context, or in the "wrong" social context, may inspire hostility, and 2. That which nevertheless must still come into being through the address to indefinite strangers. From Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick he chooses the example of "the closet" which only exists

¹⁸³ This will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

within a presupposed heteronormative discourse, while would not exist in a queer counterpublic. Within a condition of *homonormativity*, however, there may be different types of “closets,” perhaps BDSM,¹⁸⁴ trans,¹⁸⁵ bisexual, downlow,¹⁸⁶ among others. Identity is conferred to the members through their participation in their respective counterpublic. Warner notes the promise of the counterpublic in the poesis of scene making and its transformative intent, producing change in some sense. Agency is attributed to counterpublics as they strive for and attain the rational-critical mode of discourse, the mode most favoured by the state and based on the model of private reading and decoding.

Counterpublics do not lend the readerly model such privilege, but rather they often hold such values as, for example, embodied sociability and performance over print, for example, carnivals, BDSM and public sex practitioners. It is precisely when, according to Warner, a counterpublic adapts itself to engage the state on its own terms, namely through rational-critical discourse that it forsakes its earlier transformative ethos and becomes a social movement. This also follows from Warner’s queer critique of the rational-critical logic and practices of the larger lesbian and gay movement, especially as it focuses on the single issue of same-sex marriage in the U.S.

¹⁸⁴ ‘BDSM’ is quickly replacing ‘S&M,’ and stands for bondage and domination and sadomasochism.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Trans’ is often used to mean transgender, transsexual, or transvestite.

¹⁸⁶ The term ‘downlow,’ which comes from African American queer culture, is used in the expression ‘to be on the downlow’ to mean a gay male who can still pass for heterosexual among heterosexual people.

Although Warner presents an admittedly cogent model for thinking about publics, I will be working through critically his theory in relation to LGBT film festivals. As already discussed above, the film festivals work to produce and secure their publics or counterpublics in part through the circulation of their prose (and image).

To show how Warner's counterpublics and scenes work together, I would like to outline briefly a theory of scenes below. I argue that the early lesbian and gay film festivals had strong roots in specific scenes that produced the festivals and their counterpublics, the relations between which have also changed over the years. Hitherto I have used the term 'scene' without trying to specify what the word means precisely. As Will Straw writes,

Scene is a term which flourishes within everyday talk about urban cultures but which, until recently, was marginal within academic writing on cities. Journalists, tourists and city-dwellers will speak of the Temple Bar scene in Dublin, the techno music scene in Berlin or the new hotel bar scene in Montreal, but the scale and character of the phenomena being referred to will fluctuate with each usage. *Scene* designates particular clusters of social and cultural activity without specifying the nature of the boundaries which circumscribe them (Straw 2004, 411-12, emphasis in text).

To be sure, we use the term in our everyday lives but its curious semantic elusiveness to precise definition has kept scholars at bay. Straw continues to define the concept of scene (1) spatially (where it takes place), and (2) through the "genre of cultural production," such as style of music or type of activity, which

also invites the analysis of the “territory” of the city in which a particular (nomadic) cultural activity may have a more complicated relation to the space of the city (2004, 412).

In many ways resonating with Straw’s work on scenes, Alan Blum’s recent work is centered on constructing a theory of cultural scenes as social formations. His theory has nine important aspects, which I will describe briefly as follows (2001).¹⁸⁷ Borrowing from Georges Bataille’s motif of “desire over economy,” he posits the necessity of regularity, recurrence and repeatable practices to constituting a scene. In other words, a scene cannot happen for one isolated event, it needs repetition and regular temporality. There is an energy or desire to form and keep the scene afloat, without which the scene could not happen. Without sufficient desire to form a scene, it dissolves. Each city has relations to its scenes, which is also known as its extensiveness. Some cities are known for their scenes, and they become part of the city’s identity. Scenes come and go, namely they have a “mortality,” a finite duration that likely includes a respective “golden age,” evaluated through a sort of connoisseurship. Scenes depend on a certain social impulse for grouping, for collectivization, or a type of solidarity among admirers or fans, centered round a goal or project. The scenes that take place in physical places presuppose a reciprocal theatricality, as a site for the occasion of seeing and being seen. The scene invites exhibition and exposure through the circulation of its participants. Similar to the concept of the

¹⁸⁷ For more on this theory of scenes, see Blum’s *The Imaginative Structure of the City* (2003).

heterotopia, as discussed in the previous chapter, the scene has borders and requires a type of membership and qualifications to belong, such as expert knowledge or experience. As with any social formation with borders, scenes may have a transgressive aspect. Blum contends “every project struggles to be a scene,” namely it aims at spectacle, which puts it in competition with potential rival projects and scenes. Intrinsic to the scene is the shared sense of being private in public, a tension between private interests common to the public. In the end, this performs a collective representation of intimacy in public. The final aspect of Blum’s theory of scenes addresses the notion of the creative city, which explores the boundaries of urban life, communal as well as pluralistic (2001; 2003).

In the specific case of the early lesbian and gay film festivals, it is clear how the festivals emerged from the gay film scenes of the period, and to this end I will take up Straw’s suggestion that “we might move from the question of how urban culture ‘produces’ scenes to that of how the activities transpiring within scenes produce urban culture as a set of institutions and textures,” following Bruno Latour’s similar turn in the study of science (2004, 413). Echoing Blum and his use of Bataille, scenes can be remarkably creative and capable of producing new cultural institutions. A number of scenes converged in the case of emergence of the lesbian and gay film festivals, namely the gay and lesbian scenes as well as gay and lesbian members of the film or art scenes. San Francisco’s gay film scene would include precisely those founders of the film festival and their diverse acquaintances and friends. To be sure, the emergence of the festival depended

heavily on the unpaid labor of the founding members. Not only did the festival serve to extend their scene, but it did so by constituting a counterpublic in Warner's sense of the concept.

When do lesbian and gay film festivals begin to constitute publics over counterpublics? The tension between assimilationists and anti-assimilationists might be articulated through the festival's attempt of Warner's counterpublic to transform by selective forgetting into a public. Different festivals demonstrate different positions, from the boldly defiant alterity of MIX to the cautious others.

Martha Gever has contributed much to the discourse on the relationship between cultural identities and cultural artifacts. In her well-known essay "The Names We Give Ourselves," Gever posits,

No wonder lesbian and gay film festivals which incorporate popular cultural forms, retain the character of the ghetto, where embattled people find pleasure without having to constantly look over our collective shoulder. Because self-identified lesbians approach these places with a presumption of community, no matter how fictional, these become cultural spaces that can change our relationship to the screen. Our identities are constituted as much in the event as in the images we watch. Reciprocally, what is on the screen will propose the lesbian public that it attracts – or doesn't (Gever 1990).

A shortened version of the text above is quoted often (for example, Siegel 1997; White 1999), but here I choose to let Gever say more, including the ghetto quality of the festivals as well as the reciprocity between screen, or more precisely

festival programming, and the counter/public that it constitutes. To be sure, as Gever suggests, the festival exceeds the sum of its individual films, and is constituted as an event, situated in real sites in the city, itself arising from a constellation of scenes that brings into existence particular counter/publics. Let us turn to the case of how festivals name themselves. How do they prefer to be read, and what might that mean? How does its publicity reveal the idea of the festival?

As we have seen in the last few chapters, the names of these film festivals on the theme of minority sexualities seem to have been under constant revision and change from 1977 on. Let's consider in what respects might the name of a festival index or mark it? The act of naming any organization requires great care and the consideration of many possible nuances and associations, whether intended or unintended. What I have been calling 'lesbian and gay,' 'LGBT,' but very rarely 'queer' film festivals has been more a matter of convenience than historical accuracy. These festivals have gone through a number of important name changes over the years that reflect, to various degrees of success, changes in their structure and policies regarding content, effectively revealing their self-understanding and how they want to be understood, which includes moreover the sort of counter/publics they want to attract. This process of naming and renaming is part of what Gever suggests above in terms of that special reciprocal (creative) dynamic between festival and audience. In fact, to discuss these festivals in general quickly becomes quite a semantic challenge. There have been several distinct phases in their historical development, as detailed in

the third chapter, that require some attention and intimate the cultural politics of their times. Does the use of 'lesbian and gay' negate the broadened LGBT claim of most festival today? When or under what conditions might a LGBT film festival ever be queer? Not only have their names changed, but also the meaning of the words comprising them. In the 1970s they began as gay film festivals,¹⁸⁸ organized and run mainly by enthusiastic gay white men, independent filmmakers and film buffs alike, with very little lesbian content, and primarily for one another.¹⁸⁹ As women¹⁹⁰ became more present and vocal within the organization and as members of the audience at the festivals, demands for greater lesbian representation increased. Consequently, the San Francisco festival shifted its name to 'gay and lesbian film festival' to become more inclusive in 1982. Furthermore, to highlight lesbian visibility and the need for more work by and concerning women there was another semiotic shift to 'lesbian and gay film festival' at many other festivals.

Alongside the 'film festivals' were the even rarer 'gay video festivals' in San Francisco and New York City in the late 1970s. The politics of video (versus film) was centered on alternative media practice, community access and cable

¹⁸⁸ The word 'gay' was then, and is still sometimes, used in a wider embrace of meanings to include lesbians, as in 'gay women,' but the word 'lesbian' is certainly more explicit and common in its naming.

¹⁸⁹ One notable exception, as discussed in Chapter III, is the SFGVF, which had a remarkably equitable representation of various groups.

¹⁹⁰ Of course, as discussed in Chapter II and III, lesbian filmmakers were also screening their work at and organizing many important women's film festivals at the time.

television production.¹⁹¹ Later in the 1980s and 1990s some festivals opened their submissions to video and certain ones even made the ungainly name change to ‘lesbian and gay film and video festivals.’ From the standpoint of medium specificity, this change brought into the festivals a curious mixture of professional and amateur work, feature films were programmed alongside video art, documentary films alongside amateur short films or videos, and so forth.

Similarly, the politics or ethic of inclusion has continued up to the current ‘LGBT film and video festival,’ which for the sake of brevity is sometimes called ‘queer film festival.’ On this issue Andrew Paterson writes incisively,

As it is easier to refer to a “film festival” rather than a “film and video festival,” it is also less of a mouthful to say “Queer” rather than lesbian and gay. “Queer” is a word that can and has worked to cut across falsely assumed demarcations – between men and women and between bisexuals, transsexuals, polymorphs and strictly fags and dykes [...] However, “Queer” can also be an exclusionary word not unlike “community,” in the eyes and minds of some pundits and perhaps tastemakers there are Queers and then there are those who are merely gay (1998, 15-16).

While these festivals work to accommodate each of the gender categories and sexual identities represented in their titles, specialized festivals also exist for each category as well as for racial and ethnic identities. For instance, as

¹⁹¹ The rift between types of media in their relative hierarchy of cultural value will be considered in detail in the following chapter.

mentioned in earlier chapters, there are now lesbian film festivals, bisexual film festivals, transgender film festivals, San Francisco's Queer Women of Color Film Festival, and Toronto's South Asian diasporic queer film festival *Desh Pardesh*, to name a few.

Effectively, the name play across three decades intimates the sexual and gender politics in and around these festivals. This speaks cogently to the persistent question of intersectionality. How are such multiple allegiances negotiated in practical situations, in the formation of the festivals, and even in the work between them? A film aligns itself with the type of festival in which it is screening at any given moment. One film might, for example, screen at lesbian and gay film festival, a trans film festival, a diasporic film festival, an international film festival, a Black film festival, and so on. The specific affiliations of the audience members may or may not necessarily overlap at all with one another between festivals. As Teresa de Lauretis writes in her well-known 1991 introduction to the first special issue on queer theory,

Today we have, on the one hand, the terms 'lesbian' and 'gay' to designate distinct kinds of life-styles, sexualities, sexual practices, communities, issues, publications, and discourses: on the other hand, the phrase 'gay and lesbian' or, more frequently, 'lesbian and gay' (ladies first), has become standard currency [...] In a sense, the term 'Queer Theory' was arrived at in the effort to avoid all of these fine distinctions in our discursive protocols, not to adhere to any one of the given terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead to both transgress and

transcend them - or at the very least problematize them (de Lauretis 1991, v).

Evidently, the idea of queer and queer theory was originally aimed at overcoming debacles and *différends* stemming from certain politics of identity.¹⁹² Let us now turn to the publicity, the prose of the festivals themselves to understand how they worked to distinguish themselves and produce their respective counterpublics.

2.0 San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival

Frameline's SFILGFF began as the San Francisco Gay Film Festival in 1977. In order to demonstrate its organizers' commitment to the visibility of lesbians in the festival, the name was expanded to include the word lesbian in 1982. As Siegel notes, the festival has been slow to convince women that the festival is also equally for them in its events and programming (Siegel 1997). The so-called lesbian riot in 1986 has already been discussed as a culminating point of the festival, a challenge to the presumed gender relations.

The 1986 edition of the festival took place at the large 1500-seat Castro Theater, the smaller Roxie Cinema, Video Free America, and by community television on KQED. The program guide takes its typical form for this festival: no programming statement, but one photograph at the top of each column description for each film or program of films with three or so to a page. The programming seems directed by the size of the anticipated audience for each screening, with most of the gay-

¹⁹² Jagose surveys this history in her classic book introducing queer theory (1996), and see also (Sullivan 2003).

interest films scheduled in the large Castro Theater at the choice screening hours, and the lesbian-interest work scheduled for the smaller Roxie or in the Castro at off-hours, but also experimental short films and political or documentary films were also screened in the Roxie. All videos were screened at Video Free America or at the television studio, which was due to technological issues that were overcome a few years later, when video projection became possible at the Roxie.

The now infamous (in the festival circuit) short film *Ten Cents a Dance* (Onodera, Canada, 1985) screened on Sunday afternoon at the Castro without incident in a mixed gendered program of shorts "Four From the Commonwealth" that represented one film each from the UK, New Zealand, Australia and Canada. However, the problematic screening took place the following Wednesday at 6 PM at the Roxie, when Onodera's film was included in a program simply called "Lesbian Shorts." Perhaps one of the final advertisements in the guide speaks to the situation most accurately. It states, "Francine's – FINALLY, A Women's Bar in the Castro" (SFILGFF 1986).

The 1987 edition of the festival brought with it some changes, made evident in the program guide. Longstanding festival director Michael Lumpkin was joined by associate director Maria Kellett. While the guide kept its typical format, there were more lesbian-interest films present and many scheduled at the Castro, and filmmaker Alexandra von Grote received the Frameline Award (SFILGFF 1987). The following year in 1988, a full screening committee was instituted to advise on programming decisions, apparently in order to circumvent any potential problems

in audience relations. The introduction of the committee also shows how the festival was trying to accommodate a broadening counterpublic, for if it was claiming to represent lesbians, then it had to deliver and be accountable. Such committees became common to most lesbian and gay film festivals in larger cities (except Montreal) and could be understood as a type of outreach activity. The festival clearly continued to offer an increased visibility to films and videos by women, even a special Castro afternoon program “Two Films by Midi Onodera,” which included her 1985 film. Furthermore, the festival organized a special “AIDS Video Symposium” at the Roxie. While the advertising still bespoke of a very male presence through its specific demographic target, the programming and its scheduling had evinced important changes according to gender at least.

For the 15th anniversary edition in 1991, the guest curator Annette Förster was brought into the festival. On page three of the guide, she poses and answers her question,

“What is a lesbian film?,” the lesbian community often asks. My answer is as complex as your question. Some films are lesbian without being “about” lesbians. Some lesbian filmmakers make lesbian films, others make other films. And some films are not lesbian even though they feature a lesbian character. I cannot give an objective guideline. Some lesbian films have been made but many more will never exist. Problems with funding and distribution are well known but are not the only reasons for the lack of lesbian specificity on celluloid. What do you imagine when you say

“lesbian film?” Ask 4 dykes and you’ll get 4 different films. Acknowledging diversity is powerful, so stand by it (SFILGFF 1991, 3).

Here we have an invited lesbian programmer addressing directly the lesbian film-going counterpublic. The issue appears to be regarding a paucity in lesbian feature filmmaking, in tacit contrast to the overrepresentation of gay features. The guest curator continues,

For 15 years, the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival has annually offered an overview of films and videos that have actually been made. Look through the program book. As usual there are a handful of new features related to ongoing debates in the lesbian community, then there is a retrospective of outstanding work by Elfi Mikesch, a special program on Su Friedrich, and several films on Catholic iconography. And last but certainly not least, I direct your attention to the great variety of short films and videos that represent the diversity of our lives in a bold and uncensored way (SFILGFF 1991).

The tone of the prose comes across as a defense and challenge to the lesbian readership to take a risk and support lesbian work by seeing some.

Mark Finch took over as festival director in 1992 with Jenni Olson as guest curator. They begin their brief bilingual statement in English and Spanish with a quotation by Bertolt Brecht,

There are those who fight one day and they are good. There are others who fight one year and they are better. Then there are those who fight for

many years and they are very good. But there are those who fight all their life, and they are indispensable (SFILGFF 1992, 3).

The quotation may be a tacit reference to the controversy of the sudden cancellation of funding from the NEA, which is discussed by Thomas DiMaria in his statement on the issue. This edition marks the first attempt at showcasing work by Latino and Latina artists, making evident a new outreach initiative. The following edition in 1993 was particularly ambitious in its expansion. The festival held satellite screenings and events outside of San Francisco at the University of California at Berkeley, SF Art Institute, in East Bay and San José, beyond the usual Castro and Roxie cinemas. Finch and Olson write in their introduction,

There are two ways to dismiss a gay or lesbian film – at least that’s what straight critics think. If it’s good, it’s “not really” a gay film. If it’s bad, it’s “just” a gay film.

Frameline has spent the last 17 years working to prove that lesbian and gay images should be taken seriously. Today, the Festival is the largest continuing lesbian and gay arts event in the world. And that’s a tribute to all the lesbian and gay artists – and audiences – who refuse to be dismissed (SFILGFF 1993).

The programming took on new themes, such as work on Jewish identity, work from Asia, experimental film and video, and a historical retrospective series. Moreover the advertising appears to diminish the presence of the hitherto frank display of male bodies for bars, dance clubs, and pornographic videos and publications. Perhaps this can be understood as a shift to balance the relative

invisibility of female bodies outside of the images for lesbian films and videos. The advertising stemmed primarily from gay male-owned establishments in the Castro area, hence the skewed imbalance in carnal representation throughout the guides. On the other hand, the elimination of the frank style of gay address can also appear as a type of conservative retreat to pre-Stonewall times.¹⁹³ If some lesbians might welcome the toning down of male images in the guides, gay men would likely understand the change quite differently.

San Francisco's festival remains the largest and longest running LGBT film festival in the world. It seems to have found a happy balance for its counterpublic, and continues to innovate with select programs and further collaborates through the co-sponsorship of programs at other related festivals in the city. Nonetheless, other more specialized festivals have emerged to fill in certain gaps in the programming or density, such as the Tranny Fest, SF Bi Film Festival, Black Gay Film Festival, and the Queer Women of Color Film Festival, which may prove that the SFILGFF is unable to satisfy the interests of all LGBT groups, even with its innovations in programming, co-sponsorships and outreach initiatives, but somehow it remains highly successful for what it does.

¹⁹³ Susan Sender studies this phenomenon in the case of the well-known magazine *The Advocate*, as it transformed over the years and aimed to secure national advertising by sequestering its explicit gay male imagery and sex ads (Sender 2005).

3.0 New York Gay Film Festival, MIX, NewFest

The now defunct New York Gay Film Festival (1979-1987) was the first annual lesbian and gay film festival in the city. Its first few program guides do not include any introductory statement by the festival director/programmer Peter Lowy. Perhaps its mandate was confidently taken for granted at the time. The letter of endorsement of the 1981 edition from the then Mayor Edward Koch gives the festival some shape, when Koch writes,

On behalf of the City of New York I welcome the 1981 Gay Film Festival. Once again, this festival offers a varied array of films from many foreign countries to be viewed by New Yorkers of different cultural and social backgrounds. Our city is made up of countless minorities and lifestyles. By portraying Lesbian and Gay men in a wide spectrum of circumstances in our society, the gay film festival reflects the cultural diversity that has made New York a truly unique city, while simultaneously contributing to a better understanding of the Lesbian and Gay community (NYGFF 1981, 5).

While an impressive achievement in itself, the letter is remarkably generic, which is evident if the reader simply replaces 'lesbian and gay' with any other group. Lowy was careful to secure "festival endorsers," which he listed on the same page as the Koch letter. They included various public officials but also many gay and lesbian community organizations. Although this festival did include a few programs of short films, they were typically segregated according to gender, under such titles as 'images of gay men' and 'lesbian voices.' There were a

handful of special benefit performances, for example, in 1982, Lambda Legal Defense Fund, Gay Men's Health Project & NYC Gay Men's Chorus, and The Curse of Fred Astaire. The few female staff members at NYGFF were in charge of advertising and publicity. By far most of the paid advertising represented gay male establishments, for example, bars, dance clubs, "The New St Mark's Baths" in 1981, various community publications and gay pornographic magazines.

Lowy states in the program guide of the sixth edition, less as a statement and more as a part of a fundraising drive,

We're proud of the talent that we have been able to find and bring to the screen in New York, and we believe that events like the festival make our community richer and stronger. You can guarantee the future of the festival and at the same time lower your 1984 tax bill by making a deductible contribution to Altermedia, Ltd. before the end of the year. You'll like what we do with your money much better that [sic] what Ronald Reagan and his friends do if they get their hands on it (NYGFF 1984, 3).

The same year announced the inauguration of the NYGFF Audience Prize for feature film and short film. Moreover, the festival organized a public forum "Homosexuality and Death in Film," moderated by Vito Russo.

For the 1986 edition, festival director Peter Lowy is finally joined with a woman associate director Jenny Eiger. In their statement, they write,

The New York Gay Film Festival is the largest annual gay cultural event in the world. There is a unique excitement generated when this

concentration of gay creativity meets the passion and intellect of the New York audience [...] You'll find some films that you love and other that you hate. We guarantee it. We planned it that way. We think that a Gay Film Festival should explore our differences as well as our shared experience because our strength lies in our diversity as much as in our unity (NYGFF 1986, 4).

Perhaps under the influence of the female associate director, the festival scheduled more films by women during the coveted weekend slots than ever before. Furthermore, there were two wrap parties for the festival, one for women at the Avenue One club, and another at the notorious gay disco The Saint. The festival ended the following year with a new associate director John Lewis, who went on to work with Susan Horowitz to found the NewFest two years later in 1989.

During the final year of the NYGFF, another quite different lesbian and gay film festival emerged from the New York scenes. The first New York City Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival (now known as MIX) had its first few screenings at the Millennium cinemas September 15-20, 1987. The experimental nature of the festival gives it a very sharp definition that sets it off from the vast majority of LGBT film festivals around the world. The photocopied program notes for the first edition contains a statement from the two fulltime, unpaid head organizers Sarah Schulman and Jim Hubbard, that works to set the tone and expectations of the festival. A very similar statement was used for both the first and second editions of the festival in 1987 and 1988, as noted below. The text accurately sets the

tone and raised expectations for the festival. In their opening paragraph, the founders discuss their motivation for creating the festival, they write,

We organized this festival because we believe that lesbian and gay people can have an especially rich relationship to experimental film. Both avant-garde film and gay consciousness must be resolutely created in a world that insists on a homogenous sexuality and a narrowly-defined aesthetic enforced through a stiflingly limited media. The experimental process mirrors, in many ways, the process of understanding a gay identity, both demand an endless re-imagining of the self and the world in order to envision and create what the mainstream believes should not and must not exist (MIX 1987).

Schulman and Hubbard establish the relation between sexual minorities and experimental cinema, in fact as a necessary duty in order to challenge, resist and transform the world as given, as strongly heteronormative. The experimental approach to filmmaking is also understood as an important play of resemblances between self and the world (“mirrors”) and against a reified mainstream media and its forms. While all the other LGBT film festivals position themselves against Hollywood’s distortion of lesbian and gay lives and promote more films of and by lesbian and gay filmmakers, which I name the corrective motif, none of them takes the additional requirement to innovate formally and even dispense with narrative altogether. Precisely this is unique to MIX.

Films had to “have a gay presence or perspective *and* they had to engage the medium in some interesting way” (my emphasis). For most films, “gay presence

became fairly obvious”, for others “it simply meant a stance separate from and critical of the heterosexual hegemony.” Such statements and requirements would be unimaginable in other community-oriented festivals, for they presuppose much about not only the audience but also the festival programmers and their idea of film, lesbian and gay community, and festivals themselves. The festival directors try to clarify their terms,

By experimental or avant-garde films, we mean films that view filmmaking as a philosophical and aesthetic medium, and not merely as entertainment. Thus, film remains an essentially and primarily visual art form that does not enforce a simple story or narrative line, and explores light, chemistry, the lens, the splice, and the whole physical substructure of the medium (MIX 1987 and 1988).

Both Schulman and Hubbard are writers and filmmakers with no significant experience of or commitment to video as an artistic medium. However, they are radically open to innovative filmmaking, when they write, “Within the broad notion of gay avant-garde, a wide range of approaches and visions flourishes, so we tried at all times to be inclusive rather than exclusive” (MIX 1987 and 1988).

Moreover, the organizers posit,

As a result of our [Schulman and Hubbard] experience, we now believe that by concentrating on the personal aspect of cinema we present a truer, more complex, more interesting, and more diverse view of gay and lesbian lives than do the few examples of commercial movies that contain gay characters. Furthermore, we found a rich supply of films by women and

believe that all the film festivals can find more work by women. Our major disappointment was a frustrating lack of success in finding more experimental works by people of color. This must be a priority for future festivals (MIX 1987 and 1988).

Regarding early funding for the festival, “[d]uring the early stages we approached progressive funding sources who told us, ‘No one funds gay, no one funds film, no one funds experimental’” (MIX 1987).

From the very beginning, MIX organizers encouraged a touring program of selected films from its festival, in part as outreach and in part to generate some funding for the filmmakers and the festival. The touring program of films screened at various university campuses across the U.S., thereby also creating new potential audiences for its New York City incarnation.

The 1989 third edition of the festival took on a stronger political direction. As the festival directors write,

During the short life of this Festival we have seen the dramatic erosion of the rights of gay people, including more street violence, the Supreme Court’s sodomy decision, continued negligence with regard to the health crisis, and now a calculated assault on our right to depict our own lives [...] Today the U.S. Senate is actively suppressing art work [...] because of the forthright depiction of gay love and gay experience [...] In the face of these assaults, gay people have become increasingly politically active. This commitment to direct action also drives the films and challenges

artists to become activists themselves. In 1987, one film was about AIDS.

This year the entire Festival is informed by the AIDS crisis (MIX 1989).

They state that in 1987 they screened the work of only two filmmakers who had died of AIDS, but in 1989 they were showing the films of eight who had died and of others “who are ill and fighting for their lives.” The festival directors state,

One of the goals of this Festival has been to unite gay men and lesbians. By programming women’s and men’s films together, we hope to help each other become aware of the full range of concerns in our community. We can have a united vision that understands jack-off clubs and sees Annie Sprinkle’s cervix, and a community that struggles against the AIDS crisis and against rape. Making and supporting gay art has become a political act, but art never has been and never will be enough. Every one of us who participates in this event can take the validation, inspiration, and creativity exhibited in this Festival and turn it into activism. For lesbians and gay men, silence has always equaled death (MIX 1989).

Lists of filmmakers who had died of complications arising from AIDS were common at this festival. Unlike at other festivals, this one was boldly explicit in its positions.

The 1990 edition expanded the festival even further with its emphasis on Black gay men. As Schulman and Hubbard state,

this year’s focus is on films by and/or about Black gay men. Only now that multiple voices have surfaced can the complexity of the Black gay

perspective even begin to be explored [...] Together [the films] begin to create the complex and multifaceted picture of a community (MIX 1990).

The final festival that the original two founders directed in 1991 continues their battle against the actions of the political rightwing. In their statement, after listing over one dozen filmmakers who had recently died of AIDS, they note,

[t]he effect of AIDS on this Festival is only beginning to be measured. For the first time, we have significantly more films by women than by men. We also note the almost complete absence of overt sexuality from the men's films (MIX 1991).

The 1992 festival opened itself to video for the first time in its history. Three main programmers, Jim Hubbard, Jerry Tartaglia and Marguerite Paris, write, "The second major change this year is that we are showing both film and video. When we began this festival five years ago, we felt that experimental film was an endangered species and need special attention" (MIX 1992).

The commitment to programming new work by lesser known film and videomakers is well evinced in their statement that, "Fifty-nine of the 73 film and videomakers presenting work this year have never before shown in the Festival. Forty percent of the makers are women; at least 19 (26%) are persons of color" (MIX 1992).

The interest in expanding its audience through outreach campaigns strongly continued in 1993 under the new festival directors Karim Ainouz and Shari Frilot. In their curatorial statement, they note,

We have invited guest curators from different backgrounds to program the majority of the Festival. We have also nearly doubled our mailing list to include more people of color, as well as, lesbian and gay youth, from around the metropolitan area, and we have focused on the nontraditional publicity strategy of direct community outreach in the effort to invite audiences who are often overlooked by mainstream media (MIX 1993).

Subsequent MIX festivals expanded into multimedia, in collaboration with the 1994 LOOKOUT Video Festival¹⁹⁴ and other independent curators, and continued its project of outreach to queer members of communities of color. Its radical stance is also confirmed in the words of festival director Shari Frilot, who writes that the 1994 program “celebrates transgressive sexual diversity, explores hybridity within notions of queerness, takes up issues of race, nationality, ethnicity, and gender and critically investigates the state of lesbian and gay politics today” (MIX 1994).

Filmmaker and programmer Daryl Chin¹⁹⁵ recounts his experience of MIX in its tenth anniversary publication,

no matter what the variability of the work, going to MIX is always exciting, because you're always with a partisan audience which is primed to give the work a chance. MIX has proven itself to be absolutely indispensable to

¹⁹⁴ Organized by the DCTV (Downtown Community Television Center).

¹⁹⁵ Curiously, Chin is much more associated with the NewFest, where he has served on various committees and boards since its founding.

the cause of alternative media, not just in this country, but internationally (in Jusick 1996, 64).

‘The New Festival’ (sometimes also ‘NewFest, Incorporated’) refers to the corporate entity that organizes the New York International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, which was first organized by Susan Horowitz and John Lewis¹⁹⁶ in 1989, after the demise of the New York Gay Film Festival of Peter Lowy and the founding of the New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival (MIX). As its name suggests, it replaces the “old” defunct festival with a new concept of festival – ‘international’ and also ‘lesbian’ figure in the name. This new festival had to work to distinguish itself from the defunct NYGFF (1979-1987) and the experimental one that came into being partly in critical response to the NYGFF. In comparing the program guides, press releases and other ephemera circulating around these festivals, it is clear that NewFest aimed for a much broader idea of festival than MIX, but also aimed to improve upon the NYGFF.

On the back cover of the 1989 program guide is written, “Celebrate a love affair with the movies.” Cinephilic but familiar (“movies”) might be part of this festival’s signature. The festival directors write,

The 1989 New York International Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film culminates almost two years of preparation and planning. The tasks of identifying, locating and screening hundreds of gay films – followed by the process of selecting the 70 titles offered here – involved countless hours,

¹⁹⁶ Lewis was also the co-director of the final edition of the NYGFF in 1987.

thousands of miles of travel, and the energy of many exceptional women and men who advised and encouraged us (NewFest 1989, 2).

The new festival had a new design and layout for its program guide. Borderless photographs inset, text of different tonalities and size, and other distinguishing design choices make the guides visually quite rhythmic but also intelligible to the reader searching for information about the films and rest of the festival.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the NewFest in 1998, the then executive director Wellington Love writes,

[...] the 10th anniversary of a film festival is perfectly calibrated to signal communal jubilee. In searching the calendar for an occasion which I imagine to engender similar anxiety, anticipation, and trepidation, I envision Thanksgiving eve at the starting line of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. A year of planning and preparation has brought you to that one fateful evening when thousands upon thousands of excitable New Yorkers gather for the annual "barn raising" (NewFest 1998, 3).

The comparison certainly captures some of the differences between it and the festival idea of MIX.

Love posits, "[w]hile the festival remains a staple of big-city subculture, it has help [sic] move the underground a little closer to the surface" (NewFest 1998, 3).

Furthermore,

Time passes and a decade later some may question the logic of a brand identification that perennially advertises a new festival. But surely a case

can be made for the timelessness and possibility with 'new.' The New Festival, conceived by Susan Horowitz as a re-birth, lead the way in reestablishing an annual exhibition of lesbian and gay film in New York, following a previous incarnation headed by Peter Lowy (NewFest 1998, 3)

The lesbian and gay film festivals in New York City demonstrate through their respective "prose" and ephemera significant attempts to distinguish each from one another. Effectively, each festival has its own project, its own idea of LGBT film festival. The early NYGFF was run under the directorship of founder Peter Lowy till its demise in 1987.¹⁹⁷ The style of programming at the festival retained strict gender segregation and put its emphasis on narrative, feature films with less recognition of short films or video. It lacked any aggressive outreach program to encourage new and different audiences (but has developed such programs since then). The festival was impressively successful at fundraising, for the list of sponsors at all levels is remarkable.

MIX festival was formed during the early AIDS epidemic and found its niche in the radical end of lesbian and gay cultural production. It frankly highlights the liberationist pro-sex motif and continues to retain that in its publicity today. The festival argues persistently against commercial feature films in favor of formally innovative film and video that engages queer sexuality in some manner. The festival constitutes those counterpublics whose members have some interest in

¹⁹⁷ There are only rumors circulating that the festival director had embezzled festival money for personal use, but nothing was ever proven. The festival closed under such suspicions in the late 1980s.

innovative film and video form, outside of standard storytelling, as well as a wide range of types of sexual representations.

The NewFest invented itself out of the ashes of the NYGFF, but sets itself in relation to both its predecessor and MIX. The festival works hard in its publicity to distinguish itself from the earlier GFF. Its idea of festival includes programming committees, representation through outreach initiatives of various communities typically outside of the white middle-class majority, strong emphasis on feature films, documentary, but also programs of short films and videos. NewFest expanded its use of film-clip lecture presentations, perhaps because of the influence of so many academics involved in the festival, for example, José Muñoz, Patricia White, Roger Hallas, and Martha Gever, among others.

4.0 Montreal's Image&Nation

The self-definition of some early festivals was sometimes presupposed, perhaps due to their pressing urgency and sense of duty. Montreal's Image&Nation began in April 1988 under the direction of the Diffusions gaies et lesbiennes du Québec.¹⁹⁸ The program guide for its first edition seems curiously elliptical in certain details. It does not name itself a film festival but rather a *manifestation cinématographique*, in its brief introduction,

L'organisation de Diffusions gaies et lesbiennes est heureuse de vous présenter cette manifestation cinématographique. Nous vous offrons ici une programmation des plus variée en films et vidéos. Nous espérons que

¹⁹⁸ Loosely translated as gay and lesbian exhibition of Quebec.

cette sélection saura vous plaire et nous vous souhaitons BON CINEMA!!!
(1988, 4)

(The organization Diffusions gaies et lesbiennes is happy to present to you this cinematographic manifestation. We offer you here a program of films and videos of the greatest variety. We hope that you will enjoy this selection, and we wish you a good screening!!!)

The French words *distribution* and *diffusion* in film and video generally correspond to the English *distribution* and *exhibition*, while diffusion also includes screenings at festivals.

Curiously, the title of this edition is "IMAGE&NATION LESBIENNES ET GAIS" without any explicit indication of its festive identity. The cover of the guide omits the name of the festival and is filled with interlocking male (spear) and female (distaff) symbol that hovers over the Quartier latin (Latin quarter) of the city, somehow barely grazing the village gai, casting its shadow onto the area. It is precisely the recognizable area that the hybrid symbol and shadow touch that opens the overall image to greater ambiguity than had it simply been hovering over the gay village. The new territory seems too west and north to represent the simply reterritorialized gay village as it stood in 1988. The floating symbol imagines a unity between the "opposite" sexes in the context of the Diffusions gaies et lesbiennes and perhaps an advance from the gay ghetto. The idea of opening up to the city is echoed in the statement of support from the local provincial representative (for Saint Jacques) André Boulerice who writes,

Avec cette édition du Festival, la communauté gaie prend sa place pour mieux s'ouvrir aux autres. Je m'en réjouis et je suis heureux de m'y associer. Bonne chance aux organisateurs et bon Festival à tous, [signature] (1988, 3)

(With this edition of the festival, the gay community takes its place to better open itself up to others. I am thrilled by this and am happy to be associated with the event. Good luck to the organizers and *bon festival* to all, [signature])

Such public political endorsement is impressive.¹⁹⁹ The politician speaks to both the maturing 'gay community' and its desire to open itself to those who do not necessarily belong to it.

The festival seems shy to name itself one, and makes no larger explicit claims on identity or community outside of its impressive "variety of films and videos." The minimized explicit programming text is further confirmed by the lack of program titles. The films are simply listed by their titles without any extra thematic title subsuming the films.

The second edition (in November 1989) is named IMAGE&NATION festival international du cinéma et de la vidéo gais et lesbiens de Montréal, revealing more information about the event and its aspirations to be taken as another sort

¹⁹⁹ Compare with Mayor Koch's statement on the NYGFF. Banal today in some cities, these endorsements were rare in the 1980s and 90s.

of international film festival in the city. The executive director of the festival René Lavoie notes in the introduction,

Dans cette édition du Festival nous voulons questionner la différence dans la différence (In this edition of the festival we want to question difference in difference) [... with retrospectives of work by Isaac Julien, the British collective SANKOFA and American auteur director Michelle Parkerson] (1989, 4)

Lavoie also highlights the introduction of quite a new discourse to the festival when he describes how the two auteur directors will show their work but also discuss

la position des minorités visibles dans nos sociétés occidentales. Ils, elles, questionnent aussi cette position face à l'identité gaie et lesbienne (the position of visible minorities in our Western societies. They question also this position with regard to gay and lesbian identity.) (1989, 4).

The discussions were also organized around a panel “Representation, Responsibility and Moveable Marging,” clearly in English as indicated by its title, which was the only part of the introductory text not in French. In view of the scant translation into English in the program guides, it would seem that the festival organizers presupposed that the Montreal audience would be able to read the texts in French, if necessary. Many of the films and videos listed are themselves in English without subtitles. After all, independent films in the 1980s and 90s still found subtitling quite an expense, but this also hints at the remarkable amount of work made in English.

The question of language of address becomes and remains particularly important in the case of the Montreal festival. Image&Nation was conceived during the rule of Robert Bourassa's Liberal Party in the province and between separatist Parti Québécois governments. To be sure, the sense of the breadth of nation, a word intrinsic to its very name, includes Canada, among others, beyond the borders of Quebec. Lavoie acknowledges in the introduction, "nous vous offrons quelques premières canadiennes et pluseiurs premières québécoises" (we offer to you a few Canadian and several Quebecois premieres) (1989, 4). If the festival were truly aligned with the separatist project, there would have been no need to recognize or mention the fact of any Canadian premieres. One thematic program "Vampire Fantasy/Fantasie Vampiresque" addresses the reader in English and explores the "B" movie of Count Dracula through lesbian camp. The notes posit furthermore, "a lesbian reading of these films is dangerous [to] heterosexual hegemony. Lesbian laughter can transform a "B" movie intended to horrify lesbian audiences into an empowering experience" (1989, 7).

Regarding the presence of films and videos by women, images from men's work are much more represented in the guide than women's.

Given the strikingly gendered asymmetry in commercial venues for sex it is not surprising that all the most sexually explicit advertisements are for gay men, for example, saunas, porn cinema, gay adult magazine shop, bars and dance clubs. The female body is absent from all the ads in this issue, save a few smiling faces promoting the National Film Board's Studio D (women's studio unit). Male bodies inflecting gayness are used frankly and brazenly to promote both commercial

venues and the films in the festival itself. These differences in sensibility towards the body and its representation stem from equally different approaches to the representation of sexuality in the 1970s and 80s according to gender. On the one hand, gay liberation argued for a very frank, “outed” representation of the male body and sexuality with a somewhat social pedagogical transformative aim, the woman’s movement and lesbian feminism had a variety of often more cautious approaches to the representation of women, lesbians and sexuality.

5.0 Toronto’s Inside/Out

The Inside/Out Collective’s inauguration of its first International Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival of Toronto took place in 1991, the same year as de Lauretis’ statement above. In many ways its founding could appear as ready-made. It captures in its very structure and statement of purpose very tidily the major political concerns and issues of the period. The year is timely in many respects, particularly it marked one decade of AIDS, the idea of “queer theory” was erupting at select conferences in North America, it was also the year that Ruby Rich was making her rounds along the international film festival circuit and pointing to a new queer trend,²⁰⁰ and Frameline’s festival in San Francisco had survived fifteen years. In effect Inside/Out in 1991 may be seen as a snapshot of theoretical and activist discourses of the time, which makes it a very compelling festival to study.

²⁰⁰ See her review essay that develops the idea of queer cinema (1992).

The 1991 program guide shows the signs of a willfully defiant group coming together to present films and videos by or for the LG minority. A statement “from the collective” introduces the festival in all-capital text that gives it a manifesto-style sense of urgency and purpose. The members of Inside/Out are listed to the left according to their respective function or functions in the festival organization. A few sponsors, ticket information, and the acknowledgements are also listed to the left, below. The collective states,

REPRESENTATIONS OF GAYS AND LESBIANS IN THE POPULAR MEDIA HAVE FOR MANY YEARS BEEN INFREQUENT AND MARGINALIZED. THE PURPOSE OF THIS FESTIVAL, LIKE OTHER FESTIVALS OF ITS KIND, IS TO REDRESS THE HISTORICALLY INADEQUATE DISTRIBUTION AND EXHIBITION OPPORTUNITIES FOR THESE WORKS WHICH BEST REFLECT OUR COMMUNITY.
(1991, 1)

Here the issue is to find a forum through which to counter both the paucity of representations of lesbians and gays in mass media as well as the inadequate opportunities for the distribution and exhibition of such work. Having arrived quite a few years following “the other festivals of its kind,” the collective acknowledges that it is building on the past work of others elsewhere. If it is more or less similar to those already elsewhere, then how does it justify itself there and then?

The collective states in its second main paragraph,

THE FILM AND VIDEO WORKS IN THIS PROGRAM REPRESENT SOME OF THE MOST POWERFUL, VITAL AND IMPORTANT WORKS

CURRENTLY BEING PRODUCED BY GAY AND LESBIAN ARTISTS. THE TRULY INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO HIGHLIGHT EQUALLY WORKS BY AND ABOUT GAYS AND LESBIANS, AND WORKS PRODUCED ON FILM AND VIDEO. SPECIAL EMPHASIS HAS BEEN PLACED ON WORKS BY AND ABOUT GAYS AND LESBIANS OF COLOUR, AND ON WORKS PRODUCED IN CANADA AND QUEBEC. (1991, 1)

The ethos of inclusivity is strongly apparent here. The text sets up four binaries that are explicitly or implicitly recognized: gay and lesbian, film and video, international and Canadian and Québécois, and white mainstream and people of color.

Moreover, in the following passage the collective stresses the level of quality of the programming and the rarity of the screenings,

THE FOCUS OF THIS YEAR'S PROGRAM IS ON CONTEMPORARY WORK, BOTH MAINSTREAM AND "CUTTING EDGE." THE FILMS AND VIDEOS IN THE PROGRAMME, MANY OF THEM TORONTO PREMIERES, WERE SELECTED FOR THEIR SIGNIFICANT ARTISTIC AS WELL AS CULTURAL AND/OR POLITICAL VALUE. THE WORKS REPRESENT OUR COMMUNITY IN ITS DIVERSITY, EXPLICITLY OR IMPLICITLY ADDRESSING A VARIETY OF ISSUES, INCLUDING ISSUES OF RACE AND SEXUALITY, AIDS AND REPRESENTATION AND STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE. (1991, 1)

Curiously here 'cutting edge' is set off with quotation marks, while 'mainstream' is not. Sometimes the former is used as an adjectival translation of 'avant-garde' in its diverse meanings and nuances. In this case it seems to carry the semantic weight stemming from its opposition to 'mainstream,' thus it may cover the fundamentally new or experimental work? In discourses on aesthetics 'avant-garde' or 'experimental film' are terms that carry more force and meaning than 'cutting edge,' a phrase that suggests an advertising and marketing keyword. This leads us back to the question of what is possibly intended by the word 'mainstream' in this context? If the larger mainstream excludes lesbian and gay films and video, then is this new mainstream of the margin, that is, the lesbian and gay mainstream of the margin produced by the process of heteronormativity, particularly in the popular media? The admission here of the lesbian and gay mainstream suggests the then nascent or full-blown homonormativity that touches so much of North American LGBT politics. So, the selling point is rather clear to the reader – the emphasis is on contemporary or new work, both familiar narratives, for example, genres, and the more challengingly new.

While A-list festivals typically demand world or national premieres, the first edition of Inside/Out had the modest claim to city premieres. City premiers would certainly not create much of a draw for foreign journalists, since they would prefer to catch the buzz at the world premiere at the most relevant festival; and similarly a director seeking a distributor or a distributor looking to create a buzz for a film would choose the most advantageous festival suitable for launching the film. In 1991 the festival was speaking to a very local scene, to be sure.

The third sentence of the paragraph boldly lays claim to the extent of the representations within the festival. The works in some way “represent our community in its diversity.” The ‘we’ is subsumed here under ‘diversity.’ Curiously as exemplary issues, race is the coupled with sexuality, AIDS with representation and lastly the issue of “strategies of resistance.” Evidently these categories presuppose one another in this context. Apparently, the issue of gender had been, if only temporarily, resolved through the constant use of the phrase ‘gay and lesbian’ throughout the text and in the programming of the festival. To be sure, trans discourse was then beginning to establish itself alongside queer theory, and was soon to trouble aspects of the givenness of sex and even aspects of the newly founded concept of gender. The third issue of political resistance addresses the pressing concern for action – what to do? – on many fronts, namely lesbian and gay misrepresentation and underrepresentation in the popular media, but also the question of racial differences, and the negotiation of further minorities within a minority.

The final paragraph imagines a future for the festival. The collective states,

IT IS OUR HOPE THAT WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY
THE FESTIVAL WILL BECOME A PERMANENT AND IMPORTANT
FIXTURE ON TORONTO’S GAY AND LESBIAN CULTURAL SCENE. TO
THAT END, WE INVITE YOU TO SUPPORT THE FESTIVAL AS A
PATRON, SPONSOR OR VOLUNTEER. WE ALSO INVITE YOU TO
COMMENT ON THIS YEAR’S FESTIVAL AND CONTRIBUTE IN
WHATEVER WAY YOU FEEL ABLE TO THE ONGOING ACTIVITIES OF

THE INSIDE/OUT COLLECTIVE. ABOVE ALL, THE FESTIVAL IS DESIGNED TO SERVE AND BE ENJOYED BY THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF TORONTO'S GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY. SO ENJOY! (1991, 1)

Very much like San Francisco's festival Toronto's has also found the necessary material support and ingenuity to make it through seventeen years and counting. The text above calls forth the imagined community for support either financial or un/paid labor – the two main modes of community involvement in the running of any festival, outside of types of contributions, for example, advertising space traded for party or film screening venue, but also “contribute in any way you feel able.” Included in this text is the important statement that members of the community will be heard, should they wish to respond to the festival, which encourages critical feedback in order to improve it. This sets the level of responsiveness of the festival to its imagined community very high. Furthermore, the final sentence in the paragraph aims to draw a closer connection between the named constituency and the festival. Effectively, the festival aims to “serve” its constituency, and it can only do so if it also enjoys what it consumes. ‘Enjoy’ may be the most sensual word used in the entire text, and this I note only because of the festival's theme of sexuality. ‘Enjoy’ is the sexiest word, and it is finally given in the imperative tense as perhaps a duty, recalling Patricia White's assertion that attending such festivals becomes a “civic duty.”

Advertising in the first issue remains confined to restaurants, microbrewery, film and video production facilities and distributor, and community organizations.

David Walberg, whose company name of Pink Triangle Press publishes the main Toronto gay weekly *Xtra!*, is the declared designer of its ad, as is indicated on the back cover page. *Xtra!*'s logo is plainly recognizable and prompts the reading that it is an ad for the newspaper. There are two curious intersecting ovular statements. The smaller typed one reads, "Nourishing the arts and promoting the artists of the lesbian and gay communities since 1971," which is true only if *Xtra!*'s earlier and much more politicized incarnation *The Body Politic* is considered part of the same lineage.

The *Body Politic* went through an editorial crisis during and following the infamous scandal caused by the larger media's reaction to Gerald Hannon's investigative article on pedophilia titled "Men loving boys loving men," in which he claimed that the founder of the YMCA was a pedophile. In short, the name of the publication changed to *Xtra!*, and its articles shortened in length and lightened in seriousness – more party, gossip and personals, becoming as typical as any other gay scene publication found in other cities in North American.

What is most striking about the back cover is not that statement but rather the other larger typed text attributed to Oscar Wilde that reads, "All bad art is the result of good intentions." Wilde's name is written in all capitals, in the largest type in solid black, while the other text is in grey. The text has a very volatile ambivalence to it in its particular context on the back cover of a festival guide. It is indeed a strange quotation to choose from all of what Wilde wrote. Is this simply a frivolous camp gesture left to the ephemerality of a solitary quiet chuckle? Perhaps it is more of a subversive camp gesture by the less committed,

more distant gay jester, and comments on the well-meaningness of the festival itself – the last word on the new addition to the “gay and lesbian cultural scene”? Frivolity or mockery? The ambivalence persists.

The descriptions of the films and videos are strongly unmarked and marked according to race. However, racial categories are used only in the cases of the non-white. It seems clear from the text that the invisibility of ‘white,’ for it remains unmarked in language, makes whiteness the mentioned mainstream. Apparently, there are no white issues addressed in the works, but plenty of Black, Latino, Native and Asian challenges to be overcome. In this way, whiteness presupposes itself or becomes the universal ground for the play of racial difference.

6.0 Concluding Remarks

Not only is it the film and video programming but it is also the prose generated in and around the festival that contributes to the formation of particular audiences. Through this chapter I provided a textual analysis of the public discourse of the festivals and showed how it produces the signature of the festival and works to constitute an associated counterpublic.

I addressed in part the emergence of the festivals out of lesbian and gay film and video scenes, considered in earlier chapters, that then worked to produce counterpublics or audiences for the specific festivals. The use of the concept of counterpublic over community, I argue, speaks more precisely to the nature of the dynamic of film festivals organized around categories of minority sexuality

and permits us to analyze the movement of the concept of community throughout the festivals.

In this chapter I considered the relation of publicity and community, or the language of community in the context of the festivals. Building on discourse theory, Michael Warner provides a cogent theory of (reading) publics and counterpublics (Warner 2002), which extends discourse and queer theory. I addressed the seven points that Warner regarding the nature of publics and counterpublics, which play a central role in this chapter in relation to the festivals and their counter/publics. I then argued that the festivals and their originary counterpublics owe much to the activities of specific overlapping scenes, as theoretically articulated in the work of Will Straw and Alan Blum. While I have shown that the case film festivals share certain commonalities, in as much as they are all subsumed under the same festival type, but each also has its own contingent specificities that are evinced in the prose that circulates throughout the festivals and gives each festival its unique signature. The following chapter addresses the issue of taste and distinction within and between the lesbian and gay film festivals, but also between types of film festivals.

VI. On the Play of Distinction in LGBT Film and Video Festivals

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. - Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*

This chapter primarily addresses the operation of cultural capital and distinction in lesbian and gay film festivals, following and adapting some of the work of Pierre Bourdieu on French society of the 1960s and 70s. In this chapter, I argue that while international film festivals retain their own hierarchy of prestige that lends selected films a certain measured cultural capital, which in turn might be converted into economic capital, lesbian and gay film festivals operate within a sharply separate circuit with reduced capital in part due to their obligation to program films and videos of interest to community centered on identity, and in part due to the particular potential stigma (perhaps negative capital?) of minority, namely non-normative, sexualities. The two extra-aesthetic organizational aspects of community or identity and minority sexualities distinguish lesbian and gay film festivals from the generally larger international film festivals that claim to program simply the “best and most current films” in the world. LGBT film festivals have developed from at least two positions, namely (1) the “gay cinephilia” of an older *style* of gay identity and (2) a taste informed by more popular media, which together in any festival are often in tension. While the earlier festivals reveal a stronger sense of cinephilia in their programming, over the decades the festivals

have opened up to multiple types of media. Effectively, the exigencies of community themes and productions have worked to expand the original film-only festivals into film, video and even internet festivals, which has enabled a broader and more inclusive representation of members of the communities. Let us now turn to the Bourdieu's concepts of capital and distinction.

1.0 Introducing the Concepts of Cultural Capital and Distinction

As stated in the section on theoretical framework in the introduction, I am employing Bourdieu's work on fields of cultural production, cultural capital and distinction. I wish to address now the complicated play between so-called high and low cultural forms and types of media in relation to the changes in the festivals and their overall professionalization. How do the hybrid programs of films and videos matter, to whom? What are the stakes? To this end I am working through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of taste culture and cultural capital.

Bourdieu's theory permits a cogent articulation of the specific culture of film festivals organized around categories of minority sexualities. As argued throughout *Glances*, those added categories fundamentally distinguish the festivals from, in particular, the international film festivals, which implicitly claim to acknowledge simply the best films in the world, outside of any limiting social categories. The lesbian and gay film festivals aim to screen only films and videos of and for lesbians or gay men, or work that resonates with certain cultural affinities or practices, especially camp and other gay or lesbian cinephilic practices. Although the IFFs and LGBT film festivals may overlap in the occasional programming of select films, their fields are notably distinguished, as

argued further below. The two fields of cultural production have strikingly different selection criteria and aesthetic values. The explicit social orientation of the LGBT film festival complicates the latter's prestige in relation to festivals founded on more purely aesthetic values or commercial "free-market" values.

I wish to address first and adapt Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, and then his concept of distinction, to the idea of the lesbian and gay film festival, but also in contrast to international film festivals.²⁰¹ Other sections are dedicated to the specific circulation of capital in the field of cultural production of LGBT film festivals.

1.1 Cultural capital

In his article "The Forms of Capital," Bourdieu lays out his theory of cultural capital by differentiating it from economic and social capital. He argues,

[...] capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility (1997, 47; emphasis in original).

²⁰¹ Evidently, much of this analysis could be adapted to other community-oriented film festivals, for instance, women's, black and diasporic.

Taking the network of lesbian and gay film festivals as a particular field of cultural production, the three types of capital are readily identifiable within it.

(1) Economic capital enables the festivals to take place, as films and videos circulate from one festival to another in exhibition, for which tickets are sold and further distribution contracts signed. The economic capital would also reside in the success of the festival's fundraising campaigns – how much funding, from whom or what source? Certain festivals have received major donations from one or more patrons, such as Toronto's Inside/Out, which permits them a certain stability for planning their future editions. The balance between public and private sponsorship shifts yearly in the details.

(2) The social capital of lesbian and gay film festivals has increased over the past several years and is measured by the number of exclusive events restricted to types of donors and sponsors, where social networking takes place among peers. Moreover, the social capital would also extend to the social mandate of such community-oriented festivals. Such social events contribute to the building of relations between members of the constituencies and generally enriches the larger community by providing it a fest or feast. To this extent, the festivals can also be understood to have social value or capital.

(3) The cultural capital of the festivals stems from their prestige, their cultural value. How prestigious would it be to screen a film at, say, the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival? How does its cultural capital differ from, say, that bestowed by the Sundance festival? Bourdieu subdivides the concept of cultural capital into three forms, namely it exists,

[i]n the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee (Bourdieu 1997, 47; emphasis in original).

(a) While cultural capital can be learned, it also combines “the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition” (Bourdieu 1997, 49), which I translate into film culture as active connoisseurship (embodied cultural capital), particularly in the case of lesbian and gay scenes and their cultural practices. The practices of cinema- and festival-going contribute to a type of embodied cultural capital. Through going to the festivals and experiencing many films, the spectator accrues specialized knowledge in the form of connoisseurship, which might later be converted into economic capital by being hired as a curator or critic. (b) Objectified cultural capital would include anything produced by or on the festival, for example, program guides, t-shirts, posters, but also reviews or mentions in the media. The consumption and even collection of the films and texts on their attributes is objectified cultural capital. (c) Institutionalized cultural capital would include the signature of the festival itself, in the sense of what it means to a wide range of the constituency. This also could be manifest in the festival director or

artistic director. The festival's signature might also indicate the quality of the various associated parties, choice of cinemas, and general quality of the festival as an event. The institutionalized cultural capital regards how an institution bestows some objective category of merit, for example, the undergraduate degree from Harvard or the feature film selected for competition at the Cannes film festival.

Social capital stems from the scope and quality of social networking. One's social capital relates to how many and whom one knows, and their relative values. As Bourdieu writes, some people

are sought after for their social capital and, because they are well known, are worthy of being known ('I know him well'); they do not need to 'make the acquaintance' of all their 'acquaintances'; they are known to more people than they know, and their work of sociability, when it is exerted, is highly productive (1997, 53).

On the other hand, social capital concerns membership in a group, for example, the more selective and powerful the social network of the group, the more prestige. While major international film festivals (IFFs) offer many levels of membership to sponsors that involve invitations to exclusive events such as parties and screenings, LGBT film festivals offer similar exclusive events for social networking among peers.

1.2 Distinction

Distinction plays an important role in and between film festivals of any type of circuit, including IFFs and LGBT film festivals, among the many others. Particularly, within the context of lesbian and gay film festivals, there has developed a signature tension between cinephilic and popular tastes, as the festival's aim and programming have broadened. Bourdieu writes in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*,²⁰²

[...] the encounter with a work of art is not 'love at first sight' as is generally supposed, and the act of empathy, *Einfühlung*, which is the art-lover's pleasure, presupposes an act of cognition, a decoding operation, which implies the implementation of a cognitive acquirement, a cultural code (1984, 3).

I accept Bourdieu's main claim that aesthetic experience is largely learned, a result of nurture, and marked by various social difference, over the claim that it is given, innate, or a sensibility in the Kantian sense. My interest here is to adapt and develop the category of distinction to the cinema, particularly in the case of the competing circuits of film festivals as fields of cultural production.

Bourdieu argues that the modern "enchanted experience of culture" begs the question, that is, it presupposes itself without recognizing the fact and condition of its specific modes of cultural acquisition. Bourdieu focuses on the role of the

²⁰² The book is an extended critique of Kantian aesthetics and their naturalization in French culture.

“family” in the reproduction and transmission of taste. Recalling perhaps Duchamp’s teasing “retinal art,” Bourdieu writes on modern aesthetic apprehension,

The ‘eye’ is a product of history reproduced by education. This is true of the mode of artistic perception now accepted as legitimate, that is, the aesthetic disposition, the capacity to consider in and for themselves, as form rather than function, not only the works designated for such apprehension, i.e., legitimate works of art, but everything in the world, including cultural objects which are not yet consecrated – such as, at one time, primitive arts, or, nowadays, popular photography or kitsch – and natural objects (1984, 3).

To be sure, community-oriented film festivals trouble distinction. As they broaden their constituencies, they perform a complicated confluence of films and videos of relatively differing levels of taste and distinction, with the social documentary scheduled next to the art or independent feature film next to the amateur home movie, and so forth. In the case of the experimental film, which requires some expert knowledge or at the very least an openness to innovated film form, without which might invite a reception quite similar to Bourdieu’s description of certain experiences of modern painting or music, “A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason” (1984, 2). The appeal of the avant-garde, or experimental, or even auteur/independent films, is not quite universal among lesbians and gay men. Bourdieu posits,

Like the so-called naive painter who, operating outside the field and its specific traditions remains external to the history of art, the 'naive' spectator cannot attain a specific grasp of works of art which only have meaning or value – in relation to the specific history of an artistic tradition. The aesthetic disposition demanded by the products of a highly autonomous field of production is inseparable from a specific cultural competence (Bourdieu 1984, 4).

At LGBT film festivals, there is a learned hesitancy and cautious regarding the programming of such films and videos without special explanation and framing, as was discussed in the previous chapter.²⁰³ Before I consider the festivals, the media themselves present unique questions on the problem of distinction.

The highly technological media of film and video have troubled the category of high art from their beginnings. Arguments for and against photography, film and video as valid art media have circulated by critics with theoretical or capital investment on either side of the debate. Film, with its humble origin in the traveling circuses and penny arcades,²⁰⁴ can now be divided into four broad types with respect to any particular film's context of production, anticipated audience, and recognition: (1) industrially-made films, of the culture industry, sometimes called commercial or commercially oriented, destined to the broadest possible audiences; (2) art films made by auteur directors who are making a

²⁰³ I discuss the tension between cinephilic and popular tastes below.

²⁰⁴ See any book on the history of early cinema, for example, (Barnouw 1983).

claim for film²⁰⁵ as art and filmmaker as creative artist;²⁰⁶ (3) experimental or avant-garde films, which also make a claim for or against art, but with less of a concern, at times, for narrative and more of an influence from the visual arts, music and poetry than by novels or short stories; and (4) other non-fiction genres, such as documentary films, which very rarely ever make any claim to artistic status.

Video has its own humble origin and association to accessible broadcast television. Video art established itself as an outsider medium for art, particularly women's performance in the 1960s and 70s,²⁰⁷ and has kept a sharp distance from the more male-dominated experimental cinema during those years, with notable exceptions, for example, lesbian experimental filmmaker Barbara Hammer. To be sure, these new media were not immediately celebrated and accepted as a significant part of high culture. Their ambivalent positions in both the art world and popular culture will doubtless remain strong. The radical accessibility of digital video has opened up, perhaps arguably democratized, media production by enabling a larger number and, hopefully, variety of people to make videos outside of the highly expensive economy of professional filmmaking

²⁰⁵ Typically auteur directors engage innovative narrative form and respect the feature film length, with some exceptions.

²⁰⁶ The more recent phenomenon of independent filmmakers might, arguably, fit in this type, but often without as much high-art intention.

²⁰⁷ Barlow studies this in her article on feminist video (2003).

or video making.²⁰⁸ New lines of accessibility are drawn around those who have access to a digital camera, digital editing software and a home computer. While not wholly universal, an enlarged demographic now has much greater access to the tools for putting a film together. The new expanded number of lesbian and gay film festivals create a real demand for more content. Short films and videos are the simplest to program, either in groups of other shorts or before or after a feature. This is one area that the production boom in amateur and experimental lesbian and gay films and videos appears to be accommodating.

With such an expanded base of filmmakers, professional and amateur alike, has come the birth of a particular type of “festival film,” which speaks to a particular sort of institutional capital that poses the question, how does a festival circuit constitute a ‘festival film’? One study of the concept of the festival film posits two mutually somewhat antagonistic meanings, namely festival film as “a film exhibited *at* a festival” and intentionally “produced *for* the festivals” (Stringer 2003, 143; emphasis in original). While Stringer’s account is restricted to the case of international film festivals, which typically do not program short films, the community-ethos of lesbian and gay film festivals has grown to embrace short films, both in programs entirely of shorts and one or two as accompaniment to a feature film. Extending the argument of the previous chapter, these festivals qua

²⁰⁸ Directors of several LGBT film festivals address this issue in recent interviews (in Straayer 2005) and may be summarized as while the new media might be democratizing, videos are still chiefly made in western countries, the numbers have increased but the quality of the work is mediocre, except in Brazil where the festival uses digital video as part of a concerted outreach program.

festivals effectively call new filmmakers, films and videos into existence. The new counterpublics encourage the new content by necessity, since any festival thrives on new work. The radically eclectic nature of the film programming at these festivals, as is discussed below, besides professionally-made feature narrative, documentary, experimental short films and video art, also includes student and amateur films.²⁰⁹

Outside of the dismissive pejorative sense of the term 'festival film' in popular criticism, I would argue that in the case of the community-oriented film festival, the festival film does in fact exist. In the specific case of the lesbian and gay film festival the festival circuit was created in order to screen work that would not have otherwise been likely seen elsewhere. It is precisely this difference between the international film festivals and women's, black or LGBT film festivals that opens up other possibilities for the films that are selected and screened. The development of a significant international circuit of such festivals enables new sorts of films and videos to circulate and find a place for exhibition within it. The possibilities are quite different in the international film festival, where programs typically aim to show the "best films" made in the last twelve months or so. The categories for the programs are quite narrow or vague themes. There is in the end less opportunity, less programming time and space for "festival films" in such festivals, except by accident. While there may be some films that crossover

²⁰⁹ Perhaps one of the most successful amateur films was Jonathan Caouette's personal documentary *Tarnation* (2005), produced through the help of contacts at New York's MIX festival. It succeeded as a "crossover" film, namely from the lesbian and gay film festival circuit to limited theatrical release more broadly.

between the international and lesbian and gay film festival circuits, that is probably minor in comparison to those films that do not leave the LGBT circuit, do not find non-festival distribution and exhibition, and are restricted to online streaming and DVD release. From the point of view of the film industry, the wide exhibition of such films would not be financially viable. Simply put, the demographic would be too small to be economically lucrative.

According to Stringer, his notion of 'festival limbo' is the condition of a film remaining restricted to public exhibition in festivals, effectively never escaping the festival circuit by gaining distribution or release in other formats (Stringer 2003, 151). Community-oriented film festivals were founded largely as correctives to the culture industry's poor representation of the lives of their respective constituents and circulation of selected stereotype narratives and characters. The emergence of these new festival circuits encourages the production of films and videos by a wide spectrum of members of the communities and within a broad range of formal categories, for example ready-made commercial genres, documentary, experimental narrative and non-narrative, art films, and various types of short films.

The lesbian and gay film festivals were created to encourage such work. Within their specific circuit there is no pejorative view of the so-called festival film. In fact, the festivals themselves were created *for* their communities, and their films similarly. In short, these film festivals and their participating filmmakers were in the beginning more than grateful to have their films in limbo than nowhere public at all. The possibility of the organization of community media came a bit later,

particularly with the formation of San Francisco's Frameline, whose goal is to represent and distribute LGBT films and videos. I stress this here only because the fact of festival limbo would not be nearly as negative or pejorative in the lesbian and gay film festival circuit as it would be in that of the international film festivals. The expectations are not quite interchangeable. While the amateur short videos might remain content in festival limbo, larger productions, mainly feature or documentary films, today are seeking at least video or DVD release, if not theatrical run. Similar to Elsaesser's analysis of the limits to distribution for films that do not conform to the "Hollywood" meaning of entertainment, the network of festivals acts as important alternative modes of distribution themselves (2005, 88 f.). Some films only have a screen life within such festival circuits. Their producers might not have the funds for large or small-scale advertising campaigns, and consequently depend on the rumor mill and gossip of the festivals and newspaper or online reviews to promote their films. Some community-specific films have few alternatives to festivals to provide distribution.

The concepts of distinction and the three forms of capital are important analytical tools that I will be using below to understand the culture of lesbian and gay film festivals as such and in relation to other types of film festivals. I wish now to turn to the place of the LGBT film festival circuit and its relative cultural capital, both within its circuit and between festivals types.

2.0 Differentiated Festival Circuits

Not all film festivals are created equal in any sense of the word. As the first chapter brings out, there may be networks of international film festivals, but there

is also a strong hierarchy of individual festivals that set most of the agenda around the world. One of the major networks is regulated by the international organization FIAPF, which defines the A-list, comprising such festivals as Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Toronto, among others.²¹⁰ While there is a complicated constellation of distinguishing attributes that set these festivals off from other international film festivals, there are evidently many other types of film festivals and overlapping networks to consider. The first question addresses an added category to festival programming, for example, a national showcase within the festival, and its effect on the distinction of the films subsumed under the specific program within the international film festival. The second question addresses the community-oriented category of lesbian and gay film festivals and how this produces a certain diminished cultural capital.

Liz Czach writes on the apparent influence of large film festivals and their approach to programming on the development of the national canons of film (2004). There are many gradations of cultural capital associated to specific films in relation to what context in the program they are screened. Galas are highly coveted and quickly become a part of the promotional material of the film as it finds distribution contracts over various territories around the world. Apart from the happier distinctions that arise from festival programming, there are more ambivalent moments. Czach briefly discusses the perceived “ghetto effect” of certain extra-aesthetic categories of programming in international film festivals.

²¹⁰ See Appendix II for the full list of FIAPF-endorsed festivals.

Her study considered the case of the Perspective Canada showcase in the Toronto International Film Festival. As Czach argues,

If critical capital is accrued from being selected for a prestigious festival, further distinctions are determined through the film's placement within the festival structure. In the case of the noncompetitive Toronto festival, the Opening Night Gala slot is often considered one of the prime slots of the festival, and programs such as Galas, Special Presentations, and Masters are eagerly sought by distributors, producers, and filmmakers for the arrival in the mid-1970s of the Toronto International Film Festival (or the Festival of Festivals as it was initially known) coincides with the advent of Canadian cultural nationalism. In this period, the distinctiveness of Canadian cinema as Canadian was to be revealed the positioning of their films. In this hierarchy, regionally defined programs such as Planet Africa and Perspective Canada are often perceived as *ghettos for underperforming work* (2004, 82-83, my emphasis).

The two mentioned programs were not occasional in the festival, but rather annual, regular programs, one organized around Black diaspora and African cinema, and other around films that met certain criteria to be considered Canadian, including films from Quebec, as well as co-productions. The perception in this case is that the work was not grouped together under a topical theme but a constant theme of national showcase. While Perspectives Canada provided the festival-goer a convenient program of films made in the host country, its regular presence in the festival made it critically suspect. Was it there

to showcase major achievements in the country's cinema, or was it there to prop up mediocre work? The latter, according to Czach, left a lingering critical suspicion.

Moreover, Czach explains how the festival changed its programming policy to better accommodate the filmmakers, their perceptions, and their films. She writes,

In the 2003 Toronto International Film Festival, a large number of Canadian films were programmed outside of the Perspective Canada series. Canadian films were scattered in Gala slots, Special Presentations, the Master series, and a number of coproductions were presented in Contemporary World Cinema, Discovery, and Reel to Reel. This dispersal of Canadian films throughout the festival raises questions about the long-term necessity of a national cinema series. If a spotlight program is seen as a means of bolstering a national cinema, does broader integration signal the successful assimilation of Canadian film into world cinema? Is a dissolution of a national cinema series the ultimate sign of success? (Czach 2004, 82-83).

Czach points out the effects of a film or program of films becoming marked by a special category within a festival oriented towards an ethos of 'only showing the best films' or perhaps 'film for the sake of film.' By placing films in an extra-aesthetic category like nation or race as a constant fixture of the festival, the overall cultural capital of the program and its films diminished. An increase in their cultural capital would force them to circulate "freely" among all other films in

the festival, without any suspicion that they were programmed for extra-aesthetic, perhaps political, reasons. This case is very important to those festivals with a community orientation.

Not only is there an issue of prestige within any given film festival, but also between them and between different types of film festivals. While international film festivals aim to screen only “the best” films of the year, community-oriented film festivals always already have extra-aesthetic motives for programming their films and videos that exceed the ostensibly simple aim of the former. Lesbian and gay film festivals screen films of interest and relevance to their constituency, further confined by such issues as whether the film is gay or lesbian or made by a lesbian or gay man, among others. Moreover, while the extra-aesthetic category of community already diminishes the cultural capital and distinction of the lesbian and gay film festival, the main defining category of minority sexualities further stigmatized the festivals, particularly in the 1980s.

The frustrating and persistent stigma of the ghetto of lesbian and gay film festivals, a sort of tainted love, has been well documented throughout the history of the festivals. Not only were established filmmakers particularly concerned about being marked as gay or lesbian filmmakers, perhaps instead of “filmmakers who happen to be gay or lesbian,” so were the distribution companies that represented films of interest to lesbian and gay festival-goers. In his brief history of the NewFest on the occasion of its 15th anniversary edition, Daryl Chin recalls that,

What's startling to remember is how the festival began at a time when commercial factions in the motion picture industry were leery of LGBT representation, and avoided contact with NewFest. This made having gala opening and closing night events well nigh impossible for the first few years (NewFest 2003, 9).

Chin goes on to acknowledge how films provided by the British Film Institute, the mandate of which in part includes the exhibition of British films abroad,²¹¹ saved the festival in such dire times. As the 1990s continued, the idea of the "gay niche" emerged and held enormous commercial sway.²¹² Business, and specifically in this case the film industry, began to understand the financially lucrative potential of pandering to this new niche, instead of fearing and avoiding it. To be sure, the culture industry recognized and seized upon a new opportunity that continues into the new millennium. The original distance between commercial distributors and lesbian and gay film festivals must have had its origin in the industry's fear of negative financial repercussions for any association of their film or films with such festivals. In Bourdieu's terms, the film industry imagined that the cultural capital gained at a lesbian and gay film festival gala, or other place in the program, would convert poorly into economic capital, since the association with lesbians and gay men would diminish its appeal to the larger paying public beyond the festivals.

²¹¹ Other national agencies include Germany's Goethe Institut and Canada's Canada Council for the Arts, among others.

²¹² Several detailed studies of the rise of the idea of this niche have now been published, especially Katherine Sender (2005).

Perhaps the most famous documented case of a gay or lesbian filmmaker's refusal to permit his or her film to screen at a lesbian and gay film festival concerns the Belgian *auteure* director Chantal Akerman.²¹³ Akerman made her first films in the late 1960s with *Saute ma ville* (1968) and nearly one dozen during the 1970s, including the feature length *je tu il elle* (1974) and 201-minute long *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975). Starting in the 1970s and 80s she was regularly interviewed for such prestigious film and art journals as *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Artforum*. To be sure, Akerman identifies strongly with the artistic approach to film particularly with regards to experimentation in narrative.²¹⁴ Moreover, her professional recognition seems restricted to important international film festivals, such as Berlin (nomination for the Golden Bear, not the Teddy, in 1989), Venice (retrospective and Golden Lion nomination in 1991),²¹⁵ Torino (FIPRESCI prize in 1994), Karlovy Vary (jury prize in 1996), among more recent others.

²¹³ While I am a great fan of Akerman's work, I am using this highly public case to represent also other LGBT filmmakers generally at all stages in their careers. The case is very rich for this study of the play of distinction and capital in the lesbian and gay film festivals, through the questions and tensions that it reveals.

²¹⁴ Her early stay in New York City brought her into contact with the filmmakers centered at the Anthology Film Archives, particularly the work of Michael Snow, Andy Warhol, Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas, which Akerman cites as influential on her own work.

²¹⁵ Akerman was designated president of the International Jury of the Orizzonti section at the 65th edition of the Venice Film Festival in 2008.

Martha Gever makes reference to a controversial moment in the history of the New York Gay Film Festival, when its director Peter Lowy was refused by the filmmaker to screen her film in the 1984 edition of festival. Gever writes,

[...] I've preserved another item that appeared in the *Village Voice* in late 1984,²¹⁶ detailing the refusal of Belgian filmmaker Chantal Akerman to have her film *je tu il elle* screened at the New York Gay Film Festival. According to the article, she told the festival director, "This is not a business decision... but a moral and ethical one. I will not be ghettoized." No artist wants her work "ghettoized," and Akerman's choice to withhold her film from a lesbian and gay film festival is hardly unique. What is uncommon in this case is that Akerman's response was documented whereas most discussions along these lines are left unrecorded. The withdrawal of films from lesbian and/or gay events usually goes on behind the scenes, although most frequently distributors – not filmmakers – are the leery parties, arguing that a "lesbian" label will hamper potential screening opportunities and box office receipts (1990, 198).

Evidently, Akerman perceived nothing advantageous at the time to screening her film in the NYGFF. One filmmaker's ghetto might be another's paradise. I am thinking here of UK filmmaker Pratibha Parmar's well-known statement that "[LGBT film festivals are] often the only place we can get our work screened and affirmed." Different (lesbian) filmmakers have different professional identities, different expectations for their work and relations to their publics or

²¹⁶ See critic Richard Goldstein's article "Et Tu Chantal" (1984).

counterpublics. Akerman's intended affirmation was located elsewhere at that time for that film.²¹⁷ Its cultural capital would come from the recognition from another type of festival and screening, more centered on experimental art film.

Gever touches on the type of distinction and capital that Akerman might have been seeking, when she writes,

Although not a coming out story, the Akerman/New York Gay Film Festival anecdote suggests many of the complicated issues entailed in assertions of or constraints imposed by lesbian identities. In defense of Akerman, it is conceivable that she was anticipating another kind of New York premiere for *je tu il elle*, one that would attract the all-too-important reviews in the *New York Times* and other power-brokering mass media publications which, in 1984, works in the Gay Film Festival never received but are necessary for the successful distribution of a feature film, even a risky, highly unconventional one like Akerman's. Similar sentiments are often expressed as the reasons behind the reluctance of many distributors and a few filmmakers to have work introduced to the public at explicitly lesbian events. But the rationale, even if accurate, reduces the question to economic terms, which may be relevant (a consideration that I will return to later) but remain inadequate to an investigation of the ambivalences of a cultural identity that is based on the concept of deviant sexuality (Gever 1990, 198-199).

²¹⁷ According to her filmography, the film screened in 1988 at Boston's gay film festival without incident.

Considering Akerman's professional position as an auteure director,²¹⁸ she is clearly much more familiar with the art film circuit of international film festivals and museum screenings than the identity-centered lesbian and gay film festivals. Is it more a question of her lesbian sexuality or her interest in having her films receive the most cinephilic attention and prestige through the international film festival circuit? While her work engages sexuality in a very broad sense with much nuance, her first commitment appears to be to the distinction bestowed through professional IFFs. All other types of festivals and screenings follow in rank.²¹⁹

Critic Gary Morris mentions a screening of one of Akerman's films in a lesbian and gay film festival,

Akerman, one of the great filmmakers working today, has proven problematic to those who wish to pigeonhole, if not assimilate her, because she's refused to be ghettoized as a "lesbian director." It's surely good news that she's allowed *Jeanne Dielman* to be shown in this year's festival, given her history of pulling her films from stated queer venues.

²¹⁸ Even though I am gendering 'auteur' female here, Akerman refers to herself in the French as 'un cinéaste' in the masculine.

²¹⁹ In comparison, the American lesbian experimental filmmaker Barbara Hammer apparently has no hesitation in allowing her films to be screened in lesbian and gay film festivals, from the early days of programmer Michael Lumpkin of San Francisco's festival and the many premieres and retrospectives of her work since then. Hammer's films are typically short in length and are less engaged in narrative experimentation than Akerman's work.

The fact that this epic about the agonizingly slow breakdown of a middle-class woman is almost impossible to see theatrically and is not available on video makes it — like much of the Queer Innovators programs — essential viewing (Morris 1998).

Morris' mention of Akerman is typical of those critics writing on LGBT films inasmuch as he brings to light the rarity of one of her films screening in a lesbian and gay film festival but also her fear of being “ghettoized” by a category of sexuality. Doubtless, such “Queer Innovators” programs are a tough sell at the larger LGBT festivals, since they presuppose a certain level of expert knowledge of the field of lesbian and gay films as well as an openness to formal innovation, as I discuss below.

The economic capital of lesbian and gay film festivals has been under suspicion for decades, with public funding agencies accommodating or refusing to recognize them. Arts funding agencies have required some explanation and justification to consider community-oriented work valid for funding under their original mandates. How valid could the institutional capital be of lesbian and gay film festivals? The culture wars of the 1980s and 90s forced most public and private agencies to sharpen their funding criteria (Duggan 1994). As identity became such an important theme in the fine and media arts, minority identities became visibly set off from those characterized as: presupposed natural (by tradition, convention, or Bourdieu's education), typically white, heteronormative, male concerns. The problem then became, how to justify to the agencies the new types of identity art and films. A continuing and compelling case is described by

festival directors Charline (Charlie) Boudreau and Katharine Setzer who have stated, on their own lesbian and gay film festival,

Image+Nation receives operational funding on the federal level from the Canada Council for the Arts, on the provincial level for promotional use, and also some funding from the city of Montreal. We have never gotten arts funding from the province of Quebec's cultural institutions, as they do not fund "sociological festivals." This is obviously detrimental to our medium- and long-term growth as an event (in Straayer 2005, 585).

In such a festival city as Montreal, where public funding is significant and coveted from all levels of government, the fact of a fairly large film festival's not receiving any funds takes on special meaning. Curiously, there is no place for a lesbian and gay film festival in Quebec's officially funded culture. Whereas the Regina festival was given a small grant from its provincial public arts funding agency, Montreal's Image&Nation has always been refused such funding from its similar agency (SODEC) for uncertain reasons. In the program guide for Image&Nation III in 1990, le Festival du cinéma et de la vidéo gais et lesbiens de Montréal the introduction states the problem quite boldly,

Nous avons établi avec les organismes collaborateurs un climat de confiance assurant ainsi notre autonomie de production. Notre Festival témoigne de plusieurs problématiques d'intérêt pour la communauté gaie et lesbienne. Cependant, notre programmation a toujours su éviter la getthoisation. S'il y a getthoisation, elle vient de la part des institutions gouvernementales qui nous marginalisent en refusant obstinément de

nous financer. Ell[e]s refusent par le fait même, de reconnaître un événement culturel majeur de la communauté gaie et lesbienne. DGLQ étant un organisme pouvant servir de lien entre notre communauté et l'ensemble du milieu culturel québécois (1990, 6)

(We have established with our collaborating organizations a climate of confidence that assures our autonomy. Our festival serves as a forum for several issues of interest to the gay and lesbian community. However, our programming has always aimed to avoid ghettoization. If there is any ghettoization it is on the part of the government institutions that marginalize us by obstinately refusing to fund us. They refuse by this to recognize a major cultural event of the gay and lesbian community. DGLQ being an organization able to serve as a link between our community and the whole Québécois cultural milieu.)

The year following, in the 4th edition's guide, the organizers state,

we have paid special attention to the quality of the programming and of its presentation, even though our resources are very limited, since we still have not received any help from Quebec or Montreal cultural institutions, and this for the fourth year (1991, 5, quotation in both English and French).

To be sure, such comments display a considerable impatience with the provincial and municipal funding agencies, an impatience rarely articulated so explicitly.

In spite of the fact that several notable arms-length publicly funded film or arts institutions to some extent sponsor the festival, particularly the National Film Board of Canada (NFB)²²⁰ and the Cinémathèque québécoise, the festival was unsuccessful in obtaining public funding that would be obtained by other festivals of comparable size. Here the question of community grates against the grain of the larger project of the Québécois as (one) nation.

The charge that Image&Nation is “sociological” stands out. What makes a LGBT film festival more sociological than, say, a recognized international film festival in the same city? In what respects is the annual festival “Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois,” which showcases québécois films made in the province over the last twelve months, not sociological? While every festival is by its very nature social, ‘sociological’ carries with it some sort of program of study. How would lesbian and gay film festivals produce (sociological) knowledge, or is it simply a problem with any festival organized around categories of particular identities or that exceed aesthetic experience, for example, community-oriented media and festivals? It seems evident that it is the latter case, since it would be hard to imagine even the best social documentary film festival capable of producing sociological work itself.

Unlike the vast majority of regions in the rest of Canada and the United States, Quebec has come to define its purpose as the protector of the French language in North America, a position sometimes called linguistic nationalism. The culture wars there have taken on quite a different meaning, namely one of protecting the

²²⁰ The French-language version of NFB is ONF (Office national du film).

majority against its potential cultural genocide in the face of the overwhelming presence of English-speaking culture that dominates the rest of the continent. Interpretations of this position are represented in the province's cultural policy, and in particular in the criteria of SODEC regarding the funding of film festivals in the province. Let us consider the policy itself. From section 4 on financing film festivals in SODEC's report, the festivals must,

- favoriser l'accès à une cinématographie diversifiée (favor access to a diverse body of films);
- contribuer à élargir l'offre cinématographique sur le territoire où se tient le festival (contribute to the broadening of the range of films offered in the region where the festival is taking place);
- diversifier la clientèle et préparer les publics de demain (diversify the cliental and prepare the publics of tomorrow);
- contribuer à la promotion du cinéma québécois (contribute to the promotion of Québécois cinema) (SODEC 2007, my translation into English).

The requirements for the funding of film festivals are fairly generic in their aim to contribute something new to their respective regions, develop new publics and bolster local filmmakers and filmmaking. One national cinema is given emphasis over all others, encouraging familiarity in the province with its cinema. Furthermore, SODEC explicitly specifies its priorities as well as those types of festivals that it does not fund. The report states,

La Société accorde prioritairement son soutien aux festivals généralistes ainsi qu'à certains festivals spécialisés dont ceux consacrés au documentaire, au film pour enfants, au film sur l'art, au film d'animation et au court métrage. Elle concentre ses ressources dans la consolidation des festivals déjà soutenus. *Les festivals thématiques, autres que ceux portant sur le cinéma québécois et celui des Premières nations, sont exclus* (SODEC 2007, my emphasis).

(SODEC gives priority to the support of general festivals as well as certain specialized festivals focused on documentary cinema, children's films, films on art, animation, and short films. SODEC concentrates its resources on festivals already supported. *Thematic festivals, other than those with emphasis on Québécois or First Nations cinema, are excluded.*)

Since lesbian and gay film festivals fall into the category of thematic festivals, and none of the exceptions apply, along with many other possible festivals, it is excluded from the possibility of funding from SODEC. Apart from the requirement that the festivals must be non-profit, SODEC stipulates furthermore,²²¹

- la programmation du festival est diversifiée et principalement constituée de productions récentes (deux ans ou moins) (festival programming must demonstrate a diversity and put its emphasis on productions made within the last two years);

²²¹ I have left out a few requirements that Image&Nation clearly satisfy, such as mixed private and public funding, at least two consecutive editions, and a proven administration.

- le festival a des retombées sur les plans professionnels – particulièrement à Montréal et à Québec – et culturel (the festival must have an impact on the cultural and professional sectors, particularly in Montreal and Quebec City);
- *une partie significative de la programmation* est accessible à un public francophone, spécifiquement les films d'ouverture et de clôture du festival (A *significant part of the programming* must be accessible to a French-speaking public, specifically the opening and closing films of the festival) (SODEC 2007, my translation).

Apparently, the festival is seen as failing the criterion of art-for-art's sake by organizing itself around an unsupported “theme”, and consequently simply falls outside of the public policy mandate of SODEC, in spite of the enormous, proven success of the festival.²²² It is difficult to explain how or why such a unique festival in the province could be ignored so completely by SODEC and the cultural elite of the province.

The different film festival circuits or networks are different fields of cultural production with complicated tensions and relative distinction and cultural capital between them. The international film festivals certainly have their stars, the women's film festivals too, and of course certain lesbian and gay film festivals outshine others, but the different types of festivals also carry varying differentials of capital between them. The introduction of extra-aesthetic categories, such as

²²² Chantal Nadeau has written on Québécois film culture and its “hetero-masculinist national heritage” (see Nadeau 1999).

community, tarnishes the value of annual festival programs and those festivals organized around those categories themselves. Like the annual Canadian cinema program in the Toronto International Film Festival, there is a sense of “underperforming” films that have made it safely to the festival but only by virtue of the special “ghetto.” Akerman’s use and refusal of various types of film festivals brings out the complicated tensions between them, and how professional artistic identity can be weighed against personal sexual identity. Should the lesbian filmmaker Akerman screen her films in “high art” contexts, queer film festivals, women’s film festivals, or all of them? The Image&Nation festival in Montreal poses a problem in the face of public funding policy that does not recognize the festival as a funding priority in spite of its remarkable relative success. Apparently, this nation has no place for transnational sexual identities, but finds one for its own language-based identity and another for First Nations.

2.1 New Queer Cinema (1992-2000)

While there was one “gay new wave”²²³ in the mid-1980s, it predated the significant expansion and growth of lesbian and gay film festivals. In 1992 B. Ruby Rich touched a cord with her famous review in which she presented evidence for a broad approach to filmmaking, and fresh new films, that she named the “new queer cinema.” It was originally published as a survey of the 1991-2 international film festival circuit in the *Village Voice* and was promoting a selection of films about to screen in the new directors series at the Museum of

²²³ This phrase is used by critic Goldstein in his *Village Voice* review article “The Gay New Wave” (1986).

Modern Art in New York City. This case is especially compelling when situated in the context of the complicated play of institutional capital around a number of festival circuits, the MoMA, and the *Village Voice* (later also the academic journal *Sight and Sound*) as well as the embodied capital of the critic herself.

Borrowing from Czach's analysis of the influence of international film festival programming on national cinema canon formation, I would like to consider briefly a crucial text to new queer cinema, namely Ruby Rich's 1992 article "A Queer Sensation: New Gay Film." Her text was written for the *Village Voice* as a review of the state of new lesbian and gay work across several film festivals, namely Sundance Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), and the Amsterdam Gay and Lesbian Film Festival²²⁴ (also known as the Roze Filmdagen [pink film days]). In the review, Rich attempts to define the overriding characteristics and tendencies exhibited by the various films that she includes in her critique.²²⁵ The original aim of Rich's article was to boost the then-upcoming Museum of Modern Art 'New Directors' series that had four of the mentioned films programmed in New York City and highlight a new trend to queer-friendly cinephiles in the Big Apple.

Its success exceeded its local intention and quickly became, in a sense, a rally cry for a new generation of queer filmmakers and, arguably, also contributed to

²²⁴ Festival started in 1996, when the third edition of the former International Gay and Lesbian Filmfestival Holland (1986, 1991) failed to materialize.

²²⁵ Rich noticed a trend towards narrative experimentation and innovation, energy, and vague sexualities.

constituting a new canon of queer films. It touched a nerve and was quickly republished under the new title “New Queer Cinema” in the September issue of *Sight and Sound* that year. Rich’s mention of screenings at the MOMA of work by several of the new directors intimates the important cultural capital bestowed by the institution.²²⁶ To be sure, the cultural distinction through institutional capital that a screening at the MOMA affords should not be underestimated. Indeed, the new directors screening there have arrived.

Rich’s article articulated a certain newness and wish at the time. ‘Queer’ and ‘queer theory’ still had critical edge. Teresa de Lauretis had only just coined the latter phrase. The ‘new queer cinema’ as an idea and as a canon of films helped to establish a sophisticated art-cinema, queer through and through. The films of the queer canon challenged conventional expectations and moved away from the more popular lesbian and gay feature films. Rich’s position as a critic, respected both as a journalist and in film academic circles, enabled a consensual flow between. The critical practice entails engaging the network of film festivals, sifting through the many titles, sensing the buzz, anticipating future trends and taste. As Czach observes, this is a common process between culturally-valued festivals, critics and academia.²²⁷ Rich’s text was clearly part of the “prose” produced around film festival circuits and serves to constitute in part a new type of

²²⁶ Haidee Wasson, in her book on the MOMA’s invention of art-cinema, demonstrates eloquently the importance of the institution in establishing and propagating the concept in the United States (2005).

²²⁷ In the previous chapter we briefly reviewed some of the extra-academic critical work of Rich, Dyer and Waugh.

crossover film with representations of understated or vague sexualities. The main proof for the cogency of Rich's article would be the sheer number of publications and university film courses that share the name.

3.0 Cinephilia, Popular Taste, and Civic Duty at the Festival

"Cinephilia – the love of movies as an art form – has become an obsolete pastime, or, for the days of Jean-Luc Godard" – Susan Sontag, "The Decay of Cinema"

I would like now to question the locations of and tensions between two specific taste cultures that tend to characterize lesbian and gay film festivals, namely (1) gay and lesbian cinephilia and (2) a taste for popular forms of cinema. I argue here that this tension between taste cultures generally defines the large lesbian and gay film festivals of today, in a unique play of types of capital. While this section concerns a more theoretical treatment of these issues, the following section will analyze the differences between the first wave of gay film festivals, programmed according to a strong gay cinephilia, and the second wave of LGBT film festivals that have a greater sense of spectatorship as a "civic duty" (White 1999).

In her 1996 *New York Times* article "The Decay of Cinema," critic Susan Sontag writes on the state of contemporary cinema and the decline of the practice of cinephilia, "that very specific kind of love that cinema inspired" (1996, SM60). The critique is replete with sentiments of nostalgia and loss. She traces the history of cinephilia back to 1950s France and the birth of celebrated film journal *Cahiers du cinéma*, the enthusiasm for which spread to other countries around

the world, which in turn contributed to the founding of many cinematheques and waves of art cinema in the 1960s and 70s. The experience of the cinephile owes much to older conventions of reception, namely visiting a theatre, sitting among anonymous strangers, and enjoying the thrill of the largeness of the image. Contemporary changes in technologies of reception, for example, the home video or DVD, fundamentally alter the “erotic and ruminative” experience of the darkened cinema. The cinephile, for Sontag, worshiped and learned from movies, even as a “fanatic” or “apostle” for the medium. Critical film viewing was an important part of the cinephile’s life. Furthermore, she laments,

[...] you hardly find anymore, at least among the young, the distinctive cinephilic love of movies that is not simply love of but a certain *taste* in films (grounded in a vast appetite for seeing and reseeing as much as possible of cinema’s glorious past). Cinephilia itself has come under attack, as something quaint, outmoded, snobbish (1996, SM60).

Not only has the practice of cinephilia waned, but filmmaking itself has shifted away from the art film. Sontag notes, “now the balance has tipped decisively in favor of cinema as an industry” (1998, SM60). To be sure, it is a troubling note on which to end her article that was also meant as a centenary commemoration of the birth of cinema.

According to Sontag, there was once a significant caste of film-lovers, cinephiles, whose obsessive dedication to innovative, intelligent films is named the practice of cinephilia, an act of film-love. On the one hand, the cinephile performs her or his identity through the activities of cinephilia. Without doubt, this intense film-

love has driven many of the people behind the scenes at film festivals to become film programmers and festival directors, among other roles.²²⁸ If Mussolini had disliked the medium, or found it too lowbrow, would the early Venice festival have been organized and funded?

In his recent article “AIDS and Gay Cinephilia” (2003), Roger Hallas provides an important analysis of how certain gay men and lesbians engage films and videos, both in terms of reception and as producers. He further narrows the meaning of cinephilia when he offers the definition of ‘gay cinephilia’ as

[...] the set of gay cultural practices revolving around a collectively shared passion for cinema and its history [...] The specific advantage in deploying the concept of gay cinephilia in the analysis of these films lies in its ability to account for their cinematic meaning and affect in terms of a set of cultural practices shared by both filmmakers and audiences. Moreover, cinephilia is a dynamic that, I would argue, structures the reading practices of gay viewers and the formal techniques taken up by gay filmmakers (Hallas 2003, 89).

I am somewhat hesitant to use the concept of gay or lesbian cinephilia without making some clarification. Perhaps the best way to understand, say, gay cinephilia is by asking just what makes it gay. A significant investment in a specific constellation of gay cultural practices is necessary, and precisely this

²²⁸ Sontag’s article prompted a continuing series of responses on the fate of cinema and cinephilia, including De Valck’s anthology (2003), which also includes a study of the Rotterdam IFF.

exceeds Sontag's approach to defining cinephilia, and so would of course lesbian cinephilia. Sontag herself presents a fascinating case as a very famous critic "who happened to be" bisexual or lesbian. The cinephilia that she advocates above is curiously unmarked sexually. The investment in the culture of minority sexual identities is surely lacking. Perhaps her fleeting fascination with camp gives it away?²²⁹ My point here, as a clarification, is that gay or lesbian cinephilia requires a special investment in the (mainly historical) culture of gay men or lesbians, in how certain films are found and received. To be sure, cinephilia of whatever type requires cultivation, as Bourdieu would remind us.

There is no single gay cinephilia or lesbian cinephilia, but rather a wide multiplicity of cinephilic practices centered on particular strategies of reception. While cinephilia is a love that exceeds any particular sexuality, what might be gay or lesbian cinephilia? How should it be framed? Following in part Bourdieu, I am positing gay or lesbian cinephilia as a largely cultivated activity that is shared among those gay men or lesbians who choose to participate. On the one hand, it is a subjective passion for the cinema with traits that Sontag lays out above, and on the other hand, in the particular case of gays or lesbians, it may also offer a larger social aspect, among the gay or lesbian cinephiles. To be sure, not all gays and lesbians are cinephiles, and there are likely different types of cinephilia among different groups, according to a wide range of affinities and dislikes. The broadened counterpublics of the current lesbian and gay film festivals exceed

²²⁹ Sontag is by no means flattering to gay men and gay camp in her essay "Notes on Camp" (1964).

cinephilia of all types. With the greater obligation to a larger community, “to fill the seats,” a compromise on gay and lesbian cinephilia was needed, and many more films of a more popular taste were admitted to the festivals.²³⁰

Film scholar Brett Farmer explores the pre-Stonewall practices of gay reception, and especially the question of cinephilia, in an interview with Annamarie Jagose (2001). He summarizes his account of the historical formation of these practices thus,

Organized around the consumption of what, as you note, is a vigorously heterocentrist cultural form, gay spectatorship would seem fundamentally riven by paradox. In fact, from the perspective of a certain tradition of film theory where cinema is characterized as a massively functioning apparatus for the production of phallic heterosexual identification, gay spectatorship might even seem a veritable contradiction in terms. Yet, it is precisely this contradictory tension that grounds gay spectatorship and furnishes much of its structural dynamism. In the face of a representational system anchored in compulsory heterosexuality and predicated, more often than not, on the explicit exclusion of homosexual desire, gay audiences of Hollywood film have been forced to engage resistant reception practices and to develop a versatile repertoire of

²³⁰ Many gay and lesbian film critics have written on this curious dilemma of spectators who are reluctant, if not outright resistant, to explore the cinephilic pleasures of festival programming. Ruby Rich, for example, has addressed this in several articles, one of which includes a reference to the case of the “lesbian riot,” discussed at length earlier (1999).

counternormative reading processes. Camp, subtextual interrogation, star gossip, intertextual referencing and other such forms of resistant reading have been widely used by gay spectators to combat cinematic heterocentrism and to reconstitute film with a variety of gay significances (Jagose 2001).

My interest here in the notion of gay or lesbian cinephilia is not to detail a psychological theory of resistant gay or lesbian reception, but rather to show how remaining types of gay or lesbian cinephilia informed the development of lesbian and gay film festivals. The first gay film festivals were formed in the late 1970s, during the waning end of cinephilia.

Hallas notes the crucial relationship between experimental work and the context of LGBT film festivals,

In their support and development of these types of experimental films and videos as a major part of their programming, lesbian and gay film festivals have nurtured a space in which the dynamics of gay spectatorship – including fantasy, appropriation, fragmentation, and reconstitution – continue in a variety of different forms. The lesbian and gay film festival constitutes an important space of confluence for lesbian and gay reading strategies and aesthetic practice, in that many film- and videomakers demonstrate in their work an engagement with cinema that their festival audiences share and sustain. The name of such an engagement, I would argue, is *cinephilia* (Hallas 2003, 92).

The screening of gay and lesbian experimental films at a festival presupposes gay and lesbian cinephiles, which in the end is usually played out. In her insightful article "Collision, Catastrophe, Celebration: The Relationship between Gay and Lesbian Film Festivals and Their Publics" (1999), Ruby Rich addresses these différends between the taste and expectations of the audience members and the programmers. She writes,

The festivals predominant in the seventies and eighties, conceived as political interventions and playing to small, self-selected audiences, have morphed into the large events of the nineties, complete with corporate sponsors and huge audiences that return annually and grow exponentially [...] What happens when audiences reject programmers' choices? Why does this dissonance occur? What are the implications and consequences? (1999, 79).

For Rich, a critic and cinephile of many hats, the challenge posed is how to deal with anti-cinephilic sensibilities and reactions in the broadened lesbian and gay film festivals. The statistic for the Los Angeles festival indicates that 80% of the respondents do not go to the cinema at any other time of the year (Brooke 1998). The only cinema that they will visit in the entire year will be in the context of the festival. While Los Angeles might stand for the least cinephilic lesbian and gay festival audiences, other large festivals are not so far behind. I am not so concerned with the fact and cultural importance of gay and lesbian cinephilia, which still finds some space within the large festivals (classic Hollywood, camp

films, queer auteur directors, and so forth), but rather the rise of a (anti-cinephilic) popular taste, and especially the tensions between the two.

In the context of a community-oriented festival, professional medium-specific hierarchies are often displaced, even subsumed under some relevant higher community theme. Feature films are programmed alongside art videos, fiction and documentary films are put into competition with one another, amateur home movies next to experimental films, to give a sense of the fascinating combinations of diverse films, videos and television.²³¹ This produces a wild hybridity of genres, media and tastes, all under one festival. Always attentive to the fragile position of art video in relation to feature film, artist-critic Andrew Paterson observes, “As it is easier to refer to a ‘film festival’ rather than a ‘film and video festival,’ it is also less of a mouthful to say ‘Queer’ rather than ‘lesbian and gay’” (Paterson 1997, 15). He forgives anyone who might slip and reduce the name of a festival to one medium or sexuality for the sake of verbal expediency.

Let us consider the changes of name with their accompanying changes of address. The names or titles of the festivals have shifted significantly since their founding, which makes them difficult to discuss with precision, difficult to put into language, for we are always wondering what any given festival called itself at any given time. The changes and slippage are telling. They tell us much about their highly situated, often contested, discursive contexts.

²³¹ Some popular television programs would include *The L Word* (USA 2004-), *Queer as Folk* (UK 1999-2000; USA 2000-2005), *Will and Grace* (USA 1998-2006), and *Ellen* (USA 1994-1998).

Why and on what grounds have “film and video” festivals combined their media? The act of bringing video into the film festival radically shakes any tacitly presupposed media purity, and only allows their combination transmedially according to their overriding themes. This political gesture is still contested by media purists. From a professional art or film theoretical standpoint the discourses are distinct. Film and video have separate histories and aims. Filmmakers and critics themselves have traditionally perceived video as the poor younger cousin, a medium whose relatively easy access makes it more appropriate for training exercises, ephemeral documentary, or domestic use. Video artists situate their work in contemporary art, ranging from performance to installation art, stemming from 1970s feminism and gay liberation. Another stream of video comes directly from political activism, namely using video as a medium for getting one’s message out and circulating to affect social change or simply to document one’s movement.

From the early women’s film festival and the gay film festival came the new hybrid of the lesbian and gay film festival during the late 1980s. The early gay film festivals were typically started by gay men, often filmmakers or film buffs themselves, sometimes professional programmers from other film organizations (for example, Quandt 1986). Their programming was led by their own interests, which had a gendered bias. Women protested the relative invisibility and underrepresentation of lesbian films and videos in such festivals and became more active at higher levels of administration and programming within them. Under the sinister specter of AIDS and its devastating effects on the LGBT

community and its organization, the gay film festival, among others, opened up to include lesbian work and heighten lesbian visibility.

Gay and lesbian cinephilia or the connoisseurship of cinema: the queer aesthete. Gay and lesbian cultural and artistic connoisseurship, and its cultivation, has played a significant part in gay and lesbian identities for a very long time. It plays an important role in explaining the interest in forming, in this case, the festivals and their particular resonance with their audiences. A related phenomenon might be the clear overlap of expertise at various festivals in a given city. Many of those involved in the lesbian and gay film festival are often also involved in others. Their expertise is shared and dispersed among festivals. To be sure, the cultural capital earned from the ongoing practices of cinephilia are valued and convertible into (sometimes paid) curating and programming positions among the various film festival circuits.

Few lesbian and gay film festivals ever forefront a preference for formal innovation or narrative experimentation in their programming, with New York City's MIX and perhaps Berlin's LesbenFilm being very rare exceptions. Schulman and Hubbard, the founders of MIX, argue that queer people ought to recognize the important affinities between (queer) experimental film, and now other media, and queerness itself (MIX 1987). The plea is well taken by those already involved, but the large majority of festival-goers of an everyday popular taste ignore it.

In his social critique of modern bourgeois culture, and particularly aesthetic experience, Bourdieu writes,

The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences (Bourdieu 1984, 7).

Lesbian and gay film festivals, in particular, exceed cinephilia in their necessary appeal to the broadened counterpublics, which may include queer cinephiles but also includes many less engaged in art films and camp and more appreciative of gay and lesbian narrative forms derived and adapted from popular cinema. Part of this necessary appeal is tied to the economic capital of “filling seats” for the survival of the festival itself, once it took the risk to expand. Such film festivals simply cannot aim to show “the best” films of the year, as in international film festivals, but rather must address the complicated combination of cinephiles and non-cinephiles that constitute their counterpublics. The constraints, limits and tensions in the festival programming are very real.

Touching the very question of narrative,²³² it is crucial to notice how these festivals organized around sexual identity call forth and encourage certain

²³² Many have written on the importance of narrative in subjective identity formation in general. I especially recommend Sean O’Connell’s *OutSpeak: Narrating Identities that Matter* in which he develops an account of narrative specific to queer identities through the work of Ricoeur, Butler, among others (2001).

genres, especially the ubiquitous coming-out feature film, a queer descendent of the coming-of-age narrative. Others would include biographical features or documentaries and more movement-oriented social documentaries. While all films and videos in lesbian and gay film festivals engage some aspect of LGBT identity in some respect, otherwise there would be little cogency to their place in programs, the mentioned genres have a strong emphasis on becoming.²³³ The coming-out film is a common, popular fixture of the festivals, typically providing a sentimental moment of nostalgia, lived or simply wished. Festival director Stephen Gutwillig in Los Angeles addresses this issue when he writes,

Despite being the center of American film production, L.A. is not a town of cinephiles. The city has one struggling commercial revival movie theater. General audiences favor blockbusters, and our audience tends to mirror mainstream attendance patterns and tastes. The higher profile a film, the more likely it is to draw substantial audiences at our festival. As a result, we tend to generate our large overall attendance through event screenings, such as galas. We regularly fill screenings with narrative reflections of the experiences of sexy white men, a common practice among queer American festivals. By contrast, we struggle to build audiences for documentaries, for most international work, for experimental

²³³ The “low” genre of pornographic film might find its way into the festivals either as part of historical retrospective of an individual pornographer, such as Wakefield Poole, or in clip-show presentations or documentaries on the subject. Pornography’s concentration on sexual acts might put its emphasis on sexual being than narrative becoming.

work, and for work that reflects the experiences of lesbians, transgendered people, and people of color (in Straayer 2005, 599).

In quite a different tone to Gutwillig's text is maverick gay film critic Vito Russo's statement on coming-out films more generally. Russo writes, "Coming out films are all alike. They're put together by committee to reach the widest possible audience in the most inoffensive manner possible and dedicated to proving that homosexuals can be just as boring as heterosexuals" (1986, 32). Evidently, Russo's idea of gay film demands more than a polite, light or cliché narrative.

Feelings of self- and group-affirmation, in the context of the safe space of LGBT film festivals, are signature experiences of the festivals. Festival programmer Brian Robinson writes,

There also remains a need for the social experience of seeing a film with a gay or predominantly sympathetic audience. There are few experiences as dispiriting as watching a gay or lesbian film in a multiplex in which the overwhelming audience reaction is loud disapproval, disbelief, or disgust (Barrett 2005, 594).

This sort of experience is certainly part of the sociability created at the lesbian and gay film festivals, but vociferous protests at screenings take place as expected from any vibrant counterpublic.

The refusal of gay or lesbian cinephilia, as Hallas posits it, comes from a more popular taste culture, and has been discussed in various cases throughout *Glances*, especially the case of the so-called lesbian riots at the 1986 San

Francisco festival. Bourdieu is sensitive to these tensions between advanced artistic production and popular taste. He argues,

This is seen clearly in the ease of the novel and especially the theater where the working-class audience refuses any sort of formal experimentation and all the effects which, by introducing a distance from the accepted conventions (as regards scenery, plot etc.), tend to distance the spectator, preventing him from getting involved and fully identifying with the characters (I am thinking of Brechtian 'alienation' or the disruption of plot in the nouveau roman) (1984, 4).

I am not as convinced in the simple class distinctions that Bourdieu mentions,²³⁴ since they appear more muddled in North America. The rejection of contemporary art or art films seems to depend more on education and nurture, with a complicated relation to social class. Even with the long, encouraging warnings to the festival-goers over the necessity and historical significance of experimental film and video to lesbian and gay culture, those who seek familiar popular representations and forms are baffled by the formal play and experimentation in the cinephilic work, and the cinephiles avoid the cliché narratives. Understood in a slightly different way, these two extremes within the various overlapping counterpublics produced by the festivals accurately characterize the unique signature of the lesbian and gay film festivals

²³⁴ It is doubtful that many working-class lesbians and gay men attend the festivals, which are by-and-large middle-class events. This would require a more detailed sociological study.

themselves. Let us turn to the early gay film festivals and their particular cinephilia, which opened up to the wide constellation of media and genres of the current festivals today.

4.0 Early Gay Film Festivals into LGBT Film and Video Festivals

Within the field of cultural production of lesbian and gay film festivals, as I have argued above and elsewhere in *Glances*, there are significant tensions among those competing visions of what such a festivals should be. Within the framework of convertible capitals, between economic, social and capital, I address here the particular tensions between those early gay film festivals of the 1970s and early-1980s and the later wave of LGBT film festivals that take up a much stronger, explicit commitment to communities of sexual difference. In brief, the early festivals were directed by gay cinephiles, who had a very specific idea of lesbian and gay films (very rarely or reluctantly video) in mind, which included retrospectives of gay (and lesbian) auteur filmmakers, historic films of interest, with an emphasis on narrative feature films. The important *turn* in lesbian and gay films of the late-1980s and 1990s was towards a stronger outreach to diverse groups that were underrepresented in the previous large festivals. This change in style and content was a challenge to the solitary authority of the artistic director, whose programming was then augmented with special invited curators and selection committees aimed to better represent the broadened constituencies.

A case of interest here²³⁵ regards the firstness of Toronto's Inside/Out Festival (1991) over the earlier First Toronto International Gay Film Festival in 1986 that was organized by the professional film programmer James Quandt, then head of programming at the Harbourfront Centre for the Arts, and now longtime head of the Cinematheque Ontario. One half of a decade between them, nonetheless Inside/Out insists on its counting scheme, which excludes the 1986 festival. The continuing *différend* brings out several significant differences between the natures of the two festivals. Quandt's festival stems from a strong cinephilic commitment to the art film, an older generational sensibility, less of an emphasis on documentary film or activism, and a less egalitarian imagined community. As discussed in Chapter III, Inside/Out did not at all forefront the cinephilic experience. There was much more at stake. After its paragraph on the combined commitment to films and videos of the contemporary mainstream and "cutting edge," both artistic, cultural and political, the collective writes,

INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAMME ARE DRAMATIC AND COMIC WORKS, CULT FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES. THE WORKS ARE VARIOUSLY FUNNY, TOUCHING, EMPOWERING, INFURIATING AND INSPIRATIONAL – BUT ALL ARE "ESSENTIAL VIEWING." (Inside/Out, 1991)

Evidently, there is something much greater going on in this newer style of programming that breaks with the older cinephilic conventions. Perhaps the

²³⁵ I would argue furthermore that this case could also apply more generally to a larger trend between the two styles of programming.

result of the zeal of the copy writers, but claim of “essential viewing” (with quotation marks) in spite of the remarkable diversity of the films and videos making up the programmes.

Quandt named his 1986 festival the “Inverted Image - Toronto’s First International Festival of Gay Cinema.” The title makes clear, witty reference to the historical term ‘invert’ that often meant ‘homosexual person,’ but more accurately someone with a reversed sense of sex roles of the “opposite sex.” The program notes that

THE INVERTED IMAGE IS TORONTO’S FIRST INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF GAY CINEMA, FEATURING TEN DAYS OF THE BEST FILMS DEALING WITH GAY SUBJECTS OR BY GAY DIRECTORS FROM MAJOR FESTIVALS AROUND THE WORLD. MANY TORONTO PREMIERES! (1986, 3 capitals in original)

The politics of representational of this festival was not centered on the mainstream or popular but rather primarily on the art film, with a few documentaries and shorts. Feature films by gay men far outnumbered those by lesbians, although the program certainly expands to the short film form to include several notable works by women. The absence of video in this festival is notable and indicates the cinephilic emphasis on film as film, but typical of the period. The Images Festival of Independent Film and Video began one year later in 1987 under quite a different politics of programming which clearly combined works of film and video under one festival.

The mode of programming followed the established connoisseurship of the head programmer, and did not follow a committee-run style of the later festivals. This model of festival continues that set by the international film festivals but adapted to specific gay and some lesbian cinephilic taste. Similarly, there is no clear collective with social aims, as we find in *Inside/Out* and others. The analogical aim of the festival, to the international film festivals, is rather simply to show “the best films” by gay or lesbian directors or on gay or lesbian themes. The elusive word “best” as a criterion haunts festivals, since taste is at its root and is so intrinsically subjective.

While *Inside/Out* put its accent on the contemporary, *The Inverted Image* integrated historical screenings, for example, Fassbinder, Dirk Bogarde, and van Sant, as well as films that approached homosexuality rather tangentially or elliptically, for example, *Times Square* (Allan Moyle, 1980, USA). The invited gay auteur director was Rosa von Praunheim from West Berlin along with a retrospective screening of several of his films in association with the local Goethe Institut. The benefit screening for the AIDS Committee of Toronto was Derek Jarman’s *Caravaggio* (1985, UK).

The case of the *Inverted Image* and the *Inside/Out* festivals is definitely not unique in the institutional history of lesbian and gay film festivals, but rather has been reproduced many times across the continent as the festivals transformed in mandate, as their festival concepts integrated elements from the political discourse of the lesbian and gay movement but also from academic lesbian and

gay studies and queer theory. The expansion of the festivals beyond the cinephilic made them more accessible to broader counterpublics.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter argues for the unique operation of economic, social and cultural capital, along with distinction, in lesbian and gay film festivals, distinguished from the larger international film festivals whose programming is organized around the elusive notion of selecting the best possible films, without any apparent extra-aesthetic constraints.²³⁶ In contrast to international film festivals, and their global network, which together retain their own hierarchy of distinction, particularly through the work of the FIAPF, which in turn lends selected films cultural capital, lesbian and gay film festivals operate within a different circuit with reduced capital primarily due to their obligation to community, and in part due to the particular social stigma attributed to minority sexualities in North America, which renders 'community' a counterpublic in Warner's terms. The two extra-aesthetic organizational aspects of community and sexual identity distinguish lesbian and gay film festivals and IFFs from one another.

LGBT film festivals have been strongly influenced by at least two cultural preferences, namely the "gay cinephilia" of an older style of gay identity and a broader popular taste, which together in any festival are often in tension, but which constitute the signature of lesbian and gay film festivals at least in Canada

²³⁶ Since the 1968 inauguration of festival directors and artistic directors, they have been relatively autonomous or at "arm's length" from their respective national government, as discussed in the first and second chapters.

and the United States. While the earlier festivals reveal a stronger gay and lesbian cinephilia, the festivals have integrated various media beyond celluloid film to include analogue and digital video, online streaming of selected videos, and even digital film, which has worked to democratize access to production and to exhibition in the festivals themselves.

CONCLUSION

Montreal film critic Matt Hays writes,

“Do you really think,” a friend asked me after reading through last week’s preview of the Image and Nation Film Festival, “that we really need a queer film festival any more?”

The question surprised me, not only because I hadn’t thought to question the existence of gay and lesbian film festivals, but because the person asking the question was himself gay. Clearly the question was not rooted in homophobia but rather in a sincere curiosity as to the place of queer film festivals (Hays 1993, 22).

Lesbian and gay film festivals, as I have been calling them throughout *Glances*, have proven to be remarkably resilient cultural organizations since their founding in the late 1970s. However, the perennial question appears regarding the relevance or purpose of these festivals. Perhaps for Hays back in 1993, another exciting year of successful “crossover” films associated with the New Queer Cinema, but doubt was at least temporarily emerging. Times change, situations change, festivals change. They need not disappear, but that is up to that careful negotiation between the festival organizers, their “idea” of what the festival should be, practical choices that they make, and the real counterpublics that they in turn constitute. *Glances* has worked to trace the emergence and development of lesbian and gay film festivals across nearly three decades, through thick and thin.

I situated the lesbian and gay film festivals, as a specific type of community-oriented film festival, in the institutional history of the international film festival, and tried to show how the IFFs can be understood as a mainly parallel circuit, with occasional overlap, but with starkly different amounts of capital. The histories of international film festivals are fascinating for the sorts of relations, social, political and artistic, that they reveal. Their early period can be characterized as strongly nationalistic. The government represented its view of nation directly through the structure and content of its own national film festival, but one in which the films of other nations were carefully, even diplomatically, programmed and screened. The Cold War period brought to the festivals a heightened diplomacy but redrawn along international lines according to the major spheres of influence. As in the case of the Berlin film festival, many took on propagandistic aims. The protests of 1968, specifically regarding the Langlois affaire in France, prompted changes in 1969 edition of Cannes and elsewhere thereafter. New auteur and young filmmakers and more challenging films could be screened in the festival. The new role of the festival director, with greater autonomy for artistic and programming decisions, gave the festivals much greater artistic credibility, for they were then no longer considered simply compromised mouthpieces of state foreign policy. The very idea of 'film festival' had changed fundamentally, and opened up to a new constellation of possibilities and constraints, centered on a new set of coordinates.

While the structure and organization of the IFFs changed fundamentally, the practice of committee-run festivals returns to the new types of community-

oriented film festivals in an attempt to be accountable to and represent the festival's imagined counterpublics. Curiously, the tourism industry has been with IFFs since their beginnings in Venice and Cannes, and more recently this aspect has been integrated into various indices that attempt to measure and rank the quality of life in any city. In North America this might mean that today municipal governments might actively encourage and fund in part various cultural activities, now including many types of film festivals, in order to demonstrate their competitive measure alongside all other cities that are also competing. Increased funding possibilities and an encouraging municipal politics enable a greater number of potential cultural activities in any such city.

Several community-oriented film festivals stemmed directly from media practices and initiatives associated with social movements, most particularly the civil rights and women's movements. I also included the fascinating case of the erotic film festivals that emerged in the context of the sexual revolution and the fleeting trend of "porno chic" in the early 1970s. In ethos, lesbian and gay film festivals resemble all three of these festivals, with important differences. Each movement aimed to take greater control the representations of their constituencies in popular media, to train their members in film and other media, and to form extensive alternative networks for distribution and exhibition.

The nascent gay liberation and lesbian feminism movements emerged following Stonewall and owed much to the social movements that preceded them. Multiple film exhibition practices continue to be used today, including "clip-show" lectures, the thematic film series held at a cinematheque, public library, university,

community center, private home, among other places. Various activists and academic/critics participated in the early festivals. The new socially-oriented film festivals of the early 1970s were joined, by the end of the decade, with gay film festivals, organized around the category of homosexuality. The word 'lesbian' took several years to be added to the names of the festivals, which was followed by others, in a common variation on 'LGBT.'

While there was significant overlapping expertise shared among these movements in the early period, the younger gay liberation movement owed much to the more seasoned ones. This included various media practices, particularly the development of the lesbian and gay film festival circuit. As Ruby Rich discusses in her history of women's film festivals, the politics of the festivals reflected much of the debates of the larger women's movement at the time. As some lesbians became disenchanted with the perceived and felt heteronormative impulse in the feminism of the time, they began to align themselves with the struggle for the civil rights on sexuality in gay liberation, the idea of the mixed gendered homosexual film festival was brought into existence. Alternatively, lesbian separatists, creating spaces outside of the larger women's movement, founded festivals organized around gender and sexuality.

The general periodization of the North American lesbian and gay film festivals can be summarized provisionally as follows. The late-1970s were the founding years of the gay film festivals, which became gay and lesbian film festivals in name and substance in the early 1980s. The 1980s began between the assassination of Harvey Milk in San Francisco and the initial stages of the AIDS

epidemic in 1981, and is marked by the feminist debates over pornography and Reagan era's culture wars. Festivals were founded by filmmakers and programmers, mobilized in defiance of the right-wing political climate and government slowness in responding to the AIDS epidemic. While the controversies of the 80s continued into the 1990s, the more optimistic invention of queer theory as a theoretical corrective, with practical consequences, to some of the various dilemmas and aporias arising out of identity politics. Moreover, the films of the new queer cinema breathed new life into the festivals, which rapidly expanded in number and grew in size across North America. The festivals "professionalized" as they fell into competition with one another, and with other community groups in the non-profit sector. The late-1990s and early-2000s witnessed a robust globalization of film festivals on a theme of minority sexualities, with many festivals choosing 'queer' over 'LGBT.' As the case studies of San Francisco, New York, Montreal and Toronto brought to attention, LGBT film festivals are incredibly diverse, differing in structure, audience, taste, and even concepts of sexuality and gender themselves. The legal system creates special spaces of its own, namely a formal space of the law, and the quite different contingent spaces of its interpretation and enforcement. This is similar to cultural policy in the form of cultural funding policy, public or private.

Foucault considers space through his concept of heterotopia. Generally, any film festival would fall under the category of temporal heterotopia. Foucault's analogy to the mirror, which presents a utopic placeless place in the mirror but also exists as a medium playing between presence and absence, and thereby allowing for

the experience of heterotopia. The example of the mirror resembles the experience of the community-oriented lesbian and gay film festival, where spectators experience quite a similar play of presence and absence at the event, in the screenings, waiting in line, and so forth, all through the ephemeral mechanisms of resemblances, empathy, identification, disidentification, and the like. The films and community produce complicated experiential chains of familiarity and difference, according to such categories as habitus, gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual identification. In brief, the festival itself takes place, producing a (potentially transformative) site. Once the festival closes, its heterotopia dissolves.

The current interpretation of the concept of the carnivalesque places much emphasis on transgression, namely the transgression of social norms. Always already circumscribed, what is permitted was already permitted in advance. Laws, permits, agreements, and funding policies, all participate in this. It is in this way that these film festivals might be seen as participating in sort of carnivalesque. The carnivalesque helps us to understand the limits on public space and its constraints. The event of the festival, its very space draws attention to its continuing negotiation with many gate-keeping players.

While the carnivalesque presupposes a “permitted transgression” in its space, the theories of gay and queer space help to articulate other important elements of the space and experience of particular lesbian and gay film festivals. The unique promise of community, as a consequence and as a discursive moment within the queer film festival, itself an institution and lived site, will remain open

for further analysis and symptomatic of larger discourses at play in and about the festivals. As a heterotopia it both constitutes and distorts its public in its chain of ephemeral resemblances; its carnivalesque aspect promises unruly moments; and its hybrid sexuality between queer and substantive identities will remain a volatile mixture.

Not only is it the film and video programming but it is also the prose generated in and around the festival that contributes to the formation of particular counterpublics. Through this chapter I provided a textual analysis of the public discourse of the festivals and showed how it produces the signature of the festival and works to constitute an associated counterpublic. The use of the concept of counterpublic over community, I have argued, addresses more accurately the precise negotiation of such film festivals organized around categories of minority sexualities. Building on discourse theory, Michael Warner provides a cogent theory of (reading) publics and counterpublics, which works through discourse and queer theories. I argued that the festivals and their originary counterpublics owe much to the activities of specific overlapping scenes. While I have shown that film festivals share certain commonalities, but each also has its own contingencies made evident through the prose that circulates throughout the festivals and gives each festival its unique signature.

Bringing Bourdieu's work out more explicitly in the final chapter, I argued for the unique operation of cultural capital and distinction in lesbian and gay film festivals. In contrast, international film festivals with their programming organized around the elusive notion of the "best" possible films, without any apparent extra-

aesthetic constraints. In contrast to international film festivals, in their own global network, sustain their own distinction, particularly through the work of the FIAPF, which in turn lends selected films cultural capital, community-oriented film festivals, on the other hand, operate within a quite different circuit with reduced capital primarily owing to their obligation to their respective constituencies. Moreover, in the case of lesbian and gay film festivals, the associated stigma of the *homoerotic in public* renders 'community' a counterpublic in Warner's language. The two extra-aesthetic organizational aspects of community and sexual identity distinguish lesbian and gay film festivals and IFFs from one another.

Lesbian and gay film festivals have been informed by, if not organized on, at least two taste cultures, namely one centered on the practices of the "gay cinephilia" of an older style of gay identity and another centered on a broader popular taste. The two cultures together in any festival are typically in tension, but which, as I argued above, constitute the major signature of lesbian and gay film festivals, at least in Canada and the United States. Not all lesbians or gay men participate in gay or lesbian cinephilia. Not all lesbians or gay men subscribe to popular culture forms. Serious members of each would find the other dubious or unintelligible. The critics have patiently complained that the broadened counterpublics ought to embrace a spirit of adventure in the context of festival-going. Other spectators simply want to laugh and be entertained after a long day's work. While the earlier festivals reveal a stronger sensibility for gay cinephilia, with retrospectives of camp classics, historic films as well as the films

of gay and lesbian auteurs, the festivals all along have also tried to adapt and include media beyond film, namely video, and online streaming, which has worked, in principle, to democratize access to production and to exhibition in the festivals themselves on the part of independent film- and videomakers. All of these elements work together in this special field of cultural production to confer varying degrees of cultural capital on the films themselves, the festivals, and the associated counterpublics.

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APPENDIX I: FIAPF List of A-LIST FESTIVALS

I. COMPETITIVE FEATURE FILM FESTIVALS

2008 CALENDAR OF FIAPF ACCREDITED* FESTIVALS

Berlin	7 February	17 February
Cannes	14 May	25 May
Shanghai	14 June	22 June
Moscow	19 June	28 June
Karlovy Vary	4 July	12 July
Locarno	6 August	16 August
Montreal	21 August	1 September
Venice	27 August	6 September
San Sebastian	18 September	27 September
Tokyo	18 October	26 October
Cairo	18 November	28 November
Mar Del Plata	4 December	14 December

Competitive section for short films

Non-competitive section for short films

* Most Festivals are in the process of accreditation

II. COMPETITIVE SPECIALISED FEATURE FILM FESTIVALS

2008 CALENDAR OF FIAPF ACCREDITED* FESTIVALS

Brussels (Science Fiction) (Fantasy and science fiction films)	27 March	8 April
Istanbul (Films on art: literature, theatre,	5 April	20 April

music, dance, cinema and plastic arts)		
Wiesbaden (goEast) (Films from Central and Eastern Europe)	9 April	15 April
Sydney (New directions in film)	4 June	22 June
Troïa (Films from countries producing a maximum of 30 features yearly)	6 June	15 June
Valencia Jove (New directors' films)	21 June	28 June
Sarajevo (Films from Central and South-Eastern Europe)	15 August	23 August
Frankfurt (Films for children)	7 September	14 September
Almaty (Films produced in Europe, Central-Asia, Asia)	(Dates to be announced)	
Namur (French-language films)	26 September	3 October
Bogota (Films of new directors)	1 October	9 October
Sitges (Fantasy films)	2 October	12 October
Pusan (New directors' films from Asian countries)	2 October	10 October
Ghent	7 October	18 October

(Impact of music on films)		
Warsaw (First and second features)	10 October	19 October
Valencia Mediterranean (Films from Mediterranean countries)	14 October	22 October (TBC)
Kyiv (Young directors' films)	18 October	26 October
Los Angeles (AFI FEST)** (Documentary / first or second feature)	30 October	9 November
Thessaloniki (New directors' films)	14 November	23 November
Gijon (Films for young people)	20 November	29 November
Stockholm (Films on new cinematographic orientations)	20 November	30 November
Tallin** (Films produced in Europe, Central Asia, and Asia)	20 November	7 December
Turin (New directors' films)	21 November	29 November
India (Goa) (Films from Asia, from Africa and from Latin America)	22 November	2 December
Courmayeur (Police and mystery films)	7 December	13 December
Kerala (Trivandrum) (Films from Asia, from Africa and	12 December	19 December

from Latin America)

Competitive section for short films

Non-competitive section for short films

- * Most Festivals are in the process of accreditation
- * Newly accredited festival with an associate festival status for first years of
- * recognition

III. NON-COMPETITIVE FEATURE FILM FESTIVALS

2008 CALENDAR OF FIAPF ACCREDITED* FESTIVALS

Haugesund	16 August	23 August
Toronto	4 September	13 September
London	16 October	30 November
Vienna	17 October	29 October
Kolkata	10 November	17 November

Competitive section for short films

Non-competitive section for short films

- * Most Festivals are in the process of accreditation

IV. DOCUMENTARY AND SHORT FILM FESTIVALS

2008 CALENDAR OF FIAPF ACCREDITED* FESTIVALS

Tampere	5 March	9 March
Oberhausen	1 May	6 May
Krakow	30 May	5 June
St. Petersburg	15 June	22 June
Bilbao	21 November	29 November

Competitive section for short films

Non-competitive section for short films

- * Most Festivals are in the process of accreditation

APPENDIX II: FIAPF Criteria for International Film Festivals

48 International Film Festivalos signed FIAPF's mutual trust contract and received accreditation in 2006.

FIAPF's role as a regulator of international film festivals is to facilitate the job of the producers, sales agents and distributors in the management of their relationships with the festivals.

The FIAPF International Film Festivals Regulations constitute a trust contract between those festivals and the film industry at large. Accredited festivals are expected to implement quality and reliability standards that meet industry expectations.

These standards include:

- Good year-round organisational resources
- Genuinely international selections of films and competition juries
- Good facilities for servicing international press correspondents
- Stringent measures to prevent theft or illegal copying of films
- Evidence of support from the local film industry
- Insurance of all film copies against loss, theft or damage
- High standards for official publications and information management (catalogue, programmes, fliers)

FIAPF's role is also to support some festivals' efforts in achieving higher standards over time, despite economic or programming challenges which often stem from a combination of unfavourable geopolitical location, budgets, and a

difficult place in the annual festivals' calendar. This is particularly relevant in the context of the unequal levels of resources and opportunities between film festivals in the Southern and Northern hemispheres.

APPENDIX III: GAWC Indexed Global Cities

(Loughborough University, UK)

(Number of points for cities stated at left of each ranking, from 12 to 1.)

A. ALPHA WORLD CITIES (full service world cities)

12: London, New York, Paris, Tokyo

10: Chicago, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Milan, Singapore

B. BETA WORLD CITIES (major world cities)

9: San Francisco, Sydney, Toronto, Zurich

8: Brussels, Madrid, Mexico City, Sao Paulo

7: Moscow, Seoul

C. GAMMA WORLD CITIES (minor world cities)

6: Amsterdam, Boston, Caracas, Dallas, Düsseldorf, Geneva, Houston, Jakarta, Johannesburg, Melbourne, Osaka, Prague, Santiago, Taipei, Washington

5: Bangkok, Beijing, Montreal, Rome, Stockholm, Warsaw

4: Atlanta, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Istanbul, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Miami, Minneapolis, Munich, Shanghai

D. EVIDENCE OF WORLD CITY FORMATION

Di Relatively strong evidence

3: Athens, Auckland, Dublin, Helsinki, Luxembourg, Lyon, Mumbai, New Delhi, Philadelphia, Rio de Janeiro, Tel Aviv, Vienna

Dii Some evidence

2: Abu Dhabi, Almaty, Birmingham, Bogota, Bratislava, Brisbane, Bucharest, Cairo, Cleveland, Cologne, Detroit, Dubai, Ho Chi Minh City, Kiev, Lima, Lisbon, Manchester, Montevideo, Oslo, Riyadh, Rotterdam, Seattle, Stuttgart, The Hague, Vancouver

Diii Minimal evidence

1: Adelaide, Antwerp, Arhus, Baltimore, Bangalore, Bologna, Brasilia, Calgary, Cape Town, Colombo, Columbus, Dresden, Edinburgh, Genoa, Glasgow, Gothenburg, Guangzhou, Hanoi, Kansas City, Leeds, Lille, Marseille, Richmond, St Petersburg, Tashkent, Tehran, Tijuana, Turin, Utrecht, Wellington