

**NETWORKS OF FEELING:
AFFECTIVE ECONOMIES OF QUEER & FEMINIST FILM FESTIVALS
ON THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES**

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ABSTRACT

Film festivals are full of feeling. As complex institutions, affective labour underpins the work of programmers and festival staff. As public events, films screened at festivals can be well-received pictures, poorly-reviewed flops, or events met with protest, controversy, and outbursts of public emotion. The relationship between these different types of emotion, affect, and feeling is a complex yet an often-overlooked aspect of film festivals. This dissertation develops a theory of affect through the history of the queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies from 1985 to 2005. Drawing on the vast collection of public and private archives available on these festivals, as well as interviews and ethnography, I attend to the ways the region's network of film festivals have produced and have been produced by affect and how affects of dis/interest, disgust, shame, and happiness circulate within film festival networks. The circulation and production of different affects at various points in these festival histories have had profound effects on how these festivals organize—from how organizers relate to each other and to their publics, to the kinds of funding they accept and the politics of their programming. I consider the ways in which these affects circulate and how such organizational and discursive affects underpin the network of relationships between gay, lesbian, women's, and racialized bodies within and around film festivals. I further consider the role lesbians and feminists of colour had in organizing this network of film festivals, the place of public and private funding and state institutions like the NFB's Studio D, and the intersections between queer and feminist film festivals and human rights activism. I argue that complex and diverse economies of affect structure film festival institutions and networks. These affective economies can be most clearly traced through film festival archives.

DEDICATION

For William Neil Richards (1949-2018)
and
Catherine Diane Johnston (1945-2015)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASK	Association for Social Knowledge
AVC	Alberta Vocational College
CSIF	Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers
CSWAC	Calgary Status of Women Action Committee
GALOC	Gays and Lesbians on Campus
GATE	Gay Alliance Toward Equality
GAU	Gay Academic Union
GCCS	Gay Community Centre of Saskatoon
GIRC	Gay Information and Resources Calgary
GLCSA	Gay and Lesbian Community Services Association
GFE	Gays for Equality
IRPA	Individual Rights Protection Act
LISO	Lobby for the Inclusion of Sexual Orientation in the Human Rights Act
MCC	Metropolitan Community Church
NAC	National Action Committee on the Status of Women
NFB	National Film Board of Canada
NGRC	National Gay Rights Coalition
RCSW	Royal Commission on the Status of Women
SGC	Saskatchewan Gay Coalition
WCC	Women of Colour Collective
WGLFS	Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: AFFECT, ECONOMY, ARCHIVE

On the warm summer evening of June 19, 1985, 100 gay men and lesbians shuffled into Winnipeg's Cinema Main. On the schedule that night were two films: the feature-length *Fox and His Friends* (Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, West Germany, 1975), and the short film *David Roche Talks To You About Love* (Dir. Jeremy Podeswa, Canada, 1983). Before the films began, a group of gay men circulated a note to its audience. The note read:

We are a recently formed group, frustrated with the lack of choice in films with gay-related themes at commercial theatres. Therefore, we took it upon ourselves to research, and try to obtain films not normally screened in Winnipeg.

If response to the films tonight is encouraging, we'd like to continue presenting independently-made gay and lesbian films, along with commercial films of the past and present that emphasize a gay-positive attitude.

If you are interested in obtaining more information on our showings, or if you'd like to join our group, please fill out the form below and deposit it in the box at the front entrance.

Thanks for coming out tonight.¹

The response to the film was more than encouraging—the films were a hit with the crowd and marked the beginning of the Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society (WGLFS), the longest-running queer film organization in Canada. For the next two years the group screened 16 queer films over 9 monthly screenings.² In 1987, the WGLFS re-organized these monthly screenings into Counterparts: International Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film, the first annually-occurring, and some brief hiatuses notwithstanding, longest-running queer film festival in Canada.

Up until now, the WGLFS has been off the radar of queer film festival scholars in Canada and around the world. Despite having been around for more than 30 years, and having

¹ "A Note from the Winnipeg Gay Film Group" c 1985, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 4.

² A complete listing of films screened during this period is included in Appendix A.

documents pertaining to its history both online and stored in public archives, the WGLFS remains a footnote to festivals both big and small happening in Toronto, Montreal, New York, and San Francisco. Indeed, not only has the WGLFS been ignored, but so has every single queer and feminist film festival that is operating or has ever operated on the Canadian Prairies. Like the Winnipeggers, who were frustrated with the lack of gay and lesbian films in their city in 1985, I am frustrated with the lack of scholarly and popular attention to these festivals today. It is this frustration—both historical and contemporary—that propels this dissertation.

While this strong negative affect propelled both the WGLFS and I, it was an altogether weaker, more neutral affect that sustained us: interest. Frustration may have kickstarted the process of researching and screening gay and lesbian films, but this newly formed group knew that the only way they would be able to continue to offer these screenings is if they had an interested audience. It may seem obvious that a film festival must capture another's interest in order to survive and flourish. But in studies of film festivals, affect, activism, and cinema history little attention has been paid to this incredibly formative, and indeed necessary, affect. At its very core, film festivals must express and invite interest.

This dissertation develops a theory of affect through the history of the queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies from 1985 to 2005. I attend to the ways the region's network of film festivals have produced and have been produced by affect, and how interest made it possible for other affects to circulate, including disinterest, disgust, shame, and happiness. The circulation and production of different affects at various points in these festival histories have had profound effects on how these festivals organize—from how organizers relate to each other and to their publics, to the kinds of funding they accept and the politics of their programming. I consider the ways in which these affects circulate and how such organizational

and discursive affects underpin the network of relationships that make up a film festival. I argue that complex and diverse economies of affect structure film festival institutions and networks. These affective economies can be most clearly traced through film festival archives.

This is an argument I could make with any network of film festivals, but I choose the network of queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies for two related reasons. First, there has been no comprehensive scholarly attention paid to these festivals. There have been over fifteen festivals (five of which are currently active) operating in cities large and small across the prairies. In chronological order from the date of their first festival screening, these festivals are:

- Counterparts: International Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film, now called Reel Pride LGBT Film Festival, held in Winnipeg, Manitoba since 1985
- In Sight Women's Film & Video Festival, held in Edmonton, Alberta from 1988-1992
- herland Feminist Film Festival, held in Calgary, Alberta from 1989-2007
- Queer Sightings Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, also named The Voice & The Vision: Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Speaking in Tongues: Lesbigan Film & Video Festival, held in Edmonton, Alberta between 1992-1994
- Re:Visions: The Winnipeg Women's Film & Video Festival, held in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1993 and 1995
- Virtuous Reality Queer Film & Video Festival, held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1995
- The Fire I've Become: Queer Canadian Film & Video Festival, held in Calgary, Alberta from 1995-1996
- Vice Versa Lesbian Film & Video Festival, held in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1995
- Queer City Cinema, held in Regina, Saskatchewan since 1996
- Fairy Tales Queer Film Festival, held in Calgary, Alberta since 1999
- Screen Femmes, held in Regina, Saskatchewan in 2000
- Rhino in the Room, held in Lethbridge, Alberta from 2009-2011
- Pitos WaskochePAYIS: Two-Spirit Film and Performance Festival, held in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan since 2012
- Rainbow Visions LGBTQ Film Festival, held in Edmonton, Alberta since 2015

No work has been done to uncover the history of these festivals or to attempt to make sense of their relations with each other. At best, some of these festivals exist as footnotes to other works

on queer cinema and queer activism.³ Recent work in queer film festival studies, as well as more general work in queer theory, has tended to focus on the particularities of queer life and queer affect in North America's major urban centres and how their queer film festivals relate to an international (queer) film festival circuit.⁴ While there has been some work done in festival studies to look at more rural film festivals or festivals that occur in small cities, as well as in queer theory to look at queer lives outside of the city, much of this work is located in the United States or otherwise outside of Canada.⁵ Likewise, though there is a growing body of work on prairie sexualities in Canada—and with it a growing body of primary sources held in public and private archives—most of the scholarly work focuses on the activism and community building

³ Thomas Waugh gives space in the Portrait Gallery section of *The Romance of Transgression in Canada* to the Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society, Queer City Cinema, Fairy Tales, and makes brief mention of *The Fire I've Become*, but none of these save a brief mention of Winnipeg during a discussion of *Passiflora* (Dir. Fernand Bélanger and Dagmar Teufel, Canada, 1985) are given attention in the essays and articles that make up the front half of the book. *The Fire I've Become* and Queer City Cinema are also mentioned near the end of Tom Warner's *Never Going Back*. These festivals are only mentioned because of the sex panics they generated in their cities, or are otherwise only dealt with in the briefest of detail. See Thomas Waugh, *The Romance of Transgression in Canada: Queering Sexualities, Nations, Cinemas* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 381, 495, 536; and Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 335-6.

⁴ See Joceline Andersen, "From the Ground Up: Transforming the Inside Out LGBT Film and Video Festival of Toronto," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 38–57; Skadi Loist and Ger Zielinski, "On the Development of Queer Film Festivals and Their Media Activism," in *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*, ed. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 49–62; Stuart James Richards, *The Queer Film Festival: Popcorn and Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); and Sarah Schulman, "What Is the Role of Gay Film Festivals?," in *My American History: Lesbian and Gay Life during the Reagan/Bush Years*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 253–255.

⁵ See Conall Ó Duibhir, "Guth Gafa: Local and Global Perspectives of a Rural Film Festival," in *Le Cinéma Entre Le Local et Le Mondial / Global/Local Film*, ed. Jerry White, Dalhousie – Sorbonne Nouvelle Summer Institute in Film Studies (Halifax, NS: Centre for European Studies, 2015), 65–85; Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005); Scott Herring, *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* (New York and London: NYU Press, 2010); and Colin R. Johnson, *Just Queer Folks: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America*, (Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 2013).

before and after the AIDS crisis. Because of this, these studies exclude any discussion of queer film festivals and their relationships with feminist film festivals, which largely emerged in the region to counter growing public homophobia exacerbated by fears over AIDS and to fight back against violence against women in the aftermath of the École Polytechnique Massacre.⁶

Second, many of the festivals I discuss throughout this dissertation—with only a few exceptions—have expansive archives of their activities that have been subsequently overlooked by scholars. Internal and public documents for Counterparts, herland, The Fire I've Become, along with ephemera related to Queer Sightings, Virtuous Reality, Screen Femmes and Re:Visions, are held in provincial and municipal archives across the region, and have been held there since at least the early 2000s.⁷ The five currently operating festivals are the only festivals without internal records in public archives, but the archives are filled with ephemera related to their operation, including festival programs, posters, and newspaper clippings. Because these festivals are small, organizers have been more than willing to provide interviews as well as access to some of their internal documents, marketing materials and news clippings. The sheer

⁶ See Alexa DeGagne, "'Severely Queer' in Western Canada: LGBT2Q Activism in Alberta," in *Queer Mobilizations: Social Movement Activism and Canadian Public Policy*, ed. Manon Tremblay (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 163–83; Lyle Dick, "The Queer Frontier: Male Same-Sex Experience in Western Canada's Settlement Era," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études Canadiennes* 48, no. 1 (2014): 15–52; Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); and Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-84* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

⁷ The Neil Richards fonds was collected by the Saskatchewan Archives Board in a number of accessions between 1985 and 2009, and the Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives was taken over by the University of Manitoba in 2003. There are some internal documents for Screen Femmes held in the Susan Risk fonds, which have been held by the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan since 2002, that suggest the festival was far more industry-oriented than any of the other feminist film festivals that had operated in Western Canada. Alberta currently lacks a comparable archive in a public institution, with the GALA fonds at the City of Edmonton archives and the herland fonds at the Glenbow Archives offering partial coverage, but community archivist Kevin Allen is currently working on collecting this history, at least as it pertains to Calgary.

amount of archival material has meant that I have been able to develop a complex and nuanced picture of both the internal workings and public perceptions of these film festivals. Because many festival scholars focus either on festivals that are currently operating, or festivals that were so ephemeral few traces were left, these archives are unique and demand comprehensive scholarly attention.

But rather than focus on the entire network of queer and feminist film festivals from their emergence in 1985 to the present, I narrow the focus of my study to the festivals that occurred in Calgary, Regina, and Winnipeg between 1985 and 2005. I limit my focus to these three cities because they have the most robust film festival cultures and the most archival material available. The material available for Queer Sightings in Edmonton and Virtuous Reality in Saskatoon during this period is quite ephemeral, made up mostly of posters and programs.⁸ Queer Sightings's short lifespan and three different names (it was also previously known as The Voice & the Vision and Speaking in Tongues) may be attributed to the fact that it was organized by a student group, University of Alberta's Gays and Lesbian On Campus (GALOC), which often have high turnover rates every three to four years.⁹ Likewise, Virtuous Reality perhaps only ran for a single year because one of its key organizers, Christopher Lefler was a controversial figure in Saskatoon's queer community because of his often-irreverent art.¹⁰ Virtuous Reality's lack of longevity, however, should not be read as an indication of its lack of importance: the festival launched the career of Thirza Cuthand, one of Canada's most influential queer Indigenous filmmakers, who made her first short film *Lessons in Baby Dyke Theory* (Canada, 1995) at a

⁸ "Positively Queer Presents: Virtuous Reality" 1995, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections.

⁹ Gay and Lesbian Archives of Edmonton fonds, City of Edmonton Archives, MS-595, series 12, file 80.

¹⁰ Neil Richards, interview with author, 10 June 2016.

filmmaking workshop offered by Maureen Bradley at the festival. While the ephemerality of the documents and the brief histories of these festivals is not necessarily a barrier to studying them—in chapter 4 I discuss *The Fire I've Become* and *Vice Versa*, festivals whose archival records are primarily ephemera—the lack of any other supporting documentation about *Queer Sightings* and *Virtuous Reality* make it difficult to make any further comments beyond the ones I am able to make here.

I temporally bind my study between two crises and two legal shifts: the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and the global financial crisis of 2008, and the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the 2005 Civil Marriages Act. Besides marking the founding of the WGLFS, 1985 also marks the beginning of the AIDS crisis in Canada and the year the equality rights provisions of Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into effect. The first reported cases of AIDS appear in Canada in 1983, and by 1985 queer activism across the country had shifted focus toward combatting both public stigma and government indifference to the disease. In this context, I think it is no coincidence that the country's first annual queer film festival emerged. By creating venues where positive images of queer people—in particular, gay men—could be screened and seen, queer film festival organizers were doing their own work fight back against serophobia. Likewise, I end my study at around 2005 because it marks the beginning of a series of political changes that would radically change the organization and politics of queer film festivals in Canada. In 2005, the federal Liberal government passed Bill C-38, the Civil Marriage Act, legalizing same-sex marriage across Canada. In 2006, a newly united Conservative Party was elected and brought a magnifying glass to Heritage Canada and Canada Council for the Arts funding, the two major federal funding agencies for the region's queer and feminist film festivals, and cut the Court Challenges Program, a legal program established after feminist

activists lobbied the federal government for support in advancing language and equality rights. In 2007, Calgary's herland Feminist Film Festival, the last feminist film festival left operating in the region, shuttered its doors after its Canada Council funding was cut. And in 2008-09, the global financial crisis and the Occupy Movement initiated a significant discursive and affective change that led to a renewed consideration of how public arts were funded. The global financial crisis catalysed the change in queer and feminist film festival funding that saw major multi-national banks and corporations sign on as major sponsors. The effects of these changes on queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies—and indeed, on arts organizations across the country—are profound and complex and deserve a book-length study of their own.

But rather than provide a series of case studies of these festivals and relatively straight histories of their development between 1985 and 2005, I approach these festivals with more feeling. The archival records for these festivals are quite idiosyncratic. For some festivals I have fairly complete runs of internal documents, but for most of them all I have is ephemera—scraps of paper, one half of a chain of correspondence, notes written in the margin of completely unrelated documents, newspaper coverage of media scandals, and other sorts of incomplete material. Though these documents are materially incomplete, they capture within them the trace of the affective attachments and emotional investments activists, organizers, politicians, and opponents placed in the festival. More than just a record of the ins and outs of festival management, these archival holdings are sticky with affect. This affect cannot be contained and spills into every aspect of this research and the history of these festivals, circulating between the festivals, between documents, between organizers, and between the researcher and the archive. For the remainder of this introduction, I theorize affect, economy, the archive in relation to the queer and feminist film festivals I discuss throughout this dissertation.

Buzz and the Affective Economies of Film Festivals

Unlike the so-called A-list festivals, queer, feminist, and other activist film festivals exist more in a networked relationship than a circuitous one.¹¹ These networked relations offer multiple moments for affect to bubble up and erupt on the surface. The complexity of the film festival as an institution—it is not only a place to screen and view films, but also to meet filmmakers, do business, go to parties—provides innumerable opportunities for bodies, objects, and signs to circulate and accumulate affect. But despite wealth of affects that circulate at film festivals, scholarly focus on affect in film festivals has been limited to discussions of programming labour or as a method to organize researchers' personal experiences and recollections of a film festival.¹² There is no scholarly work on how affect circulates at film festivals, despite the robust body of research that shows how Bourdieuiian forms of capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic—circulate alongside films, people, and other material objects within film festival networks.¹³ Borrowing a turn of phrase from Elspeth Probyn, I argue there needs to be a “radical cross-fertilization of ideas” between studies of festival affect and studies of festival networks to understand specifically how affect circulates within film festival

¹¹ Leshu Torchin, “Networked for Advocacy: Film Festivals and Activism,” in *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*, ed. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 9.

¹² Liz Czach, “Affective Labor and the Work of Film Festival Programming,” in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 196–208; and Felicia Chan, “Film Festivals and Cosmopolitan Affect,” in *Cosmopolitan Cinema: Cross-Cultural Encounters in East Asian Film* (London; New York: I.B.Tauris, 2017), 92–118.

¹³ Diane Burgess, “Why Whistler Will Never Be Sundance, and What This Tells Us about the Field of Cultural Production,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 90–108; Marijke de Valck, “Film Festivals, Bourdieu, and the Economization of Culture,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 74–89.

networks.¹⁴

I conceptualize the operation of affect in film festivals as an economy. I borrow here from Sara Ahmed's work on the cultural politics of emotion. Ahmed's conceptualization of affect as economy is drawn from psychoanalysis, which she reads as providing

a theory of emotion as economy, as *involving relationships of difference and displacement without positive value*. That is, emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced as an effect of its circulation. I am using the 'economic' to suggest that objects of emotions circulate or are distributed across a social as well as psychic field.¹⁵

In an affective economy, signs, objects, and bodies do not *have* feelings, emotions, or affects; that is to say, they are not the source of affect. Rather, affect is *produced* through the circulation of signs, bodies, and objects, and "the more signs circulate, the more affective they become."¹⁶ She draws the insight that signs accrue affect through their circulation from Marx's conceptualization of capital. For Marx, an object receives more value through the fact of its circulation: "movement converts [value] into capital."¹⁷ Ahmed argues that affect operates under a similar logic: "the movement between signs or objects converts into affect."¹⁸

I am drawn to this economic understanding of affect because economic discourse has, in the fallout from the 2008-09 financial crisis and the Occupy Movement, situated itself as the dominant language for understanding the organization of society. Within the film and cultural industries in Canada, as Jennifer VanderBurgh notes, economic language—or what she calls "tax credit thinking," named after the provincial systems of funding the film and television industries

¹⁴ Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xv.

¹⁵ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 45, emphasis original.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Marx qtd. in Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 45.

¹⁸ Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 45.

in Canada—has supplanted cultural language as the dominant way artists assert the value of their work.¹⁹ Canada’s major queer film festivals are no stranger to this sort of thinking and in the last fifteen years have embraced the language of economics and of industry to express the value of their festivals to their community. Consider, for example, how Toronto’s Inside Out describes itself in the “Who We Are” section of its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan:

We are the film industry, AND we are the LGBTQ communities. We serve the film industry AND we serve LGBTQ communities. Our industry includes LGBTQ artists, storytellers, and industry professionals. Our community includes people of all ages, races, gender identities and expressions, seeking connection through the power of LGBTQ cinema and storytelling.²⁰

The language of industry is economic language, and the festival’s value is its ability to bridge the gap between film industry and LGTBQ community—or rather, to be more precise, to show that there is no gap between community and industry. As I show in chapter 7, queer film festivals on the prairies, and in particular Calgary’s Fairy Tales, are not immune to this sort of thinking. The impulse to describe film festivals as having economic value narrows the criteria for success for queer film festivals and forces them to think of success only in terms of ticket sales, sponsor contributions, and the size of their government grants. The collapsing of industry and community that Inside Out enacts has the effect of erasing the simple fact that the value of community cannot be reduced to economics. The value of community is often just simply being with another.

By thinking of affect as economic, I aim to undo this sort of thinking by turning economic language inside out and against itself. Like capital, affect accumulates: we place investments in it, it accrues value. Affect, though it acts like capital and circulates like capital,

¹⁹ Jennifer VanderBurgh, “Screens Stop Here! Tax Credit Thinking and the Contemporary Meaning of ‘Local’ Filmmaking,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 25, no. 1 (2016): 135–48.

²⁰ *Inside Out 2018-2020 Strategic Plan* (Toronto: Inside Out, 2018), 7.

can be resistant to the conversion into economic capital that can characterize Bourdieu's other forms of capital because affect is often unpredictable. This unpredictability of affect, especially within the film festival circuit, is made clear by the capaciousness of the term "buzz." Buzz is the quintessential festival affect, a word given to all of those positive and negative feelings which make films more valuable in the market economy. Buzz circulates promiscuously and is the primary currency of festival exchange, no matter the size of the festival. Buzz is the flurry of affect that accumulates around a film, a party, a director, a festival. Buzz can be generated by a media frenzy, word of mouth, by rumour, or by fleeting glance. Buzz is accrued through the meeting of actors in the film festival event, which is sometimes then translated into economic capital in the form of box office receipts, distribution deals, or film sales.

Buzz is notoriously difficult to pin down, and as an affect it is incredibly non-specific. But at its core, I argue that buzz is simply another word for a more formative affect: interest. Buzz is a marker for interest generated in an object within the festival network. In theorizing how interest connects and disconnects bodies across networks of queer and feminist film festivals, I start with Silvan Tomkins' succinct and provocative understanding of the function of interest: "to 'interest' the human being in what is *necessary* and in what it is *possible* for him [sic] to be interested in."²¹ Interest is at the core of a body's ability to do the things necessary for life and is what initiates and sustains curiosity and creativity. For Probyn, following Tomkins, "Interest constitutes lines of connection between people and ideas. It describes a kind of affective investment we have in others."²² Interest is what orients bodies toward each other and toward what is necessary and possible for the body to flourish.

²¹ Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition* (New York: Springer, 2008), 188.

²² Probyn, *Blush*, 13.

Unlike the other affects I trace throughout this dissertation, including disgust, shame, and happiness, a discursive economy of sticky words rarely follows interest. Interest still has its own economy—that is, as an affect it still circulates and accrues value on its own and independently of other affects—but it is also what underlies and supports these other economies. This is what Tomkins means when he argues that interest supports what is necessary and possible: it underlies all other affective economies and all other relations between bodies. Interest rarely signifies itself but supports what is necessary and possible for the body to circulate in other affective economies. Buzz, as the quintessential festival affect, as another signifier of interest, supports the circulation of affect at film festivals.

Archives and Feelings

Throughout this dissertation, I aim to think more precisely about how interest supports the circulation and accumulation of other affects: disinterest, disgust, shame, and happiness. In many cases, I do this by seeking out what Ahmed calls “sticky words” within festival archives: words that have gathered and accumulated affect.²³ These are words like pornography, children, rights, market, funding, straight, and queer. When these words appear in the archive, so too does affect. These words evoke particular emotions, particular bodily responses. More literally, they also often appear with words for emotions: pornography often appears alongside disgust in the archives, shame appears with rights, and happiness appears with funding. Some of these affects are documented within the archive in clear terms: in chapter 5, it is clear that conservative politicians are disgusted at Queer City Cinema. But in other cases, these affects are more ambiguous and asignifying: in chapter 4, the sorts of affects that bond the queer women of colour who organized *herland* and *The Fire I’ve Become* are ephemeral, and only emerge once the

²³ Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 46.

document is read and circulated in the present.

Within the archival turn there are significant debates over the role of archives in the production of knowledge and the circulation of emotion. Both Foucault and Derrida see the archive as the site of law, as that which governs knowledge. For Derrida, the archive sits at the intersection of law and place, and “coordinate[s] a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration.”²⁴ Likewise, for Foucault, archives are “systems that establish statement as events [...] and things” and “the law of what can be said.”²⁵ But, contrary to Derrida, who also argues that our “archive fever” is fundamentally a Freudian death drive, a desire to preserve memory from the oblivion of forgetfulness,²⁶ Foucault argues that the archive does not synchronize and reify events and statements to be preserved and remembered. Rather, for Foucault, the archive exists “between tradition and oblivion, [and] it reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification.”²⁷ The archive is the very structure through which our memories of events, statements, and things change over time.

Anne Cvetkovich’s work on archives of feeling poses a challenge to Foucault and Derrida’s paranoid views of the archive. Cvetkovich describes an archive of feelings as “an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception.”²⁸ Cvetkovich’s capacious view of an archive as simply referring to a corpus of work

²⁴ Jacques Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 10.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 145.

²⁶ Derrida, “Archive Fever,” 19.

²⁷ Foucault, *Archaeology*, 146.

²⁸ Anne Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 7.

runs counter to Foucault, who sees the archive as existing between langue and corpus,²⁹ and to Derrida, who sees the archive as a physical site where records are deposited.³⁰ But the notion of an archive of feelings re-centres the historian's engagement with the archive, and pays attention not only to what is encoded with the archived text itself, but also what happens when that text begins to circulate anew, freed from the strictures and structures of the archive.

While the work of all three scholars is formative to how I theorize the work of the archive in this dissertation, none of them accurately or adequately describe my own interactions with the archive. Instead of seeing the archive as this highly-ordered site of law, or as a capacious corpus where emotions are stored, I instead see the archive as material site of disorder. Following from Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell, archives do not “create legibility, a tidy organization of records that correspond to the organization of sources into neat boxes and files.”³¹ My own encounters with the archives suggests a different view of the archive. The archive is not a tidily ordered repository of information, but rather is an anarchic realm of fluidity, multiplicity, and ultimately disorder.

My view of the archive as a site of disorder is influenced by scholarship from archivists. The key practice of many archivist is the creation of finding aids, a table of contents of sorts to what can be found within any archival fond. These finding aids are crucial documents for any historian, and every public archive I visited throughout the course of research had many that I consulted. But these finding aids were often not created through an active restructuring and reordering of these files in order to make the collection legible and easier to navigate. Rather,

²⁹ Foucault, *Archaeology*, 146.

³⁰ Derrida, “Archive Fever,” 10.

³¹ Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell, “Something Queer In the Archive,” in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*, ed. Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015), 5.

these finding aids were created through the principle of *respect des fonds*, a principle that, as Sara Edenheim notes, means that archivists make order out of the files in a way that respects their original ordering.³² When an archivist receives new records to be deposited in the archives, files are rarely reorganized, duplicates rarely discarded. The archivist merely tries to record the groups of files as they are given. The amount of order an archivist may impose on a collection, of course, varies depending on the state the collection arrives in. But more often than not, in my encounters with the archive, these attempts at ordering serve to give only the false impression of order. Many of the collections I consulted were the idiosyncratic holdings of usually a gay male collector, or some cases the institutional records of an often precariously-funded film festival, and as such were often almost meticulous in their disorder. By this I mean that every single scrap of paper that might have been relevant was included in this archive—notes from phone calls written on hotel stationary, illegible scribbblings from an ad-hoc meeting of festival organizers, and copies of the same newspaper clipping across multiple files were all common objects in my archive. What is contained in these folders is often chaotically disordered, with incongruent files piled on top of each other, their only connection being that they may have been created within the same year or may have related to the same vague topic. The principle of *respect des fonds* is not a principle of order; it is a principle of respecting the disorder of the collection as it arrived.

This disorder is crucial to the archive because it creates the conditions through which a historian can begin to make sense of the archive and narrate a version of the past. Archives may have an order—they have finding aids, fonds, and tools to organize and order material—but this ordering often masks a deeper, more generative disorder. It is very rare that you can enter an

³² Sara Edenheim, “Lost and Never Found: The Queer Archive of Feelings and Its Historical Propriety,” *Differences* 24, no. 3 (December 1, 2013): 43.

archive, open up the very first file in a fond, and read all the files in order to the very last and come up with a complete and coherent picture of whatever subject you may be interested in. The archive only begins to become legible when historians begin to disorder it—when we begin to jump around the fonds, between fonds, and between archives in order to tell their stories. The archive is disordered, fluid, multiple, strange, and full of radical potential to be read against itself.

This disorder is what allows archives to become sites for their own affective economies. Archives are, for Sara Ahmed, “contact zones”³³ and are not, contra Cvetkovich “repositories of feelings and emotions.”³⁴ “Feelings are not ‘in’ my archive in the same way,” Ahmed writes. “Rather, I am tracking how words for feeling, and objects of feeling, circulate and generate effects: how they move, stick, and slide. We move, stick and slide with them.”³⁵ Affect cannot be positively possessed by the archive or by the objects in the archive—the archive cannot *contain* feelings. Rather, the archive is full of *potential* for affect, only becoming sticky with affect in the moment of encounter. Such potentiality could only be possible, too, if we view the archive as not a site of order and control, but of dust, of happenstance, of chance, of discarded objects waiting to be put in contact with each other. An archive is a site where a juxtaposition of material objects can manifest the potential for affect.

Comparative Festival History as Contact Zone

This dissertation follows in the footsteps of contemporary feminist scholars and archivists who “rather than approach the archive as a site of preservation (a place to house traces of the *past*), [...] are seizing the archive as an apparatus to legitimize new forms of knowledge and

³³ Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 14.

³⁴ Cvetkovich, *Archive of Feelings*, 7.

³⁵ Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 14.

cultural production in an economically and politically precarious *present*.”³⁶ Throughout this dissertation I track the affective economies of dis/interest, disgust, shame, and happiness within film festival archives. I see this dissertation as reanimating archival material, as putting objects in contact with each other, in order to see what affects emerge and what that can tell us about the present state of affairs of queer and feminist film festivals—and the arts and non-profit ecosystem more generally—in Canada. The histories of queer film festivals on the Canadian Prairies provide more than just didactic object lessons, as if distant relics from the past that can be “studied” and “learned from.” Rather, they are making contributions to the ecosystem *now* in the ongoing present. I see the role of this dissertation as bringing these diverse contributions and their historical contexts into conversation with each other. Throughout the course of this research, I was surprised at how little the queer and feminist film festivals on the prairie region, and indeed across North America, talk to and collaborate with each other. Many of them exist in their own bubble, partnering and learning from organizations in their city more than with organizations elsewhere. This seems to me like a missed opportunity, since many of these festivals have remarkably similar histories, and could learn much from each other.

In this spirit, each chapter creates contact zones and generates comparative histories of festivals, activists, and discourses to draw out the affective regional similarities and highlight the intra-regional differences within the network. In chapter 2, I create contact zones between spectatorship theory, audience studies, film festival studies, and new cinema history to trace the history of affective relationships between bodies and cinema institutions within cinema and media studies. Inverting Raymond Williams’s “structures of feeling,” I explore how the feelings

³⁶ Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Temple University Press, 2013), 4, emphasis original.

of structure embed cinema's institutions under our skins and within the body. I use this literature to situate my methodology, which I describe as feeling through structure, entering into the structures of film festivals by seeking out and following feelings.

The first feelings I seek out are those generated by the gay and lesbian rights and second-wave feminist activist uses of cinema since the end of the Second World War. In chapter 3, I build on the work of Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson to argue that cinema was seen as a "useful" medium to the gay and lesbian rights and second-wave feminist movements because of the unique ways it could generate affect. I suggest that the growth of cinema as a useful medium proved especially useful to gay and lesbian and feminist activists in the aftermaths of AIDS and the École Polytechnique Massacre in the late 1980s, two events which catalyzed the formation of queer and feminist film festivals in the prairie region.

In chapter 4, I begin to tell the stories of two film festivals that emerged specifically in response to AIDS and the École Polytechnique Massacre: herland Feminist Film Festival in Calgary and Counterparts: International Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film in Winnipeg. More generally, I focus on the circulation of dis/interest within networks of queer and feminist film festivals in Calgary and Winnipeg between 1985 and 1995 and discuss the relationships between herland and The Fire I've Become: Queer Canadian Film Festival in Calgary, and Counterparts and Vice Versa Lesbian Film Festival in Winnipeg in order to highlight the influences of lesbians and people of colour on the development of the region's queer film festivals. I show that while in Calgary the queer and feminist film festivals took an interest in each other and in each other's success, in Winnipeg the relationship was more acrimonious and characterized by disinterest.

The complex networks of interest and disinterest that I discuss in chapter 4 are generally limited to intra-movement relationships between gay and feminist activists. In chapter 5, I explore how these networks of interest take shape in the conflicts between queer activists and far-right activists between 1987 and 2000. I focus on the circulation of disgust between festival organizers and their conservative opponents at *Counterparts*, *The Fire I've Become*, *herland*, and Regina's *Queer City Cinema*. Using the paradigm of "sex in public," I argue that conservative disgust over the entry of queer and feminist film festivals in the public sphere had the perverse effect of not distancing the festivals from the public, but of centralizing the festivals and sex within the public sphere. I argue the acceptance of public funds by queer film festivals constituted a line of interest between sex and public, and that this line was the object of conservative disgust.

These panics over the relationship between queer sex and the public sphere were formative moments for the network of queer and feminist film festivals and had lasting effects on the role of these festivals within the larger public sphere. Chapter 6 focuses on the aftermaths of these sex panics and considers the ways in which rights talk was used to reduce the shame associated with sex panic. Focusing on three legislative developments at all three levels of government, this chapter explores the role of *Counterparts*, *The Fire I've Become*, Calgary's *Fairy Tales*, and *Queer City Cinema* to the reformulation of the queer citizen as a rights-bearing subject. Following from Tomkins's understanding of the relationship between insult and shame, I argue that the AIDS crisis activated institutional shame in *Fairy Tales* and *Counterparts*. In contrast, *Queer City Cinema* did not feel shame, but rather was used by the public to make the city's municipal government feel shame. To overcome this shame, these organizations turned to rights talk.

The reduction of shame made space for new forms of happiness and new queer film festivals to emerge. In chapter 7 I show that a focus on heterosexual happiness was central to the formation of Fairy Tales and Winnipeg's Reel Pride at the turn of the millennium. This emphasis on heterosexuality influenced both the programming and the public face the festivals put on in the press. While ostensibly done in order to provide cover for queerer films to be screened without being the subject of another sex panic, such decisions set the festivals on a path toward programming cleaner and safer films. As a contrast, I turn to Queer City Cinema, which instead of turning to heterosexual happiness, reveled in being happily queer. This positionality had the effect of orienting Queer City Cinema toward more marginalized filmmakers and more experimental forms of art making.

Between 2005 and 2009, the network of queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies entered another period of paradigmatic change. In my conclusion, I briefly explore how the 2005 Civil Marriages Act, the 2006 election of the federal Conservative government, and the 2008-09 financial crisis affected the material organization and affective economies of queer and feminist film festivals. I consider some of the current features of queer film festivals on the prairies, and identify how new affective economies of love, pride, and precarity are circulating within these festival networks. I finally assess the legacies of queer and feminist film festivals not only to activist organizing on the prairies, but to queer and feminist movements in Canada broadly and provide concrete policy recommendations for contemporary queer and feminist film festivals that aim to ensure their continued relevance to their communities.

In short, what I aim to do with this dissertation is tell a comparative history of an influential but ignored network of queer and feminist film festivals and develop a robust theory and methodology for understanding the place of affect within film festivals. I do this because I

am interested in other modes of organizing queer and feminist institutions that do not necessarily depend on a growing cohort of corporate sponsors with little connection to the communities they are investing their funds into. The diverse organizational models and foundations of these festivals challenge assumptions about the uniformity of culture on the Canadian Prairies, about how queer and feminist film festivals could be organized and recovers the nearly lost histories of intersectional queer and feminist organizing in the region. The histories of these film festival networks also reveal a complex economy of affect. The histories I tell throughout this dissertation show not only the multiplicity of affect that circulates, but also the ways these affects structured cinema institutions and activist organizing. In the next chapter I explore how the literature and my methodology provide an intellectual lineage and framework for understanding these networks of feeling.

CHAPTER 2

FEELING THROUGH CINEMA: LITERATURE REVIEW & METHODOLOGY

While we can and should follow Raymond Williams to explore ‘structures of feeling,’ my suggestion here is that we might also want to explore ‘feelings of structure’: feelings might be how structures get under our skin.

—Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*

Feelings of structure are themselves mutable—they are attuned to changes of presence, sensitive to the waves of intensities of emotions that rise and fall, disperse, accrue, take shape, diffuse in response to the structural forces. Feelings may even threaten to dissolve the certainty of structure.

—Karen Engle and Yoke-Sum Wong, *Feelings of Structure: Explorations in Affect*

The feelings of structure get under our skin. I start this chapter with epigraphs from two “companion texts” that have guided me through this literature review: Sara Ahmed’s *The Promise of Happiness* and Karen Engle and Yoke-Sum Wong’s edited collection *Feelings of Structure: Explorations in Affect*. As companion texts, or texts “whose company enabled [me] to proceed on a path less trodden,” they oriented me toward my key interests in my literature review and methodology and throughout this dissertation: the material structures of cinema, the ways queer, feminist, and racialized histories that are often left out of these structures, and the capacity of affect to both understand how these exclusions manifest and to re-centre marginalized histories.¹ These works are signposts, directing me and orienting me within the networks of feeling I trace throughout this dissertation.

To have Ahmed, Engle’s, and Wong’s work as my textual companions is a deliberate gesture to centre the work and contributions of queers, feminists, and people of colour throughout this dissertation—and, in the case of Engle, the work of feminists from the prairies. Ahmed writes that during her PhD, she was advised to “give [her] love to this or that male

¹ Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 16.

theorist, to follow him, not necessarily as an explicit command but through an apparently gentle but increasingly insistent questioning: Are you a Derridean; no, so are you a Lacanian; no, oh, okay, are you a Deleuzian; no, then what? If not, then what?” As a white cisgender male academic, my privilege has often protected me from such insistent questioning. Never did I have to justify my work as Deleuzian, as Derridean, or, as is often the case for people in sexuality studies, a Foucauldian. But I bring up Ahmed’s experience as being given this line of questioning to provide myself the opportunity to assert not necessarily my love for Ahmed’s work, but to identify her work as a “desire line” for my dissertation, a path “created by not following the official paths laid out by disciplines.”²

Starting with Ahmed in a literature review that focuses on affect within cinema and media studies is not the usual way to start such literature reviews; often, when tracing the place of affect in cinema and media studies, Raymond Williams’s “structure of feeling,” which he coined in *Preface to Film* in 1954, is consistently cited as an important early moment.³ Instead, as both a recognition and a queering of Williams’s formative phrase, I start with its inversion: *feelings of structure*. If a structure of feeling connotes an emergent cultural field,⁴ then the feelings of structure connote the sometimes-ungraspable affects that entangle our bodies within structures. For Engle and Wong, feelings of structure highlight the “intangible, ineffable, and evocative aspects of the complex feelings that we glean from structures.”⁵ Feelings of structure position structure and feeling “as entangled, relational, and shifting terms rather than fixed

² Ibid., 15.

³ Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama, 1954)

⁴ Raymond Williams, “Structures of Feeling,” in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132.

⁵ Karen Engle and Yoke-Sum Wong, “Introduction: Thinking Feeling,” in *Feelings of Structure: Explorations in Affect*, ed. Karen Engle and Yoke-Sum Wong (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018), 6.

binaries.”⁶ Structure is not opposed to feeling; rather it is through feelings that structure comes to press upon the body and compel us to act.

Engle and Wong’s work orients me toward exploring how feelings embed structures within bodies. This chapter tries to think narrowly about one form of structure—cinema, and to a lesser extent, other forms of media—and the ways in which feelings help cinema get under our skin. I think through the feelings of cinema as an institution to explore the ways cinema and media affect bodies and how bodies affect cinema and media. I feel my way through the literature in cinema and media studies, seeking out moments where the field has become interested in the body and in how cinema and media transmit sensation, feeling, and meaning to explore how affects embed media institutions within the body.

Throughout this literature review (and throughout the dissertation) I have attempted to follow the example Ahmed sets out in *Living a Feminist Life*, wherein she adopts a policy of not citing any white men as an institution, but instead citing and centring predominantly queers, women, and people of colour *and* the folks who advanced antiracist, and antisexist critique (who were sometimes white men).⁷ I could not adopt as strict a policy as her, if only for the simple fact that many of queer film festivals I discuss throughout this dissertation were organized by white men, and as such they have had to take centre stage from time to time. Moreover, one of the disciplines I position this dissertation within, the new cinema history, has been dominated by white straight male voices and histories and I am trying to read the histories of queer, feminist, and racialized cinema institutions into this body of work. But I bring this up here, at the beginning of my chapter on my literature review, to both be transparent about the limitations of

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 15.

my feminist citation policy and to orient you toward the stakes of this literature review: to not position this dissertation as indebted to the lineage of this or that white straight male theorist, but as indebted to feminists, to queers, and to people of colour. As a gay white cis man, it is my ethical responsibility to use my considerable privilege to listen to and centre these voices and to think more carefully about their intellectual contributions.

I divide the review into three parts. In the first part, I review the literature that constitutes the affective turn of the early 2000s, focusing specifically on the ways queer and feminist theory is both central to and a palimpsest on our understanding of affect. In the second part I turn specifically to cinema and media studies and trace the genealogical lineage of the affective turn in cinema and media studies through psychoanalytic film theory, cognitive film theory, and audience studies. In the third part, I trace the genealogy of feelings of structure through what I am provisionally calling the institutional turn in cinema and media studies through new cinema history and film festival studies. Following this review of the literature, I argue that my methodology feels through structure in order to centre the affective entanglements of queer and feminist film festivals.

The Affective Turn

In the mid-2000s, around the same time that studies of film festivals began to be published in North America and Europe, critical theorists declared that we were in the midst of what they called the “affective turn.”⁸ The affective turn constituted a shift in critical theory away from thinking about *language* as the locus of change and toward the *body*. Affect theory’s key interests the ways bodies affect others, how bodies relate to each other, and the relationship

⁸ Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

between bodies and emotions emerges from the field's roots in queer and feminist theory.⁹ But despite the centrality of queer and feminist theory to the affective turn, their contributions are often positioned as outside of the bounds of the affective turn. As Ahmed writes, "When the affective turn becomes a turn to affect, feminist and queer work are no longer positioned as part of that turn. Even if they are acknowledged as precursors, a shift *to* affect signals a shift *from* this body of work."¹⁰ My aim with this section is to re-centre the contributions of queer and feminist scholars to this turn.

Affect theory, with its "emphasis on change and relationality," provides a framework to understand how bodies, signs, and objects relate within the world.¹¹ In fact, affect is central to this understanding: as May Chew argues, "we cannot begin to grasp late-capitalist postmodernity without considering the fundamental role that affect plays in shaping our encounters within, as well as our perceptions of, this world."¹² The separation of queer and feminist theory from the affective turn proper often hinges on a separation between scholarship on "affect" and scholarship on "emotion." This distinction between affect and emotion often hinges on a particular understandings of the biological and the social, with those theorists interested in the biological and physiological intensities of the body working on affect, while those working on the social and the cultural circulation of feelings are studying emotion.¹³ In the affect camp we

⁹ Michael Hardt, "Foreword: What Affects Are Good For," in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, ed. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), ix–xiii.

¹⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 206–207.

¹¹ Marusya Bociurkiw, *Feeling Canadian: Television, Nationalism, and Affect* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 21.

¹² May Chew, "Beckoning Bodies, Making Subjects: Interactive and Immersive Technologies in Canadian Museums, 1967–2014" (PhD dissertation, Queen's University, 2015), 31.

¹³ Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xv.

can find theorists like Brian Massumi, and Deleuze and Guattari, who build on the work of Spinoza to argue for an understanding of affect as the impersonal and pre-discursive intensities that move bodies to act and be acted upon.¹⁴ In the emotion camp we can find theorists like Sara Ahmed, who builds on Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition to construct a theory of affect as outside of the body.¹⁵

Elsbeth Probyn notes that most writers are hesitant to “cross the divide between the social and biological” that often divides research on affect and emotion.¹⁶ Both Eric Shouse and Lauren Berlant refuse to cross this divide and assert clear boundaries between affect, emotion, and feeling.¹⁷ But Ahmed notes, in response to Berlant, that to insist on a firm distinction between affect as pre-personal and emotion as social reproduces a gendered distinction that casts emotion as the demure and personal feminine category against affect’s impersonal masculinity. Probyn, in her assessment of this debate, argues that there needs to be a “radical cross-fertilization of ideas” because for her what is most important about affect studies is its ability to tell us “what connected bodies do to the organization of the social.”¹⁸ Ontological questions about the distinctions between affect and emotion—questions, as Probyn notes with regard to shame, monopolize the literature—obscure more urgent questions of the performative aspects of a given affect.¹⁹

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

¹⁵ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

¹⁶ Probyn, *Blush*, xv.

¹⁷ Eric Shouse, “Feeling, Emotion, Affect,” *M/C Journal* 8, no. 6 (2005), <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>; Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 12-13.

¹⁸ Probyn, *Blush*, 26 and 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

The relevant question when studying affect is thus not *what is the difference between affect and emotion* but rather *what do affects do?* This leads Probyn to the work of Silvan Tomkins (via Eve Sedgwick), who locates affect on the body but whose “true interest lies in what the affects, understood as biological, do within and to the social.”²⁰ Tomkins reduces the body’s affects to eight distinct categories: interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, surprise-startle, distress-anguish, fear-terror, shame-humiliation, contempt-disgust, and anger-rage.²¹ Tomkins locates each of these affects on the face: interest-excitement, for example, he describes as “eyebrows down, track, look, listen.”²² However, rather than trying to determine why the affects emerge in this way, he spends much of his work trying to understand what these biological affects do within our relations with others.

The affective lineage of Silvan Tomkins intervenes into debates about the distinctions between affect and emotion and makes space for an understanding of affect that attends to its biological, personal, and cultural aspects. This is what attracted Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank to Tomkins’ work in the mid-1990s, as within Tomkins they found tools to challenge the assumption within critical theory at the time that language, not the biological body, held the most potential to affect change.²³ Within Tomkins’s writings Sedgwick, and later Probyn, found the possibility to attend to both the body in its biological materiality *and* the forces, structures, and discourses that make up the social.

²⁰ Ibid., 27.

²¹ Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition* (New York: Springer, 2008), 185.

²² Ibid.

²³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins,” in *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 1.

Drawing on this vast interdisciplinary field of affect theory, I start from the assumption that affect is not situated positively within the body and instead emerges within our body's interactions with other bodies, objects, and signs. I reject any firm distinction between affect, emotion, and feeling, and use the three terms interchangeably throughout the dissertation, both because I am less interested in affect and emotion as general categories than I am of specific understandings of specific affects, *and* because I am not interested in reproducing the gendered, sexualized, and racialized split that Ahmed warns about when we assert clear lines between affect, emotion, and feeling.

Audiences, Spectators, and Bodies of Affect in Cinema and Media Studies

Affect theory, because of its roots in queer and feminist theory and its subsequent focus on the body, can be a useful framework for exploring how feelings embed cinema within the body. Affect, in some form or another, has been an ongoing concern within cinema and media studies since well before “the affective turn” was declared in the mid-2000s. Affect theory's primary interests can be traced through psychoanalytic spectatorship theory, cognitive film theory, and audience studies, which are part of a broad body media study interested in the relationship between bodies, emotion, and media. This literature often focuses on the relationship between cinema and its spectator and/or audience, whether that be some ideal spectator imagined by the text, the empirical audience, or the critic/theorist. I locate cinema and media studies' long engagement with affect within the fields of spectatorship and audience studies since affect theory, spectatorship theory, and audience studies have a central interest in the human body's relations with objects and others within its networks.

The interest in how cinema affects the body is almost as old as cinema itself. The founding myth of cinema's new pleasures is well-rehearsed: the first time the Lumières screened

Arrival of a Train at the Station (Dir. Louis and Auguste Lumière, France, 1895) in 1896, audience members were reportedly astonished and fearful that the train would leap off the screen and drive right through the theatre. Len Kuleshov, a decade later, demonstrated that film editing, through the simple juxtaposition of two shots, could transmit different meanings and elicit different feelings from the viewer. Later, Walter Benjamin theorized how the mechanical reproduction of art would strip the art object of its “aura,” of some ineffable characteristic of the art that could only be felt when in the presence of the original.²⁴ We can even identify Leni Riefenstahl’s Nazi propaganda films *Olympia* (Germany, 1938) and *Triumph of the Will* (Germany, 1935)—designed to elicit strong nationalist sentiment in its viewer—as part of this fascination with cinema’s emotive capacities in its first fifty years.

In the 1970s, the emergence of film studies as an academic discipline and the availability of cheaper and more portable film equipment, especially 16mm film, provided new frameworks for understanding how bodies and cinema relate. Community activists became guerrilla filmmakers, verité filmmaking personified the camera’s vision, and the camera and the body began to intertwine. In the academy, psychoanalytic spectatorship theory drew upon Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to link cinema’s pleasures to the drives and to systems of identification in order to understand how cinema transmitted its meanings and affects to its spectators.²⁵ Psychoanalysis has a complex relationship with affect theory, and its focus on a handful of identifiable drives is often cast as too reductive a theory to understand the complex reasons bodies act upon each other. However, rather than rejecting psychoanalysis outright, I

²⁴Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Film Theory & Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 7th ed. (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 665-685.

²⁵ Christian Metz, “The Passion for Perceiving,” in *Film Theory & Criticism*, 702.

want to reassert its centrality to the intellectual lineage of affect and media studies because psychoanalytic spectatorship theory was crucial to the development of feminist, queer, and racialized theories of cinema spectatorship, audiences, and affect.

The origins of queer, feminist, and racialized scholars' historical investments in psychoanalytic spectatorship theory can be pinpointed to Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." For Mulvey, psychoanalysis was a "political weapon" useful for "demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form."²⁶ This structure was, at least in mainstream cinema, coded as sexual and reduced women's bodies to objects to be looked at, and not active bearers of the look.²⁷ The pleasurable feelings of film structure used the image of woman against herself, and the demands of realist editing combined with the fetishistic reduction of woman to decontextualized images of her body collapsed the look of the camera, the look of the audience, and the look of the characters on screen into one singular, monolithic pleasurable gaze. Mulvey advocates for a destruction of the visual pleasures of conventional narrative cinema by breaking these gazes apart in order to "free [...] the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment."²⁸

Mulvey's focus on pleasure through a psychoanalytic lens offers an early feminist approach to understanding how cinema has been bound up with affects and feelings of pleasure, and what alternative affective economies become available once cinema's many looks are freed from Hollywood cinema's patriarchal structure. Mulvey argues that radical alternative cinema provides an opportunity to deconstruct the patriarchy of film form. Mulvey notes that alternative cinema emerged from the increased portability and decreased cost of film production equipment,

²⁶ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (October 1, 1975): 6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

and thus importantly identifies the socio-cultural context that makes the destruction of visual pleasure possible.²⁹ Mulvey's article is thus central to the intellectual lineage to this dissertation not only because of its importance to feminist film theory but also because Mulvey taps into the complex relationships between affect, the body, and the various structures of cinema. The very structures of film form produce pleasurable feelings, and these feelings produce and perpetuate the patriarchal status quo. If we can change the structures of film form, we can change affect, and we can thus perhaps change the status quo.

As political manifesto, Mulvey's article catalyzed a field of queer, feminist, and critical race film theory on cinema's looking structures and the pleasures that emerged from it. Some scholars, like Tania Modleski, argued that there are ways to "read against the grain" of the structure of film form in order to use cinema's pleasures against itself.³⁰ Gay and lesbian film critics and theorists in including Richard Dyer, Amy Villarejo, and Thomas Waugh have argued that queer spectators are particularly adept at reading against the grain and are often able to rescue positive queer representations from even the murkiest heteronormative cinema fair.³¹ bell hooks and Manthia Diawara likewise argue that black spectators adopt a resistant or oppositional gaze and refuse to identify with on screen characters because they are almost always disenfranchising.³² Jack Halberstam similarly argues that various films offer different takes on

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

³⁰ Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1988).

³¹ Richard Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990); Amy Villarejo, *Ethereal Queer: Television, Historicity, Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); and Thomas Waugh, *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

³² Manthia Diawara, "Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance," *Screen* 29, no. 4 (October 1, 1988): 66–79; hooks, bell. "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators." In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 115–32. New York: Routledge, 2015.

the transgender look, and that while most Hollywood productions are unable to effectively deploy a transgender look and instead simply reproduce a heteropatriarchal form of looking, queer independent films are more successful.³³

This psychoanalytically-infused spectatorship theory, sometimes called *Screen* theory for the journal in which much of it was published, located cinema's spectator within the text. This opened up the field up to criticisms that it paid little attention to the normative experiences of empirical audiences and instead sought out ideal cases in order to make its theoretical or political point.³⁴ Cognitivist film theorists charged that psychoanalytic spectatorship theory depended too heavily on imaginary audiences and decoding hidden meaning rather than the normative sense-making processes behind watching a film. Cognitivist film theory expressed skepticism at generating a total theory of cinema, as it claimed spectatorship theory aspired to, and aimed instead to historicize a poetics of cinema.³⁵ But despite cognitive film theory's critique of psychoanalytic spectatorship theory as being divorced from empirical audiences, it too focused on elucidating how textual characteristics guided spectators to read, understand, and respond to the film in particular ways.

As Miriam Hansen notes, the idea of film's "spectator" is distinct from its empirical audience member, and the notion of an ideal spectator did not emerge until a set of cinematic codes and conventions emerged more than a decade into cinema's history.³⁶ Empirical and historical studies of audiences, especially of early cinema, explored the historically-situated and

³³ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005).

³⁴ Ien Ang, *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World* (London: Routledge, 1996), 31.

³⁵ David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008).

³⁶ Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1.

material ways people respond to and interact with their media. Tom Gunning, for instance, in his analysis of the myth that the first spectators of the Lumières' *Arrival of a Train at the Station* were “panicked and hysterical” at the image of a train coming toward them on the screen, notes that there is little historical evidence to suggest that such a reaction occurred, and argues that if the spectators were indeed “astonished” at the image, careful historical research needs to be done to understand how and why.³⁷ Annette Kuhn, in her study of audiences in 1930s Britain, similarly asked “How do films and their consumers interact? And what, if anything, can we know about this interaction if it has taken place in the past?”³⁸ Kuhn and Gunning’s work also became part of a growing body of scholarship named the new film history, which was “an empirical, source-based approach to the history of cinema that takes into consideration questions of medium specificity alongside varied contexts of production and reception.”³⁹ The distinction between textual spectators and empirical spectators, however, obscures the fundamental concern that unites psychoanalytic, cognitive, and empirical approaches to spectators: namely, understanding how cinema transmits its meanings, and how cinema’s viewers respond.

If naming an “affective turn” within cinema and media studies is thus somewhat disingenuous given the field’s long engagement with questions of emotions and bodies, especially by queer, feminist, and critical race scholars, it is still undeniable that there has been a resurgence of new research on affect. This new focus on affect often emerges from a desire to document the lives and histories of marginalized communities, especially those that are the most

³⁷ Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator,” in *Film Theory & Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 7th ed. (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 737-8.

³⁸ Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London; New York: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 3.

³⁹ Annette Kuhn, “VD Propaganda, Dr. Ehrlich’s Magic Bullet, and the Production Code,” *Film History* 25, no. 1/2 (2013): 133

ephemeral. The recent “affective commotion” overflowing as we look aghast at recent attacks on democracy, on media, on the gains queer and feminist activists have made over the last three decades has made affect theory that much more of an urgent theoretical paradigm, and much of the recent work in affect and media studies stakes a claim to media studies as being a privileged and necessary field for affect theory.⁴⁰ Hunter Hargraves argues “these recent events and our mediated engagements with them have demonstrated the importance of affect in our theory and praxis” and as such “media studies has a responsibility to be distracted by the rhythmically surreal emotions that structure everyday life, if only to be then urgently paused, dissected, and reflected upon, so that we may show future generations why the work that we do matters.”⁴¹ Likewise, Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier, in their introduction to their special issue of *Media and Communication* on “The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies,” are “concerned with advancing the debate on the potentials of different theoretical approaches to analyze affect and emotion as driving forces in contemporary societies and media cultures.”⁴² Much contemporary work on affect in media studies is interested in the ways media incites or evokes particular affects. Following from the work of Andreas Reckwitz, Lünenborg and Maier argue that media can be understood as “affect generators,” designed to evoke emotion, affect, and feeling within the viewer/listener/user.⁴³ Such approaches often take the form of textual

⁴⁰ Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher, “What the F**k?! Video in the Age of Sublime Uncertainty,” in *What the F**k?! Video in the Age of Sublime Uncertainty*, Curatorial Incubator 15 (Toronto: Vtape, 2019), 4.

⁴¹ Hunter Hargraves, “The Urgency and Affects of Media Studies,” *Cinema Journal* 57, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 138 and 142.

⁴² Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier, “The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies,” *Media and Communication* 6, no. 3 (September 11, 2018): 1-2.

⁴³ Lünenborg and Maier, “The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies,” 2; Andreas Reckwitz, “Practices and Their Affects,” in *The Nexus of Practices*, ed. Alison Hui, Theodore Schatzki, and Elizabeth Shove (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 114–25.

analysis of a singular media texts (or sometimes a small corpus of texts), with the aim of elucidating the varying sorts of affects these texts contain and/or produce.⁴⁴ This growing body of recent scholarship on affect is “both historically specific and speculative,” grounded within historical and contemporary concerns but also oriented toward imagining new affective possibilities for media studies.⁴⁵

Such speculative affect theories often take the form of utopian imaginings of affect’s potential to form communities and to generate political action. Marta Zarzycka and Domitilla Olivieri’s special issue of *Feminist Media Studies* sees affect as a “tool for activist interruption,” and each contribution to the issue explores how media representations and practices “may produce modes of perception that facilitate socially and politically transformative actions.”⁴⁶ This view of affect is inspired not only by the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who see affect as transformative, but also the large body of work on queer and feminist affect that advocates for a reclamation of negative affects like shame, trauma, and anger as ways to produce communities.⁴⁷ Indeed, the reclamation of negative feelings for political action has deep roots within

⁴⁴ Recent exemplars of this tendency include Jens Eder, Julian Hanich, and Jane Stadler, eds., “#Emotions,” *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies*, Spring 2019, https://necsus-ejms.org/portfolio/spring-2019_emotions/; and Scott C. Richmond, *Cinema’s Bodily Illusions: Flying, Floating, and Hallucinating* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

⁴⁵ Hargraves, “The Urgency and Affects of Media Studies,” 139.

⁴⁶ Marta Zarzycka and Domitilla Olivieri, “Affective Encounters: Tools of Interruption for Activist Media Practices,” *Feminist Media Studies* 17, no. 4 (July 4, 2017): 527.

⁴⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 257. For more queer and feminist approaches to affect that advocate for the reclamation of bad feelings see Anne Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Alexandra Juhasz, “Affect Bleeds in Feminist Networks: An ‘Essay’ in Six Parts,” *Feminist Media Studies* 17, no. 4 (July 4, 2017): 660–87; Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James’s *The Art of the Novel*,” in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 64.

marginalized communities. As Zarzycka and Olivieri note, “Anger highlights processes of aversion, exclusion, negation, and resistance: the passion of anger has always been an important driver of action against the systemic violence of racism, sexism, or economic inequality.”⁴⁸ Wendy Chun writes about “the experience of a community brought together through hatred” with regard to the online confessional videos produced by queer people and teenage girls.⁴⁹ Chun argues against conventional wisdom that the subject of these videos is not sexuality. Instead, the subject is the very fact of their shame, and the act of confessing one’s shame is “a reaching toward community, which stems from both what seems to be held in common but also what can never be: the singular experience of abuse and vulnerability.”⁵⁰ It is through the act of producing and circulating these videos—which by and large share the same format of a teenager holding note cards up to the camera, one after another, narrativizing their confession—that these teenagers try to reclaim shame. Mobilizing negative affects can often become a moment of solidarity for marginalized communities who recognize their shared feelings.

However, the reclamation of negative feelings does not always generate the kind of radical political action many of these authors sometimes envisioned. Chun also notes the communities produced by online confessional videos can be harmful, and the hordes of anonymous trolls who shame, abuse, and spew vitriol at these video subjects produces communities divided along us versus them lines.⁵¹ At the macro level, affect is also “frequently employed by political bodies to maintain global and local market consumerism, new forms of governmentality, biopolitics, and necropolitics, and notions of social and national belonging and

⁴⁸ Zarzycka and Olivieri, “Affective Encounters,” 530.

⁴⁹ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 142.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

anxiety.”⁵² Lauren Berlant notes the “cruel optimism” of neoliberal capitalism, wherein our affective investments in the “good life” can actually be a hindrance to our flourishing instead of a help.⁵³ Jasmine Rault argues that “a performance of feeling (of sympathy, empathy, identification, and solidarity) [by white queers] for queer and trans people of colour, creates a distorting field of white noise—comprised of bits and pieces of people of colour’s experiences, analyses, and labours.”⁵⁴ White queers, in their attempts at identifying with the negative affects of queer and trans people of colour, often flatten difference into a field of indistinguishable white noise, where queer and trans of colour affect is reconfigured and absorbed as necessary to narratives of white saviourism. Affect may be transformative, but there is often nothing inherent in affect that necessarily orients it toward intersectional, radical or progressive political action. Media may be replete with affect, but these affects can just as easily be mobilized in the name of the oppressive status quo as it can in the name of radical progressive politics.

Cinema Institutions and the Structures of Affect

Much of the above work focuses on how specific media texts, technologies, and audiences transmit, produce, and are produced by affect. While this literature does not ignore entirely the socio-cultural context of media affects, it often places it as background to the research’s central focus on providing a close reading of a text, an analysis of how media’s technological features make it particularly suited to the transmission of affect, or to understanding spectator or audience affects. A growing body of work that centres media’s socio-

⁵² Zarzycka and Olivieri, “Affective Encounters,” 530.

⁵³ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁵⁴ Jasmine Rault, “White Noise, White Affects: Filtering the Sameness of Queer Suffering,” *Feminist Media Studies* 17, no. 4 (July 4, 2017): 586.

cultural function, specifically within the growing sub-fields of new cinema history and film festival studies, provide a framework for exploring the relations between affects and institutions.

The new cinema history emerged in the mid-2000s and built on the empiricism of audience studies and the new film history to privilege thinking about cinema as a social institution. New cinema history “proposes that cinema is better understood as a social, rather than primarily textual, experience.”⁵⁵ Methodologically, new cinema historians turn away from the film text as their primary source, and instead look at the broad field of historical sources that structure and regulate cinema as an institution, like fire maps, ledgers, correspondence, meeting minutes, oral testimony, and newspapers. As Bronwyn Coate, Deb Verhoeven, and Alwyn Davidson note, the new cinema history

[focuses] on the overlapping networks of business, institutional, legislative and cultural practices that all contribute to bringing films and audiences to cinemas, [...] [and] tells the story of the relationship between cinemas and cities as one from ‘below’, that is from the perspective of the people who attend the cinema. Consequently, the New Cinema History as a form of audience studies is clearly distinguished in focus and methodology from work undertaken within Reception Studies that looks instead to the ways in which spectators produce the textual meaning of films.⁵⁶

This expanded notion of cinema history considers “cinema as a social phenomenon” instead of as a text to be read.⁵⁷ Approaches to cinema from his perspective are usually highly interdisciplinary, and have turned to questions of industry, distribution, and exhibition.⁵⁸ These

⁵⁵Bronwyn Coate, Deb Verhoeven, and Alwyn Davidson, “The Cinema Cities Index: Comparing Urban Cinema Cultures around the World,” *Media International Australia* 163, no. 1 (May 1, 2017): 164.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers, “Introduction: The Scope of New Cinema History,” in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, ed. Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers (London; New York: Routledge, 2019), 2.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Jeffery Klenotic, “Putting Cinema History on the Map: Using GIS to Explore the Spatiality of Cinema,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History*, 58–84; and Deb Verhoeven, “Show Me the History! Big Data Goes to the Movies,” in *The Arclight Guide to*

approaches have often produced “micro-histories” of cinema, which, as Jessica Whitehead notes, “uses a singular case to explain a whole system” and has done much to unearth the histories of cinemagoing, reception, exhibition, and distribution in smaller or more minor communities.⁵⁹

Film festival studies traverses similar territory. Film festival studies emerged in the mid-2000s independently from new cinema history, but likewise also focused on the social and cultural features of cinema and has attempted to make sense of the unique role film festivals play in the exhibition, production, and distribution of film globally. Studies have turned to audiences, activism and politics, political economy, and have used a multiplicity of methodologies, including surveys, ethnography, and journalistic and academic case studies, to map out the complex and ever shifting relationships between cinema and festival networks.⁶⁰ Dina Iordanova argues that cinema studies can be broadly divided into three categories: textual analysis, national cinemas, and industrial approaches. Film festivals, Iordanova argues, are situated within all three

Media History and the Digital Humanities, ed. Charles R. Acland and Eric Hoyt (Sussex: Reframe Books, 2016), 165–83.

⁵⁹ Jessica Leonora Whitehead, “Movie-Going on the Margins: The Mascioli Film Circuit of Northeastern Ontario” (Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 2018), 33.

⁶⁰ For an example of an audience-focused approach to film festivals see Liz Czach, “Cinephilia, Stars, and Film Festivals,” *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 139–45. For activism, see Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin, eds., *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism* (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012). For political economy, see Ragan Rhyne, “The Global Economy of Gay and Lesbian Film Festivals,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 4 (September 14, 2006): 617–19. For surveys, see Frederik Dhaenens, “Pink Programming across Europe: Exploring Identity Politics at European LGBT Film Festivals,” *Studies in European Cinema* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 72–84. For ethnography and journalistic case studies see Daniel Dayan, “Looking for Sundance: The Social Construction of a Film Festival,” in *The Film Festivals Reader*, ed. Dina Iordanova (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2013), 45–58; Toby Lee, “Being There, Taking Place: Ethnography at the Film Festival,” in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, 122–37; and Richard Porton, ed., *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals* (London: Wallflower, 2009).

tendencies, but also somehow exceed any of their methodological tools, which requires that they are studied with separate theoretical and methodological framework.⁶¹

Iordanova's framework—I think deliberately polemic—stages an intervention into cinema studies and insists upon the value of film festivals as an object of study. However, this insistence, which Antoine Damiens notes is a common occurrence across the film festival literature,⁶² separates film festival studies as distinct from new cinema history despite their shared interest in cinema as a social phenomenon. What I think stops these two literatures from overlapping more is the fact that film festival studies tends to focus on festivals within the present and from the perspective of being present.⁶³ Marijke de Valck notes that what often makes festivals so appealing to festival researchers is “their complete embrace of the present moment. Festivals take place in the here and now.”⁶⁴ There are, of course, exceptions to this presentism. de Valck's *Film Festivals* traces the early history of film festivals in Europe after World War II to the present, and Damiens's dissertation “Festivals, Uncut” focuses on ephemeral queer film festivals in the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁵ Most studies of festivals have some historical

⁶¹ Dina Iordanova, “The Film Festival and Film Culture's Transnational Essence,” in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), xi–xvii.

⁶² Antoine Damiens, “Festivals, Uncut: Queer in/ing Festival Studies, Curating Queerness” (PhD dissertation, Concordia University, 2017).

⁶³ Lydia Papadimitriou and Jeffrey Ruoff, “Film Festivals: Origins and Trajectories,” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14, no. 1 (2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2015.1106686>.

⁶⁴ Marijke de Valck, “Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How to Study Film Festivals and Why You Should,” in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 9.

⁶⁵ Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

component, but rather than being centred as the key contribution of the study, it is relegated to the status of context: useful for understanding the present, but not meaningful in its own right.

But again, these differences obscure the fact that at their cores, both new cinema history and film festival studies are focused on the same objects: cinema as a sociocultural institution. These two subfields should be in closer conversation with each other than they are, though the growing presence of papers on film festivals at recent History of Movie-going, Exhibition, and Reception (HoMER) conferences—where much of the research on new cinema history is presented—is indicative of the slow and tentative recognition of the shared methodological and material ground. Provisionally, then, I want to suggest that we should think of new cinema history and film festival studies as occupying a growing body of research in cinema and media studies that we could name *the institutional turn*. The institutional turn focuses on, as the new cinema history does, cinema as a sociocultural institution, while making room for studies of cinemas in the present, as film festival studies does. The institutional turn also makes space for thinking about how cinema interacts with and is regulated by other institutions—which we could think broadly to include the state, but also other cinema and media institutions like collectives and co-ops, non-profits, distribution and production companies, video game producers, and other media companies and conglomerates. Of course, work is already being done on these institutions, and much of this work is already in conversation with each other.⁶⁶ By provisionally collecting

⁶⁶ See for example Claudia Sicondolfo, “‘Filleing’ the Cinema Gap: The Precarity of Toronto’s Necessary Emerging Network of Feminist Film Critics,” in *Youth Mediations and Affective Relations*, ed. Susan Driver and Natalie Coulter (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 117–95; Jennifer R. Whitson, Bart Simon, and Felan Parker, “The Missing Producer: Rethinking Indie Cultural Production in Terms of Entrepreneurship, Relational Labour, and Sustainability,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, December 21, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549418810082>; and Michael Zyrd, “A Report on Canadian Experimental Film Institutions, 1980-2000,” in *North of Everything: English-Canadian Cinema*

all of this under the umbrella of the institutional turn, I am simply trying to make explicit what is already a dominating tendency within cinema and media studies.

This focus on institutions, however, should not be seen as a turn away from the body and from the circulation of affect that underscored much of film theory since the 1970s. Because film festival studies has a robust corpus of research on queer film festivals, and a small but growing corpus of work on women's festivals, the body should remain central.⁶⁷ By focusing on how cinema as an institution is embedded within the social, the institutional turn marks an opportunity to think in concrete, material, and historically-situated ways about how bodies relate within the sociocultural sphere of cinema. Indeed, I think central to the study of any cinema and media institution should be a focus on affect and the body, and how feelings of structure cause these institutions to get under our skin and embedded within the everyday lives of the people who view, produce, and work in and around cinema and media. Without a focus on the body, we may forget the lessons learned from feminist spectatorship theory: namely, that marginalized bodies have different engagements with cinema than the dominant white heteropatriarchal perspective.

Such forgetting is formative, I argue, of the new cinema history. While early women's cinema-going, exhibition, and reception histories are often central to the canon of new cinema history, queer histories have been absent: two recent collections on new cinema history make no mention of queer cinema in any form, despite the fact that queer and women's histories are often

since 1980, ed. William Beard and Jerry White (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002), 392–401.

⁶⁷ For an up-to-date bibliography of articles on queer and feminist film festivals, see the Film Festival Research Network's bibliography: <http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org>

constitutive of each other.⁶⁸ This is, I think, more than just an accident, but I think is a structural flaw within new cinema history's understanding of the development of cinema-going. For example, Robert C. Allen argues the advent of the VCR meant that "By the early 1990s, Hollywood was making more money from selling people movies to keep and watch wherever, whenever and however they pleased than it did from selling people tickets to see a film once in a place that had become a concession stand with small, dark rooms attached to it."⁶⁹ For Allen "cinema was experienced as an event" only during its first 100 years between 1895 and 1995. After 1995, cinema became a domestic pastime, with new generations experiencing film more regularly on television, through the VCR, and later through the Internet, than they did as a social phenomenon in public. But by placing the tapering off of cinema as a social phenomenon in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Allen's historiography ignores the growth of queer film festivals globally in the mid-1990s. Indeed, by focusing on his heteronormative family's interactions with cinema, Allen fails to recognize that other forms of theatrical cinematic sociality were growing and proliferating during this supposed "end" of cinema.

My above reading of one contribution to new cinema history illustrates the benefits of situating new cinema history and film festival studies within the same intellectual field. By recognizing the growth of queer film festivals in the late 1980s and 1990s as a key shift in the social and technological history of cinema that Allen traces, we can suggest that cinema (and its publics) did not die in the mid-1990s, but that its publics became made up queer and other

⁶⁸ Miriam Hansen and Annette Kuhn are often cited within the new cinema history as two key scholars of women's cinema experiences. Neither Biltereyst et al., *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* nor Maltby, et al., *Explorations in New Cinema History* contain any mention of queer cinema.

⁶⁹ Robert C. Allen, "Reimagining the History of the Experience of Cinema in a Post-Moviegoing Age," in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, ed. Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 44.

marginalized audiences. These audiences are sometimes rendered absent by new cinema history's insistence on empirical archival material as their primary sources, which often does not exist for queer histories. Queer film festivals, as Sarah Schulman and Patricia White note in two early contributions to the field, were incredibly important sites of queer publicity and sociality, especially during the height of the AIDS crisis from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s.⁷⁰

In some senses, this dissertation enacts what Damians has called the “queering of festival studies”, but for new cinema history. In queering festival studies, Damians aims to expose the ways in which festival studies ignores ephemeral festivals—literally, festivals that may have existed only for a single day—and instead “prioritises a particular type of event,” that is, the multi-day A-list festivals (in the case of the international film festival circuit) or the so-called major players in the queer film festival scene (such as *Inside Out* in Toronto, *Frameline* in San Francisco, or *New Fest* in New York City).⁷¹ Indeed, I draw from a long history of queer media studies and queering media studies—from the strategies of reading against the grain made popular by feminist and queer critics throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, to contemporary attempts to historicize queer media representation and audiences in television, the internet, and radio throughout this dissertation.⁷² I do this to not just read queer histories into the new cinema

⁷⁰ Sarah Schulman, “What Is the Role of Gay Film Festivals?” in *My American History: Lesbian and Gay Life during the Reagan/Bush Years*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 253–255; Patricia White, ed., “Queer Publicity: A Dossier on Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, no. 1 (1999): 73–93.

⁷¹ Damians, “Festivals, Un/cut,” 29.

⁷² I have elucidated the history of reading against the grain above. For recent work that historicizes queer media representation online see Cait McKinney, “‘Finding the Lines to My People’: Media History and Queer Bibliographic Encounter,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 24, no. 1 (February 16, 2018): 55–83; Roxanne Samer, “Revising ‘Re-Vision’: Documenting 1970s Feminisms and the Queer Potentiality of Digital Feminist Archives,” *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, no. 5 (July 7, 2014), [doi:10.7264/N3FF3QMC](https://doi.org/10.7264/N3FF3QMC). For radio, see Stacey Copeland, “Broadcasting Queer Feminisms: Lesbian and Queer Women Programming in Transnational, Local, and Community Radio,” *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*

history, but locate and understand more concretely the ways affect theory's key concerns about the ways bodies affect others, how bodies relate to each other, and the relationship between bodies and emotions have been present throughout cinema and media studies' history and can help us write more inclusive histories of our discipline.

Feeling Through Structure: A Piecemeal Methodology

As the above literature review suggests, I am situating my dissertation within two turns: the affective turn and the institutional turn. By bringing these two turns together, I am interested in how media institutions both produce and are produced by affect. Though I do not focus on how specific media *texts* produce affect, this approach is not necessarily anti-textual, as methodologically I explore this relationship through a close reading of the textual material produced by, about, and around film festivals. However, I turn away from the film as a text, and do not offer close readings of any films or videos in this dissertation as a way to trace affect. Instead, as an attempt to bring new cinema history and film festival studies into closer conversation with each other under the provisional banner of the institutional turn, I focus on the production of affect by cinema *as an institution*. This necessarily includes the affects that circulate during the screening of a film, but also the affects that circulate outside of the cinema—in the lobby, on the sidewalk, in the press, and in the behind-the-scenes organizing that makes cinema happen.

By bringing the affective and institutional turns together, I am trying to embrace the methodological diversity and messiness that often characterizes the study of cinema institutions. Affect theory, after all, “can potentially overcome existing dichotomies between culture and

25, no. 2 (July 3, 2018): 209–23; Matthew Linfoot, “Queer in Your Ear: Connecting Space, Community, and Identity in LGBT BBC Radio Programs, 1992–2000,” *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 25, no. 2 (July 3, 2018): 195–208.

nature, between cognition and emotion, between inside and outside, and between the psychological and the social.”⁷³ By using affect theory to study film festivals, I am not only trying to overcome the dichotomies of viewer/producer, festival/audience, researcher/subject, but to actively turn these dichotomies inside out.

I describe my methodology as “feeling through structure.” I enter into the structures of film festivals by seeking out and following feelings. Such a method is particularly suited for the study of film festivals because film festivals are complex objects: Diane Burgess notes a “film festival comprises an exhibition space; an event; and an institution with links to civil society, cinema culture, the film industry, and to other festivals,” all of which make the festival as an object difficult to grasp.⁷⁴ She suggests that such complexity makes the definition of a general theory of film festivals difficult, if not impossible, and wonders if attempts at a “synthetic approach to festivals [is] a reflection of ontological uncertainty, resulting in an etic approach that is, at best, piecemeal.”⁷⁵ Since we cannot and likely never will come to agreement on a general theory of festivals, such piecemeal methodological approaches to film festivals remain common, combining archival research, ethnography, textual analysis, and interviews into developing a holistic view of a single festival.⁷⁶

Such ontological uncertainty is in a way productive, since it encourages festival researchers to pay attention to the ways individual festivals actually work, and the specific ways feelings emerge within each site, as opposed to developing a reductive comparative model that

⁷³ Lünenborg and Maier, “The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies,” 2.

⁷⁴ Diane Burgess and Brendan Kredell, “Positionality and Film Festival Research: A Conversation,” in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, 161.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ A good example of this multi-method approach is Joceline Andersen, “From the Ground Up: Transforming the Inside Out LGBT Film and Video Festival of Toronto,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 38–57.

seeks to evaluate and understand film festivals as all working toward an “ideal model.”⁷⁷ This is not to say that some festivals do not look to other festivals and strive to be more like their perceived models, nor is this to suggest that comparative studies are all necessarily reductive—this dissertation is a comparative study, after all. Festivals emerge for different reasons, measure their success on different scales, and identify relations with other festivals, organizations, and communities in different ways. Regina’s Queer City Cinema, for example, strives toward emulating the ambitious programming of MIX NYC, while Calgary’s Fairy Tales continues to compare itself to and position itself in relation to Inside Out. Such comparisons are useful to highlight the similarities between and diversity of queer film festivals, especially in the prairie region. Paying attention to such local particularities, and grounding our analysis in the local context and conditions of the film festivals under analysis, helps stabilize some of the messy ontological questions about what a film festival is and redirects our research energies toward the performative question of what film festivals do and how they work. In short: to understand what a film festival is, we have to understand what it does.

Trying to understand how each of the film festival cultures of prairie region works has led me toward embracing the piecemeal methodology that Burgess has reservations over and a myriad group of methods. Following Catherine J. Nash and Kath Browne, I distinguish between methods and methodology as the difference between how I collect information, and the logic and rules that govern my research design:

Research “methods” can be conceptualised as what is “done”, that is, the techniques of collecting data (interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, photographs, videos, observation, *inter alia*). By contrast, methodologies are those sets of rules and procedures that guide the design of research to investigate phenomenon or situations; part of which is a decision about what methods will be used and why. Methodology can be understood as

⁷⁷ Burgess and Kredell, “Positionality and Film Festival Research: A Conversation,” 161.

the logic that links the project's ontological and epistemological approaches to the selection and deployment of these methods.⁷⁸

By embracing a piecemeal approach to studying film festivals, I am adopting both a diverse group of methods and an unstable collection of ontological and epistemological assumptions. By operating from the assumption that film festivals are ontologically and epistemologically unstable sites, difficult to understand and even more difficult to define—perhaps film festivals are fundamentally queer sites—I have been drawn to a plethora of methods and tools to gather information.

This methodology is all the more urgent given this project's aim to consider queer and feminist film festivals intersectionally. I adopt an intersectional feminist methodology, which in my case draws explicitly from queer, feminist, and critical race epistemologies and implicitly from disability, Indigenous, and other marginalized epistemologies. I do this for the simple fact that queer and feminist film festivals are often more than just queer and feminist film festivals. They are festivals with complex relationships to communities of colour, and to Indigenous, Disability, trans and other marginalized communities. This research project starts from the assumption that queer and feminist cinema exhibition practices and queer and feminist cinema audiences exist outside of the sphere of queer and feminist film festivals, and as such, we need to take a multi-axis approach to understanding the affective economies of queer and feminist film festivals. I find such a methodological conceptualization useful for the study of queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies because the archives of these film festivals are

⁷⁸ Catherine J. Nash and Kath Browne, "Queer Methods and Methodologies: An Introduction," in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, ed. Catherine J. Nash and Kath Browne (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 10-11.

sporadic, fragmented, and incomplete and only an intersectional view of these festival practices can begin to unearth these histories.

To develop a holistic picture of these histories, I have had to scavenge for methods from multiple disciplines, using an interdisciplinary toolbox of methods and theory to gather the data and information I sought on these festivals. Since the study of film festivals is a relatively recent phenomenon, the archival records we have are often incomplete, inconsistent, ad hoc, or non-existent. In studying queer and feminist film festivals, we are often chasing ephemera, clippings and posters of events that may have happened but are difficult to verify.⁷⁹ I have been relatively privileged when it comes to accessing queer and feminist archival material, despite the systemic absence of documentation of women's film festivals and feminist media activism generally in North America.⁸⁰ Many of my primary sources were initially collected and donated by white gay men from across the region, with the herland fonds at the Glenbow Museum, the Susan Risk fonds at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, and the Rise Up! Digital Archive of Feminist Activism the only collections consulted that were collected and donated by women. These sources make up the backbone of this dissertation and are cited and recited throughout. When I designed this study, I was skeptical of the number of sources I would find in the archive, especially given the ephemerality of some of the events and the inconsistency with which non-profit organizations may retain and archive records. Organized almost entirely by volunteers, what these festivals have saved over the years is inconsistent, as is what is made it into public archives and what they will provide access to.

⁷⁹ Ger Zielinski, "On Studying Film Festival Ephemera," in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, 138–58.

⁸⁰ Kay Armatage, "Toronto Women & Film International 1973," in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit*, ed. Dina Iordanova and Ragan Rhyne (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 82–98.

I turned to in-depth and elicitation interviews to try to fill some of the gaps in the archive. Compared to other forms of gathering data from individuals—such as focus groups, surveys, and more standardized interviews—in-depth interviewing has the benefit of gathering, as the name suggests, “deep” information.⁸¹ Where possible, I blended my in-depth interviews with elicitation interviews and used documents “to invoke comments, memory and discussion in the course of a semi-structured interview.”⁸² For parts of the interview, I would present them with document or piece of ephemera and see what kinds of memories or comments it would evoke. My interview with Reel Pride volunteer David Wyatt, for example, took place while I was sorting through his boxes of material related to the festival, and my questions were often asked in response to a document I pulled from one of the boxes. This data is used to supplement other ways of gathering data, including as I do here, archival evidence.⁸³ The benefit of such an approach is two-fold: it can help verify interpretations of the archival data, and can also be an important source in its own right. In-depth interviewing is particularly useful “where the research question involves highly conflicted emotions, [and] where different individuals or groups involved in the same line of activity have complicated, multiple perspectives on some phenomenon.”⁸⁴ In almost every case, these queer film festivals have been organized in highly charged emotional environments, with internal and external conflicts and multiple perspectives on events being the norm. In providing the space for informants to speak freely and openly, with a loose and less rigid structure, informants are more likely to remember and speak about fleeting moments that to them have little importance, but in the grand scheme of the research bear a

⁸¹ John M. Johnson, “In-Depth Interviewing,” in *Handbook of Interview Research*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2001), 104.

⁸² Marcus Banks, *Visual Methods in Social Research* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2001), 87.

⁸³ Johnson, “In-Depth Interviewing,” 104.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

particular weight. I conducted five of these interviews over the course of the research, and with some exceptions, these interviews were used mostly to verify my interpretation of archival sources or to otherwise fill in the gaps in the material from the archives. The interviews appear in this dissertation mostly as background and are rarely included as a source within the dissertation itself.⁸⁵

I engaged in some ethnography over the course of research, but like interviews, the insights gathered from it form the background of the dissertation. I have attended both Fairy Tales and Queer City Cinema once each, and these experiences of the festival inform my understanding of how they work. For example, when I attended Fairy Tales in 2016, I expected to walk into a festival much like Inside Out, a festival with high production values, professional wayfinding signage, maybe a few wealthy gay men in suits. However, the festival was held at the Plaza Theatre, a single-screen movie theatre whose interior is small, cramped, and a little bit reminiscent of a small-town hockey rink. The audience was smaller than I expected, and as a result, everyone seemed to know everyone—there was a palpable sense of togetherness, with the festival’s buzz forming less around a given film but around the very act of being queer and being together. This visit to the festival reminded me that despite the festival’s attempts to position themselves as a highly-professionalized space, they are still very much rooted in the needs and desires of their community. This recognition helped me to problematize the sometimes taken-for-granted distinction between industry and community that underscores radical leftist critiques of queer corporatization. Fairy Tales manages to walk the line between being corporatized and still serving the community and shows just how complex organizing a queer film festival can be.

That visit to Fairy Tales also underscored my own complex relationship to these festivals,

⁸⁵ The informed consent form and interview questions appear in Appendices B and C.

which I articulate as being an “insider outsider.” When I tell people what my dissertation is about, they almost always respond with “oh you must be from the prairies” as a way to explain my interest in the region. I am an insider to these festivals by virtue of having insider knowledge about Saskatchewan’s queer cultures: I was born and raised in Saskatchewan, received my BA from the University of Regina, came out in Saskatchewan, had my first boyfriends (and met my current partner) in Saskatchewan and maintain personal and professional contacts in Saskatchewan. But am a relative outsider to the cultures in Alberta and Manitoba: when I started this project, I had few personal and professional connections to the queer cultures of each province. This is further compounded by the fact that I have lived away from the region for seven years, and now live and work in Toronto, which repositions me as an outsider coming into the region to study its queer communities. Such complexity highlights, as Diana Fuss argues with regards to queer identity, “the fact that most of us are both inside and outside at the same time.”⁸⁶ By positioning myself as an insider and an outsider, I am indicating the complex scales and gradients of the various spatial and temporal landscapes this dissertation navigates. The outside of any inside is just another inside to another outside. Inside out, outside in, insider outsider, outsider insider: our relations with each other are a Mobius strip where we often cannot tell where one ends and the other begins.

My own insider/outsider status is an echo of the complex inside/out relations of structure and feeling. Structure and feeling cannot be easily separated: where one ends, the other begins. These relations also structure the complex network of international, national, and local political and technological changes since the end of the Second World War that moved queer and feminist

⁸⁶ Diana Fuss, “Inside/Out,” in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (Routledge, 2013), 5.

activism and media into the public sphere. It is to these contexts and changes that I turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RAISING CONSCIOUSNESS, FORMING MOVEMENTS: POST-WAR QUEER AND FEMINIST CINEMA & ACTIVISM IN CANADA

From their very beginnings, film festivals have been sticky with affect. Small film festivals were held throughout Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as celebrations of the new medium, and the first institutionalized international film festival was founded in 1932 in Italy as part of the Venice Biennale. The early Venice festivals were international affairs, with British, French, and American films, stars, and filmmakers attending the event. But, as fascist sentiment grew across Europe, Mussolini found the Biennale's film festival a useful tool to extoll the virtues of fascism internationally and to challenge Hollywood's dominance in the film industry. In 1936, Goebbels was invited to the festival as a guest of honour, and in 1938 the festival's top prize, the Mussolini Cup, was shared by Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* and *Luciano Serra, Pilot* (Dir. Goffredo Alessandrini, Italy, 1938), the latter of which was produced by Mussolini's son. Concerned with the growing influence of fascism at the festival, French, British, and American interests joined forces to start their own counter festival in Cannes, scheduled to open 1 September 1939. But the festival's opening night was quickly derailed, and the festival subsequently cancelled, when Hitler invaded Poland on 1 September 1939 and the Second World War broke out. After the war, numerous international festivals started in Europe, including Cannes, which officially began again in 1946.¹

¹ For a more detailed account of this history, see Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinophilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 47-49; and Maria Stone, "Challenging Cultural Categories: The Transformation of the Venice Biennale under Fascism," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 4, no. 2 (1999): 184-208, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545719908455006>.

It was not long after the war that the largely European film festival phenomenon crossed the Atlantic to North America. Though Kirsten Stevens pinpoints North America's festival origins to San Francisco in 1957, the first film festival held in North America actually happened nearly a decade earlier in Yorkton, a small town in rural Saskatchewan.² In 1947, James Lysyshyn, a National Film Board (NFB) employee responsible for film distribution in south eastern Saskatchewan, approached Nettie Kyrski and the Yorkton Film Council with an idea: he wanted the group to organize a documentary film festival. Inspired by the Edinburgh Arts Festival's plan to include a film section in their festival that same year, Lysyshyn saw an idea that "would restore the prestige of documentary films, as a way of convincing people that serious films could be important, glamorous in their own right." He wanted to "steal some of the glitter from the Hollywood Oscar," and thought that Yorkton would be the perfect place to launch this challenge.³ It took a little convincing—no one on the council had heard of a film festival before—but the idea of bringing foreign films to Yorkton to diversify the Canadian films audiences were used to seeing convinced the group of its usefulness. After three years of organizing, the first Yorkton Film Council International Film Festival was held in 1950—the first international film festival in the world held outside of Europe.

That the European film festival phenomenon made its North American debut on the Canadian Prairies is more than just convenient happenstance for this dissertation. Rather, it underscores the unique convergence of international geopolitics and cinema culture that allowed a network of queer and feminist film exhibition to emerge on the prairies in the early 1970s, and

² Kirsten Stevens, "Enthusiastic Amateurs: Australia's Film Societies and the Birth of Audience-Driven Film Festivals in Post-War Melbourne," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14, no. 1 (2016): 22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2015.1106689>.

³ James Lysyshyn qtd. in Kathy Morrell, "The Little Engine That Could: Nettie Kyrski and the Yorkton Film Festival," *Saskatchewan History* 63, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 8-9.

to later institutionalize into a network of film festivals in the mid-1980s. Consistent across this history of film festivals is one idea: that films were useful as more than just entertainment. For Mussolini, the film festival was useful to spread fascism across Europe; for Lysyshyn, the film festival was useful to assert the prestige of documentary cinema. This recognition of the utility of cinema proliferated during what Haidee Wasson and Charles Acland call film history's long middle period between 1910 and 1980, where cinema had been used to "both promote change and to resist it" in largely educational contexts.⁴ Technological shifts in the 1970s that increased the portability of projectors and film reels meant that organizations both big and small could start organizing screenings and festivals to advance their goals and agendas. For gay and lesbian activists on the prairies, film exhibition was a useful way of consciousness raising, a practice of "grassroots knowledge-production" common to gay and feminist activists throughout the 1970s and 1980s.⁵

This chapter explores the latter half of this long middle period of film history in which film was increasingly seen as a useful medium. More evocative history than exhaustive history, I trace broadly the international, national, and regional growth of the gay and lesbian rights and second-wave feminist movements as responses to some of the geopolitical shifts that occurred after the Second World War in order to situate and contextualize the growth of gay and feminist cinema exhibition in the prairie region from 1973 to 1989. While these movements also used more didactic methods like seminars, conferences, and rallies to advance their goals, cinema

⁴ Haidee Wasson and Charles R Acland, "Introduction: Utility and Cinema," in *Useful Cinema*, ed. Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson (Duke University Press, 2011), 4.

⁵ Rhiannon Firth and Andrew Robinson, "For a Revival of Feminist Consciousness-Raising: Horizontal Transformation of Epistemologies and Transgression of Neoliberal TimeSpace," *Gender and Education* 28, no. 3 (2016): 344.

proved to be especially useful because of the ways it was seen as uniquely adept at transmitting and transforming affect.

Gay and Lesbian Rights and Film Exhibition on the Prairies, 1973-1980

The growth of the gay and lesbian rights and second-wave feminist movements in Canada would not have been possible without the transformation of our understanding of human rights across North America and Europe after the Second World War. As a set of discourses and ideologies, what we have come to know as human rights has existed in various forms as a moral imperative, and has roots in the American and French Revolutions.⁶ Following World War II, an international consensus grew around notions of human rights as “a set of internationally agreed upon moral principles” which would inform policies and laws passed by governments.⁷ In 1948, the UN Declaration of Human Rights was assented to, the culmination of years of international effort and cooperation designed to ensure that the atrocities of World War II would never happen again. This effort to codify human rights echoed throughout various UN states, including Canada. In the late 1940s, Saskatchewan and Ontario had passed their own human rights laws. In 1962, Ontario developed the country’s first Human Rights Code, by 1975 all provinces had their own Human Rights Codes and in 1977 the federal government passed its own Human Rights Act.⁸ Many of these acts named sex as a protected ground of discrimination, but none, except for Quebec’s, named sexual orientation. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, gay and lesbian activist groups began emerging across Canada. Vancouver’s Association for Social Knowledge (ASK) bears the distinction of being the country’s first gay group, which formed in 1967. On the

⁶ Sonia M. Tascón, *Human Rights Film Festivals: Activism in Context* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 18.

⁷ Evelyn Kallen, “Gay and Lesbian Rights Issues: A Comparative Analysis of Sydney, Australia and Toronto, Canada,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 1996): 206-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

prairies, ASK was followed shortly by the Gay Alliance Toward Equality (GATE) Edmonton, Gays for Equality (GFE) in Winnipeg, and Saskatoon's Saskatchewan Gay Coalition (SGC). Many, though not all, of these groups made gay and lesbian rights a key focus of their activism.⁹

While many of these groups also attracted lesbian members, as did a number of feminist groups that formed across the prairies—including Womonspace in Edmonton and The Women's Building in Winnipeg—a few lesbian-specific organizations emerged as separate spaces for lesbians to meet, mingle, and organize. In 1975 the Winnipeg Lesbian Society was formed, and made it their goal to establish “an autonomous lesbian organization” connected to but separate from gay and feminist organizing in the city.¹⁰ In 1977 the Saskatoon Women's Liberation group sent their lesbian caucus to the National Gay Rights Coalition (NGRC) conference, which was meeting in Saskatoon that year. Along with the SGC, the lesbian caucus advocated for gender parity in the NGRC's decision-making structure, much to the ire of gay activists from central and eastern Canada. Indeed, the following year, when the conference was held in Halifax, prairie delegations walked out of the meeting and formally severed ties with the NGRC because the larger delegations from central and eastern Canada refused to support lesbian parity in the organization.¹¹

Because of these conflicts on the national stage, prairie gay and lesbian organizations tended to focus on lobbying their provincial governments to include sexual orientation within human rights legislation, largely in order to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination in employment and housing. These organizations used a wide variety of tactics, strategies, and

⁹ Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 140 and 225.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 317-320.

media to advocate for these changes and to raise the consciousness of gays and lesbians across the prairies, especially in rural communities. In the prairie region, cinema had already been proven a useful tool in numerous non-theatrical contexts, including the Yorkton International Film Festival and the NFB's other efforts to screen film in cities, towns, and rural communities across Canada—including most influentially Challenge for Change—throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Cinema was also useful as a representational medium for gays and lesbians to see ourselves on screen, which offered powerful moments of recognition and identification that would be crucial to consciousness raising. These pedagogical and identificatory impulses situated cinema within a field of exhibition contexts beyond entertainment that gay and lesbian activists could learn from to use cinema for their own activist goals.

This use of cinema as a consciousness raising tool was also consistent with the work being done by activists around the world, notably by the Third Cinema movement in Latin America, feminist film distributors like the Iris Film Collective in the United States, and by gay, lesbian, and feminist activists elsewhere in North America and Europe organizing their own film screenings in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹² Made possible in part by lighter and cheaper production and exhibition equipment, there were queer and feminist festivals and events held in major cities like Paris, San Francisco, and New York, but also in smaller centres closer to home, like the ISIS Women & Film Festival held in the Kooteney region of British Columbia throughout the 1970s.¹³ These early queer and feminist film festivals were often initially organized by an ad-hoc group of activists with an interest in “show[ing] (realistic, positive)

¹² Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Toward a Third Cinema,” *Cinéaste* 4, no. 3 (1970): 9.

¹³ “ISIS Women & Film Festival Poster,” Kootenay Feminism, 1974, <http://www.kootenayfeminism.com/archival-project/categories/kootenay-womens-council/cultural/1974-ISIS-Women-and-Film-Festival-Poster.pdf>.

representations of queers that would not otherwise find a public screen.”¹⁴ The most common representations of queer people on screen, up to and beyond this point, were often caricatures, stereotypes, or otherwise negative representations that cast queer people as somehow abnormal, villainous, or monstrous. As new films made by queers for queers became available, activist organizations across the prairies used these films as social, educational and consciousness-raising tools, and were part of a broad program of political and social activities to develop local gay and lesbian solidarity.

On the prairies, the earliest reference to gay films being screened within an activist context is during the 1973 Winnipeg Gay Pride Week, sponsored by Winnipeg-based activist group Gays For Equality (GFE). According to reports, the festival featured films alongside lectures, music, dances, and a symposium.¹⁵ This festival was part of a nation-wide effort that saw the first Pride Week activities also held in Saskatoon, Vancouver, Ottawa, Toronto, and Montréal. In February 1977, the Saskatoon’s Gay Academic Union (GAU) sponsored a film series as part of a week-long celebration of the Gay Community Centre of Saskatoon (GCCS), screening mostly European and American feature-length theatrical films with that featured gay and lesbian characters or gay and lesbian plots that already had robust distribution and exhibition strategies, like *If* (Dir. Lindsay Anderson, United Kingdom, 1968), which won the Palme d’Or at Cannes in 1968, and Fassbinder’s *Fox and his Friends*. The GAU continued this for at least

¹⁴ Skadi Loist and Ger Zielinski, “On the Development of Queer Film Festivals and Their Media Activism,” in *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*, ed. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 50-53.

¹⁵ Donald W. McLeod, *Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada: A Selected Annotated Chronology, 1964-1975* (Toronto: ECW Press/Homewood Books, 1996), 139.

another three years, organizing film series' in January 1978, February and March 1979, and March and April 1980.¹⁶

Other organizations soon followed the GAU's lead and began screening their own gay and lesbian films. Besides European arthouse films, two new American documentaries were also popular with gay and lesbian activist groups on the prairies: *Gay USA* (Dir. Arthur J. Bressan Jr., USA, 1978), a verité-style documentary on the gay rights movement in the United States, and *Word is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives* (Dir. Mariposa Film Group, USA, 1977), a talking-head documentary featuring interviews with twenty-six gays and lesbians telling stories about their lives. Despite being embedded within a particularly American history of gay and lesbian activism, because gays and lesbians from Canada often travelled to the United States to meet other queer people these films were still able to speak to a common North American gay and lesbian experience. The GAU's screening of *Gay USA* in Saskatoon as part of their 1978 film series catalyzed a small tour of the film to other gay groups in the region, and it travelled to Gay Information and Resources Calgary (GIRC), Gay Regina, and GATE Edmonton to be screened.¹⁷ Similarly, the SGC managed the distribution of *Word is Out* for its producers in the prairie region, and distributed the film to numerous gay clubs and to small towns where they had hoped to start clubs throughout 1979 and 1980.¹⁸ The circulation of films between these organizations, cities, and towns was helped along by the fact that these clubs and other gay and lesbian activists were already in regular contact with each other. Indeed, gays and lesbians on the prairies had an

¹⁶ "Film Series, 1977-1978" 1978-1977, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Neil Richards fonds, S-A821 IV. 25.

¹⁷ David Pasko to Doug Wilson, 15 November 1977, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Neil Richards fonds, S-A821 IV. 25.

¹⁸ "Word is Out," *Gay Saskatchewan* 2, no. 3 (March 1979): 5.

expansive network of conferences and reciprocal membership agreements that encouraged collaboration, camaraderie, and solidarity between cities and between organizations.¹⁹

The distribution of *Word is Out* to cities and towns across the region was used “to raise consciousness and to provide a positive focus for [their] organizing efforts around the province.”²⁰ The practice of consciousness raising originated mostly within feminist organizing, but it was quickly used by gay and lesbian activists as well. As Kathie Sarachild notes in her foundational text on the term,

Consciousness-raising was seen as both a method for arriving at the truth and a means for action and organizing. It was a means for the organizers themselves to make an analysis of the situation, and also a means to be used by the people they were organizing and who were in turn organizing more people. Similarly, it wasn't seen as merely a stage in feminist development which would then lead to another phase, an action phase, but as an essential part of the overall feminist strategy.²¹

Consciousness raising was an epistemological strategy focused on developing grassroots knowledge, with its larger goal the development of an imaginary community of activists that could work together, despite their geographic distance, towards structural change. These consciousness raising efforts were also deeply affective, with curiosity over the idea's usefulness giving way to passionate debates over method, and then to heckling from outsiders who declared consciousness raising “man-hating.”²² The activists at the SGC were, of course, not the first to recognize cinema's potential for consciousness raising. As Thomas Waugh notes, “the feminist realist documentary of the early seventies borrowed the ‘consciousness [raising]’ format [...]

¹⁹ Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-84* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 84.

²⁰ “Word is Out,” *Gay Saskatchewan* 2, no. 3 (March 1979): 5.

²¹ Kathie Sarachild, “Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon,” in *Feminist Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1978), 144–50, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110718193344/http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/wlm/fem/sarachild.html>.

²² *Ibid.*

from the real-life women's movement," and much of the work from the NFB's women's unit Studio D (discussed further below), which was inspired by the NFB's earlier Challenge for Change project, built on this tradition.²³ The gay and lesbian activists at the SGC were indebted to this feminist tradition of consciousness raising in their use of *Word is Out*.

Consciousness raising's affective roots are crucial to understanding the success of *Word is Out* on the prairies. In fact, reports about the SGC's screenings of *Word is Out* across the prairie region suggest that consciousness raising is at its most effective when it is *affective*. Consider activist Doug Wilson's report on the first screening of *Word is Out*, which he published in *The Body Politic* in late 1979. This first screening was held in Tisdale, Saskatchewan, a small town about 200 kilometres northeast of Saskatoon in early March 1979. The screening catalyzed for a small group of gay men a moment of shared recognition of a broader community of gays and lesbians around the world. While this was undoubtedly helped by the content of the film—it is a talking head documentary featuring interviews with twenty-six gays and lesbians from across the United States—equally important is the material conditions of the film's exhibition. Wilson and four closeted gay men—two teachers, a reporter, and a priest—crammed into a hotel room “so tiny that the projector had to be set up and run from the bathroom.” Wilson writes of this intimate screening:

None of these local people had ever been to a gay meeting. They had never met each other, or any other gay people in the area. Tense and nervous at first, they began discussing the film, then talked about their own experiences, laughed, visibly relaxed. The process had begun.²⁴

²³ Thomas Waugh, *The Romance of Transgression in Canada: Queering Sexualities, Nations, Cinemas* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 172.

²⁴ Doug Wilson, “Regional Report,” *The Body Politic*, December 1979/January 1980: 14. Korinek suggests that this screening was likely in Tisdale, as the timeline and locations of *Word is Out* screenings throughout 1979 seem to match up with Tisdale being the only likely candidate. See Valerie Korinek, ““The Most Openly Gay Person for at Least a Thousand Miles”:

Wilson's description of the screening in Tisdale highlights the affects that underlie the process of raising consciousness, of being aware of a larger gay and lesbian struggle. Nervousness melts into relaxation, tenseness transforms into laughter. Screening gay cinema in an intimate space was a useful tool to open up the space to have frank and open conversations about being gay in rural Saskatchewan.

Significantly, the film was also used to form solidarities with allied heterosexual communities, like the United Church of Canada. The SGC sent another one of their members, Walter Davis, and the film to a meeting of 84 ministers and laypeople in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, a small town 300 kilometres outside of Saskatoon in the Qu'Appelle Valley in 1979. Davis and the film were invited because the meeting focused solely on the issue of homosexuality in the United Church and in society at large. Davis notes that "the most striking reactions of the day came from the film showing." He reports in the SGC's newsletter, *Gay Saskatchewan*:

A number of people commented to me that they were seriously moved by the intimacy of the film as if they had met new friends and become suddenly very close to them. Others talked about how it was about gays *but* it was also about being straight. I was surprised to hear frank and open discussion among church people about their feelings and frustrations not only towards homosexuality but towards the restrictions placed on heterosexuals in repression of emotions between people of the same sex and of the opposite sex.²⁵

While the gay men who Wilson showed the film to in Tisdale took some coaxing to open up to each other, the heterosexual group of United Church ministers and laypeople felt an immediate connection to the gay men and lesbians depicted in the film. Feelings of friendship with gays and lesbians gave way to feelings of frustration that heterosexuals could not express these feelings

Doug Wilson and the Politicization of a Province, 1975-83," *Canadian Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (2003): 517-550.

²⁵ Walter Davis, "United Church," *Gay Saskatchewan* 2, no. 12 (December 1979): 5.

openly, and that their emotions were also strictly regulated. The feminist popularization of consciousness raising as an affective political strategy provided the base from which recognition of a shared regulation of emotion—a recognition made possible by the affective potentials of *Word is Out*—could become the basis for regional solidarity.

Studio D and Second-Wave Feminist of Colour Activism, 1967-1989

The end of the Second World War also saw the birth of second-wave feminism in the United States and Canada. Like gay and lesbian activists, some of these feminist activists were interested in pursuing women's equality through a legalistic human rights framework and spent the better part of the mid-20th century lobbying the federal government to implement legislative and policy frameworks that would guarantee women's equality. But where gay activists, especially in the prairies, were by and large unsuccessful in getting gay rights on the provincial and federal agenda until the late 1980s, some feminist groups successfully lobbied the federal government to appoint the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) in 1967.²⁶ While the RCSW was an influential and significant milestone in the history of second-wave feminism in Canada—in their 1970 report they made over 160 recommendations to improve gender equality within the federal government—not all feminist groups accepted the legislative and policy agenda laid out in the 1970 report, with many radical groups still advocating for non-state-centric activism.²⁷ But despite its significance, the numerous recommendations laid out in the RCSW report were largely unheeded by the federal government, causing a group of women to establish the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) in 1971, a non-

²⁶ Brenda O'Neill, "Continuity and Change in the Contemporary Canadian Feminist Movement," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 50, no. 2 (June 2017): 446.

²⁷ Janine Brodie, "We Are All Equal Now: Contemporary Gender Politics in Canada," *Feminist Theory* 9, no. 2 (August 1, 2008): 152.

governmental organization whose goal was to lobby the federal government to implement the recommendations of the RCSW. The NAC's influence ran deep, and shortly after their forming, the federal government set up a complex bureaucratic "gender-based infrastructure" over the next few decades, with numerous new women's offices, coordinators and committees set up across various federal departments.²⁸ Emboldened by the NAC's success, similar action committees sprung up across Canada throughout the 1970s and 1980s, including the Calgary Status of Women Action Committee (CSWAC) in 1974, and used their access to federal government funding to support numerous feminist media activist efforts. These often took the shape of newsletters, like the Vancouver Status of Women-funded *Kinesis* magazine, but also film festivals like herland Feminist Film Festival, which was co-founded by CSWAC in 1989. Janine Brodie notes that nearly two decades of successful feminist lobbying led to two significant federal legislative achievements in 1985: "the constitutional entrenchment of a sexual equality clause in the new Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the formation of the Court Challenges Program to fund equality-based claims-making in the courts."²⁹

These two victories were not only crucial for the feminist movement, but for the gay and lesbian rights movement as well. Early legal cases that argued for sexual orientation to be read into the Charter often depended on the sexual equality clause and argued that "sex" should be read broadly to include both biological sex and sexual orientation. These legal cases were also funded by the Court Challenges Program, as were later cases in the 2000s over same-sex marriage. The success of the gay and lesbian rights movement in Canada in the 1980s was in

²⁸ Ibid., 153.

²⁹ Ibid., 153-4.

large part made possible through these policy changes made by feminist activists throughout the mid-20th century.

Part of the growing federal gender-based infrastructure established in the early 1970s was the NFB's Studio D. Established in 1974 as the NFB's response to the RCSW, Studio D in those early years had, according to its first executive director Kathleen Shannon, "virtually no money" and three staff given a tiny space within the vast NFB infrastructure.³⁰ But the tiny Studio D grew quickly, with women's film coordinators eventually hired to the NFB offices in Edmonton and Vancouver.³¹ Studio D played an important role in the development of queer and feminist film festivals on the prairies and was central to the formation of Edmonton's In Sight Women's Film & Video Festival, which ran from 1988 to 1992, Vancouver's In Visible Colours in 1989 and 1990, and, as I will discuss more in the next chapter, Calgary's herland Feminist Film festival in 1989. In fact, the NFB was so important to In Sight that the centerpiece of the second annual In Sight festival in 1989 was a celebration of Studio D.³²

Within this context the prairie region's large feminist of colour media activist movement grew. But despite Studio D's formative role in the formation of this movement, by the mid-1980s, they had come under fire for being too white, too middle class, and ignoring the perspectives of queer and racialized feminists. As a way to rectify this exclusion, Studio D began making a concerted effort to work with queer and racialized feminists to produce their films. The most famous of these efforts is the 1990 *Five Feminist Minutes* program, which funded the production of the first films by many queer and racialized feminists, including Michelle

³⁰ Kathleen Shannon, "D Is for Dilemma: Lessons Learned at the Helm of NFB's Studio D," *Herizons* 31, no. 3 (2018): 24. Originally published 1995.

³¹ For a more detailed account of the growth of Studio D, see Gail Vanstone, *D Is for Daring: The Women behind the Films of Studio D* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2007).

³² "Film Festival Fetes NFB's Studio D," *Edmonton Journal*, August 13, 1989, C6.

Mohabeer's *Exposure* (which Tom Waugh describes as "one of the first works by a lesbian artist of colour in the Canadian canon"), Sook-Yin Lee's *Escapades of the One Particular Mr. Noodle*, and Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Milan's *We're Talking Vulva*.³³ The *Five Feminist Minutes* program launched the careers of these and other feminist filmmakers in no large part because it was screened at both queer and feminist film festivals across Canada.

Studio D also offered its robust funding and organizational apparatus to support the exhibition of work by women of colour. Notable in this respect is In Visible Colours: An International Women of Colour and Third World Women Film/Video Festival and Symposium. The first women's film festival in Canada to focus explicitly on feminist of colour film and video, In Visible Colours was organized in 1989 in Vancouver as a joint effort between Lorraine Chan of the NFB's Vancouver office and Zainub Verjee from the women's film distributor Women In Focus. The festival was organized with budget of \$300,000—a large budget in the world of queer and feminist film festivals, who during that time were often lucky to scrape by on \$10,000 cobbled together from public and private sources—in order to give women of colour "a voice."³⁴ The festival ran 15 to 19 November 1989 across three venues in Vancouver.³⁵ For Dionne Brand, who was one of more than 100 filmmakers featured that year, In Visible Colours was "a sort of flashpoint. In small ways, we'll talk about how we overturn one image or another, but on the bigger level we'll talk about how we overturn social injustice."³⁶

³³ Waugh, *Romance of Transgression*, 172.

³⁴ Liam Lacey, "Third World Films, Drums That Talk and Minority Casting: Ethnic Flavors Add Spice to Vancouver's Artistic Diet," *Globe and Mail*, November 16, 1989, C9.

³⁵ Jeani Read, "A Penetrating Celebration of Feminism and Color," *Province* (Vancouver), November 10, 1989, P13.

³⁶ Elizabeth Aird, "Film Fest Features Women of Color as Moviemakers," *Vancouver Sun*, November 15, 1989, F6.

Though *In Visible Colours* was funded in large part by the NFB, and thus was in some ways a direct beneficiary of the gender-based infrastructure that came from the RCSW, the festival was also part of a growing body of feminist activist work that centred the experiences of people of colour as a way to challenge the nation-state's colonial apparatus and reassess the legacy of the RCSW. Reflecting on *In Visible Colours* 30 years later, Verjee argues:

The failure of the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women led to a flurry of counter-events with the emergence of second-wave feminism. Race also became a major element in this collective endeavour and shook the cultural institutional apparatus. IVC [*In Visible Colours*] was a forerunner of these phenomena.³⁷

Though *In Visible Colours* only ran for two years, its impact cannot be overstated. *Invisible Colours*, along with Edmonton's *In Sight*, are cited as two important inspirations for Calgary's *Herland Feminist Film Festival*, which, as I show in the next chapter, truly marks the beginning of the growth of the queer film festival network on the Canadian Prairies.

The AIDS Crisis and The École Polytechnique Massacre

The backlash to the social advances made by the gay and lesbian rights and second-wave feminist movements leading up to the mid-to-late-1980s was swift. Following the landslide election of the Progressive Conservative Party federally in 1984, the systematic dismantling of the welfare state began and was replaced with neoliberal policies that centred “a reduced state, minimal social programmes, the end of universal entitlements, and empowered markets.”³⁸ “Equality seeking groups” were recast as “special interests,” which provided the discursive justification for cuts to gender-based infrastructure. Funding for women's community groups and shelters were cut, and there was a wholesale funding ban for groups whose “primary purpose is

³⁷ Zainub Verjee in conversation with Rosemary Heather, “*In Visible Colours*,” *Canadian Art*, September 25, 2017, <https://canadianart.ca/interviews/in-visible-colours/>.

³⁸ Brodie, “*We Are All Equal Now*,” 154.

to promote a view on abortion or sexual orientation.”³⁹ This federal shift in priorities led to a number of women’s groups following suit and refocusing their efforts on violence against women as a way to access federal funds.⁴⁰

But despite this federal shift in priorities after 1984, violence against women and queer people only increased, culminating with the lack of federal action on the AIDS crisis and the École Polytechnique Massacre. The massacre of fourteen women at the École Polytechnique in Montréal on 6 December 1989 sent shockwaves throughout feminist communities across Canada. It happened mere days after Calgary held its first feminist film festival, and the attack made it clear to its organizers that the city and the country needed vibrant public feminist spaces.⁴¹ For gay activists, the government’s unwillingness to act on the AIDS crisis catalyzed a network of activist efforts across Canada to ensure that our communities would stop dying, including efforts to sneak anti-retroviral medication across the border from the United States, safer sex campaigns, and activist videos.⁴² These videos were often screened at queer film festivals across the country, many of which were also established to fight the visual battle against homophobia and serophobia. The WGLFS, founded in 1985, responded directly to this crisis by providing a space where gay men, lesbians, and the heterosexual public could view films that cast the gay community in a positive light. Calgary’s herland Feminist Film Festival also situated

³⁹ Barbara M. Freeman, *Beyond Bylines: Media Workers and Women’s Rights in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 160.

⁴⁰ Brodie, “We Are All Equal Now,” 156.

⁴¹ Mutriba Din and Sandy Dobrowsky, “Celebrating Herland,” *The Herland Chronicle*, October 1999, herland feminist film festival fonds, Glenbow Museum & Archives, M9329-32.

⁴² Gary Kinsman, “AIDS Activism: Remembering Resistance versus Socially Organized Forgetting,” in *Seeing Red: HIV/AIDS and Public Policy in Canada*, ed. Suzanne Hindmarch, Michael Orsini, and Marilou Gagnon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 317-24.

itself as fighting back against AIDS, and the 1989 festival was deliberately scheduled to open on World AIDS Day on December 1.

The use of cinema by gay and lesbian and feminist activists as strategies to fight back against AIDS and the École Polytechnique Massacre not only indicates the usefulness of cinema to these activist histories, but also highlights that AIDS and École Polytechnique were more than simply events that demanded responses: they were a set of social relations. I am inspired here by the work of Gary Kinsman, who argues “to fully address the social impact of AIDS/HIV we need to view it as a condensation of social relations, including relations of class, racialization, and state.”⁴³ AIDS is not a “problem to be solved”, an affliction that affects only gay men, or best managed by top-down approaches to health care; rather, Kinsman argues, it needs to be seen as part of a nexus of sociality. Building on Kinsman, AIDS and the École Polytechnique Massacre had significant re-organizational effects within the realm of queer and feminist media activism on the prairies, and stuck bodies, signs, discourses, and objects together in new ways. In short: AIDS and the École Polytechnique Massacre constituted new affective economies. It is within these economies and contexts that the region’s large cohort of queer film festivals emerged in the 1980s and 1990s.

⁴³ Ibid., 322.

CHAPTER 4

MARGINAL EPHEMERA: DIS/INTEREST, FEMINIST FILM FESTIVALS IN THE QUEER ARCHIVE, AND QUEER FILM FESTIVALS IN THE FEMINIST ARCHIVE

The relationship between queer and feminist cinema, film festivals, and affect that I began tracing in the previous chapters and trace throughout the rest of this dissertation began with a chance encounter in the feminist archive. The first physical archives I visited were the herland film festival fonds held at the Glenbow Museum and Archives in Calgary. I had initially begun looking through these records not out of any interest in the festival itself; rather, I was more interested in finding trace evidence of Calgary's queer film festival scene. Though my interest in queer film festivals on the Canadian prairies stems from my status as an insider to the region, I was a relative outsider to Calgary, having never properly visited the city until I went to the archives, and so I had no sense of the city's queer community or its relationship with feminist activists. I suspected that given Calgary's reputation as the heartland of conservatism that the queer and feminist communities would be small, and thus perhaps may have overlapped. But I underestimated just how deeply interested the two communities were in each other's survival. Within the herland fonds I did not just find trace evidence of Calgary's queer film festival scene—I found reams of paper that pointed to a deep and complex relationship between queer and feminist film festivals in Calgary. The evidence in these archives suggested that herland—and the feminist of colour film festival circuit in general—had a deep and lasting influence on the development of queer film festivals in the prairie region.

This chapter tracks the affective economies of interest between queer and feminist film festivals, both documented and undocumented, as they play out within large archival collections like the herland fonds. Within these collections, I pay attention to archival marginalia never

meant for public circulation: handwritten notes, scribbles on the reverse of other documents, fax cover letters—documents that index lesbian desire and communities of colour. Many of the documents I depend on in this chapter were never official and were never meant to exist as anything other than ephemera. For Ger Zielinski, official ephemera such as posters and flyers provide a window into how the festival views and presents itself publicly, since these documents are eventually for public consumption and circulation.¹ But marginal ephemera is even more revealing because of the possibility and potentiality they represent. These documents often represented unrealized projects, speculative musings, ideas to pursue later, and personal love letters. Others still are clippings and photocopies of articles about other festivals, or their posters and flyers. Such marginal ephemera, and the lesbian desire and communities of colour it indexes, supports what is necessary and possible for film festivals to flourish.

Of the different types of marginal ephemera found within festival archives, ephemera from other festivals is perhaps the most revealing as it acts as an index for the necessary and possible relationships formed between festivals and their organizers. I argue that this ephemera can tell us much about the relationships between gay men and lesbians at queer and feminist film festivals. It also shows that lesbians and women of colour were leading the way and were organizing important and influential queer and feminist film festivals of their own. Given that so much of queer history was written on the margins and built out of ephemera, focusing on marginalia gives us an important window into the location of queer lives and bodies within the history of feminist film festivals.² Likewise, such a strategy is equally useful in locating feminist

¹ Ger Zielinski, “On Studying Film Festival Ephemera,” in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 140

² *Ibid.*, 142.

influences in queer film festivals, as well as sexist policies and conditions that often systemically excluded women.

My aim for this chapter is use marginal ephemera in order to problematize a key assumption of queer film festivals: that they would always interest both gays *and* lesbians. I argue that this assumption of shared interest resulted in a fundamental *disinterest* in centering women at Counterparts, Winnipeg's queer film festival, throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, leading to the systemic exclusion of lesbians as organizers and on screen, and necessitating the emergence of the Vice Versa Lesbian Film & Video Festival in 1995. In contrast, I show the centrality of lesbians to herland and The Fire I've Become, a short lived Calgary queer of colour film festival, meant that lesbian audiences and lesbian films were dispersed across queer and women's festivals, creating the conditions for an intersectional model of festival organizing based on mutual interest.

This chapter, perhaps more than the others that follow, errs on being more descriptive than theoretical. This is because this story is important to tell. It is important to show in as plain terms as possible that there is often a systemic exclusion of lesbians and women of colour from queer film festival organizing. For Vice Versa and The Fire I've Become, two of the region's most important festivals because of the ways in which they centred lesbians and women of colour, all I have is ephemera displaced within the archive or never placed there to begin with. This chapter centres that ephemera in order to tell their stories.

In first part of this chapter I consider the relationship between Counterparts and Vice Versa, wherein a relationship of mutual disinterest between gay men and lesbians was central to precarity and ultimate downfall of Counterparts. In the second part I contrast this with how

herland's intersectional organizational framework created the conditions for its interest in the success of *The Fire I've Become*, bringing queer and feminist film festivals together.

Unlike the following chapters, which often follow the circulation of affect via the ways they signify discursively, in this chapter I follow interest as an asignifying affect. By this I mean I follow interest not by seeking out words, phrases, and signs that indicate interest—i.e. “I am interested in supporting your festival” or “I am pleased to see you take such an interest in our community”—but as a pre-discursive force before and beyond language that moves and motivates action. In this way, I am aligning this chapter with theories that see affect as “the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement.”³ I find this a useful alignment because of the ways in which the four festivals I consider in this chapter circulate in and out of the margins of each other, sometimes consciously named and signified, but more often merely alluded to. In the herland fonds held at the Glenbow Museum, for example, *The Fire I've Become* and other queer film festivals exist within the margins, never explicitly named within the fond's finding aid, and thus often only discoverable by chance. Likewise, in the WGLFS files at the University of Manitoba, *Vice Versa* and other women's film screenings exist as marginalia, gathered by Counterparts organizers not because they were interested in documenting feminist film festivals, but because programs and posters provided a useful list of potential lesbian films to program. Though not erased from the archive, *Vice Versa* and *The Fire I've Become* are nevertheless “a palimpsest of force-encounters” indexing, through

³ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1.

their very existence within the records of other film festivals, an affective economy of dis/interest.⁴

Winnipeg: Disinterest and Lesbian Exclusion

Of all the festivals I discuss throughout the dissertation, Vice Versa—the only lesbian film festival in the region, which ran for one year in Winnipeg in 1995—may be the most marginal. It has the fewest number of documents available in both the public and private collections I consulted, and in every case, the documentation I was able to find on the festival was never collected *because* it was about Vice Versa; rather, it was collected either accidentally or as part of a larger collection of queer ephemera from Winnipeg and the prairie region. Because of this, I first discovered the existence of Vice Versa by chance. I was flipping through the Provincial Archive of Saskatchewan’s incomplete run of Winnipeg gay magazine *Swerve* when I stumbled across an interview with Vice Versa organizers Szu Burgess and Kris Anderson in the September 1995 issue of the magazine. I was elated with the discovery! Given my own interest in arguing that there is a diverse and complex network of queer film festivals on the prairies, the discovery of a lesbian film festival in the archives only served to further support my argument. This kickstarted a search for more documentation from the festival and for the festival organizers. But, after unsuccessful searches of newspaper databases and microfiche, numerous unanswered emails, all I was able to come up with was a copy of the festival’s program.

Two pieces of evidence: a magazine interview and the program. I should not have been so surprised. As José Muñoz notes, evidence of queer life was often never meant to be anything more than ephemera:

Instead of being clearly available as visible evidence, queerness has instead existed as innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances that are meant to be interacted

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

with by those within its epistemological sphere—while evaporating at the touch of those who would eliminate queer possibility.⁵

Ephemerality as a survival strategy cuts both ways—the ephemerality of experience, of its affective longings, may have also, as Marusya Bociurkiw notes with regard to second-wave feminist video collectives, “prevented [organizers] from documenting or preserving this era and the work they produced.”⁶ Indeed, physical archives of many women’s film festivals have either been destroyed through environmental neglect, or have been misplaced due to high institutional turn over and precarity.⁷ Moreover, where primary sources do exist on related forms of activism—for instance, queer activist histories—the efforts to gather these sources were often dominated by gay men who made “little effort to collect or promote material relating to women.”⁸

I take Muñoz’s claims about the evaporation of queerness and Bociurkiw’s suggestion that affect acts as a barrier to preservation as my starting point for theorizing why *Vice Versa* is absent from public archives. The lack of evidence was a survival strategy on the part of *Vice Versa*’s organizers meant to ensure that the festival would be able to reach its core audience of Winnipeg lesbians and to avoid the ire of both gay and straight opponents. But, more

⁵ José Esteban Muñoz, “Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (1996): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07407709608571228>.

⁶ Marusya Bociurkiw, “Big Affect: The Ephemeral Archive of Second-Wave Feminist Video Collectives in Canada,” *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 31, no. 3 93 (2016): 19.

⁷ Kay Armatage, “Toronto Women & Film International 1973,” in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit*, ed. Dina Iordanova and Ragan Rhyne (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 82–98; Melinda Barlow, “Feminism 101: The New York Women’s Video Festival, 1972–1980,” *Camera Obscura* 18, no. 3 54 (January 1, 2003): 3–38. See also B. Ruby Rich, “Angst and Joy on the Women’s Film Festival Circuit,” in *Chick Flicks: Theories and Memories of the Feminist Film Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 30.

⁸ Elise Chenier, “Hidden from Historians: Preserving Lesbian Oral History in Canada,” *Archivaria* 68 (January 7, 2010): 255.

importantly, the lack of evidence is also symptomatic of the general exclusion of lesbians from the festival organizing and archiving practices of the overwhelmingly gay male cohort that organized Counterparts. The existence of Vice Versa is a response to Counterparts's inconsistent history of lesbian representation both on screen and in its organization. In order to tell the story of Vice Versa, I narrate the history of lesbian exclusion at Counterparts. This history, I argue, accumulates a complex affective web of disinterest that ultimately catalyzes the establishment of Vice Versa.

To conceptualize disinterest as an affect is to open up a complex philosophical, etymological and affective can of worms. Philosophically, "disinterestedness" has a robust and complex genealogy that extends from Kant's aesthetics and the disinterestedness of taste to Levinas's "pure disinterest" in his ethics of responsibility to the other. In Kant's aesthetics, to have good aesthetic taste is to be disinterested; good taste is that which does not stimulate the body's sense organs. To be disinterested is to exhibit bodily and affective restraint. Kant's critics charge that this disinterestedness of taste is a classist effort to centre upper-class respectability as the pinnacle of goodness and happiness. Kant's disinterestedness is fundamentally, then, an inward-facing philosophy of disinterest that aims to control the self.⁹ Levinas's philosophy of disinterest, however, is directed toward the other. In Levinasian ethics, to be ethical in our interactions with the other, we must show disinterest in the other. By this he means that we must give the other space to *be other*, to give the other space and to respect the other's difference as difference. To show interest is to risk assimilating the other into our conception of our self.

⁹ For a further discussion of Kantian aesthetics and disinterest within the field of affect studies, see Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 34-35.

Neither of these philosophies of disinterest adequately explains the relationship between gay men and lesbians in Winnipeg. The WGLFS's disinterest in lesbian organizers and filmmakers does not stem from a respect for the differences between gay male and lesbian communities, as Levinasian ethics would suggest. Nor is Vice Versa's disinterest in screening lesbian-themed films directed by men a way of controlling their own affect, as Kantian aesthetics would argue. In fact, as I will show, the formation of Vice Versa is catalyzed by an abundance of affect.

Instead, I find Silvan Tomkins's own brief discussion of lack of interest to be the most generative for understanding the complex relationships between gay men and lesbians in Winnipeg. Though Tomkins never explicitly discusses disinterest, he does mention briefly what would happen to the body if there was an extreme lack of interest: "the absence of the affective support of interest would jeopardize intellectual development no less than destruction of brain tissue."¹⁰ Tomkins' apocalyptic thoughts on lack of interest, though extreme, orient us towards a vision of disinterest as performative: disinterest stops, severs, and destroys relations. But a severed relation is still a relation. As Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg remind us, "affect *accumulates* across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness."¹¹ Disinterest exceeds a definition that would simply insert negatives into Elspeth Probyn's definition of interest, as in "disinterest disconnects the lines between people and ideas," or in Tomkins's language, makes us uninterested in pursuing the necessary and possible. Disinterest does not simply sever lines of connection, nor does it remove our affective investment in others. Rather, it *changes* the circumstances of those connections and investments, transforming our relationships with others. Disinterest suggests an ambivalence to our relationships, to our being in the world with others.

¹⁰ Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition* (New York: Springer, 2008), 77.

¹¹ Seigworth and Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 2.

In Winnipeg's gay and lesbian communities, the accumulation of disinterest provided the conditions for the separation of gay and lesbian film organizing. For the WGLFS, which organized Counterparts, their disinterestedness in lesbians was born out of an ambivalence toward their relationship to lesbians within the feminist movement. The WGLFS had no lesbian members when it was founded in 1985 and was only able to attract lesbian members intermittently and inconsistently until 1990. The group's first activities between 1985 and 1986 were regular monthly film screenings. During these two years, both the number of films screened directed by women, and the number of films with lesbian content are limited and their numbers pale in comparison to the number of films shown with gay male themes or by directed by gay men.¹² Some of the male members did attempt to reach out to women, and to screen more films by and about lesbians with varying levels of success, but their inability to keep women involved consistently speaks to the group's general ambivalence toward including lesbians within the group. From a material perspective, this could be because Winnipeg lesbians were less enamored with publicness than their gay male compatriots—another form of disinterestedness.¹³ However, where lesbians did appear in public was often within feminist film exhibition practices that preceded WGLFS's founding in 1985 and succeeded it in the form of Vice Versa and the re:Visions Winnipeg Women's Film Festival after Counterparts went on hiatus in 1995.

Because lesbian content was often screened at feminist film festivals, the WGLFS felt they had little reason to centre lesbian films or do more sustained outreach to potential lesbian organizers. In an article in one of Winnipeg's early gay and lesbian periodicals, Don Macintosh, one of the first group of organizers of the WGLFS, remarks that he “approached lesbians for

¹² See Appendix A for the list of these films.

¹³ Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 115.

their input, but they seem to feel that their needs are at least partly being met by films presented by feminists.”¹⁴ Ephemera from one such earlier women’s film festival was also located in the Counterparts fonds at the University of Manitoba, suggesting that organizers of Counterparts looked to the feminist movement for inspiration on how to organize as well as potential films to screen. A “Film Festival Day” was organized at The Winnipeg Women’s Cultural and Education Centre at 730 Alexander Avenue (known colloquially as The Women’s Building) on 13 February 1983—“a key location for lesbians in Winnipeg”.¹⁵ The festival screened four films over the course of the afternoon, most of which had lesbian feminist content.¹⁶ Two of the films screened at this festival would eventually be screened by WGLFS: *Pink Triangles* (Dir. Margaret Lazarus and Renner Wunderlich, USA, 1982), as part of their Winter 1986 Film Series, and *Susana* (Dir. Susana Munos Velarde, Argentina, 1980), as part of Counterparts II in 1988.¹⁷

Where the WGLFS had interest in lesbians was in their historical and on-going exhibition practices, as their programs could be mined for films with queer content to screen, and thus hopefully these films would attract ticket-buying lesbian audiences to pay for the screening. This is the logic Concordia professor Thomas Waugh used to advise the group to seriously consider whether their group should be oriented only toward men:

¹⁴ Louise, “A Night at the Gay Film Festival,” *Out & About*, June 1985, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 3.

¹⁵ Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-84* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 127.

¹⁶ “Winnipeg Women’s Cultural & Education Centre Inc. Presents A Film Festival Day” 1983, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 25, Folder 7.

¹⁷ “Flyer for 1986 Film Series at Cinema Main” 1986, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society, CAN 6158; David Wyatt, “Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society Filmography,” accessed January 29, 2019, <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~wyatt/rp/filmography.html#c2s1>.

First of all, are you sure your constituency should only be men? I don't know anything about the gay-lesbian communities in Winnipeg, whether there are any precedents for working together, etc., but it seems to me that both communities should be able to profit from all the energy you're going to invest in this, regardless of whether you have women co-organizers (which maybe you should recruit if you don't). In purely practical terms, larger audiences mean a more sound financial footing, in any case. I have personally been very critical in the past about male-only enterprises of this nature, and my advice will be based on this perspective.¹⁸

This advice, however, did not appear to be well-taken as the WGLFS's first screenings often reflected the fact that the organizers were only men. No women were part of the WGLFS until 1988, and of the fourteen films and over 1000 minutes of film screened between June 1985 and March 1987—the period of screenings before the first Counterparts festival—only 105 minutes and three films (two of which were shorts) were films with exclusive lesbian content or directed by women.¹⁹ Though the group attempted to locate copies of other films that might be of interest to lesbian audiences many of these were not screened until they launched Counterparts in 1987.²⁰ Indeed, at Counterparts they did make an effort to screen more films directed by women, but that still only amounted to six out of thirty-one films. Of course, further complicating matters is the fact that we do not know who attended these screenings, if they were mostly gay men or lesbians or neither.

But something must have finally clicked for organizers after the first Counterparts festival, and they began making a concerted effort to bring more women in as organizers and to

¹⁸ Thomas Waugh to Barney Michalchuck and Don Macintosh, April 14, c. 1985, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Plug In ICA fonds, L-5-5-6 file 1.

¹⁹ These numbers exclude a number of the films screened, including *Pink Triangles* and *Before Stonewall* (Dir. Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg, USA, 1985), that were directed in part by women and have content of interest to gays and lesbians. A complete list of films screened between 1985 and 1987 by the WGLFS, pieced together from a number of different archival collections for the first time in this dissertation, can be found in Appendix B.

²⁰ "Winnipeg Lesbian and Gay Film Society Inc." (Meeting Minutes, November 10, 1985), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 4.

screen more films by women. Minutes from their 1 November 1987 meeting note that “concern was raised about the absence of women involved in the group” and that Bruce McFadden would approach well-known lesbian activists Anne Kent, Joy Tataryn, and Michelle Pujol to join the group. In the same minutes under a list of films the group wished to pursue for screening, *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant* (Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, West Germany, 1972) is noted as “lesbian”—not a film directed by a lesbian, but a film with lesbian representation.²¹ At their next meeting, 15 November 1987, both Anne Kent and Michelle Pujol—an organizer of Winnipeg’s first pride parade held earlier that year—are listed as members, and they decide to screen *Petra Von Kant* as part of the 1988 screening series in February.²² By 6 December 1987, Carol Pickering had joined the group as their festival coordinator, and Pickering, Pujol, Kent, and Wayne Baerwaldt were tasked with reviewing lesbian films for the festival and approaching the University of Manitoba Women’s Centre to sponsor bringing Midi Onodera to the 1988 festival.²³ These three women would remain the core lesbian contingent throughout the 1988 festival, involved primarily in liaising with various women’s organizations in Winnipeg, though they were also involved in other aspects of organizing the festival as well. T-shirts that year featured two women embracing, there were discussions of bringing Patricia Rozema and Jane

²¹ “WGLFSociety Meeting” (Meeting Minutes, November 1, 1987), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 3.

²² “Film Society Meeting” (Meeting Minutes, November 15, 1987), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 3; David Wyatt, “Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society Filmography,” accessed January 29, 2019, <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~wyatt/rp/filmography.html>.

²³ “WLGFS Meeting” (Meeting Minutes, December 6, 1987), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 3.; Jim Heber, “Challenging the Obstacles in Counterparts II: Gay and Lesbian Films,” *Toban Gazette*, January 14, 1988, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 3.

Rule in next year, an article on documentary filmmaker Andrea Weiss's lecture on the history of lesbian vampires organized as part of the festival was published in the University of Winnipeg's student newspaper, and the number of films directed by women more than doubled—the festival very quickly seemed to treat lesbians as more than just tokens that needed to be included.²⁴

But by the time the third Counterparts festival rolled around in October 1989, there had been a major shift in the way the WGLFS organized the festival. The first two festivals had been organized in partnership with the Plug In Gallery and was funded in part by grants from the Canada Council. For the 1989 festival the relationship between the WGLFS and Plug In was dissolved—the official reason given in the press was that the WGLFS had the know-how to put a festival on themselves now—but along with it came a significant decrease in federal funding in the form of withheld Canada Council grants.²⁵ On top of this, the membership had shrunk and the only woman left was Michelle Pujol (who described herself as the “token lesbian” when she met Marusya Bociurkiw in advance of the screening of her film *Night Visions* [Canada, 1989] at that year's festival).²⁶ One silver lining: the festival reached gender parity that year as it only held one screening per night and screened a gay film alongside a lesbian film each night (though in every case, the lesbian film was shorter). The archive does not have minutes for the WGLFS after 1990, and only has one document from that year dated 21 October 1990, which notes a

²⁴ “Counterparts II/Winnipeg 1988” (t-shirt, 1988), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 1, Item 5; “WGLFS Board Meeting” (Meeting Minutes, January 31, 1988), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 3; Jim Heber, “Lesbian Vampires at Counterparts II,” *The Uniter*, March 22, 1988, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 3.

²⁵ Paul McKie, “Gay film festival runs without federal funds,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 17, 1989: 35.

²⁶ Marusya Bociurkiw, *The Woman Who Loved Airports: Stories and Narratives* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1994).

huge change in membership that seems to signal a shift toward including more women in the organization, with Irene, Naomi, Margaret, Ruth, Bruce, and Alin (no last names given) listed alongside the usual suspects Don MacIntosh, Lindsay Butt, and Bruce McFadden.²⁷

Indeed, after 1990, the festival's membership and its archival documentation becomes more precarious, as funding instability and significant changes in membership became the norm for the WGLFS. With the loss of funding that kneecapped Counterparts III in 1989, the fourth iteration was cancelled in 1990 and held off until 1991 until the group could raise enough funds.²⁸ This precarity of the organization may help explain why after 1990 the documentation for queer and feminist film festivals in Winnipeg drops off significantly. What documentation I do have access to however—which amounts to programs from 1992 and 1994, as well as an online transcript of every film screened by the WGLFS between 1986 and 2015—paint a suggestive picture of the WGLF's fluctuating interest in lesbian filmmaking and in retaining lesbian organizers.²⁹ In 1992 the WGLFS had twelve members (seven men and five women), while in 1994 there were only eight members (seven men and one woman), representing a loss of four women during the interim years. Likewise, a quantitative analysis of the festival's online catalogue between 1987 and 1994 suggests that though by some measures the WGFLS took a stronger interest in lesbian filmmaking, it was consistently overshadowed by gay male films (Table 1).

²⁷ “Minutes of the W.G.L.F.S. Meeting of October 21st, 1990” October 21, 1990, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 2.

²⁸ Paul McKie, “Gay film festival returns,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 26, 1991: 43.

²⁹The programs and online transcripts were both provided by long-time festival volunteer David Wyatt.

Table 1. Gay versus lesbian programming at Counterparts, 1987-1994				
Number of films directed by:				
	Men	Women	% films by men	% films by women
1987	33	8	80	20
1988	26	15	63	37
1989	7	11	39	61
1991	6	18	25	75
1992	11	31	26	74
1994	16	19	46	54
<i>Total</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>51</i>
Total screen time of films (in minutes)				
	Men	Women	% films by men	% films by women
1987	1677	167	91	9
1988	1108	588	65	35
1989	362	486	43	57
1991	416	163	72	28
1992	669	951	41	59
1994	634	472	57	43
<i>Total</i>	<i>5016</i>	<i>3019</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>38</i>
Average length of film (in minutes)				
	Men	Women		
1987	51	21		
1988	43	39		
1989	52	44		
1991	69	9		
1992	61	31		
1994	40	25		
<i>Total</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>30</i>		

What this data shows is that after the first Counterparts—of which only 20% of their programming was directed by women, and which only made up 9% of the festival’s total screen time—there was a shift toward including more films directed by women. This peaked in 1992 when films directed by women made up 74% of the total programming and took up 59% of the screen time. While on the surface this suggests the festival became more inclusive of lesbian perspectives and filmmaking, it is tempered by the fact that every year, on average, the length of films directed by women were significantly shorter than films directed by men. The films they

were programming by women were almost all entirely short films, and as such, were rarely featured in press or placed in significant places on the schedule, like opening and closing night. Thus, in years like 1991 where they screened eighteen films by women and six by men, sixteen of the eighteen films by women screened were part of the shorts package *Five Feminist Minutes*, while all six films directed by men were feature films.

The insights drawn from this data are, of course, limited, since I am unable to compare them to other festivals in the region. Indeed, it is perhaps more interesting to note that Counterparts showed *Five Feminist Minutes* than to note that eighteen out of twenty-four films shown that year had women directors, since its existence within the program suggests a significant, if fragile, recognition of the overlaps between queer and feminist filmmaking. But what this data does tell us—that though there was a growing interest in lesbian filmmaking at Counterparts, it was still often overshadowed by the feature films directed predominantly by men—provides much needed context to understand why two women’s film festivals emerged in the early 1990s in Winnipeg: re:Visions: The Winnipeg Women’s Film and Video Festival (held in October 1993 and 1995) and Vice Versa Lesbian Film & Video Festival (held in September 1995). While Vice Versa was the only explicitly queer film festival, the size and scope of re:Visions—organized by the Winnipeg Film Group on a budget of \$37,000, the 10 day festival featured ninety-four films by women—meant that it featured three “lesbian themed” films in 1993, and in 1995 featured a film by Midi Onodera and the program of queer film curated by Robin Vachal of MIX NYC.³⁰ These references to lesbian film appear in articles on re:Visions in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and hint toward lesbian cinema’s complicated status in the city. On the

³⁰ John Lyons, “Celluloid Sisters,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 29, 1993; Patrick McKinley, “Women’s film, video festival highlights,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 17, 1995.

one hand, their appearance within the pages of Winnipeg's daily paper highlights the increased public interest in queer cinema. On the other hand, lesbian films are only a small portion of the festival's programming. Taken together with Counterparts, what this suggests is that because both festivals seemed to express disinterest in centering lesbian films, there was a need for a lesbian-focused film festival in Winnipeg.

It is within this context that Szu Burgess, the programmer for the 1994 Counterparts festival, teamed up with Kris Anderson to organize and program Vice Versa Lesbian Film & Video Festival in September 1995. When asked by Hope Peterson in an interview for Winnipeg magazine *Swerve*, "Why do we need a separate festival for lesbians" when women's and queer film festivals already exist, Anderson replied with a flippant "Why not?":

The films that we've selected aren't just about lesbians, but they are films made by lesbians. I think that sets us apart from a lot of other homosexual festivals. Many of the films I've seen at other festivals are about being gay or being a lesbian. In the films that we're showing, the word lesbian might not come up or a person might watch the film and not know that it was made by a lesbian. What also sets us apart from gay and lesbian festivals, [sic] is that most of the films at *Vice Versa* would also be considered feminist and are particularly related to women.

Burgess adds:

when we started getting films that didn't really have any overt lesbian content, we realised that lesbians are making films that aren't just about what it means to be a lesbian, or the sexuality issue per se. We also saw that there were many "lesbian" films made by men and we didn't want those. So through previewing, we had to change our preconceptions.³¹

What differentiates Vice Versa from Counterparts, and indeed from many queer film festivals that come after it in the region is not that it screens films just *about* lesbians, but films *by* lesbians. This emphasis on lesbians as filmmaker, as opposed to lesbian as subject, emerges from

³¹ Hope Peterson, "Vice Girls Do The Vice Versa Lesbian Film & Video Festival," *Swerve* (Winnipeg), September 1995, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Neil Richards fonds, S-A958 I. 62.

the history of women in cinema, women's cinema, and women's film festivals where women, and especially lesbians, have been excluded behind the scenes in a male-dominated industry. While the WGLFS screened Fassbinder's *Petra Von Kant* as fulfilling their lesbian content requirement, Vice Versa avoided male perspectives on lesbians. The program was made up of an eclectic mix of short films (the longest film is 60 minutes) from Canada, Australia, England, Spain and the United States from now well-known names in lesbian cinema: Maureen Bradley, Shawna Dempsey and Lori Millan, Pratibha Parmar, and Anne Golden all have films that screen throughout the weekend.

The necessity for Vice Versa to be a lesbian-focused space is also illustrated by how they organized their final screening as a discursive placemaking gesture that underscores the importance of place and of separatism to the formation of lesbian community. While every other screening of the festival happened at the Cinematheque at 100 Arthur Street in the Exchange District—which was also the location of many Counterparts screenings—the final screening, “Excess is what I came for” was held at the Heartland Social Club at 298 Fort Street, about a five-minute walk from the Cinematheque, and a well-known lesbian haunt in Winnipeg.³² Unlike the other screenings, Burgess and Anderson describe this screening as “for lesbians only!” in the program, thus locating it under the rubric of lesbian separatism. As Marilyn Frye argues, separation, as an act of controlling male access to female bodies both physically and conceptually, forms the basis of lesbian separatism's political power.³³ By limiting access to the Heartland to lesbians only, Burgess and Anderson are making a particular political statement: that it is important that lesbians have their own spaces. The spatial separation between the

³² Shawna Dempsey, personal communication, 31 March 2017.

³³ Marilyn Frye, “Some Reflections on Separatism and Power,” in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1983), 107.

Cinematheque and the Heartland highlights the complexity of the relationship between Counterparts and Vice Versa. While holding one screening in a lesbian-only space highlights the ways in which Vice Versa wanted to imagine themselves as separate from Counterparts, their use of the same cinema for every other screening is indicative of a political economy of cinema-going and theatre rental. While there were other cinemas operating in Winnipeg at the time, the close proximity of Cinematheque to Heartland obviously made it an attractive venue. The closer Heartland was to their screening venue, the more likely it would be that the lesbians in the audience would migrate from the theatre to the social club, and the more likely it was that Burgess and Anderson would be able to build lesbian community at that final screening.

It is important to note that Burgess and Anderson also identify of a number of the films as feminist. The identification of lesbian feminism as the point where Vice Versa emerges is crucial in understanding the complex relationships between women's film festivals, queer film festivals, and lesbian film festivals. For Burgess and Anderson, women's film festivals may have an overwhelming interest in programming feminist films, but often express a disinterest in homosexuality, and thus often exclude lesbian filmmakers. Queer film festivals, while they obviously have an interest in screening queer films, often express disinterest in feminist filmmaking, and thus also often exclude lesbian filmmakers. The lack of interest in the other—of women film festivals' interest in queer films and of queer film festivals' interest in women's film—has the effect of erasing lesbians. In this economy of interest, there is effectively no place for lesbians. The WGLFS's inconsistent history of screening films by lesbians and engaging lesbians during their festivals established the conditions from which Anderson and Burgess could launch a lesbian film festival with films by lesbians and for lesbians.

Calgary: Intersectionality as Interest

The relationship between lesbian feminism and gay male activism in film festivals in Calgary takes an altogether different turn. Much like Winnipeg, the development of concurrent but distinct feminist and queer film festival cultures began in the mid- to late-1980s and met a significant turning point in the mid-1990s. But unlike Winnipeg, where women's festivals emerged as a response to the perceived shortcomings of the queer film festival, in Calgary a queer film festival emerged as a supplement, and not a challenge, to the city's long-running feminist film festival, the herland Feminist Film Festival. herland was first organized in 1989 by the NFB's Studio D, the Calgary Status of Woman Action Committee (CSWAC), and later, the Women of Colour Collective (WCC). By 1995, a smaller queer film festival, *The Fire I've Become*, was organized by members of the Of Colour collective, a group of queer of colour activists, some of whom were also involved in organizing herland, and who took inspiration from Vancouver's *In Visible Colours*. Where Winnipeg's queer film exhibition cultures throughout the 1980s and early 1990s are marked by tensions between lesbian and gay male film exhibition and activism—tensions that arise because of a mutual disinterest in the work of each other—Calgary's queer film cultures emerge from the intersectional framework that governed herland's organization and programming. Without the ground broke by the feminist activists at herland, *The Fire I've Become* would not have been able to exist, as herland organizers were often involved in organizing or connected to the queer festival and dealt with many of the same issues around lesbian content and queer representation that would define *The Fire I've Become*. This section highlights the role of queer of colour activists and lesbian content at herland, and its relationship to *The Fire I've Become*. Following from my discussion of disinterest with regards to the gay and lesbian film cultures in Winnipeg, I argue here that the intersectional framework

that underpins the queer and feminist film festivals in Calgary emerges because both are *interested* in each other. This collective interest formed the affective and intersectional base from which queer and feminist film festivals could work together to fight against the Alberta's conservative status quo.³⁴

Intersectionality is fundamentally a theory of interest. For Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is more than just the buzzword synonym for inclusivity that it often gets reduced to in popular feminism.³⁵ At its core, intersectionality is a call to think together the ways in which class, ability, sexuality, gender, sex, race, and so on come to bear on the body and the ways it can move through the world. Crenshaw articulates these as different “axes,” and that in order to understand, in her case, the ways in which Black women are multiply oppressed, we have to consider their oppression from a multi-axis framework. Following from my earlier discussion of Elspeth Probyn's definition of interest—“Interest constitutes lines of connection between people and ideas”—I want to theorize the axes of intersectional analysis as the lines constituted by interest.³⁶ Axis: “the imaginary straight line about which a body rotates.”³⁷ Within intersectional theory, each axis is a different identity category. Interest is not what is constitutive of these identities per se but is what constitutes our connections with others on these lines.

³⁴ For more on other queer and feminist activism in Alberta, see Manon Tremblay, “Introduction,” in *Queer Mobilizations: Social Movement Activism and Canadian Public Policy*, ed. Manon Tremblay (Vancouver; Toronto: UBC Press, 2015), 3-41; Alexa DeGagne, “‘Severely Queer’ in Western Canada: LGBT2Q Activism in Alberta,” in *Queer Mobilizations*, 163-183.

³⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics,” *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989: 139-167.

³⁶ Probyn, *Blush*, 13

³⁷ “axis, n.1”. OED Online. June 2018. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/view/Entry/14054?rskey=zlHG5&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed July 17, 2018).

Interest in others is what constitutes communities. Thus to think intersectionally is to think about our how interest in multiple others constitutes new and different lines of solidarity.

This interest in different lines of solidarity manifested itself in herland's interest in programming and centering films by lesbians and women of colour, and its willingness to support *The Fire I've Become* when it became the subject of conservative backlash. When the festival screened *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives* (Dir. Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman, Canada, 1992) at their 1992 festival, they started a small controversy within the pages of *The Calgary Mirror*, a local community newspaper. The *Mirror* featured an interview with the filmmakers on their frontpage and printed alongside it a photo of the poster. This resulted in incensed readers writing letters to the paper questioning the *Mirror's* "community standards." The letters focus on two related issues: the fact that the *Mirror* would publish a piece that seemingly endorses the film, and with it the "deviant" lesbian lifestyle; and that the film itself is funded by taxpayers in the form of the NFB, CSWAC, and the NAC.³⁸ What ties these issues together is the apparent concern for the community that the readers have: as one reader writes, how can the *Mirror* call itself "a 'community' newspaper if [it is] going to sympathize with the deviant minority"?³⁹ Lesbian desire is cast as a deviant other, outside of the bounds of normal community standards, and unfit to be made public. Indeed, one reader has no problems with lesbian desire so long as it is relegated to the home: "If they want to be 'different'

³⁸ Colleen Hnatuk, "Lesbian Agenda Offensive," *Calgary Mirror*, December 12, 1992, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-7.; J. David McIllveen, "*Mirror's* Standards in Question," *Calgary Mirror*, December 12, 1992, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-7.; Suzanne M. Leonard, "*Forbidden Love* Poster Tasteless," *Calgary Mirror*, December 19, 1992, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-7.

³⁹ Colleen Hnatuk, "Lesbian Agenda Offensive," *Calgary Mirror*, December 12, 1992, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-7.

in the privacy of their own homes, that's their business."⁴⁰ While herland was evidently aware of and concerned by these critiques as these clippings are found in their archives, these critiques are relatively minor, as the *Mirror* was a niche conservative weekly paper without nearly the same circulation as the city's daily papers, the *Herald* and the *Sun*.

But while herland's critics did not care for *Forbidden Love* or herland's other lesbian programming, herland's audiences did. One audience member left a page-long comment after the 1992 festival, praising the festival as

extremely valuable to me as a means of "meeting" other people whose lives and challenges and backgrounds are seemingly so different an "inaccessible." I need the first hand voices of the women in these films in order to feel confident and comfortable about my approaching the subjects of racism, AIDS, issues of sexuality and identity in open discussions [...] Yes, this festival *is* important. This is the kind of storytelling *humanity* needs, which mass media so rarely provides.⁴¹

This comment is illustrative of the ways in which intersectionality is wrapped up with interest because of the ways in which it foregrounds "meeting" people as core to developing an intersectional activist practice. The scare-quotes around "meeting" in the comment suggest not necessarily a physical meeting of people in the audience, but a meeting of different people, bodies, and voices represented on screen. The festival's interest in screening films about AIDS, sexuality, and so on constitutes lines between audience and film, and between identity categories. This audience member found the festival to be a useful space to engage with difference, to "find[...] so much common ground in terms of patterns of experience," to build those lines of connection that are central to creating a just and caring society.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Handwritten Comments, c 1992, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-7.

⁴² Ibid.

Such audience interest in *Forbidden Love* and other lesbian programming—not to mention the growth of “lesbian chic” across Canada and the United States that made lesbians popular consumerist icons—paved the way for herland to begin to more forcefully centre lesbians in their programming.⁴³ In 1994, herland organized its first ever Lesbian Celebration Night at the Glenbow Museum, which sold out and remained herland’s most popular program until its end in 2007.⁴⁴ One letter written to Glenbow officials and copied to CSWAC and WCC praised the Glenbow for hosting the “large crowd of people who were very enthusiastic about seeing works which they rarely have access to” and “encourage[d] the Glenbow to maintain this open, anti-homophobic, anti-racist programming.”⁴⁵ In audience comment cards organizers distributed, audience members were also pleased with the introduction of Lesbian Celebration Night, and was, alongside mentions of women of colour, consistently cited as something they enjoyed or wanted to see more of next year.⁴⁶

Throughout the early 1990s, herland had slowly been building a stronger interest in lesbian programming. And why not? Many of herland’s core organizers were lesbians and would later be involved in organizing *The Fire I’ve Become*. While I discuss *The Fire I’ve Become* in more depth in the following chapter, at this point I want to highlight some of the personal, intimate, and positive relationships between organizers of both festivals. Within the herland fonds there are documents and ephemera that highlight an intimate affective economy of queer

⁴³ For more on the politics and rhetoric of lesbian chic, see Erin J. Rand, “Visibility with a Vengeance: The Lesbian Avengers and Lesbian Chic,” in *Reclaiming Queer: Activist and Academic Rhetorics of Resistance* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014), 90-126.

⁴⁴ Amber Christensen, “Herland Feminist Film and Video Festival: Film Festival Programming as an Expression of Willfulness” (MA Major Research Paper, York University, 2015), 42-44.

⁴⁵ Rita Wong to Lorna Johnson, February 7, 1994, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-10.

⁴⁶ Comment Cards, 1994, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-10.

desire. Marginalia, scraps of paper, flirtatious audience comments among other ephemera produce an archive of feeling that highlight the intimate relationships between herland and Fire I've Become organizers. Emblematic of this is a letter written in 1995 to Michelle Wozny from Susanda Yee after The Fire I've Become's controversy over screening queer film in a public institution and the 1995 herland festival. Both women were involved in both festivals in some way: Yee was a member of the Of Colour and herland collectives, while Wozny's role at the CSIF meant that she was often liaising with both festivals and, in the case of The Fire I've Become, faxed numerous calls for support from the CSIF offices. The front of Yee's letter to Wozny is an official typewritten thank you letter to Wozny and the CSIF for participating in herland that year. But on the back of the letter is a handwritten note from Yee to Wozny which, more than the official document, highlights the personal stakes of organizing the two festivals:

I feel like I haven't been able to carry on a conversation for the last 2 weeks—and I so wanted to tell you some things I've noticed -> You are quite amazing & I felt very proud & spirited working with you on the Queer fest [The Fire I've Become]. Your work on herland (ideas & approaches) made (helped) me feel less lonely as a coordinator (paid person trying to work with a collective). The best part about working with you was knowing that we'd have a beer and eat after our work. Then there's your zany humour! I always was amazed at how open you were/are to talk about how you feel as well as what you think. Take good care, Susanda⁴⁷

The letter is flirtatious, full of positive feeling and memory, referencing past events and shared experiences during The Fire I've Become's 1995 controversy. Yee's note highlights the possibility of a positive affective solidarity between festivals and activists, of the kinds of loving and joyous feelings that would be shared between people out of reach of the negative and controlling eye of conservative moralists. Such an interest in each other was also helped along by the relationship between herland and The Fire I've Become.

⁴⁷ Susanda Yee to Michele Wozny, July 12, 1995, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-15.

The success of Lesbian Celebration Night and herland's work to centre work by women of colour are central to the festival's position within the prairie region's network of queer and feminist film festivals. As a consciously branded "feminist" film festival, it was broadly intersectional in its framework, operating not just from an anti-sexist philosophy, but anti-racist, anti-colonialist, anti-heterosexist, and anti-ableist one as well. Lesbian Celebration Night was renamed Queer Celebration Night in 2002, and as the festival introduced more programs related to gender and sexual diversity they remained some of the festival's most popular programs, with Queer Celebration Night still selling out nearly a decade later.⁴⁸ herland was a crucial space for Calgary's lesbian and queer communities, screening films by lesbians for lesbians.

Conclusion

When bodies meet, we cannot possibly know what will happen in advance. The context, histories, and relationships between gay men and lesbians in any city will always ensure that affect accumulates differently depending on where you are. In Winnipeg, disinterest flowed over the relationships between Counterparts, Vice Versa, and other women's film exhibition, interrupting those connections between the two. In Calgary, interest stuck herland and The Fire I've Become together, with organizers working together across both festivals out of an interest in each other and in screening lesbian content. In order for a queer film festival to do what is *necessary* and *possible* not only for its survival, but also its flourishing, it must express interest in something. Indeed, that is the very *raison d'être* of the queer film festival: interest in seeing one's self on screen. But, as we have seen with regards to Counterpart's development, interest in one's self is not necessarily enough to survive. Its inability to centre and include women in its

⁴⁸ "2002 Festival Summary," and Attendance Logs, 2002, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-48.

organization was one factor in its inconsistent scheduling throughout the early 1990s and its eventual hiatus in 1995. In contrast, herland's longevity emerges because of its willingness to support other festivals in Calgary, but also its willingness to centre a diverse body of others in their programming. This support for others—other festivals, other bodies—became all the more crucial as queer film festivals became more established and more public. With publicness came backlash, led almost exclusively by conservative moralists who were disgusted by queer film festivals and wanted to see them defunded and shut down. It is the public circulation of disgust that I turn to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

COMMUNITY AND PORNOGRAPHY: SEX PANICS, DISGUST, AND FUNDING

On Saturday May 13, 2000, a group of far-right Christian fundamentalists marched outside of the downtown branch of the Regina Public Library. The protestors were outraged that within the library, just steps away from the children's section of the library, Queer City Cinema was hosting a panel discussion called "Community/Porn: What's Up With That?" featuring queer filmmakers and porn stars. The group of white men and women were brandishing signs with slogans like "Mothers and Fathers Your Public Library Hosts Gay Porn," "Christ reorientates [sic] the sexually disoriented," "Gay Activists expect taxpayers to fund their porn addiction," "Shame on the Regina Public Library for hosting gay porn," and "SaskTel cuts services, raises phone rates and Donates to Queer City Porn Festival." These protestors, documented in Roy Mitchell's short documentary *Christian Porn* (Canada, 2000), were called the Christian Truth Activists, led by notorious anti-gay and anti-choice activist Bill Whatcott. Festival organizer Gary Varro had assumed that the panel title might draw some attention to the festival—the third one in six years—but did not think there would be a full-blown panic over it. But, as Mitchell sardonically voiceovers in his film: "Oh but really, what do they think that a panel discussion on gay and lesbian porn on a Saturday afternoon in the public library is going to do to this little town?"

Regina's panic was the last of a decade of sex panics over queer content at film festivals in the prairie region. Festivals in Calgary, Regina, and Winnipeg played host to sex panic over what Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant have succinctly termed "sex in public" brought about by the often unwitting and unintentional actions of queer film festival organizers. This chapter will use the paradigm of sex in public to unpack the affective relationship between sex panics

and funding strategies at queer and feminist film festivals. This affective relationship can generally be collected under the rubric of disgust, a strong negative affect rooted in “the experience of nearness that is not wanted,”¹ wherein the body “intends to maximize the distance between the face and the object which disgusts itself. It is a literal pulling away from the object.”²

Conservative opponents’ disgust was a response to an experience of nearness not wanted: the increasing proximity of queer sexuality to the heterosexual public sphere, of sex to publics, of pornography to community. This disgust did not simply aim to pull conservative, heterosexual communities away from their object of disgust—queer film festivals—but to actively push the object away, to deny its proximity to the community through a denial of access to public funding. These attempts to use disgust to deny queer and feminist film festivals public funding catalysed a renegotiation in how queer and feminist film festivals in the region were organized, but in different ways depending on the specific social, cultural, and political contexts in each city and province. This disgust response—which was common to the panics over queer sex that occurred across North America in the 1990s—occurred generally because the violence of the AIDS crisis necessitated increasingly urgent public queer activism, which resulted in an often equally violent backlash from a homophobic and serophobic community. I argue the acceptance of public funds by queer film festivals constituted more than just a simple tacit endorsement by government of the necessity to support queer communities during this time. Rather, public funding constituted a line of interest between the state and queer and feminist film festivals, between sex and public,

¹ Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, trans. Howard Eiland and Joel Golb (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 1.

² Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition* (New York: Springer, 2008), 356.

between community and pornography. The constitution of this line is what conservatives found so disgusting.

Drawing on correspondence about funding decisions, funding policy, interviews with organizers, newspaper and periodical accounts of the controversies, as well as the films and programs that elicited controversy, I show how the sticky connections between community, pornography, sex, the state, and public funding produced disgust directed at the festivals. I explore the myriad responses from the festivals and the effects the controversies had on festival organizational and funding models. Disgust and panic over the entrance of queer sexuality into the public sphere—entrances made possible for queer and feminist film festivals because of their complex relationships to public funding—did not, as conservatives had hoped, eject queer sex and queer film festivals from the community. Rather, following Foucault, sex “spoke verbosely of its own silence” and conservative disgust thus only further reaffirmed the centrality of sex to publics.³

Sticky Sex

Published near the end of the sex panics I consider in this chapter, Berlant and Warner’s 1998 article “Sex in Public” article is both a source of history—a record of concurrent panics over, and discourses of, sex and public in the United States in the mid-1990s—and a source of theory.⁴ At its core, the article argues for an expanded notion of sexuality beyond private intimacy, sexuality as informing and informed by the public sphere. This notion of sexuality as productive of the public sphere is the governing logic behind the sex panics of the late 1980s and

³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 8

⁴ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 547-566.

early 1990s at queer and feminist film festivals. Conservative opponents of the film festivals incited a panic over the festivals because, to them, sex should not be in public and should be and relegated to the private sphere. This act of inciting a panic over sex is an act of heterosexual belonging that circumscribes the public sphere as (hetero)sexual and excludes queer sex from the public. Sex panics like these, however, are just one of a matrix of acts of heterosexual belonging:

paying taxes, being disgusted, philandering, bequeathing, celebrating a holiday, investing for the future, teaching, disposing of a corpse, carrying wallet photos, buying economy size, being nepotistic, running for president, divorcing, or owning anything “His” and “Hers”.⁵

This list, while in some senses arbitrary in its selections, is telling when considered in light of the sex panics under consideration in this chapter. In particular, what I find most interesting for my purposes is the proximity of paying taxes to the feeling of disgust at the beginning of the list.

What Berlant and Warner mean here is paying taxes and being disgusted are two related but distinct ways in which heterosexuals belong—they are a kind of commonality to heterosexuals that hails them into a public. While Berlant and Warner articulate them here as distinct acts, I want to take their serendipitous proximity together and consider the ways in which paying taxes and being disgusted work together to form an affective economy that mobilizes heterosexual and conservative belonging against queer and feminist film festivals in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.

When signs, bodies, and objects meet within an affective economy they become “sticky” with affect. The “stickiness” of an object here, like affect, is not a characteristic of the object, but rather an effect of contact, or as Ahmed says “an effect of surfacing, as an effect of the histories

⁵ Berlant and Warner, “Sex in Public,” 555.

of contact between bodies, objects, and signs.”⁶ Objects become sticky through their contact with each other. A core feature of an object’s stickiness, Ahmed says, is its ability to produce disgust. When something is sticky it is disgusting. Throughout this chapter I consider the stickiness that is produced when taxes—or, to conceptualize it more broadly, public funding—come into contact with sex—or, to be more specific, homosexuality, queer sexuality, and pornography—and how the contact between sex and public produces a kind of disgust that in turn produces a heterosexual and conservative public. These publics are, as Warner says, bound in a specific time and place but also cut across temporality.⁷ I consider both how these publics are formed in a specific time and place but also how these publics accumulate, stick together, and travel throughout the region. In other words, I explore the different types of public funding and the different kinds of sex unique to each festival, how it forms publics, and how these publics travel, accumulate and stick to each other in times and places other than where they were formed.

I consider three types of public funding that queer and feminist film festivals on the prairies have historically received: grants from government ministries; grants from arts councils, lottery boards and other arms-length government agencies; and paid and in-kind use of public and publicly-funded space. I map these types of funding onto four different types of panic derived from a close reading of the texts that circulated during the panics: sacrilegious, epidemiological, pedophilic, and pornographic. While an overarching affective economy prevails regardless of what kinds of panics intersect with what types of funding—namely, that some kind of community standard has been transgressed by the intersection of sex and public money—the specific contours of each panic is unique and has specific effects on queer activism in each city,

⁶ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 90.

⁷ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2002), 96-7.

on the organization of each film festival, and on the predominant issues that mobilize conservative heterosexual publics both in the immediate aftermath of these panics (dealt with further in the following chapter) and in the ongoing present.

***“Offensive, Injurious, and Insulting”:* Grants from Ministries**

Public funds granted to queer and feminist film festivals from money collected by different levels of government is the overarching funding strategy that underpins all forms of sex panic that these festivals faced throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. Regardless of the specifics of how these moneys were distributed, the outrage was always directed at the fact that taxpayers money was being used to fund queer sex. However, there are nuances that depend on how the money is distributed. Whether the funds come directly from government or from an arms-length government agency makes all the difference in how public funders and queer and feminist film festivals responded to conservative outrage. I start with grants from ministries because they are the form of public sponsorship least removed from the political arm of government—since at least in the case of Winnipeg, the Minister herself makes the decision to provide funding. A grant from the Ministry of Culture, Heritage, and Recreation was the core piece of public sponsorship that the WGLFS received for their first Counterparts festival in 1987. Of the festival’s \$9,238 in revenue that year, 40% of it came from government sources: \$2,000 from the Ministry, \$1,100 from the Manitoba Arts Council, and \$556 from the NFB.⁸ Besides gate receipts, which were \$2,763 that year or 30% of revenue, the Ministry’s funding was the single largest source of revenue for the festival.⁹

⁸ Budget, Counterparts I, 1987, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 4.

⁹ Other sources of revenue that year included sponsorship from art galleries and art collectives (\$1,844, or 20% of budget) and private donations (\$975, or 10% of budget).

In Winnipeg that year, this public funding came into contact with two types of panic: sacrilegious and epidemiological, spurred on by report in the *Winnipeg Free Press* about the festival published 21 April 1987. The article, headlined “AIDS issues take front row at first gay film festival” is quite thorough in its reporting, highlighting the “rare screening” of the NFB’s film *Passiflora* (Dir. Fernand Bélanger and Dagmar Teufel, Canada, 1985), a lecture to be given by Thomas Waugh, a visit from West German filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim, as well as the lack of lesbian content at the festival. The article is buried on page 31 of that day’s issue, and though the headline is the largest on the page, no image was published alongside it. The article likely should have passed by unnoticed by most Winnipeggers. However, three issues in the article were noticed by readers and together marked the beginning of the festival’s sex panic: the headline’s reference to “AIDS issues,” a description of *Passiflora* as “a documentary about the homosexual body worship of the Pope and Michael Jackson,” and the erroneous remark that \$5,000 of the festival’s \$6,500 budget was made up of “government grants.”¹⁰

Following this report, a flurry of correspondence and written material began to circulate between festival organizers, the government, the public, and the media. These texts are full of words for feeling, or what Ahmed calls “sticky words.”¹¹ Though several letters were exchanged between WGLFS and the Ministry before the 21 April 1987 *Free Press* article, I want to focus here on the documents written and distributed by organizers, government, and the public after 21 April. This corpus consists of forty-one discrete documents, including letters exchanged between the government, public, and organizers; newspaper articles; internal government documents; and Provincial Hansard. While the internal government documents and letters exchanged between

¹⁰ Walker, Morley. “AIDS issues take front row at first gay film festival.” *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 21, 1987: 31

¹¹ Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 46.

organizers and the government are illuminating of the organizational struggles, what remains the most compelling and succinct account of the controversy emerges through the letters written by the public to the government and festival organizers. Between 23 April and 1 May 1987, the government received eight letters condemning the festival. As well, in the same period, organizers of the festival received at least one letter condemning the festival. This was followed up by two letters of support to the government in May and June.

Of all these letters, those written by the Archbishop of Winnipeg Adam Exner succinctly highlight the predominant affective issues at play during Counterparts' first year, as well as the broad effects the festival had in Winnipeg.¹² They also highlight that not just a few upset taxpayers wrote letters to the government, but community leaders as well. The Archbishop wrote a number of letters to organizers and the Ministry in which he excoriated the government and the festival for its "bad taste" in deciding to screen *Passiflora*, a film that stirred up controversy because of its irreverent depiction of Pope John Paul II:¹³

The use of taxpayers money for the festival in question adds insult to injury and is intolerable. Taxpayers should not have to put up with use of their money in ways which are offensive, injurious and insulting to them. Furthermore, why should taxpayers finance a festival designed to promote and strengthen homosexual community which in a large

¹² While most of the letters in the Ministry's files have been redacted in compliance with the province's privacy laws, it is still possible to identify two of the letters as originating from the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, and possibly from the Archbishop Adam Exner himself. This is possible because in the Plug In fonds at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba there is a letter from the Archbishop to Counterparts organizer Wayne Baerwaldt that uses some of the same language as a redacted letter to the Minister. Compare Archbishop of Winnipeg to Wayne Baerwaldt, April 23, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Plug In ICA fonds, L-5-5-6 file 2; and Letter to Judy Wasylcia-Leis and Howard Pawley, April 23, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism office files, D-5-7-13.

¹³ For more on the *Passiflora* controversy, see Jonathan Petrychyn and Claudia Sicondolfo, "Archived Passions, Censored Bodies: *Passiflora* and the Regulation of Sexuality at the NFB," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 90 (March 2019). <http://sensesofcinema.com/2019/feature-articles/archived-passions-censored-bodies-passiflora-and-the-regulation-of-sexuality-at-the-nfb/>

measure is instrumental in the spread of the Aids [sic] epidemic, a serious health threat to all and an added cost to taxpayers?¹⁴

In the Archbishop's first letter to the Minister he brings together three key issues that mobilized heterosexual belonging against Counterparts: the attack on the Catholic Church, the use of taxpayers' money, and the threat of AIDS. Implicit in the Archbishop's assessment is the notion that only heterosexuals pay taxes, only heterosexuals attend the Catholic church, and that only homosexuals can contract and spread HIV.¹⁵

The rest of the letters against the festival are remarkably consistent in the ways they replay the same kind of discursive and affective moves that the Archbishop's letter makes. All eight letters, including the Archbishop's, refer to the grant the festival received, with six of them referring to the grant as "tax money" or "taxpayers' money". Five letters mention the Pope or the Catholic Church, and a full half of them refer to AIDS or public health. In the views of these letter writers, the government should not be funding a queer film festival that is screening a film that depicts a "homosexual body worship of the Pope" because it is a direct attack on the Catholic Church and appears to be, at best, a tacit support of the "homosexual lifestyle" and, at worst, a total disregard for the public health crisis brought about by AIDS. These opponents argued that the government should revoke the festival's funding and instead redirect the money toward public health measures, including AIDS research and reopening recently closed hospitals.

¹⁴ Letter to Judy Wasylycia-Leis and Howard Pawley, April 23, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism office files, D-5-7-13.

¹⁵ The Archbishop curiously undercuts his own suggestion that the Catholic church has nothing to do with homosexuals by highlighting the Church's position on homosexuality as a sort of "hate the sin, not the sinner" mentality in his letter to Baerwaldt. See Archbishop of Winnipeg to Wayne Baerwaldt, April 23, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Plug In ICA fonds, L-5-5-6 file 2.

The government's interest in queer communities, they argued, should only be because they are interested in combatting AIDS.

On the one hand, these letters are quaint in the extent to which they reveal a fundamental misunderstanding of how government funding is allocated and the costs of health care and are likely the feelings of a small but vocal minority in Manitoba. On the other hand, the discourse of these letters, as well as the statements made in public by the Archbishop and the Progressive Conservative opposition were influential in establishing a vocabulary of anti-gay affect and emotion that would be invoked and repeated in Manitoba and across the prairie region throughout the next decade and a half. A short list of this vocabulary from these letters from the public to government includes:

outrageous, offensive, injurious, insulting, intolerable, serious health threat, fair and decent, upset, gay-erotica and Pope-bashing, pornography, inexcusable, disappointed, do not agree with, morally wrong, would not endorse, fed-up, bad taste, outrageous affrontery, clean-up their attitude, protest, moral outrage, yours in disgust, disgusting, astounded, insensitivity, parade their sick philosophy, threat to public health, warped, censorship, controversy, God help us.

The strength of the negative affect in these words and in the letters is astounding. One letter, written by hand in a violent cursive on a scrap of paper from their "Shopper's notepad," signs off with the phrase "Yours in disgust." Opponents of the festival mobilized these sticky words as ways to generate negative affect in their reader. By expressing such negativity toward the government and to the festival organizers, opponents were attempting to appeal to the Minister emotionally, to transfer their emotional outrage to the government. They are outraged and want the government to be outraged. They are disgusted, so the government should be disgusted. The government should be disgusted because they are an arm of the public, a body which the opponents imagine as a location occupied by themselves alone and separated from homosexuality. Homosexuality is not part of the public because it is disgusting. It is disgusting

because it is not part of the public. And because it is not part of the public, it should not be receiving funds generated by the public through taxes. Disgust and homosexuality are stuck together throughout these letters, their affective connection the basis from which opponents imagine it should be excluded from the tax-paying public and denied access to the tax-generated dollars.

Serious, Not Frivolous: Arts Councils and Crown Corporations

The letters the Manitoba Ministry of Culture, Heritage, and Recreation received in 1987 also took issue with the Manitoba Arts Council's \$1,100 in funding. But opponents of Counterparts could not make the distinction between funds distributed by the Ministry itself and funds distributed by the Arts Council—at the end of the day, both bodies are distributing funds collected through taxes. I argue that paying attention to this separation between funding from ministries and government agencies is crucial because government and festival organizers' responses to criticism changed depending on which government body funded the festival. By government agency I mean any agency that receives government funding and is perceived as an arm of the government, but whose daily decision-making is made by a group of people held at arms-length from the government. In concrete terms, I mean arts councils, Crown corporations, and lottery boards. In other cities, particularly in Calgary, critics were able to make the distinction between these various types of funding bodies and were able to mobilize the distinction in ways specific to the government agency. In Winnipeg this was not necessarily the case. In this section I explore the ways in which a discourse of arms-length assessment and artistic merit is mobilized by government as a counter-discourse to the discourses of disgust.

There is no one-size fits all model that adequately describes the affective dimensions of all government agency funding. Just as there is a distinction between Ministries and agencies, so

too there are distinctions between Crown corporations, arts boards, and other agencies. Each agency operates in a slightly different way and mobilizes a different vocabulary to justify its decision-making depending on how it is classified and perceived by the public. Much in the same way the opponents of the 1987 Counterparts festival established a vocabulary of anti-gay affect and emotion that would be repeated by opponents throughout the region, government agencies in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta repeated a vocabulary of separation and merit throughout the 1990s and early 2000s when arts councils and lottery boards there were challenged for funding queer and feminist film festivals. In an issue sheet likely produced after the 21 April 1987 article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the Ministry notes that the Manitoba Arts Council provided funding to the festival and supported it because it met the requirements of “artist merit” laid out by the Council’s ARTVENTURES program:

The project went through the ARTVENTURES Jury which, consistent with the mandate, reviewed it on the basis of artistic merit rather than content. Both artistic merit and broad community support were significant enough to warrant their support. The artistic merit is further evidenced by the awards many of the films have received and by the support which artists and films received from their countries to come here.¹⁶

In the Legislature, the Minister also highlighted that what the Manitoba Arts Council does with its funding is its own business, and has nothing to do with the government: “The Manitoba Arts Council, I believe, has provided some assistance as well, but remains at arm’s length from government and makes its own decisions on allocation of funds.”¹⁷ These two comments—that the arts board makes decisions based on artistic merit and that these decisions are made at arm’s

¹⁶ “Issue Sheet: ‘Counterparts’, The International Festival of Gay and Lesbian Films” April 24, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism office files, D-5-7-13.

¹⁷ Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Hansard, Second Session, Thirty-Third Legislature, 23 April 1987, Vol 33., pg. 1232.

length from the government—are crucial to unpacking the unique characteristic of government agency funding of queer and feminist film festivals.

Government agency funding was at the centre of the sex panic in Regina in 2000. The Saskatchewan Party opposition—a conservative party formed through an alliance of former Progressive Conservative and Liberal Party members—and religious groups were disgusted that government agencies like the Saskatchewan Arts Board and crown corporations like SaskFilm (the provincial film production funding agency) and SaskTel (the provincial telecommunications agency) would provide funding to a festival that was screening gay pornography and erotica. While the general shape of the panic is almost identical to Manitoba's—religious groups and conservative politicians did not think the government should be funding queer film—the specific contours of the panic shifted from Manitoba's. Where Manitoba's panic was primarily sacrilegious and epidemiological—the festival was an affront to the Pope and to public health efforts to combat AIDS—Regina's panic was primarily pedophilic and pornographic. I will discuss the pedophilic dimensions of the panic in my section on public space; for now I want to focus on the ways pornography ignited the panic and created disgust responses, and the ways in which representatives for the government, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and government crown corporations positioned pornography within the arms-length funding mandates of government agencies.

While all government agencies appeal to their separation from government as justification for their funding decisions, only arts boards make the additional appeal to artistic merit. The process by which representatives from government and from the arts board outline this mandate tends to focus on the role of the arts board's jury. Grants are not given to organizations or artists by the chairperson of the arts board or by some head of the council, as

was the case when the Ministry gave funds to Counterparts—in that case, the decision to fund the festival came directly from the Minister after an appeal was made by organizers. When elected government officials or representatives from arts boards spoke to the reasoning behind funding Queer City Cinema, both highlighted the role and expertise of the jury. Jeremy Morgan, executive director of the Saskatchewan Arts Board at the time, noted that this jury was made up of peers: “We pick serious people for our juries. [...] These are not frivolous people. And it’s important to remember they are also people who live down the street, people who have a sense of professional responsibility.”¹⁸ Because the jury is made up of peers and experts in the field of arts in Saskatchewan, the elected officials who often have to approve the board’s decision “have confidence” in the process and tend to support the decisions made by the jury.¹⁹

However, despite this state of affairs that usually sees arts boards remain independent from government, there was precedent in Saskatchewan politics for governments intervening in the operations of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. In 1993, Christopher Lefler, a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan, installed an exhibition in the university gallery that implied strongly that Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Fedoruk was a lesbian and implored her to come out of the closet.²⁰ The exhibition had received \$9,500 from the Saskatchewan Arts Board, but caused such controversy that the NDP government of the day made the unprecedented move to instruct the arts board to revoke Lefler’s funding.²¹ Opponents of Queer City Cinema invoked this controversy as precedent for the government to intervene in the Saskatchewan Arts Board again, though this time the government stood firm and stayed out of the arts board’s way.

¹⁸ James Parker, “Experts Said Festival Has Merit: Official,” *Leader Post*, May 3, 2000.

¹⁹ Neil Scott, “Arts Grants Questioned,” *Leader Post*, February 17, 2000.

²⁰ Allan C. Hutchinson and Klaus Petersen, *Interpreting Censorship in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 235-6.

²¹ Murray Mandryk, “Sad facts about the porn film debate,” *Leader Post*, May 5, 2000.

What the Lefler case and its invocation by Queer City Cinema opponents illustrates is the ways in which the arts board's arms-length status and its mandate to support projects based on artistic merit are related. If the government becomes arbiter of artistic merit, it would likely only approve projects that were perceived as relatively uncontroversial and in-line with its political agenda. This is the point one University of Saskatchewan professor made in the *Regina Leader Post* during the controversy: "the alternative is to have the government assess the artistic merits of a proposal, an approach that will lead to the production of propaganda rather than artistic expression."²² While not all circumstances where the government becomes arbiter of artistic merit necessarily lead to propaganda, the Lefler case illustrates that when politicians get their fingers in the pot of public funding it is almost inevitably to do something that will be advantageous for them politically. This was true of the Manitoba Ministry of Culture, Heritage, and Recreation's funding of Counterparts as well. When organizers wrote to the Minister to request support for the festival in 1988, she responded that they were unable to support the festival again: "Outside of a limited number of extremely large and high-cost arts festivals, my department is unable to make repeat operating commitments for festival support".²³ But it is unclear if the Manitoba government's reticence in 1987 was due to real fiscal constraints placed on the Ministry, or if because they had already expended much of their political capital on Counterparts and recent amendments to the Manitoba Human Rights Code, which made them increasingly unpopular with Manitobans (see Chapter 6). When governments get in the business of picking winners and losers based on whichever action is most likely to get them elected, arts organizations invariably suffer.

²² James Parker, "Experts Said Festival Has Merit: Official," *Leader Post*, May 3, 2000.

²³ Judy Wasylycia-Leis to Wayne Baerwaldt, November 24, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism office files, D-5-7-13.

Being arms-length from the government is then crucial for arts boards to properly adjudicate projects based on artistic merit if they want to have any chance of removing politics from the process. A consistent refrain from newspaper editorial boards and representatives of arts boards during Regina's panic is the notion that arts boards exist to fund experimental or controversial content that may not be able to get funded if left to fight it out for funding in the market. A *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* editorial makes the stakes of this clear:

It would be a dreary world indeed if the sole determinants of artistic value were market success and works that passed muster with politicians. It is because of support from such sources as the arts board that Saskatchewan has nourished so many winners of governor general's awards and produced world renowned figures in literature and the visual and performing arts.²⁴

This utopian vision of arts boards as impartial arbiters of artistic merit untouched by politics or the market is problematized by the fact that the amount of funding arts boards themselves distribute is determined by the government, and thus cannot ever be wholly removed from market or political processes. However, it still speaks to the subtle differences between the perception of money received directly from government ministries and money received from arms-length government agencies.

Though arts boards can hold onto their arms-length status as a reason for supporting projects based on artistic merit, Crown corporations have no such luxury. Though they too are at arm's length from government, they do not have a mandate to support artistic merit; rather, their mandate is to support the community.²⁵ Community is another sticky word that travels through these panics, mobilized by festival supporters and detractors as what is at stake in these debates. The editors of the *Leader Post* found it difficult for Crown corporations and municipalities to

²⁴ "Keep Politics Away from Arts," *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, May 5, 2000.

²⁵ James Parker, "Experts Said Festival Has Merit: Official," *Leader Post*, May 3, 2000; James Parker, "Sask. Party Keeps up Heat on Graphic Films," *Leader Post*, May 4, 2000.

justify their support festival that seems to challenge what community is and problematizes the notion of “community standards”:

It can be argued organizations such as the Canada Council and the Saskatchewan Arts Board, which have a mandate to support the arts, should have the freedom to fund such a festival, as long as it meets their artistic standards. But it is difficult to support either the City of Regina or SaskTel putting public money into it. Surely, there are many other more worthy areas they could put their money, such as fixing potholes and improving phone services.²⁶

The editors of the *Leader Post* echo the same fundamental misunderstanding of the allocation of public funds found in the letters to the Manitoba government in 1987. But more egregiously, in the case of the City of Regina, the editorial board curiously overlooks the role of the Regina Arts Commission, effectively a municipal version of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, in the distribution of the City’s funds to Queer City Cinema. The \$4,500 grant received from the City of Regina was allocated through a jury by the Regina Arts Commission, and ultimately approved by City Council, but not actually allocated by council itself.²⁷

But the notion that SaskTel could better put its \$500 grant to use fixing phone lines, though insulting to the intelligence of the *Leader Post*’s readers—how much phone line could \$500 actually fix?— points to the distinction between Crown corporations and arts boards that hangs on the question of sexuality. If the key difference in mandate between the arts board and crown corporation is that the former operates in service of “artistic merit” and the latter for “community”, then there is an implicit separation of art from the community. Moreover, because in this circumstance artistic merit is used as a justification to fund queer art, artistic merit is rendered queer, and thus casts community as heterosexual. Crown corporations are mandated to support organizations that establish forms of heterosexual belonging, while arts boards are left to

²⁶ “Too much fuss about festival,” *Regina Leader Post*, May 10, 2000.

²⁷ Neil Scott, “Arts Grants Questioned,” *Regina Leader Post*, February 17, 2000.

deal with forms of queer belonging. Though the *Leader Post* is ostensibly making a case for the funding of queer art, they are doing so while inscribing queer art as separate from the community, as separate from the heterosexual public sphere.²⁸

Private, Invisible, Obscene: Public Space

The transfer of cash from Ministries and government agencies is the most quantifiable and clearly defined way public funding goes to support queer and feminist film festivals. The in-kind use of public space or publicly-funded space, though less easy to quantify, often causes more controversy than the simple transfer of cash. This is because while the transfer of cash often limits the number of organizations involved to the grantor (the government) and grantee (the film festival), the in-kind use of public space multiplies these relationships exponentially and highlights a broader network of public resources being used to support these queer and feminist film festivals. Not only is there a cash value to the use of the space, but the operating budget of the space itself is often funded by public dollars, or the space is fully publicly-owned. As such, the amount of support offered is potentially far more than any grant that an agency could provide, and so the possibilities for controversy to emerge are multiplied.

While many of the queer and feminist film festivals on the prairies generated some controversy over their use of public space, the panics incited over the festivals in Calgary in particular were almost always about space. Generally, public space use causes panics because it is fundamentally about queer people being public—to use public space is to be queer in public.

²⁸ One other variable is Saskatchewan Film Classification Board, which would come up in discussions over whether it was legal for Queer City Cinema to screen pornography. In a scrum with reporters, chairperson of the Saskatchewan Film Classification Board Al Dwyer noted “the desire to maintain artistic freedom and expression has to be balanced against the community’s concern about some of the scenes portrayed in the films” and “the film classification board had no role in providing funding for the Queer City Cinema.” See Neil Scott, “Sask. Party Says Some Festival Films ‘degrading’,” *Regina Leader Post*, May 13, 2000.

In Calgary, these panics were only exacerbated under Progressive Conservative Premier Ralph Klein, who was premier of Alberta from 1992 to 2006. There was no public funding for queer groups during Klein's reign, which was a deliberate attempt to keep queer activism to a minimum and to keep queer communities relegated to clandestine private spaces in Alberta. It is not surprising, then, that herland was at the centre of three separate space-related panics throughout the 1990s and 2000s brought on mostly by its lesbian content, but also through its relationship to *The Fire I've Become*. herland's 1992 screening of *Forbidden Love* (discussed previously in chapter 4) resulted in losing their venue, the Alberta Vocational College (AVC), which they had used for the last three festivals. The minutes of a September 1993 planning meeting for the 6th herland festival in 1994 mention "a fuss raised by a couple of men" over the film, and notes that complaints were made to the Minister of Education and the president of the AVC. The minutes also note that herland collective members were not "sure whether this location will be made available to [them] again." The hesitancy of the note refers both to the fact that the organizers had not yet approached the AVC for the 1994 festival, but also implies the organizers know that the public expression of homosexuality can often be a deal-breaker for venues.²⁹ This fear that they would lose the AVC proved to be well-founded as officials soon placed conditions on the kinds of films herland could screen at the college in 1994, based in part on the controversy over *Forbidden Love*. According to organizer Mutriba Din, "the AVC said you can show this festival [sic], except you can't highlight any films dealing with lesbians or with abortion rights." The AVC, for their part, tried to challenge this view of the events and said they just "encouraged" herland to reconsider the kinds of films they were showing at their

²⁹ "Herland: A Feminist Film and Video Festival Planning Meeting #2" (Meeting Minutes, September 9, 1993), Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-10.

venue.³⁰ However, the damage was done and herland moved their festival to the Glenbow Museum in 1994.

This move would be short lived, however, as herland was then in the middle of another panic, this time surrounding the content of Calgary's queer film festival, *The Fire I've Become*. Echoing the same controversy herland found itself in in 1992 with *Forbidden Love*, *The Fire I've Become*'s program was read on the air of conservative shock-jock Dave Rutherford's talk radio show.³¹ A letter distributed to activists in Calgary at the time by Of Colour, the queer of colour activist collective who organized the festival, noted that 16-year-old Thirza Cuthand's film *Lessons in Baby Dyke Theory* was particularly disgusting to Rutherford and his conservative listeners, who leaped at the opportunity to baselessly insinuate that the film "was about babies rather than about newly-out lesbians."³² Cuthand would recall later, "One sleepy morning my mom showed me the paper and there was my name, along with a whole lot of garbage about how it was a recruiting film targeting children."³³ The film was, of course, nothing of the sort. Cuthand made the film earlier that year at a queer filmmaking workshop led by lesbian filmmaker Maureen Bradley at Virtuous Reality, Saskatoon's first and only queer film festival. *Lessons in Baby Dyke Theory* was exactly what the title of the film promised—a lesson for Cuthand and other queer teens, an opportunity for them to educate each other on what it is like being a newly-out lesbian.

³⁰ Alison Mayes, "Feminist Film Fest Moves after Program Controversy," *Calgary Herald (Alberta, Canada)*, February 1, 1994, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-13.

³¹ Joe Woodward, "Sodomizing the public." *Alberta Report* 22, no. 30 (1995): 32.

³² Mark Washeim, "Queer Film and Video Festival Threatened with Censorship," Google Groups, June 21, 1995, <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/misc.activism.progressive/W6tii2Jtq8c>.

³³ Thirza Cuthand, "The Hays Code and It's Continuing Influence on Queer Subtext in Media," October 4, 2006, <http://www.thirzacuthand.com/?p=1052>.

However, Cuthand's intentions did not make it into the newspapers, and Rutherford's pedophilic insinuation proved to have some legs. Because Cuthand's film, along with the rest of the festival, was to be screened at the publicly-funded Glenbow Museum, Rutherford encouraged listeners to call the Glenbow to express their disgust with them. As a result, the Glenbow was inundated with over 150 disgruntled phone calls and threatened to bar the organizers from holding the festival at their venue.³⁴ Herland, having held their festival at Glenbow the previous year with its lesbian content receiving little to no backlash in that space, stepped in and organized with The Fire I've Become to mobilize a group of supporters. Michelle Wozny, a coordinator with the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers (CSIF) worked closely with Susanda Yee, herland coordinator and CSWAC staff member, and faxed PSAs and calls to action to over thirty Calgary activists and organizations. Together they organized a public meeting with Glenbow officials to educate them on the history of queer censorship and to convince officials to allow the festival to continue.³⁵ Despite all of the panic, sensationalism, phone calls, and threats to call in the police, only two protestors showed up at a meagre rally against The Fire I've Become.³⁶

According to my contacts in Calgary, the festival was a success, with full-houses (or close to) for most screenings, and the following year organizers tried to build the momentum and continue the fire for a second year. Rather than shy away from the previous year's controversy,

³⁴ Washeim, "Queer Film and Video Festival".

³⁵ Sanhita Brahmachari Pahl, "The Fire I've Become Queer Film and Video Festival," *The Herland Chronicle*, October 1999, Glenbow Archives, herland feminist film festival fonds, M9329-32.

³⁶ Woodward, "Sodomizing the public," 32; Kevin d'Souza, "Burning down the house," *MIX* 21, no. 4 (April 1996): 34-5.

the festival embraced it as one of the 1996 festival's themes. In a brief notice in *QC* magazine, the organizers wrote:

We will be publicly showing queer film and video works in a political environment where queers live, and where sexuality and self-expression are viewed as undeserving of the public space enjoyed by heterosexual expression. The festival hopes to reconstruct the notion of what is classified as 'public' – and therefore – respectable and what is 'private and therefore invisible/obscene. This tension was a major bone of contention last year.³⁷

The festival received more sponsorship from small queer-friendly and queer-owned business that year, but the scale of the festival was significantly smaller. The festival moved to the Uptown Theatre for three nights between June 13 and 15, with a closing gala at the gay club Arena/Detour. Much like the previous festival, the program was made up entirely of experimental short films, but there was only one screening per evening that year instead of three.³⁸ Like many of the other ephemeral festivals in this dissertation, there is little evidence to make any definitive claims about the success of the festival that year. Anecdotes from my contacts in Calgary suggest that a combination of smaller audiences and volunteer burnout ensured that the festival would not run again in 1997, and soon afterwards the Of Colour collective folded as well. When Fairy Tales emerged in Calgary in 1999 as a new queer film festival to take place of *The Fire I've Become* it was not subject to a sex panic both because of the lessons learned from *The Fire I've Become*, but also likely because its core organizers Kevin Allen, Kelly Langaard, and Trevor Alberts were all white. Fairy Tales's cautious and more heterosexual-friendly approach to the festival meant it has largely avoided causing any controversy among Calgary's conservatives throughout its nearly 20-year existence (see chapter 7).

³⁷ "Fire to Rage at New Locale," *QC Magazine*, May 1996, 12.

³⁸ "Queer Film Fest Line-up," *FFWD Weekly*, June 13-June 19, 1996, 17.

When public space becomes controversial at queer and feminist film festivals, a pedophilic panic does not seem to be far away. In the case of Queer City Cinema, this relationship between public space and pedophilic panic manifested itself because of the spatial configuration of the festival venue itself. The 2000 festival split its programming between the Central branch of the Regina Public Library, located in downtown Regina, and the Saskatchewan Cultural Exchange Society (locally known as The Exchange) in the Warehouse District just north of downtown. Though the majority of its programming happened at The Exchange, the festival's panel on Community/Porn happened at the Regina Public Library in its Film Theatre, located in the basement of the building. As I argued above, the very fact that the festival programmed a panel discussion on the intersection between community and pornography and received public funding was enough to mobilize conservative opposition to the festival. But the decision to program it in the Film Theatre only multiplied this disgust because of the physical configuration of the space. Located in the basement next to the Film Theatre is the Children's Library, a fact that conservative opponents leaped at and used to insinuate claims of pedophilia. In the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, Saskatchewan Party MLA June Draude asked "Why would you have people there actively talking about pornography in a library beside children?"³⁹

Draude's question operates on two levels: first, on the aforementioned pedophilic level, where it is implied that homosexuals are pedophiles; and second, on the level of children as pure, innocent tabula rasa that must be protected. The notion of homosexuals as pedophiles is, of course, a well-rehearsed homophobic talking point, and is often implied in the reasoning to deny hiring queer men and women as teachers. On the prairies this was a common occurrence—so

³⁹ "Porn Panel at Regina Film Festival Comes under Fire: Queer City Festival Director Defends Nature of Gay and Lesbian Pornography," *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, April 29, 2000.

common, in fact that the firing or reprimanding of gay men working in education was the catalyst for two significant activist campaigns. In 1975, Doug Wilson was barred from supervising student teachers in the University of Saskatchewan's Faculty of Education when the Dean found out he was gay, leading to a successful complaint made to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission that discrimination over sexual orientation was protected in the province's human rights code (though this ruling was eventually overturned by the courts).⁴⁰ In Alberta, as I discuss in the next chapter, Delwin Vriend's firing from King's College in 1991 over his homosexuality eventually led to the significant 1998 Supreme Court decision *Vriend v. Alberta*, which forced Alberta to become the last province to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination in their human rights code. Libraries are educational venues, so it is likely that Draude's pedophilic dog whistle would have been heard loud and clear by her supporters.

This pedophilic dog whistle only really works, however, because it supported by a second assumption: that children must be protected. As Lee Edelman has argued, children are centred within heteronormative society because they represent the reproductive future and are at the centre of politics: "[the] Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention." Edelman further argues that "*queerness* names the side of those *not* 'fighting for the children,' the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism."⁴¹ Draude's argument that the children must be protected from pornography is thus not necessarily an argument that the

⁴⁰ For more on Doug Wilson, see Valerie J. Korinek, "'The Most Openly Gay Person for at Least a Thousand Miles': Doug Wilson and the Politicization of a Province, 1975-83," *The Canadian Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (December 2003): 517-50.

⁴¹ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

children must be protected from sex in public. Reproductive futurism is not anti-sex, since the reproduction of children comes often, but not always, from heterosexual sex. Rather, children must be protected from *queer* sex in public because queer sex constitutes a challenge to the heterosexuality of public space and, importantly, of community. Draude's attempts to remove sex/pornography from the public/community only served to do the opposite: to further assert the centrality of sexuality to formation of the public sphere.

Conclusion

The relationship between public funding, disgust, and panic at these queer and feminist film festivals throughout this period highlights the ways queer and feminist film festivals were used by conservative opponents to establish the public sphere as the site of heterosexual belonging. That these panics would do this highlights the paradoxical nature of conservative activism during this period. Conservatives were publicly protesting the entrance of queer sex into the public sphere, arguing that sex, pornography, erotica, and homosexuality best remained firmly within the private sphere. But by making such protests loudly and publicly, they were paradoxically both bringing queer sexuality into the public sphere as a site of exclusion and circumscribing the public sphere as the proper location of heterosexual culture. Rather than ejecting sex from the public, or ejecting pornography from the community, these protests only entrenched them further and made transparent the overt sexuality of the public sphere.

In this chapter I have shown how this affective economy of community and pornography maps onto the public funding available to queer and feminist film festivals, and how public funding is in fact bound up in and defined by discourses of sex and sexuality. It is easier to defend particular forms of public funding, such as those from arts boards, because some forms of public funding are already defined as queer through their relationship with art, while most others

are defined as heterosexual through their relationship with the community. However, what this means for the state of both public funding and queer activism in the region is that those public institutions that are not implicitly rendered queer are marked as a neoliberal horizon of queer inclusion. In the next chapter I consider the ways in which this sexualization of public funding influences the agenda for both queer and conservative activists in the aftermath of the sex panics and how the various ways communities, cities, and provinces dealt with the panics set the stage for rights-based activism.

CHAPTER 6

WE'RE TALKING RIGHTS: HUMAN RIGHTS, SHAME, AND THE STATE

What does it mean to claim rights in a moment of crisis? What does it mean to claim rights in the context of death? What does the claiming of rights under such conditions do to the exercise of those rights? What kinds of subjects are made when rights are claimed under such circumstances?

—Rinaldo Walcott, *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies*

In the late 1980s, a growing discourse of human rights—or what Miriam Smith calls “rights talk”—began to overtake the agenda of queer activism in Canada.¹ Following from the entrenchment of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* within the 1982 Constitution and the beginnings of the AIDS crisis, the predominance of rights talk radically changed the goals and methods of queer activism. Building on the earlier 1960 federal Bill of Rights, the Charter gave activists a new set of tools to advance their agendas on the federal stage—tools that would allow them to make claims for protections over employment, housing, healthcare, and insurance.² As queer communities were decimated by AIDS, queer activists saw these new tools as crucial for ensuring their survival. The entrenchment of the Charter and the havoc wrought by AIDS pushed activists to revisit their own provincial human rights laws to explicitly include sexual orientation within provincial legislation and in the Charter. By 1999, sexual orientation had been read into the Charter and each of the provinces had amended their own provincial human rights legislation to include sexual orientation as well. Manitoba was one of the first in 1987, followed by Saskatchewan in 1993 and Alberta in 1999.

¹ Miriam Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada: Social Movements and Equality-Seeking, 1971-1995* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

² The Bill of Rights was itself influenced by Saskatchewan’s 1947 Bill of Rights – the first of its kind in Canada and adopted a full year before the United Nations would adopt its own Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Rights talk created the category of the queer citizen and emerged as a way to counter complex feelings of shame—both personal and institutional—that circulated more forcefully within the context of the AIDS crisis. Rinaldo Walcott argues that while many scholars pinpoint Stonewall as the beginning of a new era of gay visibility, it is not until the AIDS crisis that our contemporary understanding of queer citizenship emerges.³ Such citizenship is made possible, I argue, because of the ways in which the AIDS crisis reformulated the circulation of shame within the public sphere, and subsequently, within queer film festivals. Unlike other types of queer organizations in Canada, whose origins can often be traced back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, many queer film festivals were made possible in Canada in part by the political space carved out by rights talk. Though there were several small one-off queer film festivals and screening series throughout the 1970s, all of Canada’s longest-running queer film festivals emerged after the Charter in 1982.⁴ As some of the largest and longest-running queer organizations in cities across the country, queer film festivals invariably found themselves at the centre of these battles over rights.

These organizations encounter rights talk through its interactions with different levels of government: federal in the case of Alberta, provincial in Manitoba, and municipal in Regina. While Smith’s articulation of rights talk in Canada emerges from her study of gay and lesbian activism at the federal level,⁵ I am interested here in how rights talk changes depending on the level of government, and in how the introduction of rights legislation and policy at all three

³ Rinaldo Walcott, *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies*, (London, Ontario: Insomniac Press, 2016), 149.

⁴ Antoine Damiens, *Festivals, Uncut: Queer/ing Festival Studies, Curating Queerness* (PhD dissertation, Montreal: Concordia University, 2017), 34-5.

⁵ Miriam Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada*; Miriam Smith, *Political Institutions and Lesbian and Gay Rights in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

levels both contributes to, and undercuts, the circulation of shame at queer organizations. Following from Silvan Tomkins's understanding of the relationship between insult and shame, I argue that the AIDS crisis and the panics it induced at queer film festivals activated institutional shame in Calgary's Fairy Tales and Winnipeg's Counterparts film festivals. I further argue that Regina's queer film festival, Queer City Cinema, did not feel shame, but rather was used by the public to make the city's municipal government feel shame. To overcome this shame, these organizations turned to rights talk.

Rights Talk and the Disavowal of Shame

For many scholars of Canadian sexuality, the history of queer activism in Canada since the end of World War II has been a negotiation between two positions: assimilation and liberation. For Tom Warner, liberation—referring to sexual and gay/lesbian liberation—takes as its goal nothing less than fundamental and radical social change predicated on notions of queer visibility *as queer*: it is “a revolutionary struggle that seeks the eradication of heterosexism and the overthrow of the dictatorship of compulsory heterosexuality.”⁶ It is fundamentally opposed to assimilationist notions of queer activism, which is predicated on notions of equality, inclusion, sameness and the advancement of queer communities through legislative changes at various levels of the state, whether municipal, federal, or provincial. Warner notes that in the usual cultural imaginary of queer activism in Canada, liberation is often seen as having its hey-day in the 1970s and was supplanted by assimilation's respectability politics in the 1980s. However, the actual history is not so clear-cut. During the so-called golden age of liberation in the 1970s, activists across Canada were pursuing a rights-based agenda. As I showed in chapter 3, many

⁶ Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 13.

groups made changes to human rights legislation one of its main priorities. Likewise, throughout the 1980s and 1990s liberationist activists continued to challenge the increasingly assimilationist orthodoxy that permeated much of gay and lesbian activism in Canada, and worked as a force that, at least in part, shaped the demands of assimilationist activists and critiqued their “rush to respectability.”⁷

In their rush to respectability, assimilationist activists adopted what Miriam Smith calls “rights talk” as a way to frame the aims of their activism. Like Warner, Smith finds rights talk to be counter to liberationist modes of activism, but also as having its roots in the liberation movement: for gay liberation “rights are defined as political resources,” but rights talk is “the view that the legal assertion of rights before courts is the route to social change and that legal victories are political victories.”⁸ In both cases, the end goal is equality, but the key difference is the different ways these groups conceive of the usefulness of rights. For liberationists, rights are a means to an end, a tool to be used toward the broader goal of ending heterosexism. But for assimilationists, according to Smith, rights are the endgame. The acquisition of human rights for gays and lesbians and victories within that narrow legal and political frame are seen as the ultimate victories for these activists.

The predominance of assimilationist activism and rights talk in the 1980s and 1990s is a direct result of broader changes to the Canadian political landscape brought on by the patriation of the constitution and the introduction of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982. The introduction of the *Charter* provided new tools for Canadian activists to seek equality—particularly Section 15 which guaranteed “Every individual is equal before and under the law

⁷ Warner, *Never Going Back*, 6.

⁸ Miriam Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada*, 22.

and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination.”⁹ As I will show, the existence of this tool at the federal level had wide-reaching effects on how the provinces approached their own human rights legislation, as well as how municipalities crafted proclamation bylaws that allowed them to publicly acknowledge the rights and existence of gay and lesbian groups within cities.

The concurrence of the AIDS crisis and the Charter set the stage for a new vision of queer citizenship to emerge. Faced with a state that was indifferent to their needs at best, and a public that was increasingly serophobic and openly hostile, queer activists sought to use the new tools provided by the Charter to ensure that they would not be forced back into the closet. For Rinaldo Walcott, the HIV/AIDS crisis in North America signified the beginning of a queer citizen. In Walcott’s revision of the developmental narrative of gay and lesbian activism—“first there was queer oppression; second there was gay rebellion and liberation; third there was rights talk; and now we/queers in the Western world are free and full citizens”—he shifts the focus away from Stonewall as the crucial moment in the development of queer citizenship and repositions HIV/AIDS as the “central route through which a modern queer citizenship took hold.”¹⁰ Faced with a moment of crisis, gay activists were forced by the backlash politics of a serophobic public “to secure methods through which they would not be forced back into the closet.”¹¹ These methods were the acquisition of state-sanctioned human rights.

Walcott’s fundamental critique is that by securing of rights during a moment of crisis, any changes queers made to the state were done to mirror the rights of heterosexuals and not to

⁹ Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s 15.1, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982.

¹⁰ Walcott, *Queer Returns*, 147 and 149.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

fundamentally “rethink[...] the role of the state in sexual matters.”¹² This is why he asks, “What does it mean to claim rights in a moment of crisis?”¹³ To claim rights in a moment of crisis is to ensure that the rights claimed work for the state, and not for queers. Throughout this chapter, I am trying to think through this question in the context of the development of queer film festivals in the prairie region, and to think about what effect rights talk had on queer film festivals emerging within the AIDS crisis.

By unpacking the relationship between rights talk and the AIDS crisis we can begin to understand how queer film festivals were used as tools to fold queers into the state. As I will show, these festivals, by orienting themselves toward rights talk at the height of the AIDS crisis, positioned themselves not only within state apparatuses that “produce and police sexuality based on singular terms that forces sexual minorities into a ‘one size fits all’ model,” but themselves produced and policed particularly normative visions of sexuality that were sanctioned by the state.¹⁴ A turn to rights talk is a survival strategy, but one with consequences. At once both fearful that the state will revoke their funding and claims to citizenship, I argue that many queer film festivals, instead of challenging the state’s normative requirements for citizenship, reproduced and proliferated them.

By reproducing normative state models of citizenship, queer film festivals are able to begin to disavow and dismantle the shame that circulated during their sex panics. These festivals were shamed for their content by their conservative opponents, who named the festivals “disgusting” and hurled insults at them. Walcott argues that “what contemporary ‘rights talk’

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 150.

¹⁴ Rinaldo Walcott, “The Homosexuals Have Arrived!” in OmiSoore H. Dryden and Suzanne Lenon, *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), viii.

desires is to leave the insult behind.”¹⁵ But the insult itself is also for Walcott the moment that queers are drawn together in community. To turn to rights talk, then, is to disavow the fundamental effect insult had on queer film festivals and to reject shame as a constitutive moment in their development. Rights talk is an attempt to recast an origin story for queers within the confines of state-sanctioned claims to identity and citizenship.

One of the consequences of this new origin story is the ways in which it excludes lesbian feminist activism from its narrative. The relationship between gay men and lesbians was complex and often tenuous on the prairies.¹⁶ Across Canada, gay men and lesbians moved in different circles, and thus their political trajectories often significantly deviated. Unlike the United States, Canada does not have a documented history of lesbians supporting and caring for gay men dying of complications from AIDS while their families abandoned them.¹⁷ Though some lesbians undoubtedly were involved in AIDS activism, most directed their political energies to the women’s health movement and to combatting violence towards women. This was a different kind of solidarity—since at their cores both AIDS and pro-choice activism centre around sexual health—but one that was aligned with feminism. This lack of attention to the distinctions between gay and lesbian communities during the AIDS crisis and the turn to rights talk is a shortcoming of not just of Walcott’s analysis, despite his attempts to situate rights talk within a history of feminist thought, but of much of the literature devoted to unpacking the effects of the Charter on queer communities. Walcott notes his “surprise” in discovering that feminist thought “occupies the edge in the queer ‘rights talk’ debate in the Anglo-Caribbean,”

¹⁵ Walcott, *Queer Returns*, 137

¹⁶ Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 10

¹⁷ Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

while within the works by Warner and Smith cited above, specific references to feminist and lesbian activism during the Charter and AIDS have sidelined in the literature in favor of general references to lesbians and gays.¹⁸ As one step toward rectifying this historical elision, I suggest that the move toward rights talk as a strategy to deal with shame and the AIDS crisis had the effect of excluding not just lesbian feminist politics from these queer film festivals, but a broader intersectional politics in general. This exclusion was borne out of the fact that almost every queer film festival in the region, with the exception of *The Fire I've Become*, was and remains organized primarily by white gay men. But, more crucially, this exclusion was the result of rights talk's ability to sever the historical connections between gays, lesbians, and other minority movements. As I discussed in Chapter 3, it was feminist activism that founded the Court Challenges Program, which would be used time and again by queer activists to fight for the inclusion of sexual orientation within human rights laws. Rights talk makes no mention of this history, of the debt gay activists have to feminists and people of colour for even making rights talk intelligible. By using rights talk to leave the insult behind, they also left behind their own intersectional histories.

But more than just leave behind their own histories, they also leave behind the affective grounds from which their queer communities were formed. In this case, they leave behind shame, which, as Eve Sedgwick has influentially argued, is “simply the first, and remains a permanent, structuring facet of identity” for queer people.¹⁹ Recalling the affective economy of

¹⁸ Walcott, *Queer Returns*, 145. See also Warner, *Never Going Back*, 191-217, and Miriam Smith, “Identity and Opportunity: The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Movement,” in *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada*, ed. Miriam Smith, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 179–200.

¹⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James’s *The Art of the Novel*,” in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 64.

the festival's sex panics, we know that for many festivals what activated an institutional shame was the disgust conservatives had over the festival. According to Tomkins, disgust, when hurled contemptuously as an insult, activates shame. Shame, he also argues, is only possible if we are interested in the person who shames us, meaning that shame only occurs if the other person's response to our interest in them is other than what was expected.²⁰ When I show romantic interest in a man, who then rejects me by revealing himself to be straight, I feel shame. Shame also occurs when the other that we show interest in hurls an insult at us. If that same man not only rejected me, but then hurled a homophobic insult at me, I would also feel shame. Walcott's claim that rights talk is an attempt to "leave the insult behind" then is only partially correct; rights talk does not want to simply leave the insult behind, but actively tries to deactivate the shame activated by insult.

Tomkins suggests that the only way to remove the feeling of shame is to reintroduce or reassert the original interest (since shame does not displace interest entirely, but merely reduces it incompletely). Rights talk is a mode of rebuilding the lines of interest broken by shame. When a person feels shame, their gaze shifts downward; they hang their head in shame. They no longer face the person who insulted them. To reduce shame, the head turns back up to face the other—we no longer hang our head in shame but turn our head up and look interested again. But rights talk is not the action of turning the head back to face the other; it is the language used to try to rebuild interest. While the action of turning to face the other again can be empowering, especially when the other initially looked upon you with disgust, what matters more is what you say to the other once you grab their interest again. Rights talk is simply one of many myriad ways—albeit the

²⁰ Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition* (New York: Springer, 2008), 353-4.

dominant way—queer film festivals and queer activists could talk back to the state to reintroduce the original interest.

For queer film festivals, the original interest is quite simply the joy of identification, the pride felt when you see another like yourself. Queer film festivals were often organized because a city's queer community had no other place to watch films and videos with positive representations of themselves. For many of the queer film festivals in the region rights talk was also a convenient and useful strategy because organizers already identified with the state. The people in positions of power in queer film festivals and in the state were mostly cisgender white men, and rights talk—with its focus on equality, inclusion, and sameness—was a useful tool to wash over queer difference. In this way, I argue that rights talk had three primary effects on queer film festivals. First, rights talk made festivals mirror heterosexual claims to citizenship, and subsequently occluded queer activism's historical connections to lesbian, feminist, racialized, and other minority activist movements. Second, by erasing the grounds of solidarity, rights talk de-politicized the festivals and allowed them to rearticulate their existence within highly individualized discourses of freedom and rights-bearing queer citizens. And third, through its establishment of a rights-bearing queer citizen, rights talk folded queers into the state, effectively displacing shame as queerness's original structuring affect with pride. The shame that once followed queer bodies is now stuck to homophobia. Rights talk made it shameful not to be queer, but to be homophobic.

Talk Like the State: Counterparts and the Manitoba Human Rights Code

Because the AIDS crisis necessitated that queers turn to the state to ensure that their rights were protected, queer activists had to learn to talk like the state, and to mimic heterosexual culture, in order to have their demands met. In the case of Manitoba, Counterparts was rather

adept at this because it had already established a rapport with the provincial government to fund their festival in 1987. This rapport was made extremely public in the wake of the sex panic caused over provincial funding for the festival, and so it is no surprise that Counterparts would be mobilized by activists as evidence of the queer community's ability to contribute to society in distinctly heterosexual ways. In debates over the Manitoba Human Rights Code's provisions to include sexual orientation as a protected ground of discrimination, Counterparts is invoked implicitly and explicitly as evidence of the government's already established relationship with queer communities in Manitoba. Counterparts is mobilized as an example of how queers can mimic heterosexual citizenship claims as a way to displace and dismantle the shame of the sex panics and AIDS.

The ability of the Human Rights Code, and of rights talk more generally, to do the work of displacing shame from the festival emerges in part because of their temporal concurrence. Most accounts of the Human Rights Code in Manitoba focus on its relationship to Manitoba's first Pride Parade, which occurred in August 1987, and its later use as a foundation for same-sex marriage activism in the province.²¹ Overlooked in these and similar accounts of the Manitoba Human Rights Code is the fact that discussion about the Code in the Legislature and in the press coincided with the first Counterparts festival.²² Within the span of three days between 21 and 24 April 1987, the NDP government was fielding questions from the press, from the Progressive Conservative opposition, and from the public about their funding for Counterparts *and* their

²¹ Warner, *Never Going Back*; Kathleen Lahey, *Are We "Persons" yet?: Law and Sexuality in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

²² The Manitoba Human Rights Commission, in their own newsletter commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Human Rights Code, also link the Human Rights Code to Pride. See: The Manitoba Human Rights Commission, "Two events defined the summer of 1987 in Manitoba" *Report to the Community* (December 2012), http://manitobahumanrights.ca/v1/education-resources/public-consultations/pubs/public-consultations/community_report_2012.pdf, 1.

intentions to introduce new Human Rights legislation. And of course, all of this was happening at the height of the AIDS crisis and on the eve of a province-wide AIDS Awareness Week planned for the beginning of May.²³

Because of this temporal convergence, there are few clean lines drawn between liberationist and rights talk perspectives in Manitoba. However, based on some documentation from before the government announced its intentions to update its Human Rights Code, it is unlikely that Counterparts positioned itself within a rights talk framework from the beginning. Instead, organizers invoked a liberationist ethics of representation as a means to enact broader cultural transformation within the context of AIDS. In his initial funding ask letter to the government, Counterparts organizer Wayne Baerwaldt argued that the festival was a crucial tool in combatting public conceptions of queers during the AIDS crisis: “In the midst of the AIDS crisis it is imperative that our gay subculture also be given proper, balanced representation in a public setting. This action is necessary to counteract harmful stereotyping and a political backlash against gay people”.²⁴ The letter makes no mention to the Human Rights Code—impossible because the government would not announce their intentions until a month after Baerwaldt writes his letter—and Baerwaldt is careful to position his ask within the context of the New Democratic government support of women’s, Indigenous, and racialized groups in particular. The festival merits support, he argues, because of the necessity for specific minority groups to be able to make claims to public space and to be able to control their representation—a liberationist ethic par excellence.

²³ Wayne Baerwaldt to Judy Wasylycia-Leis, January 8, 1987, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism office files, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, D-5-7-13.

²⁴ Ibid.

But, once Counterparts becomes subject of its sex panic, its ability to control its political positioning moves out of its hands, and it becomes quickly and firmly positioned within a rights talk framework, with specific references to queer activism's relationship to other minority movements supplanted in favor of platitudes toward general equality. Shortly after Counterparts ended, other queer activists not involved in the festival used the momentum of Counterparts to begin lobbying government include sexual orientation in the new Human Rights Act. Besides the eight letters against the festival that the government received during the panic, two letters of support were sent to the government after the festival. The first came from the newly formed Lobby for the Inclusion of Sexual Orientation in the Human Rights Act (LISO), who wrote on 11 May 1987 to congratulate the government for supporting Counterparts and urge them to continue supporting the gay and lesbian community:

It was most heartening to hear the very able and knowledgeable way that the Honourable Judy Wasylycia-Leis defended her decision [to fund Counterparts] in the face of hate and ignorance from the opposition. We are encouraged by these acts of our government that demonstrate a commitment to justice and equality. We look forward to your continued support in the new Human Rights legislation.²⁵

The connection here between Counterparts and the Human Rights legislation is crucial because it signifies a moment when gay activists in Manitoba realized they had the ear of government. Prior to this moment, Howard Pawley's New Democrat government was slow to enact any sort of legislation or support any kinds of endeavors that would be of benefit to gays and lesbians during his first term in government. But after they managed to hold onto their majority in the 1986 election (albeit only by one seat), the government's seemingly quick turn around on the issue with Counterparts gave activists license to begin to speak to the government on its own terms.

²⁵ Lobby for the Inclusion of Sexual Orientation in the Human Rights Act to Howard Pawley and Judy Wasylycia-Leis, May 11, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism office files, D-5-7-13.

However, what this meant in practice was a stripping away of liberationist ethics in favour of rights talk. For LISO, Counterparts deserved to be funded not because queers deserved to control their own representation, but because the government should be committed to justice and equality for all.

This invocation of models of citizenship predicated on notions of equality for everyone began to evacuate the political urgency of Counterparts in the fight against AIDS and turned it quickly into symbol for platitudes about equality. This removal of the AIDS crisis from the framing of Counterparts, however, really took hold once the government introduced the new Human Rights legislation on 29 May 1987. Shortly after this, on 6 June 1987, the government received its second letter of support for Counterparts from a citizen in rural Manitoba, which positioned the importance of the festival in terms of equality and sexual orientation:

I wish to express my support of the government in providing some financial assistance to an event such as this. It is important that Manitobans support all aspects of cultural events and that they do not discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation. We are all Manitobans and are all entitled to equal treatment, no matter what our race, colour or creed. [...] I hope that the government continues to support these events as they can open the doors to acceptance of the rights of all Manitobans.²⁶

Again, Counterparts is repositioned as a festival whose purpose is to advance the notion that homosexuals are the same as everyone else, with the subtext here being that they are the same as the presumed heterosexuals of other races, colours, and creeds. The writer positions the government's grant to Counterparts as evidence of government leading the way toward equality and acceptance. By financially supporting the festival, the government is imploring its citizens to follow suit and support the festival as well, financially or otherwise.

²⁶ Letter to Howard Pawley and Judy Wasylycia-Leis, June 6, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism office files, D-5-7-13.

More than just the view of one anonymous letter writer, though, this notion that the film festival is part of a field of initiatives of ordinary gays and lesbians that deserves to be supported by society at large circulated throughout some of the most important and influential activist organizations in Winnipeg. During the committee stage of the bill's journey through the House, Lyle Dick, a member of Project Lambda, made a presentation to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections in support of the Human Rights Code. Of the over 200 presentations the Committee heard—more than the other eight committees combined that session—Dick was the only one to mention the film festival in his presentation. Though Dick only references *Counterparts* in passing, the context of its mention is revealing:

“We contribute to and organize public educational, sporting and cultural events, even film festivals, and we pay a thousand times as much in taxes as we receive in government grants for these events. If some of our province's citizens have given up on us, we have not given up on society.”²⁷

Dick's vague reference to “film festivals” and “government grants” is an obvious reference to *Counterparts*, and like LISO and the anonymous letter writer, he situates *Counterparts* within the field of ordinary things gays and lesbians do that are beneficial to society and are not any different than things heterosexuals do, including paying taxes. Dick is staking the homosexual claim to taxes, wresting it from the grasp of the heterosexual moralists who invoked the sanctity of their tax dollars as reason to deny *Counterparts* funding. If homosexuals pay taxes, he argues, then they too are part of society and are entitled to the same government grants as any other non-homosexual initiative.

The bill was passed in the early morning hours of 17 July 1987 to much fanfare from gay and lesbian activists in Manitoba and gave *Counterparts* organizers the momentum to ask the

²⁷ Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. (Vol. 35, no. 1, July 9, 1987). 2nd Session, 33rd Legislature, p. 29.

government to continue funding the festival. In a letter to Wasylycia-Leis, organizer Wayne Baerwaldt asked the Minister to continue providing funding to the festival for its 1988 edition on the basis that it is vital that the activist community continue to build on the momentum the government started:

With the Human Rights Act Amendment now giving greater protection to minorities across the board we feel it is crucial to build on the gains that have been made by providing a balanced representation of work in a public setting. The educational and cultural focus of the project will help to counter prejudice and misinformation surrounding gay and lesbian issues in contemporary society. We aim to examine the positive contributions that gay and lesbian film and video makers have made to the discourse in culture.²⁸

Where other activists positioned Counterparts as the necessary precursor to the passage of the Human Rights Code, Baerwaldt's letter repositions Counterparts as the necessary continuation of the work of the Code. But instead of re-inscribing assimilationist, rights-based politics as the end goal of gay and lesbian activism, Baerwaldt reasserts the necessity for a broader liberationist paradigm and repositions the Human Rights Act as a means to an end and not an end in itself.

However, though Baerwaldt attempts to reassert a liberationist ethic as the governing logic of Counterparts, the Human Rights Code reoriented him and the festival to subsume it within a larger rights talk frame. As a result, the Minister took the passing of the Human Rights Code as evidence of the festival's success and as a reason to decline funding the festival for 1988. Though she officially cited both her Ministry's lack of fiscal resources to support the festival more than once and her concern that in the festival's current budget was unsustainable as the reasons for her decision—government grants made up 60% of festival revenue while gate receipts made up only 15%—I want to suggest that the passing of the Human Rights Code

²⁸ Wayne Baerwaldt to Judy Wasylycia-Leis, October 21, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism office files, D-5-7-13.

established a false sense that the shame of AIDS and of the sex panics had been effectively dealt with.²⁹ Because Counterparts and the Human Rights Act were so intimately tied together throughout 1987, the success of one was perceived as the success of the other. Though to some extent this was true, Counterparts was not able to reproduce the highs of the 1987 festival and struggled to raise enough funds to happen annually, going on hiatus in 1991, 1993, and between 1995 and 1999. Rights talk may have been an effective tool to reduce shame in the short term and instill a sense of pride in the gay community—in some senses literally as the Human Rights Code's passage was followed a few weeks later with the province's first pride parade—but its reduction was narrow and was done so at the expense of establishing a broader coalition of gay men, lesbians, and people of colour in Winnipeg.

Federal Encounters: Fairy Tales's Claims to Individual Freedom

Counterparts's relationship with the Government of Manitoba in the late 1980s indicates that though rights talk can have positive legislative effects, its ability to distribute these effects into the realms of the cultural and social are limited. In fact, rights talk narrowed the criteria by which a queer cultural event is considered successful, important, or influential and had limited success in establishing solidarities and coalitions. Rights talk may have reduced the shame of Counterpart's sex panic, but in doing so it paradoxically limited its own access to government support. In the case of Calgary's Fairy Tales, rights talk was used not only to completely disavow the shame felt from *The Fire I've Become*, but to completely avoid the activation of shame. In 1999, when Kevin Allen and Trevor Alberts developed a new queer film festival for Calgary, dubbed Fairy Tales, they consciously and deliberately did not seek out provincial or

²⁹ Judy Wasylycia-Leis to Wayne Baerwaldt, November 24, 1987, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism office files, D-5-7-13.

federal government support so that they could avoid conservative backlash and thus avoid being publicly shamed. Instead of using rights talk to talk back to Alberta's Progressive Conservative government, as Counterparts did in Manitoba to its NDP government, Alberts and Allen used rights talk to avoid interacting with government entirely during the festival's first few years. This strategic use of rights talk had the effect of deliberately depoliticizing the festival, positioning it within Charter discourses of individual freedom.

The story of rights talk at Fairy Tales—and subsequently the story of Fairy Tales's origins—is less about its interactions with any one piece of legislation or policy than it is about its position within a nexus of federal laws, legal cases, and arts agencies. The festival was founded by the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers (CSIF) as a response to Canada Council accusations that the organization fostered a climate of homophobia. Canada Council's shaming of CSIF ultimately came as a shock to Kevin Allen, CSIF Coordinator of Operations, since he is openly gay and is an active member of Calgary's gay community. But like many interactions that result in shame, this interaction with the federal funding agency was formative. Determined to show Canada Council that CSIF was not homophobic, Allen began reaching out to community organizer Trevor Alberts, herland organizer Kelly Langgard, and the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Association (GLCSA, now Calgary Outlink) to organize a new queer film festival.³⁰

But the climate of homophobia that the Canada Council should have been worried about was not at the CSIF, but in the provincial government. Alberta was more than twenty years into

³⁰ GLCSA were the beneficiaries of Of Colour's bank accounts, which had formally wound down in 1998 after a period of relative inactivity following the failure of the 1996 edition of *The Fire I've Become* and the departure of some of its members to other cities. See: Kevin Allen, "The Of Colour Collective," *Calgary Gay History Project* (blog), March 16, 2017, <https://calgaryqueerhistory.ca/2017/03/16/the-of-colour-collective/>

what would become a 44-year Progressive Conservative government dynasty that had a history of hostility toward any queer or feminist organizing in the province. This came to a head in 1997 and 1998 as the federal Supreme Court heard the case *Vriend v. Alberta* and ruled that “Alberta’s human rights legislation violated the equality rights section of the Charter, which, by 1998, had been deemed by the courts to include sexual orientation.”³¹ The ruling effectively read sexual orientation into the provincial *Individual’s Rights Protections Act* (1972) (IRPA). Premier Ralph Klein blustered the ruling was a clear case of federal overreach and he threatened to invoke the Charter’s notwithstanding clause to avoid having to include sexual orientation as a protected category within IRPA. Though Klein eventually backed down, his public bluster was successful in causing Alberts, Allen, and Langgard to seriously consider whether or not they needed the provincial money to run the festival. Since all three organizers had been around for the controversies surrounding herland and *The Fire I’ve Become*, they were intimately aware of how risky launching a publicly-funded festival could be, especially in a political climate where the provincial government was doing all it could to keep queers excluded from receiving public support.

They knew that the kind of public shame activated by conservative insults could have serious effects on the longevity of the festival, and so they made two particular discursive moves to attempt to limit the possibility of another sex panic: they depoliticized the festival and repositioned it within a rights frame that was dependent on the fundamental freedoms outlined in the Charter. The first move, to depoliticize the festival, was used first to court the GLCSA into becoming a co-organizer of the festival with CSIF. In an unsigned memo outlining the festival to

³¹ Miriam Smith, *Political Institutions and Lesbian and Gay Rights*, 99.

the GLCSA, the organizers explained how Fairy Tales would be organized explicitly to avoid inciting the ire of the public and conservative politicians:

It is known in Alberta, [sic] the issue of homosexuality has become a political issue. We want to make it clear that this festival is not a political forum. The CSIF exists as a non-profit organization, and as such, we're obligated to avoid promoting any kind of political motives or objectives. [...] Since filmmaking is an art form, there will likely be a few films branded as political. Even so, the part of the CSIF is to simply exhibit all of these films based on artistic merit, and not content or subject matter. We do not endorse the content of these films in any way.³²

The argumentative moves organizers make in this memo are telling in how they use their legal obligations under the province's non-profit organization laws in order to insist that the festival was not political, regardless of what the content of the films screened actually is. That they choose the films based on "artistic merit" is more likely a political shield than a sincere and naïve claim that you can separate a film's artistic merits from its politics.

This argument is important because it downplays the fact that the films that they would eventually program—almost entirely scrappy experimental and activist videos and short films—were engaged in the politics of queer liberation and in making queer life visible in very public and very overtly political and sexual ways. For Fairy Tales, rights talk was a Trojan Horse. It provided the necessary protection for the festival to pursue the mandate it wanted without provoking the ire of its opponents. However, unlike the Trojans, the Conservative commentators were not as easily fooled and they noticed the festival's sexual content quite quickly, eager to point out that the titles of the films were not fit to print in their "family friendly" newspapers.³³ These commentators said the same thing about the films screened at *The Fire I've Become* and at *herland*. But where in these previous cases the commentators would argue for the revocation of

³² "Fairy Tales Outline," April 19, 1999. Provided by Fairy Tales Presentation Society Inc.

³³ Rick Bell, "'Pink dollars' fund filmfest," *Calgary Sun*, June 16, 2000: 5.

the public dollars were funding queer depravity, Fairy Tales was immune from this because it had refused to seek out public dollars.

Instead, extending a discursive olive branch to Alberta's conservative public, Allen positioned the festival within terms they might have appreciated: individual rights and freedoms. In an interview with regular anti-queer commentator Rick Bell for the *Calgary Sun*, Allen tells would-be opponents that the festival is funded entirely with "pink dollars"—donations from a wealthy gay corporate class. If Alberta's conservatives had a problem with it, that was just too bad; it was their right to spend their money and to organize as they please. Allen invokes the Charter in his defense of the festival, but unlike other activists in Manitoba and elsewhere who saw their ability to organize and live as queers protected by Section 15.1, right to equality under the law, Allen instead argued that Fairy Tales was covered by his freedom of expression and freedom of association—two of the freedoms guaranteed in Section 2 of the Charter.³⁴ This shift in rights talk is unique to Alberta's political climate, where a deeply individualistic discourse of personal freedom of expression would play better to the province's social and fiscal conservatives than any claims to equality would.

This strategy, however, was not necessarily new or novel and was taken straight from the playbook of the activists who organized to protect *The Fire I've Become* in 1995. At the height of that controversy, organizers asked supporters to write to the Alberta government; to the Glenbow Museum; and to the festival's funders, Canada Council and the NFB's Studio D and suggested they focus on the following points in their letters:

- express concern for the freedom of expression of the artists taking part in the festival
- Mention the need for means/messages to combat the injustice faced by people in the gay and lesbian community

³⁴ Ibid.

- Refer to the unacceptable lack of legislative protection for the rights and freedoms of gays and lesbians in Alberta.³⁵

The festival's strategy for fighting back against censorship and homophobia is a blend of liberationist perspectives—queers should be given the means to produce images of themselves—and rights talk—queers also need legislative protections. Within this context, the necessity to protect artist's freedom of expression is situated in both camps: it is both a call to allow queers to express ourselves in our own ways, but also a call to legislatively protect our right to do so.

The ways in which Fairy Tales is framed by rights talk is thus clearly different from Manitoba and depends more on a history of articulating rights talk within discourses of individual freedoms than those of equality and justice. The ways in which Fairy Tales becomes framed by rights and engages in rights talk is also distinct to its provincial political climate; Fairy Tales is never explicitly brought into debates about the place of queers within the law and within the public, but nevertheless is cognizant of these debates and deliberately takes steps to avoid being folded into them. If organizers of Counterparts explicitly used rights talk to reduce their shame, organizers of Fairy Tales used their own province's volatile rights talk as a cover behind which to organize. The end result here, however, ends up being the same. Allen's invocation of pink dollars and of their individual freedom of expression does little to actually challenge the overtly heterosexual status quo and to overturn an oppressive sexual order. While the use of rights talk as a cover to screen more experimental and activist material appears to be a creative way to challenge the status quo and sneak in liberationist perspectives, as I discuss further in chapter 7, Fairy Tales does not continue down this programming path. Instead, the festival

³⁵ Mark Washeim, "Queer Film and Video Festival Threatened with Censorship," Google Groups, June 21, 1995, <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/misc.activism.progressive/W6tii2Jtq8c>.

programs more homonormative cinema, with the effect of making claims toward sameness and mimicking heterosexual forms of citizenship within the state. Queer film festivals can accept public dollars like Counterparts did, or avoid them entirely like Fairy Tales, but because the fear of public shame is so strong the net result is the same: they began to depoliticize and mimic heterosexual citizenship.

The Homophobic City and the City of Regina's Procedure Bylaw

By the early 2000s, a significant body of provincial and federal jurisprudence and law had been established that entrenched sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination at both the federal and provincial levels. On the cultural level, this meant that rights talk had dominated the agenda of queer activism, its discursive effects trickling down into more locally- and municipally-oriented activism. Though municipalities in Canada do not pass comparable human rights legislation, these federal and provincial laws and rulings had a significant effect on how municipalities managed their interactions with queer activists in their cities. At the municipal level, this management often took the form of city councils making particularly restrictive readings of their own proclamation policies. Proclamation policies, or sometimes bylaws, are municipal documents that govern what issues cities can make proclamations for. These proclamations are often symbolic recognition of significant events that do not have their own regular provincial or federally-recognized days, the most common and most controversial of which is often the proclamation of Pride Day. Many cities, like London, Ontario, in an effort to ensure that they would not have to make such proclamations, repealed their bylaws entirely in the 1980s and 1990s. Others, like Regina, made it explicit within the bylaw that they would not make proclamations on issues of a "sexual" or "political" nature. Throughout late 1980s and early 1990s activists in Regina unsuccessfully fought with City Council to get them to proclaim

Gay Pride Week. However, with changes made to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code in 1993 and the *Vriend v. Alberta* (1998) case, activists in the city found renewed energy to fight the city over its long-standing silence on pride week. These activists successfully lobbied the city to change its Proclamations Bylaw to remove the language around sexuality and politics, and to reintroduce language about the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, so that the mayor could proclaim Pride Week in Regina in 1998.

The actions of these activists angered conservatives in Regina, who used the new bylaw as political leverage to call not only for the rejection of Pride Week, but also the establishment of a reactionary Heterosexual Family Pride Day and the revocation of city funding for Queer City Cinema. These reactionary conservative actions were led almost exclusively by one man: Bill Whatcott, founder of the far-right group Christian Truth Activists. The ruckus he raised over Queer City Cinema's municipal and provincial funding in 2000 was only the beginning of a string of homophobic actions he took in Regina between 2000 and 2001, all of which were designed to shame the city into revoking its symbolic and fiscal support of Queer City Cinema, Regina Pride, and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. Whatcott knew he would be fighting against the tide of public support, as informal polls showed broad province-wide support for queer issues. Moreover, in an abrupt about-face in the weeks following the Queer City Cinema controversy in 2000, the Saskatchewan Party supported Regina Pride's applications for provincial recognition. But I do not think Whatcott could have been prepared for the ways in which queer activists would reclaim his own shaming tactics while engaging in rights talk. If in Manitoba rights talk was used to reduce shame, and in Calgary it was used to avoid it entirely—and in both cases, this was shame directed at queer communities by conservatives—in Regina rights talk was used by queer activists inflict shame on a homophobic and conservative city.

Before queer activists and allies were able to mobilize shame toward their own goals, Whatcott attempted to engage in the same shaming tactics that were successful in Manitoba and Alberta to stop queer organizations and human rights organizations from receiving public support. When he ran for Mayor in October 2000—just a few short months after he publicly opposed Queer City Cinema—he ran on the platform to bring back “common sense” to the city.³⁶ According to reports in the *Leader Post*, as mayor Whatcott would “discontinue the practice of issuing a proclamation recognizing a gay and lesbian pride week and instead [would] issue a proclamation condemning the city’s previous support for the Queer City Cinema”.³⁷ On top of that, Whatcott would also move the “filthy, tax-funded, intolerant of all-that-is-good organization called the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission” outside of Regina so it can practice “social engineering amongst Saskatchewan’s gophers” instead of its people and would not continue to provide a grant to Queer City Cinema.³⁸ Whatcott’s run for mayor was not much more than a stunt, though, and when it came down to it, Whatcott managed to collect only 344 votes, less than one per cent of the 46,363 votes cast in Regina’s 2000 mayoral election.³⁹

Though Whatcott’s incendiary shaming rhetoric proved to be an unsuccessful strategy in his run for mayor, he continued his attempts to get the city to denounce Queer City Cinema via other means. In December 2000, Whatcott wrote to newly-elected Mayor Pat Fiacco to request a proclamation for “Heterosexual Family Pride Day” for June 2001, where he and his Christian Truth Activists would “celebrate the traditional God ordained marriage covenant” as well as

³⁶ “Whatcott, Ruhr Round out Mayor’s Race,” *Regina Leader Post*, September 30, 2000.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ “Meet the Mayoral Candidates,” *Regina Leader Post*, October 21, 2000; Neil Scott, “Mayoral Candidates Square off,” *Regina Leader Post*, October 18, 2000.

³⁹ Neil Scott, “An Upset Win: Fiacco Brings Archer’s 12-Year Reign to an End,” *Regina Leader Post*, October 26, 2000.

“tolerance and diversity, given that perversity seems to be the norm and happy, healthy, life long marriage is almost unheard of and is indeed being discriminated against.”⁴⁰ The final wording of the proclamation also argued that “intact heterosexual families provide sexual satisfaction for the men and women who are committed to them” and “when monogamy is practiced, the husband and wives who enjoy sexual relations in the confines of their heterosexual marriage have no reason to worry about STD’s [sic], AIDS or broken hearts.”⁴¹ The affective logic of AIDS that Whatcott invokes—that infidelity, stereotypically implied to be common among gay men, leads to AIDS and broken hearts—lingers here in the aftermath of the AIDS crisis. In order to proclaim and celebrate heterosexual families and monogamy, Whatcott’s proclamation implies, he must also shame queer promiscuity. Whatcott’s request was uncritically facilitated by city officials and by March 2001, Regina proclaimed Heterosexual Family Pride Day.

That Mayor Fiacco and his staff allowed the proclamation to be made speaks to the ways in which the bureaucratization of the legislative process—especially in something as mundane as a proclamation—routinizes the exclusion of queer lives. Indeed, if the news that Regina would be proclaiming Heterosexual Family Pride Day had not made national and international headlines soon afterwards, the proclamation likely would have remained on the books due to bureaucratic indifference. But thankfully, the *Toronto Star* and the *Regina Leader Post* excoriated the city for its decision and concerned citizens from across Canada and the United States wrote condemnatory letters to the city. One writer in the *Leader Post* argued that because of the near-concurrence of the declaration of Heterosexual Family Pride Day and panic over

⁴⁰ Bill Whatcott to Pat Fiacco, 11 December 2000, 0450 Mayor Proclamations Family Pride Day Vol. 1 & 2, unprocessed material, City of Regina fonds, Mayor’s Series, City of Regina Archives, 2000-2002.

⁴¹ 0450 Mayor Proclamations Family Pride Day Vol. 1 & 2, unprocessed material, City of Regina fonds, Mayor’s Series, City of Regina Archives, 2000-2002.

Queer City Cinema the year before, “Regina itself is surely now embarrassingly coded in the national imagination [...] as a site where all but mainstream human behaviours are circumscribed, delimited and even denied.”⁴² The letters the City of Regina received about Heterosexual Family Pride Day confirm this fact: most find the city’s proclamation insulting, with more than one writer describing the proclamation as a source of shame and surely as being in violation of national and provincial human rights legislation.⁴³

By shaming the city, activists and concerned members of the public also made it politically unpalatable for the municipal government to humour Whatcott, resulting in a rejection of Whatcott’s beliefs within the public sphere. After Fiacco received the deluge of letters condemning him for proclaiming Heterosexual Family Pride Day, he and city staff changed the policy by which the wording of a proclamation is made. Effective July 1, 2001, all proclamations would be made with a standard wording and the Mayor’s obligation to make proclamations subject to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code would be more strictly enforced.⁴⁴ This change in policy meant that when Whatcott asked Fiacco to declare Heterosexual Family Pride Day in 2002, he was rejected wholesale because such a proclamation would be in contravention of the Code. In an “Open Letter to the Christian Churches of Regina” written shortly after this rejection, Whatcott laments this change of affairs:

Even our small group, the Christian Truth Activists, played a role in the loss of funding for Queer City Cinema, after we exposed their child pornography and films depicting violent sexual perversion at the Regina public library in May 2000. Why shouldn’t our

⁴² Jack Anderson, “Tangled politics of self-identity”, *Regina Leader Post*, June 7, 2001.

⁴³ 0450 Mayor Proclamations Family Pride Day Vol. 1 & 2, unprocessed material, City of Regina fonds, Mayor’s Series, City of Regina Archives, 2000-2002.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

convictions, that are based on the word of God not be brought into the public square when a child's life is at stake, wether [sic] from abortion or sexual perversion?⁴⁵

Whatcott's incorrect appraisal of Queer City Cinema's funding aside—his actions, in fact, directly led to an increase in funding from the Saskatchewan Arts Board and Canada Council—Whatcott's lament also highlights the ways in which Human Rights framing has caused the events of Queer City Cinema 2000 to be remembered differently and to be articulated in a different way. Queer City Cinema 2000's sex panic was not a failure, or simply evidence of the prevalence of homophobia in Saskatchewan, but an event that became crucial in the re-articulation of Regina from a site of national shame, to eventually a city open and accepting of its diverse sexual minorities.

Conclusion

The re-articulation of Queer City Cinema, Counterparts, and Fairy Tales within the frame of rights talk is a crucial shift in the discursive landscape of queer film festivals in all three prairie provinces and catalyzed a deeper organizational shift in the festivals. The discursive shift from sexual liberation to human rights marks the beginning of a shift away from queer film festivals being sites of radical political change and toward depoliticized venues of exhibition that began to screen films not based on their ability to raise consciousness or affect radical and systemic social change, but rather based purely on aesthetic goals. These festivals were, in one way or another, shamed into becoming defenders of human rights, and not, as some radical activists would have, sites where we could undo the restrictive notions of citizenship that come with rights talk.

⁴⁵ Bill Whatcott, "Open Letter to the Christian Churches of Regina," n. d., 0450 Mayor Proclamations Family Pride Day Vol. 1 & 2, unprocessed material, City of Regina fonds, Mayor's Series, City of Regina Archives, 2000-2002.

In all three prairie provinces the political energy expended around issues related to human rights legislation radically changed the festival environments and the organization of the festivals themselves. The reframing of queer activism as an issue of human rights as opposed to sexual liberation opened the door for activists inside and outside of the festival to reorient the work of the festival within neoliberal discourses of depoliticized inclusion, equality, and sameness—discourses that would only be further entrenched by changes to trends in film programming and at these festivals in the early 2000s.

CHAPTER 7

**RISKY BUSINESS: HAPPY QUEERS AND THE HETEROSEXUALIZATION OF
PROGRAMMING**

In his program notes for the 2018 Inside Out LGBT Film Festival in Toronto, Director of Programming Andrew Murphy notes that “Understanding that film is not just about art, but also about business means that our role as an LGBTQ film festival must keep evolving.”¹ Murphy’s observation that film is a business is of course nothing novel, especially in the Canadian context. Since the 1970s, Canadian cinema scholars have been concerned with what they have termed the “art versus commerce” debate, a debate over, among other things, whether film is art or business.² The art versus commerce debate in Canadian cinema studies reached its peak in the early 2000s, catalyzed by the federal government’s new target of having Canadian cinema occupy 5% of our domestic market.³ Likewise, in the late 1990s, critics like B. Ruby Rich noticed that one of the perverse effects of the New Queer Cinema—the name she gave to a corpus of radical queer film produced in the early 1990s that became popular on the film festival circuit—was that queer cinema was often attempting to be less artistically interesting and more economically viable. These post-New Queer Cinema films were often slickly produced rom-coms with positive representations, happy endings, and good feelings. As queer film entered the mainstream, the creative, imaginative, and often experimental sentiments that characterized queer film from the 1970s through to the New Queer Cinema began to play second fiddle to market concerns, resulting in films that were often formulaic and unimaginative. Audiences

¹ Andrew Murphy, “Message from the Director of Programming,” in *Inside Out: Toronto LGBT Film Festival 2018* (Toronto: Inside Out, 2018), 21.

² See André Loiselle and Tom McSorley, eds., *Self Portraits: The Cinemas of Canada since Telefilm* (Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute/Institut canadien du film, 2006).

³ Piers Handling, “Preface,” in *Self Portraits: The Cinemas of Canada since Telefilm*, 10.

wanted to be entertained, to feel good about themselves: they wanted “a queer Hollywood, popcorn movies for a fun Saturday night out.”⁴ But while popcorn flicks may have given queer filmmakers and queer audiences access to the marketplace, she suggests we left something behind in the process: we were able to tell our stories, and got some of the funding to do it, but forgot about the imagination we once had when funding was tight and exhibition was difficult. As Rich puts it again, “we have the marketplace without the imagination.”⁵

This critique of queer cinema is familiar and continues to influence the goals and curatorial strategies of queer film festivals around the world, and so it is not my intent to make this critique again. Rather, what I aim to do in this chapter is complicate this critique by considering the affective entanglements that underpinned this shift. I argue that the embrace of market-friendly homonormative cinema at queer film festivals is not simply an effect of an increased emphasis on economic forces; rather it is also an effect of a broader affective and discursive shift away from bad affect and toward a loose collection of positive affects that I’m collecting under the rubric of “happiness.” Festivals wanted happy endings, happy audiences, and happy funders.

In this chapter I am interested in how the growth of homonormative cinema and the increased emphasis on market forces that followed from the turn toward rights talk signaled an affective change in how the film festivals spoke about themselves. By the mid-1990s, a neoliberal logic emerged throughout the Canadian and global screen industries that saw the usefulness of film articulated within economic as opposed to cultural terms. Stuart Richards, in his study of queer film festivals in Melbourne, San Francisco, and Hong Kong, argues that this

⁴ B. Ruby Rich, “What’s a Good Gay Film?,” in *New Queer Cinema: The Director’s Cut* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

imperative to think economically led queer film festivals to screen more glossy gay popcorn flicks because queer film festivals, as social enterprises, had to be risk-adverse and must always be thinking of their bottom line.⁶ From an organizational perspective, popcorn flicks put bums in the seats, which ensured ticket sales were good, and thus ensured the continuance of the festival. However, reducing everything to an economic logic is too simplistic to deal with the complex political, economic, and affective nuances that underscore shifts in programming at queer film festivals on the Canadian Prairies. While ticket sales were a concern for the queer film festivals in the region, they did not depend on ticket sales to sustain themselves; rather, they depended on significant support from state-funded arts councils, as well as a roster of corporate sponsors, in order to survive.

Moreover, as I discussed in the previous two chapters, sex panics and the threat of bad affect loomed large over these festivals on the prairies, and it was not just their bottom line that contributed to an increase in homonormative films. Fundamentally these queer film festivals wanted to keep negative affect at bay by appealing to conservative critics, who, despite their absence in the actual audience, held deep public sway, thus putting private and public funding dollars at risk. Richards suggests that queer film festival programmers do not have to care about heterosexual audiences because they are almost always programming for a niche queer audience. However, in this chapter I challenge Richards's assumption and argue that the reason homonormative programming dominates is because queer film festivals between 1995 and 2005 became increasingly concerned with the happiness of heterosexual audiences—both the potential allies who would show up, and the critics who would otherwise have nothing to do with it.

⁶ Stuart James Richards, *The Queer Film Festival: Popcorn and Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

This chapter focuses on how happiness reoriented queer film festivals toward straightness after their sex panics and the growth of rights talk by considering the ways in which the region's three largest queer film festivals spoke about their programming: Calgary's Fairy Tales, Winnipeg's Reel Pride, and Regina's Queer City Cinema. I want to suggest here that the "happiness" that comes to dominate concerns about funding, audiences, and representation in Calgary and Winnipeg can be understood as a straightening device that limits and narrows the possibilities for programming at the queer film festival. As a way to think outside of the confines of happiness, I look to Queer City Cinema and I argue that an engagement with risk provides the aspirational space for queer film festivals to stay focused on serving the most marginalized within our communities.

Happy Economies and Market Aesthetics

The incitement to happiness that dominates queer film festival programming in the late 1990s and into the early 2000s emerges in part because of shifts in the Canadian film industry and festival environment towards more commercial and business-oriented models. Since the 1980s, Canadian governments at all levels have supported cinema not necessarily for its artistic merits, but because of its commercial potentials. In the 1980s, a shift in mandate in the Canadian Film Development Corporation saw them supporting commercially viable cinema over auteur-driven films. Likewise, in the 1990s, the introduction of tax credit systems in each province was established for commercial reasons, not artistic. In 2000, the federal government implemented a target that would aim to see 5% of the domestic cinema market occupied by Canadian films.⁷ In the early 2010s both Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia saw significant overhauls to their provincial

⁷ Handling, "Preface," 10.

tax credits that by most accounts destroyed what were vibrant industries in the province, bringing in more dollars in economic activity than the government was spending on them.⁸

The queer and feminist film festivals that emerged in Canada since the 1980s remained mostly outside of this primarily commercially-driven system, operating more as audience festivals than business ones.⁹ These were festivals, as I have shown thus far, that were primarily designed to show films to communities and to bring communities together. Little to no attempt was made by festivals to extol the economic virtues of the festival to its potential provincial or municipal grantors. No mentions were made of potential tourist dollars to be had, or of the ripple effect a queer or feminist film festival would have on the small businesses located near the screening venues. No one was coming to these festivals to buy or sell films to distributors either. To be sure, festival organizers cared about their bottom line, about the kinds of funders they could get, about the number of bums in the seats, the ad spaces they could sell in their programs, but these were not primarily places to do business; business was not even a secondary or tertiary concern. The point for organizers was to generate enough money to stay afloat for the next year.

In many ways this still remains the primary goal of queer film festivals on the prairies to this day. But in others, business and commerce have begun to play a larger role in how organizers conceptualize their merits, especially since the late 1990s. As public and private funders began to offer new grants to these queer film festivals, organizers had to begin reconceptualizing their festival not just in terms of how it would benefit the queer community,

⁸ Jennifer VanderBurgh, "Screens Stop Here! Tax Credit Thinking and the Contemporary Meaning of 'Local' Filmmaking," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 25, no. 1 (2016): 135–48.

⁹ Mark Peranson, "First You Get the Power, Then You Get the Money: Two Models of Film Festivals," in *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals*, ed. Richard Porton (London: Wallflower, 2009), 23–37. The exception to this may be Regina's Screen Femmes, which had closer ties to the film industry than any other queer or feminist festival organized on the prairies between 1985 and 2005.

but in how it is useful to the city, province, and nation at large. As a result, queer film festival success began to be articulated affectively as *happiness* and discursively as *economic*.

This shift is not limited strictly to Canada, nor is it limited strictly to non-profit and film sectors. Sara Ahmed argues that happiness is often written or spoken about in economic terms.¹⁰ We can take this to mean both that happiness has an economy insofar as happiness circulates, but also that happiness involves certain forms of capital. Within economics, happiness is correlated with purchasing power; the more purchasing power a society has, the happier it is presumed it will be. If we consider the queer film festival in these economic terms, then its happiness is determined by its power in the market. Happiness is economic, and that happiness is tied to the circulation of capital within the festival environment.

When we consider the queer film festival in economic terms, then its happiness is determined by its power in the market. The more money the festival is taking in from corporate and public sponsors, the more power the festival has to provide films, parties, and other events and services to its community, sponsors, and audiences in order to maintain their happiness. In Richards's own study of queer film festivals, the moments the organizers speak of happiness is when it has to do with the festival's finances and sponsors:

So the festival was burnt out, financially not in a happy place.¹¹

we work with some big 'all American' companies that wouldn't want to be associated with the S&M doco or the Bruce LaBruce doco. So you keep them happy, you make sure you guide them in the best way possible.¹²

The obvious answer [to how you measure festival success] is ticket sales but I don't see it just like that. [...] Last year's festival was really easy. Everyone was really happy. I felt like there was a lot of love in the room.¹³

¹⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 10.

¹¹ Lisa Daniel qtd. in Richards, *The Queer Film Festival*, 70.

¹² Frances Wallace qtd. in Richards, *The Queer Film Festival*, 126.

¹³ Daniel qtd. in Richards, *The Queer Film Festival*, 133.

From a slightly askew angle, Frameline volunteer intern Sam Berliner's comments about audiences lining up outside the theatre also highlights the connection between happiness and festival finances:

I love seeing people lined up to see a film on the street. That is pretty awesome. It just makes me happy being there part of the numbers.¹⁴

And, to add my own archival sources to the mix, the treasurer of Reel Pride in 2000 is paraphrased as being “happy” the festival is succeeding and also makes a connection to finance:

Reel Pride Treasurer Kelly Jenkins was happy to say that all screenings were well attended and financial support was plentiful.¹⁵

Likewise, in discussing the homonormativity of programming, Richards notes that the happiness of characters in a film is a key measure of homonormative neoliberal success.¹⁶ When the characters on screen are economically successful, sponsors and audiences are happy. When the audiences are happy, they are buying tickets. When sponsors are happy, they continue to honor their contracts and provide funding to the festival. When the festival's audiences, funders, and film characters are happy, the festival is happy. Happiness is economic and tied to the circulation of capital within the festival environment.

The fact that happiness is the overarching affective script that drives organizational and funding decisions made by queer film festivals in the late 1990s and in the early 2000s is also consistent with the cultural and political changes to queer conceptualizations of the good life and of citizenship. After queer communities emerged out of the worst of the AIDS crisis—due both to the resilience of our communities but also to the development of new anti-retroviral drugs that

¹⁴ Sam Berliner qtd. in Richards, *The Queer Film Festival*, 230.

¹⁵ Danielle Gibbings, “Another Successful Reel Pride,” *Swerve* (Winnipeg), July 2001, 16

¹⁶ Richards, *The Queer Film Festival*, 153.

stopped the progression of HIV and transformed a seropositive diagnosis from a death sentence to chronic condition—a renewed desire for queer happiness began to take hold. Faced with the reality that the families queers formed were unrecognized by the state, and therefore were ineligible to take advantage of the supports the state offers to the families of dying loved ones (from things as simple as bed-side hospital visits to inheritance), we began to demand for the same promise of happiness—and the same rights—as our heterosexual peers.¹⁷

These political demands radically altered what a queer vision of a good life could be and changed what would make queers happy as a political constituency. As Rinaldo Walcott argues, to seek rights in a moment of crisis often means to let the heterosexual state determine the shape of these rights.¹⁸ To extend this line further, when your happiness as a queer is dependent on these rights claimed in crisis, then your vision of the good life becomes shaped by the crisis. If, as Ahmed argues, “the promise of happiness directs us toward certain objects as being necessary for a good life,” then the promise of happiness made during a moment of crisis will direct us to whatever objects benefit the state the most.¹⁹ But what benefits the state does not always benefit the queer body, and so our attachment to happiness may become an attachment that is more harmful than it is beneficial. This is, as Lauren Berlant would describe, the “cruel optimism” of happiness conferred by rights.²⁰ By tying queer happiness to the rights offered by the state, visions of queer happiness become limited by the state.

Happiness, in effect, becomes a “straightening device”:

¹⁷ Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

¹⁸ Rinaldo Walcott, *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies* (London, ON: Insomniac Press, 2016), 150.

¹⁹ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 90.

²⁰ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1.

Happiness scripts could be thought of as straightening devices, ways of aligning bodies with what is already lined up. The points that accumulate as lines can be performative: a point on a line can be a demand to stay in line. To deviate from the line is to be threatened with unhappiness.²¹

Happiness is an effect of staying in line, of following the already determined path, of mimicking and repeating the signs of straightness. Indeed, Ahmed also argues that “queers are rewarded with happiness for approximating signs of straightness.”²² A notion of queer film festival happiness that depends on economic success is simply a desire to approximate the signs of straightness in order to avoid unhappiness. Prior to happiness there was shame, there was controversy over queer film festivals taking public money, and queer film festival organizers became burnt out and unhappy while fighting against conservative opponents. As I showed in the previous chapter, these festivals turned to rights talk to avoid this shame. This turn to rights talk also opened up the space to turn toward happiness. But the turn to happiness in queer film festival programming is done not just to avoid shame, but also to please their opponents, to make heterosexuals *happy*.

Beige Dollars at Fairy Tales

The affective shift from shame toward happiness paralleled shifts in activist discourse from sexual liberation to rights talk and shifts in the Canadian cinema and art worlds from artistic merit to economic success. These three parallel shifts created the conditions for a significant shift in the goals and principles behind queer film festival organizing. *Fairy Tales*'s unique form of rights talk—one that hinged on individual rights and freedoms—informed how it articulated its programming and organizational logic. Fearful of public backlash, they privatized the very logic and reason for organizing a queer film festival. It was not necessarily in the public

²¹ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 91.

²² *Ibid.*, 115.

interest to have a queer film festival, but it was their individual right to do so. For the first few years this meant Fairy Tales could speak publicly in a logic of happy queers while still programming experimental and happily queer work. But, once faced with the reality that private gay funds could not sustain the festival forever, they made the choice to pivot towards heterosexual private and public funders.

It was clear from the beginning that Fairy Tales's programming goals would be different than its predecessor *The Fire I've Become*. As I discussed in chapters 4 and 5, *The Fire I've Become*'s primary programming goal was to screen politically-charged and radical films by queers of colour—a programming strategy that got them in hot water with Calgary and Alberta's large conservative population. While this strategy paid off in spades for their 1995 festival, resulting in sold-out screenings and in bringing activist communities in Calgary together, they were unable to replicate it in 1996 and folded shortly thereafter. When Kevin Allen and Trevor Alberts launched Fairy Tales in Calgary in 1999, they did all they could to distance themselves from what might have been perceived as the failures of *The Fire I've Become*. They noted in an interview with the *Calgary Herald* that neither of them had been “involved with the previous festival”—a questionable assertion and likely a survival strategy given that Allen was employed by the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers (CSIF), who were significantly and controversially involved in 1995 festival.²³ In order to ensure that Fairy Tales would live longer than *The Fire I've Become*, festival organizers reoriented of the festival toward the market, centered conservative and heterosexual happiness as a funding strategy, and rejected difficult, experimental, and overtly sexual programming between 1999 and 2004.

²³ Shelley Boettcher, “Local Filmmakers Launch Gay and Lesbian Festival,” *Calgary Herald*, June 10, 1999.

When Allen and Alberts explained to the press in 1999 what made Fairy Tales different from *The Fire I've Become*, they articulated their programming strategy along three axes: they programmed films that had artistic merit, films with positive representations (in order to keep their audiences happy), and films that could play well in the market (in order to keep their funders and sponsors happy). The first two axes are nothing new to the world of queer film festivals; programming positive representations and films that are artistically interesting (however one might define the term) remain the primary aims of many queer film festivals. But the final axis, that of the film's position in the marketplace, plays the largest role in their programming strategy and marks a significant shift from queer film festivals that were organized in the 1980s and 1990s. Alberts argued that unlike other art forms, "film has turned into a major business" which gives it a large slice of the marketplace that people notice.²⁴ But despite film's large slice of the visual marketplace, gay and lesbian representation is still marginalized. As journalist Julie Pithers editorialized in her article on Alberts for *FFWD Weekly*, "when you've spent so much time in the peanut gallery, it takes a while to get out. That's why we still need film festivals that reflect gay themes and are made by gay directors, writers and actors."²⁵ Film is a big market, and queer film festivals are a key venue that allows queer representation to get a chance to break into that marketplace. While the mandate of Fairy Tales is similar to that of *The Fire I've Become* and other queer film festivals that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s—that it exists to show queer representations you cannot see elsewhere—it began to reorient itself toward the marketplace by ensuring that the films it shows are not just any films, but films that will get

²⁴ Julie Pithers, "True fairytales brought to life," *FFWD Weekly*, 1999. Provided by Fairy Tales Presentation Society Inc.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

noticed outside of the queer community and in the market at large. The purpose of this new queer film festival was not just to show queer films, but to put queer films in the marketplace.

While such a strategy aimed to ensure the longevity of the festival, the success of this strategy was mixed, as were its effects on the organization and programming of the festival. In fact, this emphasis on happiness became a straightening device, orienting Fairy Tales toward heterosexual audiences and straight notions of success. Throughout its early years, Fairy Tales organizers made overtures to straight audiences, straight communities, straight funders, and straight sex in order to court their straight dollars. With the exception of a small travel grant from the Canada Council to attend *Inside Out* in Toronto in 1999, Fairy Tales avoided taking any public funding and would only seek out private funding in order to avoid provoking the unhappiness of heterosexual opponents: as Allen said to conservative commentator Rick Bell in June 2000: “This is a completely private-funded event with money from sponsors and ticket sales, run with the help of substantial pink dollars, gay corporate money.”²⁶ However, Allen may have been overselling how substantial an investment gay corporate money was making to Fairy Tales. In 2000 and 2001, Allen and Alberts budgeted box office receipts to make up 70% of revenue, with private donations making up the rest. This model of festival organizing seemed to work for them; they sold approximately 800 tickets, which was enough to just break even.²⁷

When Brenda Lieberman came on board in 2002 to replace Alberts as the new festival director, which she received by virtue of her role as a programmer for the CSIF (still the official organizer of the festival), she was inheriting a deeply private model of festival that was working, but that could do better. But rather than shake up how the festival sought out funding, her

²⁶ Rick Bell, “‘Pink dollars’ fund film fest,” *Calgary Sun*, June 16, 2000: 5.

²⁷ “Fairy Tales Budget,” 2000; “Fairy Tales Budget,” 2001. Provided by Fairy Tales Presentation Society Inc.

solution was to radically overhaul programming. Working from a 2001 audience survey, Lieberman gave into her audience's demands: she gave them happy queers, more comedies, and fewer amateur-looking productions, just like they asked for.²⁸ This meant that the 2002 festival would program, as Lieberman told the *Calgary Herald*,

nothing more than what you would see, potentially, in any heterosexual relationship in a film. [...] Nothing 'in-your-face.' We try to stay within boundaries to keep it a little bit more open and as clean as we can. And if the sex scene or the eroticism is suited to the dialogue, to the film and to what's happening, if it's got a reason, then great.²⁹

From Lieberman's perspective, one of the biggest hurdles for Fairy Tales was trying to convince heterosexual audiences that they would be happy and enjoy themselves at the festival. By doubling down on removing erotica and overtly-sexualized content—the Alberta Film Classification Board even commended the festival for submitting such a “clean-cut” program in 2003—Lieberman hoped that the festival could appeal to heterosexuals and grow their audience base.³⁰ But again, this strategy was mixed: 18% of the audience in 2002 was heterosexual, though the fact that Kevin Allen felt the need to make this point in an interview with the *Herald* is more revealing of the prominence of straightness in queer film festival programming than the actual proportion of audience members.³¹ This centering of heterosexuals is what happens when happiness becomes a straightening device.

²⁸ A 2001 “fairy tales 3 audience feedback report” provided by Fairy Tales Presentation Society Inc. highlights some of the audience demands – more happy endings, more comedies, fewer “amateurish productions,” and keep the short films.

²⁹ Jennifer Partridge, “Fairy tales film festival keeps it clean.” *Calgary Herald*, June 7, 2002, E13. Lieberman also expressed similar sentiments to Calgary's burgeoning gay press in 2005 and prided herself on the festival's mainstream programming; see Jason Clevett, “Fairy Tales: 7 years of gay cinema,” *GayCalgary.com Magazine* no. 19 (May 2005): 10-12.

³⁰ David King, “Looking for a happy ending,” *FFWD*, 29 May to 4 June, 2003, 36.

³¹ Alexandra Burroughs, “Fairy Tales Appeal to More than Gays,” *Calgary Herald*, June 5, 2003, E6.

With this approach to the festival, Lieberman was able to grow the number of submissions the festival received—up to 200 from 1999’s 80—as well as the number of private sponsors, but was unable to grow its audience figures past 1000.³² By 2003, the festival had plateaued. Organizers and the press speculated over the usual obstacles for queer film festivals: the entrance of queer representation into the mainstream, the small budget and short duration of the festival, and its timing during the year.³³ Lieberman’s solution to their problem was again to court straight audiences: “What we need is to get rid of our straight audience’s fear that it’s not for them.”³⁴ For the 2003 festival, she changed the name of the festival from Fairy Tales *Queer* Film Festival to Fairy Tales *Lesbian and Gay* Film Festival to soften the festival for heterosexual consumption, as queer still held pejorative connotations to heterosexuals and to older members of the queer community.³⁵

Lieberman’s attempts to make the festival more palatable to heterosexuals did not pay off and put the festival at a crossroads in 2003. Still operating on the two-day festival model, and faced with stagnating audiences and shrinking revenues, the festival had to make some tough decisions. Did it continue on as a feature of CSIF’s programming and depend entirely on private sponsors, or did it finally have to break out on its own and seek public support, both fiscally and socially? Lieberman speculated openly in *FFWD Weekly* in 2003—in an article titled “Looking for a happy ending”—that the festival may have to break out on their own in order to gain access to the types of funding that would allow the festival to hire its own staff. But from her

³² Jeff Kubik, “Listening to Fairy Tales,” *Gauntlet* (Calgary), May 29, 2003, 7.

³³ David King, “Looking for a happy ending,” *FFWD Weekly* (Calgary), May 29 to June 4, 2003, 36.

³⁴ David King, “A colourful line-up,” *Outlooks* (Winnipeg), June 2003.

³⁵ Alexandra Burroughs, “Fairy Tales Appeal to More than Gays,” *Calgary Herald*, June 5, 2003, E6.

perspective, this could potentially have a chilling effect on the type of programming they could offer, since having government funding meant “having less freedom in programming.”³⁶ Lieberman’s comment here is perplexing but perhaps revealing. Presumably Lieberman is referring to the ways in which conservative critics would come out of the woodwork to publicly criticize the festival for accessing public funding, and not the erroneous idea that the public funders would actually dictate the kinds of programming the festival was able to offer out of fear of political retribution. Again, as the debate around the Saskatchewan Arts Board in 2000 reminds us (see chapter 5), public arts funders pride themselves on remaining at arms-length from political meddling and in providing arts organizations with the freedom to pursue the kinds of programming that might not succeed on the free market by itself. Lieberman feared that if the festival were to begin seeking out public support that she would have to stop programming films whose titles and content might be perceived as an affront to Calgary’s vocal conservative public. But yet, given the ways Lieberman had already self-censored her own programming abilities—to show “clean” films that would not scare off heterosexuals—accessing and relying on public funding that often rewarded risk-taking would perhaps offer Lieberman more programming freedom, not less.³⁷

Materially speaking, what this meant for *Fairy Tales*’s programming is that the experimental Canadian short films that made up the bulk of *Fairy Tales*’ programming in 1999—short films that, by and large, had the same sorts of overtly sexual and activist content that caused conservative ire toward *The Fire I’ve Become*—began to diminish as more feature films

³⁶ David King, “Looking for a happy ending,” *FFWD Weekly* (Calgary), May 29 to June 4, 2003, 36.

³⁷ Jennifer Partridge, “Fairy tales film festival keeps it clean.” *Calgary Herald*, June 7, 2002, E13.

featuring happy queers were added to the program. In 2004, the festival's feature film offerings included *Eating Out* (Dir. Q. Allan Brocka, USA, 2004), the first film of a series of popular and sexually-charged boy-meets-boy rom coms; and *Latter Days* (Dir. C. Jay Cox, USA, 2003), another gay boy-meets-boy rom com set in the Mormon church. Likewise, lesbian audiences got *Mango Kiss* (Dir. Sascha Rice, USA, 2004) and *Tan de repente (Suddenly)* (Dir. Diego Lerman, Argentina, 2002), two more rom-coms, and local filmmaker Michelle Wong's *One Dyke Wore White* (Canada, 2004), a documentary that follows two lesbians on a road trip to Vancouver to get married.

The underlying characteristic that links most of these films is the sense that they are “mainstream” of sorts—gay independent films with high production values, celebrities, and easily recognizable plot lines. The 2004 program makes mention, when it can, of the big-name and not-so-big-name Hollywood stars involved and where audiences might recognize where they are from, but also the festivals it screened at and awards it received. These films are programmed because organizers perceived them to be counter to the audience-killing experimental or “alternative” films. Lieberman's vision of the festival challenges the notion of what she calls the “a crappy independent film at an arthouse theatre” by appealing to a particular idea of what a high-quality film is: “I try to pick films that are a little bit more mainstream—something that's crisp-looking and quite strong in script, cinematography and acting. Something that people who aren't used to seeing alternative films or independent films won't be totally thrown right off.”³⁸ Implied in Lieberman's assessment is that queer film festivals have tended to, up until this point, been a venue for experimental, alternative, and art house cinema, a form of cinema that might

³⁸ Jennifer Partridge, “Fairy tales film festival keeps it clean.” *Calgary Herald*, June 7, 2002, E13.

appeal to cinephiles and particular segments of the queer community, but does little to bring allies and other members of the heterosexual public to the cinema.

But in order to give the festival that “happy ending it deserves,” Lieberman determined that the support Fairy Tales needed had to be broader than support from just gay or straight audiences—they needed support from the city.³⁹ The necessity of broad city-wide support—including support from the city government—mean that Fairy Tales had to become its own, publicly-facing organization, and not just an event organized by the CSIF. On 30 January 2004, Fairy Tales separated into its own non-profit organization, the Fairy Tales Presentation Society, Inc. With the new freedom as an independent non-profit, Fairy Tales expanded into 7-day festival, which gave it both the space to program a wider view of queer life, but also the ability to accept corporate sponsorship. If, up until this point, Fairy Tales was funded by the pink dollars of Calgary’s wealthy gay corporate class, the move to non-profit status gave the festival the opportunity to not only seek out public funding (which it would do for the first time in 2006), but more importantly, major corporate sponsors. The pink dollars from Calgary’s gay-owned small businesses began to be replaced by straight dollars from major corporations, like Showcase (who sponsored the festival in 2005), and later Telus (who came on board in 2011), TD Bank (in 2012), and RBC (since 2013). If donations from the gay corporate class were “pink dollars,” we might call these straight dollars “beige dollars” since they had the effect of completely toning down festival programming by making it palatable to sex-phobic hetero publics, removing the imagination in exchange for a piece of the heterosexual marketplace.

³⁹ David King, “Looking for a happy ending,” *FFWD Weekly* (Calgary), May 29 to June 4, 2003, 36.

Who Still Needs a Queer Film Festival?: Reel Pride's Ontological Crisis

Calgary's turn to happiness was borne in part out of crisis. Earlier queer film festivals in Calgary, by centering the needs of their queer community over the perceptions of their heterosexual public, opened the festival up to attacks. This is why Fairy Tales avoided public dollars and focused so heavily on straight happiness. Because of the significant temporal gap between the last Counterparts festival in 1994 and the first Reel Pride in 2000, as well as an archival gap between 1990 and 2002, it is difficult to trace the exact effects the sex panics and rights talk had on Reel Pride's organization and programming. To overcome this potential barrier, I use a media archaeological approach, which is "a matter of tracing paths or laying tracks leading from the respective 'now' to different pasts, in modalities that accommodate continuities as well as ruptures" between the two festivals, despite the thirteen year gap.⁴⁰ This approach is helpful in highlighting the ways a different crisis shaped Reel Pride's programming goals and oriented the festival toward beige dollars and straight audiences: an ontological crisis over the usefulness of the queer film festival. Writing in the *Winnipeg Free Press* in 2002, reporter Randall King mused that the ubiquity of gay culture "reflects a challenge for Gilles Marchildon [organizer of Winnipeg's Reel Pride][...]. In the age of *Will & Grace* on prime time and *Queer As Folk* on basic cable, it appears that gay culture is indeed being subsumed by mass culture. The issue potentially threatens the future of the festival."⁴¹ The threat to the festival's future comes not from heterosexuals who would like to see the festival shut down; it comes instead from queers mimicking heterosexual happiness on cable, primetime, and in the multiplexes.

⁴⁰ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," *Cinemas: Revue d'études Cinématographiques* 14, no. 2–3 (2004): 75, <https://doi.org/10.7202/026005ar>.

⁴¹ Randall King, "Blurred images," *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 27, 2002, C4

Reel Pride is publicly fairly dismissive of King's apocalyptic and cynical view of the future, noting to him that the phones were still ringing, they were still selling tickets, and sponsors were still knocking on their door. But privately Marchildon and the rest of the Reel Pride organizers were concerned about how they might get audiences out to their festival. Minutes of Reel Pride's meetings show that what ate up most of their time was discussing what films to screen in order to maximize their audiences while still ensuring a diversity of representations. In his president's report on the 2001 Reel Pride at their annual general meeting, Marchildon noted that though the 2001 festival was successful and came out financially ahead, audience numbers were down, citing "greater access to LGBT films in the mainstream" as one key barrier to increasing attendance.⁴² Like *Fairy Tales*, the answer seemed to lie in straightness: 40% of the audience for the 2001 festival was heterosexual. Marchildon speculated that perhaps straight audiences were drawn to the "number of good films that had compelling stories, regardless of the fact that the stories centred around gay and lesbian characters or gay and lesbian situations."⁴³ The purpose of a queer film festival had shifted: since positive representations of queers were now almost a dime a dozen, they could no longer depend on being the only place queers would be able to see themselves on screen. This meant that queer film festivals had to become increasingly concerned with showing quality films that would keep straight audiences happy in order to keep the festival financially viable.

However, if this made the festival financially viable, it was so the festival could screen smaller films that may not attract large enough audiences to break even. These so-called tent-pole films were programmed because they could be relied upon to draw large enough crowds,

⁴² WGLFS Annual General Meeting Minutes, 19 April 2002. Provided by Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society.

⁴³ Randall King, "Blurred images," *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 27, 2002, C4

and thus larger ticket sales that could subsidize the smaller screenings. One newspaper report notes:

While other screenings were less popular, Marchildon points out that this was not a surprise. 'I think it's important that a festival not present all the same thing,' he says. 'Reel Pride offered a range of programming that appealed to various segments of the community and to different tastes.' Low attendance was therefore in some cases expected. The festival was deliberately eclectic meaning that some of the shows reached a smaller, but still vital, demographic.⁴⁴

Reel Pride sold 1,153 tickets total for nineteen screenings in 2000, averaging out to sixty-one viewers per screening at a screening venue with a capacity for 120. At \$6.50 per ticket, Reel Pride made just under \$7,500 on ticket sales total, or about \$400 per screening. Marchildon notes that these screenings are an eclectic bunch: "The programming is diverse and includes romantic comedies, dramas, experimental shorts and documentaries. I think it achieves a balance with respect to genders, age range, and cultures."⁴⁵ The heterosexualization of programming thus, from the perspective of organizers, offers a bit of programming freedom. The festival can use the funds from the films that attract the larger, perhaps more heterosexual, audiences in order to provide space to screen queerer films, experimental films, and films that appeal to more marginalized communities.

Heterosexuality is thus perhaps another Trojan Horse for queer film festivals. Like the shift to rights talk, by presenting a heterosexual-friendly face to the public, queer film festivals are able to attract heterosexual audiences to their screenings. This Heterosexual Horse, if you will, allowed the queer film festivals to enter into the heteronormative public sphere without causing controversy or panic. It offered them protection from those bad affects while

⁴⁴ Ron Soltis, "Reel Pride a smashing success," *Swerve* (Winnipeg), July 2000, 11.

⁴⁵ Ron Soltis, "A Film Festival of Our Own," *Swerve* (Winnipeg), June 2000, 15.

simultaneously making heterosexuals happy with the gift of their queer film festival-disguised-as-a-horse.

The Trojan Horse, though, was not very mobile or flexible, and its large size and wooden wheels meant it could only follow straight lines and paths already laid out. Moreover, the Horse was made as a gift for the Trojans. By constructing a Heterosexual Horse within which to place their queer film festival, organizers of Fairy Tales and Reel Pride may have been protecting themselves but were also doing so in a way that made heterosexuals happy. As Ahmed reminds us, happiness is a straightening device, one that sets us out on lines and paths already laid out.

Risky Business: Regina's Queer City Cinema

Unlike Winnipeg's Reel Pride and Calgary's Fairy Tales, Regina's Queer City Cinema did not attempt to court heterosexual audiences. In fact, it decidedly rejected any notion that the festival should be for heterosexual audiences and refused to orient itself in a way that would make themselves legible to heterosexuals. As I discussed in the previous two chapters, like Reel Pride and Fairy Tales, Queer City Cinema was faced with a crisis in the form of a sex panic. Like Reel Pride and Fairy Tales, Queer City Cinema also had conservative activists attempt to defund the festival, or failing that, reorganize the festival to be more hetero-friendly. But because of the criteria of Canada Council for the Arts grants at the time—which wanted more risk-taking in media arts festival curation—there was no incentive to try to play it safe. Queer City Cinema took a huge risk and started programming more experimental art, more performance, and it paid off in spades.

Queer City Cinema's programming is governed more by "grant aesthetics" than market aesthetics. Theorized by curator Merray Gerges, grant aesthetics is the name she gives to a tendency in the Canadian art world to develop art that will be successful in generating grant

money; it is a form of art-making that puts the criteria for a successful grant application (whether public or private) ahead of any independent aesthetic concerns the artist might have. An artwork can be said to have grant aesthetics if its aesthetic, political, or pedagogical concerns proceed directly from the criteria of a grant. She posits that this economy of art production exists in Canada because there is an absence of an “art market,” of the private buying and selling of art as the key driver of a given artist’s success. In Canada, our cornucopia of public and private grants for the arts gives juries, councils, arts boards, and private funders an outsized influence as the arbiters of art in Canada. Artists working in Canada who are knowledgeable of this process thus create their art with the aim of successfully getting access to these funds. They do not need to be able to sell their art they just need to be able to convince a funder to support it.⁴⁶

While Gerges’s intervention is in many ways particular to the situation in galleries and other exhibitors of plastic and performance arts, her insight that artists often make decisions about their art in ways that they perceive will please potential funders rings true for the development of Queer City Cinema after 2000. Unlike Reel Pride and Fairy Tales, Queer City Cinema was receiving funding from the Canada Council for the Arts since it became its own festival in 1998 (the first festival in 1996 was an art exhibition organized by the Dunlop Art Gallery). In 1998, the festival received \$3,000; in 2000, the festival received \$5,000. But in 2001, Queer City Cinema’s support from the federal Canada Council for the Arts jumped to over \$45,000.⁴⁷ While this huge jump in funding can be in part explained by the fact that in 2001 the festival also offered a touring program, Queer City Cinema’s artistic director Gary Varro has

⁴⁶ Marray Gerges, “Towards a Theory of Grant Aesthetics,” *Visual Arts News* (blog), May 19, 2016, <http://visualartsnews.ca/2016/05/towards-a-theory-of-grant-aesthetics/>.

⁴⁷ “Grant and Prize Recipients,” Canada Council for the Arts, accessed January 30, 2019, <https://canadacouncil.ca:443/about/public-accountability/proactive-disclosure/grant-recipients>.

speculated that what managed to get the Canada Council to increase his funding so significantly was the way in which Queer City Cinema took risks in programming in 2000.⁴⁸ According to the 2003 version of the Annual Assistance to Media Arts Festivals application form, “support is given to festivals that [...] display vision, innovation and risk-taking in their programming.”⁴⁹ This desire on the part of the Canada Council to see art that takes risks was reiterated by the then-chair of the Canada Council Jean-Louis Roux when he visited Regina in 2001 to give a speech at the Hotel Saskatchewan in advance of a Canada Council board meeting to be held in the city.⁵⁰

While Gerges’s theory of grant aesthetics was meant as a critique of the Canadian art world, when applied to the context of queer film festivals, it actually provides the foundation for a way of organizing that does not centre heterosexual audiences. To pander to heterosexual audiences, as Reel Pride and Fairy Tales did, would be to play it safe. Queer City Cinema used the Canada Council’s interest in risk-taking as a social license to continue to pursue challenging, risky, and experimental art. In his program notes for the 2002 festival, Varro suggests that the festival’s controversy in 2000 marked a sort of “coming of age” for Regina, laying bare the province’s homophobia, making space for the necessity of a queer film festival in such a small city, and “acknowledging [the festival’s] unique ability to provoke thought, its contribution to diversifying regional arts and culture, and its role in advancing the appreciation of queer media arts and the culture that surrounds it.”⁵¹ At the 2002 festival Varro experimented with including

⁴⁸ Gary Varro, personal interview, 9 November 2016.

⁴⁹ “Annual Assistance to Media Arts Festivals” (Canada Council for the Arts, September 2003), <https://web.archive.org/web/20031025080907/http://www.canadacouncil.ca:80/grants/mediaarts/pdf/mag11-e.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Neil Scott, “Queer City Grant Defended by Arts Council,” *Leader Post*, September 13, 2001, A10.

⁵¹ Gary Varro, *QCC 4* (Regina: Queer City Cinema, 2002).

performance art at the festival and invited five transgender, transsexual, and intersex artists to perform at a “Transformance Cabaret” and continued to program short experimental works by Canadian artists and filmmakers that year, at the 2004 festival, and in the 2005 tour.

Varro’s turn toward trans performance in the aftermath of its 2000 panic stands in stark contrast to the turn toward heterosexuality in Calgary and Winnipeg and offers a different path to success. Varro’s risk-taking moves oriented Queer City Cinema away from heterosexuality’s straight lines and paths. Indeed, what is remarkable about Queer City Cinema during this period is that never once does Varro attempt to publicly court heterosexual audiences. Instead, he opens the festival up more diverse identities and forms of art. It is not all that surprising the festival headed in this direction. Varro still insists that his curatorial notes for the first Queer City Cinema still influence his curatorial decisions. Within these notes, he lays out explicitly that Queer City Cinema will not be for heterosexual audiences:

One obvious option was to satisfy general curiosity by curating a ‘Lesbian and Gay 101’ selection of films and videos about living queer in a straight world [...] taking an educational, didactic informative approach. [...] as useful and important as this effort continues to be, it tends to exclude many artistic, creative, and alternative works. But, more important, such an approach unintentionally reinforces a hetero-patriarchal framework—*here’s how we survive in your world.*⁵²

For Varro, the festival should not be for straight audiences. Nor should its programming mandate operate from a framework that considers queer representation as parallel and opposite to hetero representation: “it isn’t enough to become parallel to straights—we want to obliterate such dichotomies altogether.”⁵³ Queer City Cinema’s programming rejected the feel-good, gay independent feature fare that was dominating the multiplexes, cable, and queer film festivals in

⁵² Gary Varro, *Queer City Cinema: Coming (Out) to a Theatre Near You*, (Regina: Dunlop Art Gallery, 1996), 2.

⁵³ Varro, *Coming (Out)*, 5.

Calgary and Winnipeg, and embraced experimental art and cinema where form, content, and identity are “fluid, multiple, contradictory, shifting, and inconsistent.”⁵⁴

This vision of Queer City Cinema began to take shape in 2006 when the festival curated its first fully-realized expanded cinema exhibition *Queering Plunder*. Curated by Deirdre Logue within the Dunlop Art Gallery, *Queering Plunder* was borne out of a concern over funding. The idea for a media arts component of the festival was always in the back of Varro’s mind over the years: he had “wanted to do an exhibition of media art installations as part of the festival for a long time. But funding always stood in the way.”⁵⁵ Having received a \$28,000 Canada Council grant in 2005, Varro approached the Dunlop Art Gallery in the Regina Public Library with *Queering Plunder*, an exhibition of moving-image art by queer artists to be held in the gallery.⁵⁶ This was a significant shift not just for Queer City Cinema, but for queer film festivals in Canada writ large. Varro, like many of his contemporaries in the queer film festival circuit, is consistently interested in queer representation in film, video, and art, but with *Queering Plunder* did what most other queer film festivals in Canada have not: he programed queer moving-image art outside of the confines of the black box of the theatre and within the white cube of the gallery.

The reason for including *Queering Plunder* in the festival, Varro said in the same interview with *prairie dog*, is that “[b]eing outside the darkened theatre and in a public gallery provides another way of looking at queer media art and artists.”⁵⁷ The interest in both expanding the festival’s exhibition of moving-images and expanding the possibilities of queer

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Gregory Beatty, “Cinema Varro,” *prairie dog magazine*, November 9, 2006, 22.

⁵⁶ “Grant and Prize Recipients,” Canada Council for the Arts.

⁵⁷ Beatty, “Cinema Varro,” 22.

representation beyond what was the beginning of a post-New Queer Cinema work in tandem. If Varro were to be serious about “maintain[ing] an integrity to keep showing works—film and video—that maintain the notion of identity as something that’s fluid and not fixed,” that he wrote about in the program notes for the very first Queer City Cinema, a turn toward expanded cinema is appropriate, if not almost inevitable.⁵⁸ *Queering Plunder* marks the beginning of what would eventually become a decade-long project at Queer City Cinema to challenge the boundaries of queer film festival curation and to exhibit more fluid and perhaps more radical queer representation in other expanded and paracinema forms.

Conclusion: Happiness and Critical Nostalgia

Fluidity, multiplicity, contradiction: these are terms that rarely appear in the press and program notes for Reel Pride and Fairy Tales. Likewise, heterosexuality and happiness rarely appear within Queer City Cinema’s own “written festival.”⁵⁹ Indeed, when Varro does evoke happiness, it is within the context of nostalgia:

We have witnessed significant changes in not only the kinds of films and videos being made and shown at queer film festivals, but also the kinds of ways in which lesbian and gay is now queer, transsexual/ transgendered is the new ‘lesbian and gay’, video is now digital, film and video is now media arts, politics is now gay marriage, short films are now feature length, and TV and the Film Industry are now embracing Queer Content like never before - taking us further from the margins and closer to the mainstream. Yet, part of me laments change. Is it nostalgia, or is it a substantiated critical stance that makes me happy and sad at the same time?⁶⁰

Written for the 2006 festival, Varro is reflecting on the huge changes in art, media, and politics in Canada that have occurred over the past decade. Varro’s critical nostalgia, one where he is

⁵⁸ Courtney Wagner, “Film, Video and Queer Culture,” *Regina Leader Post*, 18 November 2006, A8.

⁵⁹ Daniel Dayan, “Looking for Sundance: The Social Construction of a Film Festival,” in *The Film Festivals Reader*, ed. Dina Iordanova (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2013), 45-58.

⁶⁰ Gary Varro, “Queer City Cinema 6,” accessed January 30, 2019, <https://www.queercitycinema.ca/2006>.

both happy for these shifts but sad for what we have lost, echoes Rich's own lament: queer cinema may have the marketplace, but we have lost our imagination. Varro's comments, considered within the context of Reel Pride's and Fairy Tales's own embrace of this new shifting political and aesthetic order, suggests a compelling question: who is happy now? Who is happy that politics is just now gay marriage, that short films have been supplanted by feature films? Who is happy that gay and lesbian is now queer, and that transgender is now the new gay and lesbian? What do these shifting signifiers do to queer and trans politics? What do they orient us toward? What paths to they make us follow?

For the organizers of Reel Pride and Fairy Tales, the shifting political and aesthetic environments set up a path for queer film festivals to follow that is at one both parallel to heterosexuality but also, at times, overlapping. Such paths allow the festivals to be happy—by following heterosexual happiness scripts, they are able to avoid heterosexual anger and disgust. But to run parallel is to run in a straight line next to another straight line, to follow the path of another line already laid out. What if, instead, the line was to not run parallel, but perpendicular? Or what if it were to bisect the straight line? Or what if there was no line at all, but simply a vast openness and indeterminacy? To step away from the path is to open oneself up to indeterminacy. It is also to engage with risk. Risk: a deviation from happiness scripts, from straight paths, from straightening devices. To engage in risky behavior is to revel in indeterminacy, to embrace not knowing where you are going or what the effects will be. Such is the path Queer City Cinema chose to follow, a path that made the festival what Ahmed calls “happily queer”. To be “happily queer” is “to be happy with where we get to if we go beyond the straight lines of happiness scripts.”⁶¹ To be happily queer is to be happy at being the cause of others unhappiness, of not

⁶¹ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 115.

pandering to the happiness of (straight) others. To be happily queer is to be happy with one's queerness, and to embrace deviating from the path.

When Reel Pride and Fairy Tales turned to beige dollars and followed the straight lines laid out by their straight critics, they managed to survive, but lost their imagination and the space to program and curate more challenging fare. Queer City Cinema, however, *aspired* to make space for queerness not confined, defined, or straightened by happiness. Ahmed notes, “the Latin root of the word *aspiration* means ‘to breathe.’” We should see Queer City Cinema’s embrace of risk and indeterminacy as the festival giving itself space to breathe. Again, as Ahmed says, “With breath comes imagination. With breath comes possibility. If queer politics is about freedom, it might simply mean the freedom to breathe.”⁶² To return then to Rich’s assertion that queer film festivals have given up imagination for the strictures and straightening devices of marketplace, in order to bring imagination back to queer film festivals, they may simply need to give themselves, and queer filmmakers, space to breathe.

⁶² Ibid., 120.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION: AFFECT, ACTIVISM, AND QUEER AND FEMINIST FILM

FESTIVALS AFTER 2005

It's morning in Winnipeg. Rachel wakes up early. It's late June and when she steps across the threshold of her front door. The sun is warmer than it was the day before, and the day before that. She gets into her car—it doesn't matter what the make is—and drives across town to pick up her friend Sylvie. They're going on a road trip to Regina.

No one just makes a trip from Winnipeg to Regina on a whim. It's a 6-hour drive—and that's in the middle of summer when the roads are good. In the dead of winter, with ice and blowing snow, it could take longer. But it's June. The roads are good. The weather is nice. So, Rachel and Sylvie will get to Regina in 6 hours, maybe a little less if they speed.

The reason they're making the trip to Regina is because John Waters is going to be speaking there that night. Yes, that John Waters. He's the closing night event of a two-week long John Waters film festival organized by Queer City Cinema, the city's queer film festival. In the weeks leading up to Waters's appearance, the festival organized free screenings of Waters's films at the Regina Public Library, and in the days immediately before he was scheduled to speak at the Westminster United Church in Regina's Cathedral district, the festival hosted a who's-who of queer Canadian filmmakers and artists: Shawna Dempsy and Lori Millan, Bruce LaBruce, Noam Gonick, Thomas Waugh, Wayne Baerwaldt, Roy Mitchell, Kent Monkman. Not all of them were there, only their films. But that doesn't matter. Rachel and Sylvie weren't making the road trip for them. They weren't excited to get their photo taken with them or get a book signed by them (though maybe they should have been). They were making the road trip for John Waters.

When they arrived, they were floored. The venue, located in the basement of the church, was campy and trashy homage to the self-styled Baron of Bad-Taste. Ice sculptures in the shape of toilets adorned the tables, and everything was decorated in a garish pink. When they left Regina the next morning for their 6-hour drive to Winnipeg—though with the hangover it felt longer—Waters’ words still rung in their ears: “Stay where you are and make it better. Every place is cool now.”¹

In a lot of ways, this story of Rachel and Sylvie, which I have based on a real encounter at Queer City Cinema documented in a 2017 Facebook post, encapsulates a number of the key concerns that are driving this research project: the ability of film to move and affect people; the surprising relations that can only emerge in the heterotopic sphere of the film festival; and the strength of the affective bonds that emerge from these relations between queer subjects, bodies, signs, and ideas.

This dissertation has set out to provide a history of the affective economies of queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies from 1985 to 2005. In limiting my scope to this twenty-year period, I have aimed to make a modest, but important contribution to two growing fields of study: film festivals and Canadian sexualities. With respect to film festivals, I aimed to offer a theory of affective economies, a way to understand the diverse and complex ways in which affect circulates within film festivals and their networks. Rather than offering a theory of affect that emerged from my own autoethnographic experiences of film festivals, as the few

¹ This story is creative non-fiction, and is based on this letter to Queer City Cinema: Queer City Cinema, “We got this wonderful love letter and just had to share it. Thanks, Rachel!....,” Facebook, 27 June 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/QueerCityCinema/posts/1475487355807572>

articles on affect and film festivals tend to do, I wanted to offer a rigorous methodology for reading affect and emotion within film festival archives. As I showed in chapters 2 and 3, affect has been a continuing scholarly and activist concern since the end of the Second World War. As such, this dissertation has sought out sticky words and affective resonances within the festival archive and has traced the movement and resonances of these words across documents, across archives, across cities, and across the region. I have argued that by paying attention to the movement of affect, we can get a stronger sense of how film festivals work.

With respect to Canadian sexualities, this dissertation has contributed to the growing body of work on prairie sexualities, a name for a loose collection of scholarship devoted to studying sexuality, queer communities, and activism on the Canadian Prairies. Until recently, prairie sexualities had been ignored within studies of Canadian sexuality. The literature had tended to focus on the ways in which communities were formed and the ways in which sexuality was circulated and regulated within Canada's three large metropolitan centres: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. With the donation of public records of queer communities and activism in the prairies to archives across the region throughout the early 2000s there has been an increase in scholarship on communities in the region, albeit most of this work focuses on the period before 1985, and often takes as its end point the AIDS crisis. In contrast, I have taken the AIDS crisis and the *École Polytechnique* Massacre as my starting points and have aimed to provide an account of some of the community-building, organizing, and activism that occurred in the region within the interim period between 1985 and 2005.

In focusing narrowly on queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies, I have also aimed to showcase the diversity of identities, organizations, and activism that existed in the region. As I showed in chapters 3 and 4, queer community-building, organizing, and activism

throughout the region owed much of its strength and energy to the work of feminists, lesbians and women of colour. Calgary's herland feminist film festival and *The Fire I've Become* were central organizations for lesbians and queers of colour. As festivals that were primarily organized by these communities, they centred the work of queer women of colour and provided spaces for their films to be shown and for queer women of colour to meet, mix, and mingle. These festivals were places of joy and interest where solidarities, friendships, and alliances were able to be formed.

Elsewhere in the region, there was more conflict between lesbians and gay men, resulting in separate festival cultures. In Winnipeg in particular, the inability of Counterparts organizers to include women in the Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society (WGLFS) led to a structural exclusion of women's films from their program and of lesbians from their group. While attempts were made throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s to include and even centre women, Counterparts flailed, going on hiatus in 1991, 1993, and between 1995 and 2000. Such inconsistency in its schedule, coupled with its structural exclusion of women, led to the formation of two other festivals in Winnipeg: the *re:Visions Winnipeg Women's Film Festival* in 1993 and *Vice Versa Lesbian Film Festival* in 1995. While these festivals only lasted two years and one year respectively, they were indicative of a general sentiment of disinterest within Winnipeg's gay and lesbian film communities, where the two rarely worked together.

While much of the queer histories of Canada after 1985 focus on the devastating effects of the AIDS crisis on our communities, I showed in chapter 5 that there were other ways of doing AIDS activism. The queer and feminist film festivals on the prairies, and indeed many across Canada as well, emerged after 1985 and were often spaces devoted to showing positive representations of queer people in a serophobic and homophobic climate. While these film

festivals were not explicitly AIDS organizations, the work they did was crucial to changing public opinion on queer communities during the AIDS crisis. Indeed, many of the festivals in the region became the subject of a sex panic over their content and reception of public funding—a panic that was only heightened by the AIDS crisis. Negative affects like disgust circulated across the festivals, ironically bringing these festivals into the public sphere in ways in which their conservative opponents dreaded. Such panics highlighted the ways in which both public and private funding is sexualized.

Moreover, film festivals were also crucial within legislative battles over the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and human rights legislation in Canada. In chapter 6 I explored how in the immediate aftermaths of these sex panics the festivals became central within legislative battles over human rights at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. In Calgary, the organizers of Fairy Tales evoked the *Charter's* freedoms of expression and association to justify the organization of a new film festival in 1999. In Winnipeg, Counterparts was central within the debates over including sexual orientation within the province's 1987 Human Rights Code. And in Regina, the national circulation of Queer City Cinema's sex panic, coupled with Regina's Heterosexual Family Pride Day proclamation in 2001 turned the city into a site of shame, displacing the shame previously directed at the film festival onto the city. This turn to rights talk—both by the festivals and their allies—aimed to undo the shame of the sex panics and the AIDS crisis and to fold queer film festivals into the state.

As these festivals entered the new millennium, they each responded to the growing economic, aesthetic, and cultural changes of queer cinema and of the Canadian arts sector in different ways. Chapter 7 focused on how market forces began to play a bigger role in queer film festival organization, causing the new festivals of Fairy Tales in Calgary and Reel Pride in

Winnipeg to struggle to find a purpose and an audience. But more than just a replay of that perennial question of “why do we still need queer film festivals,” these struggles highlighted the centrality and importance of the happiness of heterosexual audiences and funders to the continuing success of their festivals. Wary of replaying the sex panics of their festival predecessors, these new festivals rearticulated their public presence in terms that would not draw the ire of potential straight critics. As such, they centred happiness as a goal, and reorganized their programming toward romantic comedies and genre films that would play well to heterosexual crowds. In some respects, these began as tent-pole films designed to draw big crowds in order to support the screening of more niche films that would play to smaller audiences, but still these festivals struggled to stay afloat. Meanwhile, Regina’s Queer City Cinema took its sex panic as a social license to program riskier and more experimental programming. Emboldened by Canada Council for Arts granting criteria that rewarded risk-taking, the festival flourished and programmed more performance art and more media art by trans and other marginalized artists. Rather than centering the happiness of straight audiences, Queer City Cinema aimed to remain happily queer.

This dissertation has offered a comparative approach to draw out both the regional similarities and to highlight the complex intra-regional differences within the network of queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies. However, one of the complications of such an approach is that it often leaves a straight history of each festival just out of view, as at each moment when you would expect me to narrate the next change in a festival’s history, I often jumped to another festival to narrate a similar story in another city or during another time. While this disorientation is deliberate, and, I argue, particularly generative for understanding the complexities of queer and feminist film festival culture in the prairie region, such disorientation

is perhaps only more useful if we understand what we are disoriented from. As Sara Ahmed notes with regard to her own queer phenomenology, “In order to become orientated, you might suppose that we must first experience disorientation.”² To this end, I want to offer a relatively straightforward narration of each festival’s history as a way to re-orient you back to the history I narrated in this dissertation—as well as to provide the history of some of the festivals I only mentioned in passing—before narrating the history of queer film festivals on the Canadian Prairies after 2005.

Histories of Queer and Feminist Film Festivals on the Canadian Prairies, 1985-2005

Counterparts: International Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film

Counterparts’s origins can be pinpointed to the first screening of the Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society (WGLFS), held 19 June 1985. The group showed Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s *Fox and His Friends* and Jeremy Podeswa’s *David Roche Talks To You About Love* to a sold out and excited crowd in Winnipeg’s Cinema Main. The group continued to organize regular monthly screenings during the fall and winter months until 1987, where they organized the first Counterparts International Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film. Taking advice from Thomas Waugh in Montreal and James Quandt in Toronto, the first festival was a ten-day extravaganza of films, videos, and lectures that unsurprisingly sparked controversy (as I discussed in chapters 5 and 6). After that first blowout year, the WGLFS struggled to organize Counterparts regularly, in part due to its inability to consistently include lesbians as organizers and on screen at the festival (as I discussed in chapter 4). Counterparts went on hiatus in 1990 and 1993, and its last festival was held in 1994. The festival was of varying lengths throughout

² Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.

these years, and always struggled to maintain a consistent roster of volunteers and funders. The WGLFS went dormant in 1995 and was reborn again in 2000 to organize a new film festival, Reel Pride, which still operates today.

Vice Versa Lesbian Film & Video Festival

Having both been briefly involved in organizing Counterparts, Kris Anderson and Szu Burgess were frustrated by the festival's general disinterest in screening films by lesbians. The year after Counterparts collapsed, the pair organized Vice Versa, Winnipeg's first (and only) lesbian film festival in 1995. The festival screened films from around the world over the course of its three-day run and reserved its finale screening at Winnipeg's Heartland Social Club (one of the city's lesbian haunts) "for lesbians only!" As I discussed further in chapter 4, despite remaining marginal and ephemeral within the festival archives, Vice Versa remains one of the most important queer film festivals on the prairies because of the ways it centred lesbian and feminist cinema and activism.

Reel Pride

In 2000, after nearly five years without a queer film festival in Winnipeg, a group of gay men decided it was high time to organize another in their city. Carman Johnston, Gilles Marchildon, and Michael Edwards approached original WGLFS member David Wyatt about restarting the WGLFS and soon after Reel Pride was born. The first Reel Pride was a 10-day extravaganza of queer film and video from around the world held in June 2000 during Winnipeg's Pride Week. As I discussed in chapter 7, like Counterparts before it, Reel Pride struggled to maintain momentum. Organizers blamed a number of factors over the years—pride festivals ate their audience, it was tough to compete with the internet, and so on—but the festival

continued to survive. The festival remains organized mostly by volunteers and has a smaller funding roster than its sister festivals in Calgary and Regina.

herland Feminist Film & Video Festival

herland, like many queer and feminist festivals, never had aspirations of being annual. Its first festival, held in 1989, was the result of institutional happenstance. The NFB's Studio D wanted to show its new film, *Goddess Remembered* (Dir. Donna Read, Canada, 1989) in Calgary. But since Studio D was also in the midst of organizing Edmonton's women's film festival, *In Sight*, they also decided to bring a selection of films from *In Sight* to "tour" Calgary. The Calgary Status of Women Action Committee (CSWAC) leapt at the opportunity, and that year the first *In Sight* Tour: Women's Film & Video Festival was held at the W. R. Castell Central Library Theatre on December 1 and 2, 1989. Four days later, after news of the École Polytechnique Massacre rippled through Canada's feminist circles, the group resolved that Calgary needed an annual festival, and thus herland was born.

The festival grew quickly and remained a partnership between CSWAC and the Women of Colour Collective (WCC) for much of its existence. The festival centred women of colour and often came under fire for screening lesbian films. Starting in 1994 herland organized a regular Lesbian Celebration Night as part of the festival, which quickly became its most popular event. The festival became a fixture in Calgary, and many of its organizers were also involved in organizing other festivals in the city, including *The Fire I've Become* and *Fairy Tales*.

The Fire I've Become: Queer Canadian Film & Video Festival

As I discussed in chapters 5 and 6, *The Fire I've Become* lived up to its name and stirred up a significant firestorm of controversy during its brief two-year existence. Founded in 1995 by the Of Colour Collective, a group of radical queers of colour in Calgary, the festival was quickly

in the cross-hairs of Calgary's vocal Christian conservative majority for its daring and sexuality suggestive programming. Festival organizers received support from dozens of Calgary arts organizations, including herland and CSWAC to fight back against conservative protestors who would have preferred to see the festival cancelled. Despite the backlash, the first festival went off without a hitch to sold-out audiences. However, the group was unable to sustain the momentum in their second festival in 1996, and quietly collapsed after a number of its key organizers left Calgary. What money Of Colour had left in the bank was donated to the Calgary Gay and Lesbian Services Association (CGLSA), which would become one of the founding partners of Fairy Tales in 1999.

Fairy Tales Queer Film Festival

Fairy Tales started in 1999 as the brainchild of the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers' (CSIF) Kevin Allen, the CGLSA's Trevor Alberts, and herland's Kelly Langaard. As I discussed in chapters 6 and 7, the idea came to Allen after the CSIF was accused of fostering a culture of homophobia by the Canada Council because of the way it distanced itself from the controversy surrounding *The Fire I've Become*—a shocking accusation given that Allen was and is an openly gay man. Allen brought Alberts and Langaard on board, stumbled across the name Fairy Tales during a name brainstorming session, and organized the first festival without a single public dollar. Like many queer film festivals emerging in the early 2000s, Fairy Tales struggled to compete with the growing body of easily accessible queer content on television and the internet and came close to collapse a number of times because it could not grow its audience numbers. But the festival stepped out from under the CSIF's wings and became its own non-profit in 2004 and has not looked back since.

Queer Sightings Lesbian & Gay Film Festival

Queer Sightings—also known as The Voice & the Vision and Speaking in Tongues—was another of the region’s short-lived festivals. Its short lifespan may be attributed to the fact that it was organized by a student group, University of Alberta’s Gays and Lesbian On Campus (GALOC), which often have high turnover rates every three to four years. Primary source material in the City of Edmonton Archives suggests that after 1993 the group tried to organize outside of the auspices of the University of Alberta but failed to get a festival off the ground.

Virtuous Reality Queer Film & Video Festival

By 1995, there had been a queer film festival in nearly every province west of Quebec except one: Saskatchewan. Saskatoon-based organizers Joanne Bristol, Jan Haave, and Christopher Lefler decided to rectify that with *Virtuous Reality*: a three-day festival of queer film and video that also included a queer filmmaking workshop. The festival was contentious to Saskatoon’s small queer community, as Lefler had only a few years before gotten in hot water for his irreverent art installation at the University of Saskatchewan that implied that the province’s Lieutenant Governor was a lesbian. The festival, however, remains important not only because it was Saskatchewan’s first, but because it launched the career of one of Canada’s most prolific and influential queer filmmakers, Thirza Cuthand, who made her first video *Lessons in Baby Dyke Theory* in Maureen Bradley’s queer filmmaking workshop at the festival.

Queer City Cinema

Queer City Cinema started as a one-off exhibition of queer film and video in Regina at the Dunlop Art Gallery (located in the central branch of the Regina Public Library) curated by Gary Varro. Varro, a performance artist by trade, attended queer film festivals in Toronto and San Francisco to curate an eight day “exhibition” for the gallery. Queer City Cinema set attendance records for the Dunlop in 1996, and so Varro came back in 1998 to organize a second

iteration of the festival. Like *Counterparts* and *The Fire I've Become*, *Queer City Cinema* was also at the centre of its own controversy over its perceived pornographic content (see chapter 5 and 6). *Queer City Cinema* was organized every two years until 2012 and has been organized annually since.

Screen Femmes

Organized for one year in 2000 by University of Regina film professor Christine Ramsay, *Screen Femmes* was the first and only women's film festival in Saskatchewan. *Screen Femmes* was more industry-oriented than other queer and feminist film festivals in the region and had no lesbian content in its program, though the program featured a number of films by Indigenous women. The festival's exclusion of lesbian filmmakers from its program may have inadvertently shielded it from the sex panic that gripped *Queer City Cinema* that same year.

Queer Film Festivals After 2005

By 2005, it was clear that the region's three major queer film festivals—Calgary's *Fairy Tales*, Regina's *Queer City Cinema*, and Winnipeg's *Reel Pride*—were here to stay. They had overcome moral, financial, and ontological crises to establish themselves as permanent fixtures in their respective cities' queer ecosystems. These festivals have continued to grow over the past fourteen years in multiple and diverse ways. *Fairy Tales* quickly expanded to offer a diverse range of non-cinema programming, *Queer City Cinema* organized a separate performance art festival, and *Reel Pride* began offering small scholarships to queer film students. All three festivals have provided queer programming to film festivals in other small cities in the region, including Banff, Alberta; Gimli, Manitoba; and Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Perhaps inspired by the success of these three major festivals, queer film festivals have since emerged in Edmonton and Lethbridge in the early 2010s.

By 2005, it also looked like herland would remain a permanent fixture on the prairie's festival scene, but a significant cut to its Canada Council funding caused herland to close its doors in 2007. Indeed, by the early 2000s, herland was the only remaining feminist film festival in the prairie region, and one of only a handful left across Canada. In many respects, herland was a victim of its own success. Having successfully situated itself as the preeminent feminist film festival on the prairies, and a key location where battles over queer publicity were fought in the region throughout the 1980s and 1990s, herland made space for not only Fairy Tales to flourish, but for an ecosystem of film festivals to emerge in Calgary. When herland received notice that their Canada Council funding was to be significantly reduced because they did not meet growth expectations, organizers speculated that the growth of other film festivals in the city ate into their audiences, ultimately spelling the end for the festival.³

The loss of herland to the festival's queer and feminist film festival circuit meant that after 2007, the circuit was only made up of queer film festivals. As a result, the sorts of political, cultural, and social shifts that affected these festivals after 2005 reflect that loss. The shift in activist focus to same-sex legislation in the early 2000s, the election of the federal Conservative Party in 2006, and the 2007-08 global financial crisis constituted significant shifts that radically changed the affective and discursive environment queer film festivals on the Canadian Prairies in ways that are complex and difficult to trace. The shift of much of these festivals' internal activities and external documents to the internet wherein paper correspondence is replaced by easily-deleted email, programs are uploaded to webpages and then deleted once they are no longer relevant, and the earned and paid media that was once limited to print publications is

³ Alexandra Burroughs, "Original Film Festival Facing Demise," *Calgary Herald*, May 10, 2007, herland feminist film festival fonds, Glenbow Archives, M9329-85.

exponentially proliferated by social media has created a festival archive that is at once vast and indeterminate, but yet always shrinking. To effectively and exhaustively document the ways in which these three major national shifts affected queer film festivals on the prairies—not to mention numerous provincial and urban shifts specific to each city—would require a significant methodological change that would need to centre digital humanities methods and in-depth interviews with a wide range of festival organizers, staff, and volunteers. Such methodological changes are outside of the scope of this dissertation. However, I want to spend some time briefly tracing what little the archival holdings I do have access to say about same-sex marriage, the 2006 Conservative election, and the 2007-08 financial crisis to think broadly about changes to these festivals' affective economies.

Same-sex marriage

The earliest forms of same-sex marriage activism in Canada occurred on the prairies. In December 1973, Chris Vogel and Richard North applied for a marriage license in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Their request was denied but the couple were eventually married by the Unitarian Church in 1974 using then legally-recognized process of “proclaiming the banns,” or having a minister declare the intent of two people to be married from the pulpit for three consecutive weeks. Despite the legality of the ceremony, the province of Manitoba refused to recognize the marriage, and the courts threw their case out. But while Vogel and North were unsuccessful, their creative approach to marriage inspired later activists in Toronto at the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), who in 2000 and 2001 used the same process to conduct their own same-sex marriages for two couples. As was the case in Manitoba some 30 years prior, the province of Ontario refused to recognize these marriages, and the MCC joined in the legal case

of *Halpern v. Canada*, which in 2003 legalized same-sex marriage in Ontario.⁴ Over the next two years, seven more provinces (including Saskatchewan and Manitoba in 2004) and one territory had their own separate rulings legalizing same-sex marriage, and in 2005 the federal government passed the *Civil Marriages Act*, which legalized same-sex marriage across the country.

The affective and discursive underpinnings of the marriage debate are hotly debated and deeply complex. On the one hand, Chris Vogel has argued in an interview with Nancy Nichol that the shift to marriage (which he positions as a shift away from human rights and away from sex and desire) centered homosexual *relationships* and “the idea that homosexuals could fall in love” as the centre of the social movement.⁵ The extent to which “love” became a key affect in the economies of queer film festivals on the prairie region is complex, and further research is needed into the extent to which queer film festivals—not just in the prairie region, but across Canada—were invoked and folded into the debates around same-sex marriage, similar to the way I analyzed the ways festivals were folded into debates around human rights legislation in chapter 6. As I noted at the end of the previous chapter, Queer City Cinema’s 2006 program notes explicitly mention marriage as one shift within a broader social, cultural, and technological shift facing queer film festivals during this period. The 2001 Reel Pride was themed “2001: A Nuptial Odyssey,” and “encourage[d] us to contemplate the brave new frontier we are about to embark on as we challenge the boundaries of things such as same-sex marriage.”⁶ Fairy Tales’s own programs and marketing materials between 2000 and 2005 all seem to avoid talking about marriage, perhaps because they were still skittish about putting their festival within the cross-

⁴ Nancy Nicol and Miriam Smith, “Legal Struggles and Political Resistance: Same-Sex Marriage in Canada and the USA,” *Sexualities* 11, no. 6 (December 1, 2008): 678–682.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 679

⁶ Danielle Gibbings, “Cinematic Odyssey Awaits Audiences,” *Swerve* (Winnipeg), June 2001, 22.

hairs of Alberta's conservatives. Indeed, because of the ways these festivals are central to the queer ecosystem of their respective cities, the extent to which they are implicated within the same-sex marriage debates would further illuminate their affective and political shifts after 2005. Much in the same way that I tracked disgust, shame, and happiness, research on queer film festivals on the prairies after 2005 would likely need to track love as a key affect of the network.

The Conservative Government

The 2005 *Civil Marriages Act* would be the last significant piece of legislation the federal Liberal government would introduce before the election Stephen Harper's Conservatives in 2006. This shift in government from Liberal to Conservative after the introduction of major legislation that would be of benefit to queer communities mirrors the similar shift in government in 1984 when Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives trounced John Turner's Liberal government to win the largest majority of any federal party in Canadian history, just two short years after the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was patriated within the Constitution. Like in 1984, there was an increase in social backlash that created a particularly complex environment for queer film festivals looking to continue. On the one hand, the same-sex marriage laws marked the beginning of a period of growing public acceptance of queer institutions and representations, as private businesses and politicians from both the left and right were eager to flex their progressive credentials by throwing their support behind queer causes. On the other hand, arts and social program funding took a significant hit over the Harper decade, and after his government was elected in 2006 they halted all Heritage Canada applications until the Minister had personally looked over each and every one of them,⁷ cut the Court Challenges Program, and

⁷ "Winnipeg Reel Pride Film Festival" Meeting Minutes, 24 August 2006. Provided by the Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society.

closed a number of Status of Women offices across the country. This put a chill on public support of the arts and on queer and feminist organizing. The only festival that was a casualty of this shift was herland, which shut down after Canada Council cut their funding in 2007 and left a huge hole in the region's festival ecosystem as it was last feminist film festival operating. These cuts to public funding on the federal level were likely one of the many catalysts that led many queer film festivals to seek out more corporate sponsorship over the last decade, as that funding was an easy solution to queer film festivals' almost structural precarity.

The Global Financial Crisis

While same-sex marriage legislation and the shift to a Conservative government are perhaps two of the most obvious shifts that would affect queer film festival organizing on the Canadian Prairies, a less remarked upon, though arguably more important, shift likely had the widest reaching effects: the 2007-08 global financial crisis. The complexity and magnitude of the crisis, while originating in the United States, caused Canada to go into a brief recession, which the Conservative government used as an excuse to cut spending to arts and social programs that queer and feminist film festivals would often access. But more than just causing material changes to the queer film festival ecosystem, the crisis popularized discourses of “economic uncertainty” and precarity as the key way to understand the organization of society.

These discourses, like the discourses around love, are difficult to trace within the queer film festival archive. However, it does appear tellingly in Gordon Sombrowski's president's message in the 2009 Fairy Tales program. The message goes through the regular motions of such messages—thank you to the audiences, programmers, funders and so on—but when he thanks the sponsors, he positions his thanks within the rhetoric of the crisis: “During this time of economic uncertainty we offer an even heartier thank you to all of our sponsors and donors. We

are thrilled that you chose to join with us in continuing to support the arts in these troubled times.”⁸ Sombrowski’s reference to “economic uncertainty” and “troubled times” appears to be pulled straight from Harper’s rhetorical playbook, who was fond of repeating the phrase “economic uncertainty” during and after the 2008 election to convince voters to continue to put their faith in the Conservative Party. Interestingly, Sombrowski’s message is the only message from a queer film festival in English Canada to make such a reference in 2008 and 2009. This is perhaps indicative of Calgary’s unique position within Canada’s queer film festival circuit, as the only queer film festival to exist in Harper’s backyard, and so it was perhaps more attuned or affected by such rhetorical changes than others. Given that major bank and corporate sponsorship does not become visible until a few years after the crisis, I suspect that banks and corporations saw queer film festival funding as one way to rehabilitate their public image in the aftermath of the financial crisis.

Same-sex marriage activism, the election of the Harper Conservatives, and the 2007-08 global financial crisis provide some of the context for the major changes to programming and organization that occurred at queer and feminist film festivals in the last fourteen years. Fairy Tales expanded their programming beyond the film festival, and started offering youth filmmaking workshops, film outreach programs for schools and churches, an annual “Coming Out Monologues,” and an “Ally Toolkit Conference.” Each successive program represented a step further away from the organizations original and core mandate of holding a queer film festival, and so in 2018 the organization renamed itself the Calgary Queer Arts Society to better reflect their broadened mandate. Similarly, Queer City Cinema’s Gary Varro, after years of

⁸ Gordon Sombrowski, “President’s Message” in *Projecting Our Pride: Fairytales International Queer Diversity Film Festival 11* (Calgary: Fairytales International Queer Diversity Film Festival, 2009), 8.

including more performance art in the festival program, organized a separate performance art festival called Performatorium between 2012 and 2015. Since 2012 Varro has also been curating Pitos WaskochePAYIS, a mini-festival of two-spirit film and video and likely the first film festival in the world devoted exclusively to two-spirit cinema, in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Reel Pride expanded its programming to include more community partnerships, co-organizing screenings at Cinémental, the oldest and largest French-language film festival in Western Canada in 2012 and 2013, and the Spur Festival and Gimli Film Festival in 2016. After 2009, new festivals emerged in Lethbridge (Rhino in the Room, 2009-2011) and in Edmonton, Alberta (Rainbow Visions, 2015-present). Even herland has been reborn, and now exists in Calgary as a women's filmmaking mentorship program. I have chosen to end this study at 2005, then, because of the significant changes that followed from the growth of same-sex marriage activism, the election of the Harper Conservatives, the 2007-08 global financial crisis, and numerous local changes—changes that deserve another dissertation-length study on their own.

Recommendations for Contemporary Queer Film Festivals

The specific historical, social, and cultural contexts of each festival notwithstanding, the diverse network of queer film festivals on the Canadian Prairies can provide a number of lessons to current and hopeful queer and feminist film festival organizers. I present these recommendations in good-faith and with the aim to not only make sure queer and feminist film festivals remain relevant to their communities, but also remain resilient and long-lasting. To these ends, these recommendations should not be read, to follow from Eve Sedgwick, as critique

stemming from the paranoid position, but as a gesture of love emerging from the reparative position, from the desire to see my communities grow and flourish.⁹

Organize intersectionally

As the precarity of Counterparts shows us, that without organizing intersectionally, you risk alienating your diverse and intersectional audiences. But this must mean more than simple token gestures of inclusion—it is not simply enough to ask multiply-oppressed people to volunteer for the festival (either in governance or during the day-to-day operations of the festival). It is also not enough to relegate films and videos by trans, Black, Indigenous, and people of colour to a package of poorly-attended shorts programs. You must centre their work—put it in the programming slots that matter, like opening and closing night. Bring back the practice of pairing shorts with feature films. Give these filmmakers the audience they deserve.

Ditch the corporate sponsors and be on the avant-garde

As Queer City Cinema shows us, queer film festivals can still be organized in Canada *without* corporate sponsors and still be a multi-day and wildly successful event. Since corporate sponsors have become more prominent at queer film festivals, the programming has become less risky. Without risky, experimental programming, queer film festivals risk becoming irrelevant niche festivals. Queer film festivals will not shed the niche label by programming homonormative independent white gay and lesbian cinema. Queer film festivals will shed the niche label when they reassert themselves as the leaders in programming the next wave of avant-garde cinema. They will not become leaders by programming whatever schlocky low-grade rom-com gets independently produced. Program work that is *truly* on the avant-garde. This work does

⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You,” in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 123–51.

not necessarily be experimental (as we so often associate with the avant-garde) but should be filmmaking that in some ways truly lead the way in form, style, or content. If queer film festivals can do that, the next major queer work to sweep the festival and awards circuit may get its Canadian premiere at a queer film festival, and not the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

Centre your communities

Not all queer film festivals need to aspire to be TIFF. They do not all need to be two-week, multi-million-dollar extravaganzas with exorbitant ticket prices, knock-off red carpets, and long rush lines. Since the 1970s, the *raison d'être* of the queer film festival in North America has not changed: to program films by queers and about queers that we would not be able to see elsewhere in order to build local and transnational communities. Return to this ethos and shrink the size of your festival. As Queer City Cinema and Pitos WaskochePAYIS show us, you can still be relevant to your community—and get funding—if you are only a few days long. As Fairy Tales's most recent history shows us, if queer film festivals continue to face an ontological crisis over their relevance in a media landscape saturated with queer images, they should not be afraid to radically overhaul their mandate and offer non-cinema and paracinema programming in order to serve the communities that need them most.

When I first presented my plan for this dissertation project, I was met with skepticism. Mentors and colleagues suggested to me that I should include a discussion of Toronto's Inside Out and of Vancouver's large queer and feminist film scene within the dissertation in order to provide contrast to what they assumed would be a homogenous group of festivals. While I have briefly included discussions of both cities, I have done so not to necessarily provide contrast but to trace the shared influences and networks between the prairies and these larger metropolitan

areas. As I have shown, there is a diverse network of queer and feminist film festivals on the Canadian Prairies as complex and as complicated as any queer or cinema culture located in Toronto or Vancouver. After thirty years of organizing, exhibiting, and producing queer films and videos of their own, and in ways that were often highly creative and imaginative, many of these festivals have managed to weather through the many crises often faced by arts organizations anywhere in this country. Even those that did not quite make it past their first few years still provided lessons to the longer-running festivals, and their influence has not been easily forgotten by today's organizers. For decades, many prairie queer and feminist film festival organizers looked to the major queer and feminist film festivals in Toronto, San Francisco, New York, and Vancouver for inspiration on how to grow organize their own festivals. But the continuing resilience, creativity, and energy of the prairie's queer film festival circuit suggests that it may be time that the major festivals instead look for inspiration from the prairies. The festivals on the prairies are transformative, provocative, bold, evolutionary, and revolutionary—and anything but small. As John Waters reminds us, every place is cool now, including the prairies.

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APPENDIX A

EARLY SCREENING ACTIVITY OF THE WINNIPEG GAY AND LESBIAN FILM SOCIETY, 1985-1986

The complete screening activity for the Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society from 1987 to 2015 is currently hosted online by David Wyatt on his personal website.¹ This appendix documents the screening activities for 1985 and 1986, drawing from documents held in archives in Winnipeg and Toronto. Screenings were held in 1986 at 8:00pm (as were likely the 1985 screenings, but that remains unconfirmed) at Cinema Main. The 1985 screenings are pieced together from meeting minutes and second-hand accounts, which only give us tentative times and screenings. The 1986 screening series flyer found at the CLGA is almost identical to what is outlined in the minutes found at the University of Manitoba, with only a few date and screening changes; as such, we can assume that what we know about 1985 is at the very least a strong approximation of what actually happened. A planned screening in June 1986 found in the minutes does not appear on the flyer and so it remains unconfirmed.

19 June 1985²

Fox and His Friends (Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, West Germany, 1975, 123 min.)
David Roche Talks To You About Love (Dir. Jeremy Podeswa, Canada, 1983, 22 min.)

21 November 1985³

Sincerely Yours (Dir. Gordon Douglas, USA, 1955, 115 min.)

11 December 1985⁴

The Consequence (Dir. Wolfgang Petersen, West Germany, 1977, 100 min.)
Alice and Gertrude In Passing (Dir. Kay Armatage, Canada, 1978, 7 min.)

16 January 1986⁵

Before Stonewall (Dir. Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg, USA, 1985, 87 min.)

¹ David Wyatt, "Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society Filmography," accessed January 29, 2019, <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~wyatt/rp/filmography.html>.

² Louise, "A Night at the Gay Film Festival," *Out & About*, June 1985, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 3.

³ "Winnipeg Lesbian and Gay Film Society Inc." (Meeting Minutes, November 10, 1985), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Flyer for 1986 Film Series at Cinema Main" 1986, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society, CAN 6158.

12 February 1986⁶

The Gold Diggers (Dir. Sally Potter, UK, 1983, 87 min.)

Lost Love (Dir. Cathy Zheultin, USA, 1981, 11 min.)

12 March 1986⁷

This screening was a fundraiser for the Winnipeg Gay Community Health Centre.⁸

No Sad Songs (Dir. Nik Sheehan, Canada, 1985, 63 min.)

Together and Apart (Dir. Laurie Lynd, Canada, 1984, 26 min.)

17 April 1986⁹

Pink Triangles (Dir. Margaret Lazarus, Renner Wunderlich, USA, 1982, 35 min.)

Witches, Faggots, Dykes and Poofers (Dir. Digby Duncan, Australia, 1980, 45 min.)

15 May 1986¹⁰

The Times of Harvey Milk (Dir. Rob Epstein, USA, 1984, 90 min.)

11 June 1986¹¹ (Planned screening unconfirmed)

For Paul (Filmmaker information unavailable)

Narcissus (Dir. Norman McLaren, Canada, 1983, 21 min.)

David Roche Talks To You About Love

c. December 1986¹² (Planned screening unconfirmed)

In a Year of 13 Moons (Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, West Germany, 1978, 124 minutes)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Winnipeg Lesbian and Gay Film Society” (Press release, March 5, 1986), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 4.

⁹ “Flyer for 1986 Film Series at Cinema Main” 1986, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film Society, CAN 6158.

¹⁰ “Winnipeg Lesbian and Gay Film Society” (Press release, March 6, 1986), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 4.

¹¹ “The Winnipeg Lesbian and Gay Film Society” (Meeting Minutes, April 9, 1986), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 3.

¹² “Winnipeg Lesbian-Gay Film Society Meeting” (Meeting Minutes, January 31, [1987]), University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives, Mss 42 (A.08-67), Box 8, Folder 4.

APPENDIX B INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study name:

The Affective Economies of Queer Film Festivals on the Canadian Prairies

Researcher:

Jonathan Petrychyn, B.A. (Hons.), M. Phil.

Doctoral Candidate, Graduate Program in Communication and Culture, York University

Purpose of the research:

This study aims to develop a history of feelings and emotions that circulate within the queer film and video festivals on the Canadian Prairies (which, for the purposes of this research encompasses southern Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan) from the mid-1980s to the present, and how they relate to other events happening within your city. This research will be conducted through a combination of archival research, policy analysis, and interviews. Findings will be presented primarily in a dissertation, conference presentations, and publications.

What you will be asked to do in the research:

You will be asked to engage in an open interview and free-ranging discussion on queer film and video practice in Calgary, Alberta; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Winnipeg, Manitoba, specifically as it relates to queer film and video festivals and other events in those cities. You will be asked to recall anecdotes, short stories, feelings, and memories about your interactions with the film and video community, film festivals, and other events in your city. Estimated time commitment for this research is between 20 to 30 minutes, though it may be longer or shorter depending on the participant.

Risks and discomforts:

You will be asked to provide consent to have your first name, last name, and institutional affiliation published. As such, there is a risk of being "outed" publicly as a queer person if you are queer and not already publicly out. This risk can be mitigated if you choose to conduct this interview anonymously and do not provide consent for your names and institutional affiliation to be published.

Benefits of the research and benefits to you:

Your participation in the research will help document underrepresented aspects of Canada's queer film and video history and will help contribute to the advancement of knowledge on the queer film festivals in their communities.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and participants may choose to stop participating at any time. You may also choose to not answer particular questions. A participant's decision not to continue participating will not influence their relationship or the nature of their relationship with researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

Withdrawal from the study:

You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality:

The information supplied during the research will be held in confidence unless you explicitly agree otherwise. You as the interviewee have complete control over whether the entire interview or only parts may be used. You may be quoted and your name may appear in any report or publication of the research, including a possible audio documentary. Participants will be given credit for their statements. The interview data will be digitally recorded and stored on the researcher's password-protected and encrypted laptop. If this interview is occurring in person, on the telephone, or via Skype, only the audio will be recorded. If this interview is occurring via email, your emails will be downloaded from the York University email client to the researcher's laptop. The data will be safely stored and only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to this information. The data will be stored indefinitely until there is a technical disaster and files are lost or outdated.

Consent to have your first name, last name, and institutional affiliation used in the study:
Agree [] Disagree []

If you decide, for any reason, to not consent to not having your first name, last name, and institutional affiliation associated with your interview, it will not influence your relationship or the nature of your relationship with researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future, and your interview data will remain anonymous.

Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions about the research?

If you have any questions about the research in general or your role in the study, please contact the researcher or Dr. Marusya Bociurkiw, Supervisor. You may also contact the Graduate Program in Communication and Culture directly.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University.

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I, _____ consent to participate in “The Affective Economies of Queer Film Festivals on the Canadian Prairies” conducted by Jonathan Petrychyn. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____

Date _____

Participant:

Signature _____

Date _____

Principal Investigator: Jonathan Petrychyn

Additional consent

Data gathered from this project may be used in future projects, including but not limited to a book, audio documentary, and other publications. Data may also, in the future, be deposited in a publicly accessible archive. Before data is deposited in a publicly accessible archive it will be anonymized and all identifying information will be removed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

I consent to allowing the researcher to use my interview data in future projects.

Agree [] Disagree []

I consent to allowing the researcher to deposit my anonymized interview data into a publicly accessible archive in the future.

Agree [] Disagree []

If you decide, for any reason, to not consent to the use of your data in future projects or deposited in a publicly accessible archive it will not influence your relationship or the nature of your relationship with researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How did the festival get its start? What was the catalyst?

What considerations do you take when scheduling your festival? Do you try to avoid overlapping with local events? Do other queer film festivals (or other events) outside of the city and province influence what dates you end up picking? What kinds of other events do you try to avoid overlapping with?

When programming the festival each year, do you attend other festivals to scout out films to screen, or do you mostly program solicited submissions?

Do you feel you have more in common with the queer film festival in Toronto (Inside Out), or with other local arts festivals?

Can you discuss any controversies that have happened over the years?

How have trends and shifts in queer activism and politics affected the programming and organization of the festival? For example, when same-sex marriage became a key focus in the 2000s, how did this affect the festival, if at all?

What has the festival's stance been on films and videos by transgender artists, or that show transgender perspectives? Has the festival always made an attempt to include these perspectives, or is it a more recent shift?

How have you responded to technological changes? How has the shift from video to digital affected the operations of the festival?

How much of an effort do you make to include films and videos from local artists (i.e. artists who live and work in the province)? What about artists from Western Canada? Artists from other regions in Canada?

What are some of your favourite memories of the festival?

Is there anyone else you think I should contact to talk about these film festivals? Names, phone numbers, email, etc.