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DEVIANT PROGRAMMING:
CURATING QUEER SPECTATORIAL POSSIBILITIES IN U.S. ART HOUSE
CINEMAS, 1968-1989

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Abstract

“Deviant Programming:
Curating Queer Spectatorial Possibilities in U.S. Art House Cinemas, 1968-1989”

By Marc Francis Newman

This dissertation looks back at how popular queer films—canonical then or now—were programmed at urban art-house, independent, repertory, and second-run theaters primarily from 1968 to 1989. Contrary to assumptions that undergird queer film criticism, queer cinema was by no means marginal, rare, peripheral, or strictly nocturnal within these spaces. What I call *deviant programming* in art-house and repertory houses provides pivotal access into an underlying register of subversive and deviant spectatorial political imaginaries beyond the LGBT circumscription to which queer politics has grown accustomed. Programming, the practice of selecting films to be shown for exhibition in a specific space for a specific audience, aggregates discrete texts to form interrelated networks. It continually offers spectators of all sexualities

and genders opportunities to encounter narratives about non-normative subjectivities. Positioning calendars and programs as acute indicators for spectatorial desires, I argue that these practices shook audiences with depictions of masochism, bodily fetishes, abjection, and other “degenerate” practices that fall outside of or are relegated within the bourgeois ethos of sexual propriety. Programming metabolized these confrontational aesthetics, leading spectators to enjoy, resist, discover, as well as learn from their atypical renderings of sexual pleasure and gender performativity. Merging concepts in affect studies (e.g., contact zones and reparativity) with semiotics (e.g., intertextuality and *bricolage*), I try to capture what it means to *feel the intertextuality* of programming, both in knowable and inchoate forms.

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INTRODUCTION

In May 1978, the Strand Theatre, located in the heart of San Francisco's downtown, programmed a month's worth of fare that would not to a contemporaneous cinephile have appeared as anything out of the ordinary. All the usual classics were present: *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946), *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958), *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974) *The 39 Steps* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1935), and *Giant* (George Stevens, 1956).¹ A signature of the time was its mixture of high, middle, and low brow, Hollywood and independent, U.S.-made films and foreign art-house. Thus *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966) played in a double bill with *3 Women* (Robert Altman, 1977); *Forbidden Planet* (Fred M. Wilcox, 1956) and *Journey to the Seventh Planet* (Sidney W. Pink, 1962) were shown concomitantly before the midnight screening of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975) on one Saturday before a somber Sunday of family melodramas in which a double feature of *Souther* (Martin Ritt, 1972) and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Robert Mulligan, 1962) played back-to-back.

Interwoven throughout was a number of films with queer appeal. Besides *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, double bills of *Therese and Isabelle* (Radley Metzger, 1968) and *Camille 2000* (Radley Metzger, 1969), *Desperate Living* (John Waters, 1977) and *Pink Flamingos* (John Waters, 1972), and *Some of the My Best Friends Are* (Mervyn Nelson, 1971) and *The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, 1968) were screened. Interspersed were queer classics such as *Death in Venice* (Luchino

Visconti, 1971), *Gay USA* (Arthur J. Bressan Jr., 1978), *The Conformist* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970), and *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti, 1969). Several films, though not necessarily “queer,” focused on sexuality: *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (Richard Brooks, 1977), *Klute* (Alan J. Pakula, 1971), and *The Devils* (Ken Russell, 1971).² The presence of films that were “queer” and/or engaged in examining the social constructs of gender and sexuality would appear a symptom of the theater’s location in San Francisco. Often regarded as a “gay Mecca,” San Francisco was saturated with cinemas that regularly exhibited queer fare, presumably to appeal to its readily available queer movie-going demographic. But from a more aerial view of programming across US cities at this time, one sees that the Strand was not singular, but rather representative of urban art and repertory house fare at this moment. Queer programming does not so much tilt towards the local queer clientele as much as it speaks to art-houses’ broader investment in queer films, be it for financial, cultural, or artistic reasons.

Ten years later, the programming at the Strand had not deviated much from this model. In fact, it was the perfect place for a young Marcus Hu, then a part-time employee of the theater, to screen the gay Filipino film, *Macho Dancer* (Lino Brocka, 1988). The film would become Hu and the theater owner Mike Thomas’s first feature under their new distribution company Strand Releasing.³ Continuing the sensibility of the Strand Theater, Strand Releasing would go on to be the prime source of queer films throughout the 1990s, including groundbreaking titles such as *Looking for Langston* (Isaac Julien, 1989), *Swoon* (Tom Kalin, 1992), *The Living End* (Greg

Araki, 1992), *Totally Fucked Up* (Greg Araki, 1993), and *Show Me Love* (Lukas Moodysson, 1998), its reputation and catalogue only growing into the 2000s.

It would appear, then, that Strand's programming, which greatly shaped Hu, tells some of the prehistory of New Queer Cinema, a moment when queer films made by queer (mostly Anglophone) independent directors such as Derek Jarman, Todd Haynes, Gregg Araki, Gus Van Sant, Isaac Julien, and others whose names are less known, populated the indie film festival circuit. Films such as *Death in Venice* and *The Devils* (the latter of which was Jarman's first job on a film as a production designer!) then seemed to anticipate if not animate the imagination of queer work that would explode in 1990s. In B. Ruby Rich's apposite list of factors that helped give rise to the grassroots movement, including affordable video recording technology, Reagan, AIDS, and cheap rent, we might add to it the perverse stylistic precursors that channeled the wayward sensibilities of these emergent filmmakers, found fundamentally in the art-house programming of their formative years.⁴

This is one way to narrate this history. But doing so might overdetermine New Queer Cinema, positioning it as *the* authentic moment when queer cinema came of age and truly liberated itself. What would it mean instead to look earlier, to focus on this moment in exhibition history when Hu was forming his distribution tastes? Rather than look towards the individual films that were exhibited at a theater such as the Strand, what might it mean to look at the Strand itself, and turn towards its programming as paradigmatic, an index of the broader scheme of art-house trends? How were these queer films that helped mold communities, subjectivities, and entire

subcultures, put in conversation with one another to produce resonances across bodies and practices? What queer pleasures might this indicate that we have yet to describe, perhaps outside the telos of the New Queer Cinema, and into less trodden terrain?

This dissertation looks back at how popular queer films—canonical then or now—were programmed at urban art-house, independent, repertory, and second-run theaters primarily from 1968 to 1989. Contrary to assumptions that undergird queer film criticism, queer cinema was by no means marginal, rare, peripheral, or strictly nocturnal within these spaces. While the presence of “out” queer makers invested in identity-based politics was limited to a certain few (e.g., Rosa von Praunheim, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Barbara Hammer, and Rob Epstein, to name the key figures), programming as a practice that aggregates discrete texts to form interrelated networks, continually offered spectators of all sexualities and genders opportunities to encounter narratives about non-normative subjectivities.⁵ Just think of films from the 1970s that have become part of the queer film canon; films by Pier Paolo Pasolini, Bernardo Bertolucci, Oshima Nagisa, John Waters, Chantal Akerman, Paul Morrissey, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Radley Metzger, and Russ Meyer (just to name a few making narrative-based features) shook audiences with depictions of masochism, bodily fetishes, abjection, and other “degenerate” practices that fall outside of or are relegated within the bourgeois ethos of sexual propriety. Programming metabolized these confrontational aesthetics, leading spectators to enjoy, resist, discover, as well as learn from their atypical renderings of sexual pleasure and gender performativity.

In the chapters and video essays that follow, I track art-house programming's epochal transformation, which parallels and intertwines with a transforming sexual ethos often attributed to the baby boomer generation. Reflected in a generational demographic that began the countercultural movement of the 1960s and catalyzed the sexual liberation of the 1970s, this programming tracks their liberal *and* radical ideals, but also their anxieties and questions about the unknown and uncharted landscapes of sexuality. In this sense, programming is a key arena through which to investigate an era's tectonic break from the "old order" of respectable gender binary logics and puritanical morality. Repertory and art-house programming of this era amassed a comingling of perverse pleasures within the delimited scope of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) experience as well as "straight" forms of sexual otherness that traversed fetish, kink, swinging, intergenerationality, interracial desire, and so on.

This project does not concern itself with separating the queers from the "straights" into opposing publics that correspond with divergent pleasures and curiosities. (Chapter 3 is an exception in that I turn to the distinct history of queer reparative readings of "bad objects.") Instead, I approach spectatorship through programming more than individual subjectivities of reception. Art houses at the time had the capacity to introduce any viewer to states of arousal, revulsion, disinterest, curiosity, and confusion — regardless of their alleged identity. Programming is to thank for this variability, in part because it organizes texts in such a way as to steer or guide orientations and attachments in its audiences, to evoke novel sensations, and

therefore to remap the sensorium. Whether through themed or organized series, or through “random” or less systematic styles, the little-known and rarely-celebrated programmers of this era welcomed chances to disrupt the affective tendencies of audiences, harnessing queer contagions of desire that were transmittable across the queer-straight divide.

Take into account, for example, the manner in which double bills (nearly ubiquitous in repertory houses at this time) were arranged. Federico Fellini’s *Satyricon* (1969) and Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *The Decameron* (1971) were repeatedly paired together, encouraging an audience to entertain decadent fantasies of premodern Italy as sexually permissive and fluid.⁶ Or consider another popular Italian pairing, albeit a far less euphoric one: Visconti’s *The Damned* was paired with his *Death of Venice*, perhaps to stage a critique of the lethal effects of sexual repression. *The Damned* ends quite literally with the Night of the Long Knives and *Death in Venice* with the protagonist in an agonizing state of pederastic longing before his ultimate demise.⁷ These are only two cases in which programming established near-bipolar intertextual meanings about sexuality: on the one hand, romanticizing it within its unruliness, and on the other, issuing an injunction against sexual alterity.

Essential to this study is the acknowledgment that programming in a filmic (versus televisual) sense is meant to be experienced in the company of others, including friends and strangers. This project turns on the notion that cinema programming is a phenomenologically informed and affectively engaged practice in which, as Laura Marks writes, “unforeseen meanings emerge” of both the verbal and

nonverbal kind.⁸ Working on multiple registers, then, programming seeks out tonal resonances and dissonances among texts, and anticipates how they will strike viewers *together* in their dialogic processes either in one sitting at a double or triple bill, or across longer stretches of time (such as a week or month).

Given the highly corporeal and sensorial material that is the focus of this study, I try to read within the spaces of a theatrical calendar or schedule the irreducible multiplication of effects and affects that emerge from the spectatorial scenes that unfold and keep unfolding, generating spatiotemporal ripples and echoes that rebound in the psychic and bodily lives of audiences. Rather than relying on audience testimonials or reports on reactions to verify the affective conditions of the theater, programmatic arrangements—especially of the queer variety—in and of themselves provide embodied, fleshy, contextualized, and worldly records of what these cinemas made affectively available and possible. This study finds within the contours and crevasses of spectatorship the places where meaning and sensation are at times apparent and others inchoate or unarticulated, nestled in the recesses of subjectivity.

The theories that I propose in this study are in many ways contingent upon the compulsive viewing practices of spectators at this time. For example, the fact that spectators tended to stay for both films in a double feature is central to my claims in Chapter 4. The fact that the repertory house was the primary way to see classic or cult films, or to see repeat screenings of recent sensations in the pre-VHS era, figures greatly in my considerations of how spectators, queer ones in particular, formed

reparative relationships with “bad objects,” and is thus important to my larger claim in Chapter 3.

Intensely devoted forms of cinephilia intensified programming’s imprint upon spectators’ bodies and minds. Calendars were more than timetables; they were itineraries for weekly screenings, regarded with the same devotion that a fundamentalist brings to the Advent calendar. In the *New York Times*, one devotee of the Thalia reminisced about his summer ritual upon the occasion of the theater’s reopening (under the management of Richard Schwarz, discussed in Chapter 1) in 1977: “You taped two [copies of the schedule] on your refrigerator door (showing front and back—both ends of the schedule). You circled the must-sees. Remaining dates, if any, were available for lower-priority summer activities.”⁹ Such devotion attests to not only the power of individual films and makers but also a fervent commitment to the sensibility and craft of specific exhibitors. Without a doubt, cinephiles played favorites in their film-going, preferring the theater that played more offbeat films, or the one obtaining rarer prints of classics, or the one with “midnight movies.” This surely structured their affective and semiotic encounters and reencounters with repertory and art house fare as much as the films themselves.

At the same time, arguing for programming’s profound cultural impact need not completely rely on a frequentative mode of spectatorial engagement. My parents, for instance, saw many of the films referenced in these chapters while they lived as 20-somethings in New York City in the 1970s. By no means did they go to the cinema every day, nor even every week. All the same, they were indelibly shaped not

only by these films but by how they were programmed. This sphere of influence includes the co-features in a double bill, the personality of the theater exhibiting the films (which itself was formed for and by its programming as much as by its location, architecture, or ticket price), and for how long or how often certain films might be shown in a space. The behaviors and habits of spectators need not be systematized to be able to demonstrate the larger impact of programming.

Furthermore, great influencers of culture populated these theaters. Besides the expected movie critics and reviewers, famous public intellectuals, artists, designers, actors, directors, and musicians regularly attended these cinemas. *Village Voice* film critic Melissa Anderson remembered sitting two rows in front of famous essayist Susan Sontag at a screening at the Quad in New York.¹⁰ A young Jonathan Demme was a regular at the Bleeker Street Cinema in the 1960s.¹¹ Influential cultural producers who steered discourses, set trends, and challenged status-quo attitudes immersed themselves time and time again in the intertexts facilitated by urban repertory and art-house cinemas. Programming was thus felt by the public through these cultural mediators; it was quietly transforming the bases on which cultures and subcultures rest.

Programming Studies, or Something Like It

Despite its significance for film-going populations and culture at large, programming has oftentimes been overlooked in studies of film history. Within exhibition studies, programming and curation tend to get only brief mentions; a set of

films, for instance, might be signposted to illustrate a theater or exhibitor's distinct personality, with any deeper consideration of textual and spectatorial interaction left by the wayside. Programming is therefore a silenced force, sensed among historians as something important—that it indeed does leave its imprint—but without a proper methodology to parse out its discrete operations and implications. My hope is that this study can offer a start to better analyze the dialogic configurations and to discern how programmers communicate through their practice.

Some film scholars have worked to fill this gap. Most notably, Scott MacDonald, Laura U. Marks, Chon Noreiga, Patricia Zimmerman, and Andy Ditzler have provided more substantive insights into not only programming history but also theoretical thinking on the role of the programmer or curator as a cultural and knowledge producer. Arguably the most substantial theoretical work on the topic took place in the Spring 2004 issue of *The Moving Image*, for which Jan-Christopher Horak and Laura U. Marks co-edited an entire dossier. This writing labors to go beyond much of the empirical research on programming one might find in film festival studies in order to, as Marks words it, “address the curator’s struggle both to shape the meaning of a program through context and argument, and to yield to the emergence of unforeseen meanings.”¹² This conversation tends to concentrate on the pedagogical functions and impacts of programming that are oftentimes situated in more academic curatorial environments such as universities, museums, or intellectually exclusive festivals (such as the Flaherty Seminar). The dossier authors

tend to raise questions such as, “Should a programmer use film and media to educate her or his audience? And if so, how should this be implemented?”¹³

In contrast, my project focuses on less formal sites of film experience such as repertory and art house cinemas, with only occasional reference to museums and film societies, the latter of which serve mostly to illustrate larger points about shifts in taste.¹⁴ Even though I do not privilege questions of pedagogy in this project, the theme of education does cut across the chapters that follow: cinephiles, curators, and critics time and time again remark that repertory and art-house cinemas provided them with lasting film educations. When they say this, they are more often than not referring to the learned ability to *appreciate* the “art” of cinema through recursive encounters with treasured work by canonical directors such as Ingmar Bergman, Fritz Lang, D.W. Griffith, Yasujirō Ozu, Kenji Mizoguchi, Akira Kurosawa, King Vidor, and so forth.¹⁵

Similarly, Jason Rapfogel notes in his preface to a film curator roundtable in *Cineaste* that programmers “labor not only to keep great films in circulation, and to discover those forgotten or overlooked, but also to ensure that films are seen as they were intended to be seen [as film prints, in public, and on a large screen projected for an audience].”¹⁶ There existed along this notion of veneration a more academic approach stretching back to the early twentieth century. Iris Barry was among the first to institutionalize the view that films hold great historical, cultural, and aesthetic value when she built the Museum of Modern Art’s (MoMA) film library in 1935. Films do not simply index these qualities, her efforts suggest; moving images have

the power to shape and be shaped by social and historical events, movements, and discourses.¹⁷

This project extends this thinking about programming's educational uses in ways that work with and against the ideological and the aesthetic to describe a *sensorial* education. The temporal and geographic scope of this study suits such a line of inquiry because, beginning in the late 1960s, art-house cinema shifted from a site of predominately elite cerebral rumination to include also more visceral and somatic programming of more sexually explicit content.¹⁸ In a concomitant turn towards more eclectic and heterogeneous programming sensibilities—what I define in Chapter 1 as a form of *bricolage*—sexploitation films, for example, were incorporated into the mix, leading art cinema to redefine itself.

I consider throughout this dissertation the ways that art-house programming of this era provided venues for heuristic modes of sex education. Distinct from educational institutions such as museums and universities, repertory and art houses carved out a space for spectators to make connections on their own bodily terms, to exercise curiosity and arousal, and to put their pleasures experienced there in the space of the theater into dialogue with those of the lived world.

Given my emphasis on the spectatorial imagination, this dissertation does not provide details on the daily conditions of the programmers' work. It does not focus on such important factors as print availability (especially telling if one wonders why one film or director's corpus suddenly appears or disappears), nor does it dwell on other quotidian scheduling dilemmas, of which there were many. Instead I treat

programming in a more discursive manner. It is my viewfinder for spectatorship, an entryway predicated on the push-and-pull of exhibition and reception, but without the empirical stumbling blocks common to these two respective methodologies.¹⁹

Programming, as I conceive of it in this project, as a practice that arranges, assembles, and put films in conversation with one another, offers an opportunity to go beyond thinking about the role of subjectivity and the conscious experience of the individual spectator as common to reception studies. My approach uses the grouping, clustering, and assembling of multiple texts within the time-based parameters of the cinema to access that which remains partially formed and unarticulated within the psychic and emotional lives of spectators. This project is therefore an attempt to better understand these nexuses of signification, traversing the epistemic and affective potentiality accessed by devoted audiences.

Feeling Intertextuality

Programming, I stress, puts into practice the process of intertextuality by grouping films and moving-image media to generate larger meanings. This can take different forms within the realm of independent exhibition. Some programming is ordered as a themed series or festival, most commonly organized around the work of a specific director or actor, a studio or distributor, or by genre, movement, national cinema, or stylistic theme/motif. These can form along either a horizontal axis (weeklong or throughout the month) or vertical axis (taking place on a certain day of the week) of a calendar. In contradistinction, there also exists a more varied or

“random” style of programming that changes day-to-day without any explicit unifying principle binding texts across a period of time. These two different styles—one that frames a group of films thematically or topically, and the other that does not—are meant to elicit distinct modes of reading and response from audiences. Nevertheless, I regard them both as modes of filmic intertextuality put into practice. Jason Rapfogel articulates these two styles, emphasizing that programming helps to foster an “awareness of individual works as part of an oeuvre, a tradition, an historical era, or a nexus of relationships and interconnections—something that is easily lost when shopping among the hordes of films available on video or on-line.”²⁰ Rapfogel draws our attention to the human *intention* behind programming that helps to steer spectators’ tastes, knowledges, and sensibilities, whether it appears highly structured or not. Programming asks of spectators that they draw connections and note dissimilarities across and between the texts that activate them.

Intertextuality is thus my primary mode of analysis in this dissertation. There is a vibrant lineage of theories on intertextuality within literary studies so plural and layered they are practically overflowing.²¹ Within film studies, however, theories of intertextuality have been underutilized, even underdeveloped, perhaps due to the scant and rather clumsy methods available, which tend to relate literary or linguistics theories to film theory rather than produce their own concepts on the interdependence and relationality of moving-image media.²² My project departs from this work that tends to strictly chart semiotic and cognitive pathways in order to undermine, true to theories of intertextuality, the voice of the “author” (or, in film terms, auteur) and any

claim to originality, and, to quote Laurent Jenny, to arrive at a “new mode of reading that explodes the linearity of the text.”²³ Though this project still channels some of these imperative concerns, I also centrally consider the embodied address of the audience that is unique to the filmgoing experience.

Intertextuality is an affective experience, rebounding in the uncultivated and still-expanding regions of spectators’ sensoria. Popular art-house films released in this era—including *Belle de Jour* (Luis Bunuel, 1967), *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (Russ Meyer, 1970), *Female Trouble*, *Flesh* (Paul Morrissey, 1968), *In the Realm of the Senses* (Oshima Nagisa, 1976), *Last Tango in Paris* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972), *Pink Flamingos*, and *Trash* (Paul Morrissey, 1970)—treated individually would necessitate an engagement with the affective and corporeal life of spectators. I borrow Ara Osterweil’s term of “the corporeal turn” in order to apply it to the art-house cinema that begins in the 1960s and was all the more vitalized by this vivid intertextual network that together called into question gender and sexual normativity, or advocated anti-normative sexual politics through dynamic tonal and stylistic interplays.²⁴

If intertextuality is pushed to its political limits—as, in Graham Allen’s astute reading of Julia Kristeva, an “embodiment of otherness...beyond and resistant to (mono)logic...which struggles against and subverts reason, the belief in unity of meaning or of the human subject, and which is therefore subversive to all ideas of the logical and unquestionable”—its theories require an affective consideration.²⁵ Programming makes such textual relationality legible, immediate, and intense in its

immediacy. In the spirit then of this hoped-for intertextuality, I try to merge semiotics with affect theories without imposing a dogmatic or pedantic utility on either of them. With the help of such semioticians as Umberto Eco, Charles S. Peirce, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, and Mikail Iampolski, and such affect theorists as Lauren Berlant, Donna Haraway, Kathleen Stewart, José Esteban Muñoz, Heather Love, and Vivian Sobchack, among others, I try to capture what it means to *feel* the *intertextuality* of programming.

I was struck by the affective concentration of a ten-week series such as “Outlaw Cinema Thursdays” presented at the Nuart Theatre in Los Angeles in 1981, showcasing the work of Kenneth Anger, Pier Paolo Pasolini, John Waters, Paul Morrissey, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, all part of what the calendar describes as an “untamed and shocking school of picture-making” that is “characterized by anti-social attitudes, individualistic styles, and a fascination with the violent, the sexy, the weird, the grotesque, and the graphic in both subject matter and treatment.”²⁶ The Nuart programmers put these transgressive texts in close proximity in order to stimulate, delight, and disturb spectators.

Less extreme, and arguably directed more towards a gay and lesbian clientele, the opulent Castro Theatre in San Francisco—known especially for its classic Hollywood menu—programmed throughout the late 1970s and 1980s several series centered on legendary screen divas (such as Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Mae West, Audrey Hepburn, Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, etc.).²⁷ A series such as “Legendary Ladies” mirrors much of the rich intertextual analysis found in queer film scholarship

on stars, as exemplified by the work of Patricia White and Richard Dyer.²⁸ White and Dyer's writing, which captures the ways LGBT spectators decode texts to feel involved in the world of the film, suggests that a program such as this one, showcasing the cattiness of stars Crawford and Davis as well as the androgyny of Dietrich and Garbo, incite attachments and disseminate feeling states of shame, pleasure, and melancholia among queer audiences resident at that time in the historically gay neighborhood.

The intertexts of "Outlaw Cinema" and "Legendary Ladies" constitute *contact zones* where, in Kathleen Stewart's terms, "the overdeterminations of circulations, events, conditions, technologies, and flows of power literally take place."²⁹ This meeting ground serves as a foundation on which possibilities inherent in porous subjects and objects emerge into visibility through their encounters, yielding the felt presence of overlap, similarity, and dissonance among them. The programmatic intertext creates one contact zone among others. Perhaps the space of the theater itself can be framed as a contact zone, where spectators not only meet the screen, but also the bodies of other spectators gathering together in a dark space to watch the projected moving image. Throughout my readings of intertexts in the chapters that follow, I try to keep in mind these many surfaces that meet, merge, and diverge at the cinema. In this project, the intertextual matrices laid out in programs and schedules serve as historical bases for an *open horizon* of spectatorial relations that cannot be fully determined, neither in the moment of their occurrence nor in retrospect. They

can, however, be read as representative of contact zones that make available emergent knowledges and sensations.³⁰

The videographic criticism component of this project directly engages these spectatorial experiences by stitching them into the affective relationship of the video essay, incorporating the viewer who has immediate access to the images and sounds. These videos, which I consider as practice-based reception studies, offer more personalized accounts of the theories I proffer to the reader in my written chapters. As I move among the different responses to William Friedkin's controversial film *Cruising* over the years, or seek to establish a relationship between curator Mark Valen's teenage love of *Myra Breckinridge* (Michael Sarne, 1970) and my own of *The Dreamers* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 2003), I try to create surfaces that meet within the montages of the video essays. These images, I hope, also meet the viewer in such a way as to stimulate their own conversations with the piece, the images and sounds emanating from it, and my voice as I try to piece together the texture and timbre of these intertextual relations assembled out of the remnants of memories and desires, past, present and future. The videographic essays should be seen as parallel to my arguments in this paper: not as illustrations of my arguments but rather as concomitant arguments offered in the language of cinema/video.

Intertextual Analysis

My emphasis on affect, assemblage, and network in this study might lead to an expectation of finding a genealogy that in fact is not here, that is, one that would

weave through affect theories inspired by Gilles Deleuze, or actor-network theories popularized by the work of Bruno Latour.³¹ Though familiar with this work, I am not convinced by these frameworks' ability to reckon with the text. I am much more inspired by Jacques Derrida's thinking on the polysemy, undecidability, unknowability, destabilization, and aporia that comprise deconstruction than I am by Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of the assemblage, the rhizome, and the "body without organs" that form their "schizoanalysis."³² While the language of post-Deleuzian affect theorists, especially in queer theory, is central to this project's rhetorical thrust, my engagement emerges from a semiotic tradition in which principles of signification and interpretation still apply and cohere, even if they are protean and dynamic in form.³³

While I am drawn to deconstruction as a reading practice, especially for critiquing what I am about to describe as queer political imaginaries, I diverge from a Derridean methodology in that I do not necessarily adopt the procedures of close readings cherished by deconstructionists.³⁴ This is not to say that I do not take care in researching or thinking about both the theory and the objects I employ, but rather that I do not want to isolate details such as words in texts or stylistic elements in films to reveal an underlying incoherence that might unravel or implode an entire discursive system. In reading films, my practice involves a form of *intertextual analysis* that uses the arrangements, designs, and descriptions within calendars or schedules, along with the films' many associations, to extract from them a set of possible intellectual and affective meanings that resonated consciously and non-consciously with

spectators, given the physical and historical contexts within which they were received.

One might be tempted to call this form of analysis, in contradistinction to close reading, “surface reading,” as Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus have described it. They write, “surface readers...find value in the rectangles [i.e., the pages] themselves and locate narrative structures and abstract patterns on the surface, as aggregates of what is manifest in multiple texts as cognitively latent but semantically continuous with an individual text’s presented meaning.”³⁵ Best and Marcus might as well be describing the “aggregates” of “multiple texts” that comprise a film program. For them, a text is already profuse with meaning, but this meaning sometimes gets submerged in a critical pursuit to define the “symptom” that underlies it.³⁶ As much as I find relief in Best and Marcus’ quest for other reading options than the symptomatic and “hermeneutics of suspicion,” their proposed “surface reading” places an odd premium on what is apparent and legible (ironic given its alleged love for affect) and jettisons too hastily the past efforts of critical theory that has asked what it means to labor through the layering of textuality.³⁷

Given my investment in the text and its iterative potential, I don’t want to be caught in a surface reading/close reading binary. Instead, I attempt here to read intertexts, not to determine the definitive meaning of the films, but rather to see what possibilities for reading practices exist in the spaces between them. My intention is to move between or among texts, as well as among theories, not to graze their surfaces,

but to probe the conditions that cause them to oscillate between pleasure and critique, curiosity and suspicion, canniness and naïveté.

From Queer to Deviant and Back Again

The resoundingly queer programming at the Strand in 1978 suggests that it is not so easy to determine the address of queer films nor what exact meanings they produced. This example, especially given the mixed company of the theater, puts immediately into crisis queer film criticism's commonplace historical narrative that divides spectators into neat camps based on their respective sexualities and genders. In fact, urban repertory and art house programming of the 1970s and 1980s continually put into collision with each other texts depicting fetishes, paraphilias, and kinks that cut across and moved outside of gender and sexual binaries, in turn providing a robust network for deviant viewing practices. It is for this reason that I find the term "deviance" useful to employ throughout this project, as representative of the kind of multifarious programming of this era.

Sexual deviance, in this sense, *is* queer in that it too is a critical category that applies pressure to sexual and gender classifications and strata, and locates sites of their disruption, displacement, and strain. Queer theory and queer film studies alike have through the years been invested in perverse or deviant bodies, practices, and experiences. Among its many interventions, queer theory has revealed in the psychoanalytic accounts of maladjustment and unhealthy cathexis as a way to arm the maligned queer figure with pride in their abject status. (The so-called "anti-social

turn” that came in the wake of Lee Edelman’s monumental *No Future* emboldened and further theorized queer outsider figuration.) In queer film studies alone, Chris Straayer’s remarkable contribution to the field is *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies: Sexual Re-orientations in Film and Video*, which aimed to assert through film and media the “multiple ‘deviant’ subjectivities outside the patriarchal and heterosexist confines of binary opposition.”³⁸ The volume *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video* was edited by a collective called “Bad Object-Choices” and was spawned by a contentious conference of the same name.³⁹ The field has been built through writings that sought out perversion, subversion, and transgression within gender and sexual performativities, but almost always with a catch: that aberration is made legible through “LGBT” or whatever “worthy” identity the acronym has decided to extend its hand to include at any given moment. “LGBT” thus remains silently at the “core” of queer film criticism.

Is queer film criticism, then, an appropriate site for the kind of analysis I propose here?⁴⁰ While in the past decade it has sought new objects of study (festivals), new media (television, social media, and other web-based media), new theories for application (e.g., Deleuze and phenomenology), or sought out overlooked artifacts to which to apply traditional politics or readings, queer film criticism has missed opportunities to rethink its political imaginaries, to question the “LGBT” qualification that undergirds its theoretical operations, and thus to redraw its discursive boundaries. Queer film criticism therefore suffers from, at best, a discursive solipsism, and at worst, a discursive narcissism.

Cathy Cohen made a parallel charge against queer theory at large in 1997. Cohen critiqued queer theory's attack on heterosexuality, positioned as always complicit in normative regimes, as well as its privileging of a white subjectivity, the emblem of emancipatory, transgressive potential.⁴¹ Cohen, for example, uses the figures of the "welfare queen" and interracial couple to critique queer theory's criteria for what constitutes *viable* and *visible* queer representations. This thinking deserves to be reactivated here to wonder who and what else gets excluded from queer theory's political imaginary.⁴² The solution is not empirical inclusion (adding letters to the expanding acronym), but rather lies in redressing exclusionary theorizing, then reorienting the vectors of critique to address those durable normative operations that shore up hierarchal mentalities towards sexual alterity. Deviant objects therefore provide openings—not answers—for political projects that go beyond the status quo imagination, both within and without the academe.

This project is an attempt to revise who and what figures within queer theory's political imaginary, and provides a conduit for reinvigorating queer theory *and* queer film criticism. The programming of deviant films exposes the entangled histories and tropes of deviance as they have been defined through discourses of medicine, religion, entertainment, law enforcement, and education. Sexual deviance through this critical lens is more than an aggregate or collection of non-normative subject formations. It is a consolidated and knotty assemblage of identities, types, behaviors, and practices with confusing or tenuous borders and intertwined narratives and logics. The work of 1960s sociologists such as Erving Goffman, Evelyn Hooker,

and Howard Becker, just to name a few, demonstrated as much with their intersectional approaches to what Goffman called “spoiled identity.”⁴³ Though this work is not incorporated into this dissertation, my argument parallels theirs in that it argues that programming gives us a view into another arrangement of queerness that hinges not on “LGBT” but on the marshaling of those who fail to be brought into the normative fold of society.

Within such programmatic arrangements, “deviance” retains a double meaning or double connotation to signify its exploitative history as well as its political potency as a critical mode—not an identity category—around which to rally. For example, it would be disingenuous to say that the primary motivation for programming deviant work was in the name of what Gayle Rubin calls a “radical sex politics.” Certainly, programmers would show this work for its titillation factor, counting on selected certain outrageous and obscene films to fill seats and guarantee profit (albeit marginal compared to mainstream cinemas). Likewise, spectators might meet these representations with reactions of disgust and judgment, or uncertainty, to be determined at another time. Deviance, then, is a category that opens itself up to numerous modes of reception and reading, developed and gestating, that coalesce around a text or body of texts. Throughout this dissertation, I use textual readings from film critics and scholars that pinpoint experiences of pleasure as well as critique, ambivalence, and confusion, and do so by textual proximity to and the interdependence of other texts.

I am more inclined than not to treat films in these intertextual arrangements with generosity. My aim here is to recover structures of feeling that make legible a history in which deviance is not simply maligned, one in which queer critique is open to more than LGBT subjectivities. This project taps into an alternate temporality that holds promise for futurities haunted by the forgotten and submerged deviant political imaginaries rooted in 1970s and 1980s programming.⁴⁴ I in no way intend to idealize or romanticize this era. While my intertextual analyses lean to the reparative for the sake of my own hopes for queer theory, I in no way believe that we can return to this era as a model for lived sexual politics. There is no turning back. There is, however, room to *retrofit* some of the most galvanizing parts of queer theory to this history to reconstruct out of it a political imaginary that intersects with the disparate experiences, types, and practices still disavowed by normative orders of sexual and gender decency and moralism.

Scope

I have limited my scope in this project to urban art-house programming between the years 1968 and 1989. The year 1968 is a landmark for several reasons. Typified by the student uprisings in Paris in May 1968 and the anti-Vietnam War protests, this year would also signal the rise in or embolden existing activism of other marginalized groups within the U.S. (e.g., gay and lesbian liberation, black power, and indigenous empowerment movements, such as the Native American and Chicano movements). As explored in Chapter 1, sexual liberation followed suit, transforming

social attitudes towards the body and its visibility. This tectonic shift was felt also in the realm of film production and distribution when the Production Code that had been in place since 1930 was finally dissolved. Years of court cases had been wearing at its fibers and the public had become less invested in its particular moral schema.⁴⁵

Censorship took a new guise that year in the form of the MPAA ratings system. No doubt the lifting of the code and its replacement with the ratings system allowed more films to be made, enabling permissive content to become more readily available for exhibition.⁴⁶ Repertory and art-house programming was shaped by this change in what became obtainable as well as what was in vogue for their urban baby-boomer demographic, informed by the new sexual liberation ethos. This would transform programming practices and reframe the art and repertory houses to suit a more corporeal form of spectatorship.

This programming style did not alter much through the two decades that followed. Based on the research I conducted, examining calendars, listings, schedules, memos, program notes, advertisements and their designs in archives in New York City, Los Angeles, and Berkeley, I found that in the wake of gay and lesbian liberation, there was a huge increase in the LGBT films throughout the 1970s and 1980s that were made and programmed, but this did not affect the programming of deviant films as much as one might expect. While conducting my research, I also wondered about the impact of HIV/AIDS. I was surprised to find that only the programming at gay and lesbian film festivals reflected the epidemic and not so much the repertory or art house (even ones in historically gay and lesbian neighborhoods).⁴⁷

What did leave a lasting impact on this deviant programming, however, was the VCR (Videocassette Recorder) revolution and the New Queer Cinema.

Throughout the latter half of the 1980s, repertory houses throughout the country began to close in part due to the proliferation of VHS (Video Home System) now offering a compact version for home enjoyment of what had before been unique to the movie theater.⁴⁸ To say the least, people stopped going to the cinema as much and started going to their local video stores. Filmmaker and co-programmer of the Carnegie Hall Cinema and Bleeker Street Cinema Jackie Raynal remarked in 1990 that cinephiles now collected tapes like avid readers collect books.⁴⁹ According to Ben Davis, emergent cable television around the same time too began to offer classics and cult fare, “once exclusive domain of the repertory houses.”⁵⁰ Though 1989 is by no means meant to function as the exact moment these theaters went into decline, it provides a useful benchmark to help index technological and social transformations that led to the repertory house’s near extinction.⁵¹

Queer viewing practices also intensely shifted by the early 1990s. Breakthrough work in the late 1980s such as *She Must Be Seeing Things* (Shelia McLaughlin, 1987), *Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs, 1986), and *Looking for Langston* began to signal a sea change in both who was making queer films and for what audience. Then in 1992, B. Ruby Rich identified a movement on the film festival circuit that channeled the painful experiences of HIV/AIDS from the previous decade, while it also ushered in an unapologetic and collectively-inspired radical gay and lesbian sexual politics. It was hailed as the New Queer Cinema.⁵² This trend was

cause for celebration because no longer was an LGBT spectator beholden to the infrequent unique queer film that got released, nor were they obliged to negotiate their viewing pleasure to work with sensationalized renderings of queers by straight makers.

Alongside this explosion of queer content in the indie and mainstream markets, LGBT film festivals grew exponentially, creating a niche market catering to LGBT spectators who, B. Ruby Rich argued, hungered for “sameness, replication, reflection” rather than novel representations that might challenge, provoke, or open up their worlds to different queer experiences than their own.⁵³ These occurrences set in motion new organizing strategies for queer content in film programming. Without the repertory house available to provide playful “non-academic” arrangements, the art houses that program queer films to this day do so in line with already-calcified classifications: a Pasolini retrospective here, a series honoring Strand Releasing there. It hasn’t become harder to see queer films (after VHS, they become available in higher quality on DVD and then via streaming platforms), but it is nearly impossible to be exposed to them in a manner that surprises, confounds, and delights the senses as they are put in dialogue with unlikely and unusual texts. Suddenly ample justification was needed for a queer program to exist.⁵⁴ Queerness could no longer roam on its own.⁵⁵

Chapters

Traversing the programming of queer films during the 1970s and 1980s, all of the chapters of this dissertation have a twofold aim: to both deeply explore theoretical facets of programming as well as to propose for queer film criticism more capacious ways to think about queer subjectivity. Each chapter therefore funnels dilemmas pertinent to both respective fields, with the hope that programming will be considered more seriously in film studies beyond the queer, and that queer film scholars will rethink the political imaginaries that undergird their work.

Chapter 1 situates a historical shift in the late 1960s towards what I call *bricolage*-style programming practices. During this time, films by the great (mostly European) masters Roberto Rossellini, Max Ophüls, Ingmar Bergman, Carl Dreyer, and Yasujirō Ozu, as well as their modernist offspring, Jean-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, Alain Renais, among other 1960s New-Wave directors, began to yield to the screening of perverse and sexually provocative work by Pier Paolo Pasolini, John Waters, Paul Morrissey, Bernardo Bertolucci, Federico Fellini, Russ Meyer, Radley Metzger, among many others. In this transition, the taste structures associated with art-house fare began to loosen, helping to develop what I think of as a *promiscuous* form of programming in which films of divergent traditions, periods, genres, national contexts, etc. converge. This chapter also argues that this trend does not emerge from thin air, but rather finds its antecedents in the programming of Iris Barry and Amos Vogel, two programmers who loved to surprise and reorient audiences' decided tastes and sensibilities.

Taking us deeper into what I discuss in Chapter 1 as “the *bricolage* effect,” Chapters 2 and 3 take on problems or impasses plaguing queer film criticism by way of art-house programming. In Chapter 2, I consider what knowledges and sensations programmers made available by exhibiting for their audiences highly deviant material. Historically, I juxtapose this development with the emergence of gay and lesbian film criticism that begins to take flight in the late 1970s. Seeing the programmatic and the academic as two distinct trajectories, deviant programming, I argue, encouraged its viewers to grapple with themes of sexual repression and social stigma at the same time it invited spectators to be aroused by those very same motifs.

Chapter 3 most directly of all the chapters speaks to queer film studies. Here I theorize the place of what is commonly considered the “reclaiming” of “bad objects.” I propose that instead we frame this notion within the highly protean and complex process of reparativity as it has been defined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and the many others whom she has inspired.⁵⁶ By taking on the programming of lesbian vampire films and women-in-prison films in particular, I emphasize that it is not the disavowal of trauma and pain that allow these texts to become pleasurable but rather the exercise of putting the past and present within each other’s shifting orbits, to probe what pleasures might surface in their wake. I counterpose this to the dominant telling of film history, propelled by Vito Russo’s *Celluloid Closet*, which positions trauma front and center as *the* queer spectatorial experience.

Chapter 4 focuses on program arrangements, that is, the double bill or double feature paradigm. This exhibition phenomenon was nearly ubiquitous within

repertory cinemas, where programmers had to continually take into account films' shared or conflicting meanings. Given that films were often shown over and over in different combinations, the double bill operates on a diachronic register as well, in which affects associated with certain objects are under continual assessment and reassessment, resonating differently with each viewing or with the viewing of proximate texts with which the spectator may find it in dialogue. I call these opportunities for elongated encounter and reencounter *repertory time*, taking into account also the duration within which one occupies the theater. In the age of independent film festivals, online curation, and microcinemas, *repertory time*, I lament, has become increasingly marginalized, reserved only for those cinephiles diehard enough to seek it out in increasingly few spaces where it still survives.

My last chapter is a compilation of video essays I have created over the past two years on the topic of programming. This chapter, unlike the text-based ones, incorporates more of a reception-based model into the study of queer film programming. The videographic criticism genre becomes an ideal space for me to grapple with others' readings of films such as *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980), *Boys in the Band* (William Friedkin, 1970), *Myra Breckinridge*, and *The Dreamers*. Editing them together, and oftentimes including my own voiceover, created an affective dynamic whereby I was forced to wrestle with the noisy voices that populate this reception. A short maker's statement accompanies these videos to help readers/viewers bridge the written and audiovisual portions of the dissertation, and to further explain my use of videographic criticism.⁵⁷

Throughout these chapters, I frame the cinema, in its most intertextual deviant moments, as a site where desires spontaneously and intensely collide, sometimes audibly or explicitly, at other times, only sensuously. The study of programming is a uniquely embodied way to anchor films in discourses and material conditions, and to demonstrate the ways that films together confirm or challenge ordered sets of knowledges about or sensations associated with a subject, style, history, and experience. My hope is that this project will begin a series of *reorientations* and *disorientations* in the fields I engage with, a hope that in this academic climate comes with equal amounts of anxiety and gratification.

Notes

¹ “filmcalendar,” Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA

² Mike Thomas purchased the Strand in 1977. According to Jack Stevenson, “Thomas personally booked and oversaw daily operations at The Strand” until it closed in 1989 (84). Stevenson gives the impression that Thomas had to negotiate the theater’s programmatic identity. It had to be “hip” and eccentric, but not go so far as to become a grindhouse. Thomas is quoted as saying, “If you play nothing but nasty, violent movies you get nothing but nasty, violent people” (82). He added, “If you think your customers are animals and give them nothing but exploitation pictures, they’ll treat your theatre accordingly” (82). With Thomas at the helm, Stevenson notes, the Strand established itself “on a diet of subtitled foreign films, widescreen epics, vintage Hollywood pictures and cult ‘specials’ like house-filling bargain-priced marathons on Sundays, and a ‘Scary Movie Festival’ every Tuesday. Thomas sought to maintain a classic grind house [*sic*] style of exhibition in the manner of his beloved old Market St movie houses. This meant continuous programming, daily multiple-bills stacked with cartoons, shorts and trailers. No intermissions... non-stop movies. The lights never went up” (83). Fittingly, Thomas drew, “a new audience composed of students, senior citizens from the neighbourhood and film buffs from all over town who appreciated extras like the restored décor and displays of original one-sheet lobby posters” (83). See Jack Stevenson, *Land of a Thousand Balconies: Discoveries & Confessions of a B-Movie Archeologist* (Manchester: Headpress, 2003).

³ For more on Strand Releasing’s genesis, see Carlos Aguilar, “Of Fearless Masterpieces and Queer Visions: Strand Releasing Hits 25 Years of Uncompromising Passion for Exceptional Gems,” IndieWire, April 23, 2014, www.indiewire.com/2014/04/of-fearless-masterpieces-and-queer-visions-strand-

[releasing-hits-25-years-of-uncompromising-passion-for-exceptional-gems-214320/](#); and Melissa Anderson, “20 Years in, Strand Still Releasing (Prudently) on the Edge,” *The Village Voice*, July 1, 2009, accessed online, www.villagevoice.com/2009/07/01/20-years-in-strand-still-releasing-prudently-on-the-edge/.

⁴ B. Ruby Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director’s Cut* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), xvi. For more on NQC precursors, see Rich’s first chapter, “Before the Beginning: Lineages and Preconceptions.”

⁵ Throughout this dissertation I use the term “programming” rather than “curation.” Though I think they can be, for the most part, used interchangeably, curation for me connotes more of a museum or formal institutional space. Programming, on the other hand, has generally been the language of repertory and independent houses. The issue, of course, is that with resounding interest with the digital in the humanities, “programming” can be confused with computer coding (and indeed streaming websites such as Netflix now merge the two through algorithmic film and media “curation”). Laura U. Marks defines programming as “ongoing exhibition, such as for festivals or regular series in galleries and other venues” (36). Curating, on the other hand, is the practice of “organizing thematic programs that are not necessarily linked to a regular venue” (36). This appears more an idiosyncratic definition than anything standard in the field. Again, I have no interest in policing this diction, but have instead settled on “programming” because it is slightly more neutral. For Laura Marks’ explanation, see Laura U. Marks, “The Ethical Presenter: Or How to Have Good Arguments over Dinner.” *The Moving Image* 4, no. 1 (2004): 34–47.

⁶ They were programmed over six times in a span of three years in just the Bay Area’s theaters alone: Surf Theatre [September 1975]; UC Theater [November 1977]; Roxie [April 1978, June 1978, November 1978]; Strand Theater [October 1978]. “filmcalendar” and “Roxie Theater,” Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA.

⁷ Programmed at the Carnegie Hall Cinema [Summer, 1974, Winter 1978]. “Carnegie Hall Cinema,” Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA

⁸ Marks, “The Ethical Presenter,” 43.

⁹ Joseph Michalak, “Thalia, West Side Muse of Reruns, is Revived,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1977.

¹⁰ Anderson, Melissa. “The Quad Relaunches (and Pleasingly Confounds) With an Unanticipated Pick,” *The Village Voice*, April 11, 2017: 28.

¹¹ Ben Davis, *Repertory Movie Theaters of New York City: Havens for Revivals, Indies and the Avant-Garde, 1960-1994* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2017), 47.

¹² Laura U. Marks, “Coeditor’s Foreword,” *The Moving Image* 4, no. 1 (2004), x.

¹³ Knowingly or unknowingly, this work also counteracts art-house programmers’ tendencies to mystify their practices, to make it appear as if they operate first and foremost from their viscera. Instead, we might see their talents as a product of their astute ability to synthesize considerations of (inter)text, audience, and context. See

Ditzler, “Curation and Cinema,” for more theoretical insights on film curation as a practice.

¹⁴ Interestingly, Stanley Cavell commented in 1983 that, “One may, accordingly, think of ‘rerun’ movie houses, a relatively new element of our cultural system, as constituting protomuseums of film.” (112). It seemed to escape Cavell that the repertory house had actually been around for quite some time at that point, as well as other museological models for film viewing such as MoMA and the Pacific Film Archive, today known as BAMPFA. For other odd observations, see “What (Good) Is a Film Museum? What is a Film Culture?” in *Cavell on Film*, ed. William Rothman (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 107-113.

¹⁵ For these kinds of anecdotes, see especially, Jason Rapfogel, “Repertory Film Programming: A Critical Symposium Featuring Commentary by John Ewing, John Gianvito, Bruce Goldstein, Haden Guest, Jim Healy, Kent Jones, Laurence Kardish, Marie Losier, Richard Peña, James Quandt, David Schwartz, Adam Sekuler, Dylan Skolnick and Tom Vick,” *Cinéaste* 35, no. 2 (2010).

¹⁶ Jason Rapfogel, “Repertory Film Programming: A Critical Symposium Featuring Commentary by John Ewing, John Gianvito, Bruce Goldstein, Haden Guest, Jim Healy, Kent Jones, Laurence Kardish, Marie Losier, Richard Peña, James Quandt, David Schwartz, Adam Sekuler, Dylan Skolnick and Tom Vick,” 38.

¹⁷ See Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 20-2; and Robert Sitton, *Lady in the Dark: Iris Barry and the Art of Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

¹⁸ Linda Williams writes, “moving images are surely the most powerful sex education most of us will ever receive.” See Linda Williams, *Screening Sex* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 6.

¹⁹ Reception studies did much to ground the hermeneutic experiences of cinema in lived subjectivity, and thus move away from the dogmatism of psychoanalysis and into the realm of polyvocality. Canonical work in this field such as Jackie Stacey’s *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1993) has demonstrated the extent to which spectators adapt and localize the meanings of films and their various formal attributes. In Stacey’s book, for example, British lower and middle-class women discuss how they reproduced—within their means and resources—many of the dresses they would see their favorite actresses wear on screen. For a stellar critique of reception studies, see Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

²⁰ Rapfogel, “Repertory Film Programming,” 38.

²¹ See Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*. Second edition. (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011).

²² Mikhail Iampolski’s *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) is a perfect illustration of this. Iampolski sophisticatedly applies semiotics theories based in literature and linguistics to the moving image. Admirably, Iampolski attends to the specifics of film form and

spectatorship, but in the end he still rather rigidly channels the language of semiotics without forming his own technique or approach to issue of intertextuality and film.

²³ Laurent Jenny, "The Strategy of Forms," in *French Literary Theory Today*, ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 44.

²⁴ Ara Osterweil, *Flesh Cinema: The Corporeal Turn in American Avant-Garde Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

²⁵ Allen, *Intertextuality*, 45-6.

²⁶ Nuart Theatre's program archive, Los Angeles, CA.

²⁷ "Castro Theatre," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA. Examples include *Great Ladies of Silver Screen* (Jan-Feb 1979), *Legendary Ladies* (May-July 1980), *Hollywood Musicals* (December 1981-February 1982), *Hollywood Musical* (January-February 1984).

²⁸ See Richard Dyer, *The Culture of Queers* (London: Routledge, 2002); Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies in Lesbian and Gay Film* (London: Routledge, 2003); Dyer, *Pastiche* (London: Routledge, 2007); Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

²⁹ Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 3. Also see Mary Louise Pratt who, in an early use of the term, suggests it could be seen as an alternative to "community" as a place "where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical power relations..." (34). Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession*, 1991.

³⁰ In framing the affective collision course that double features put films on, I agree with Eugenie Brinkema's notion that affect "invokes force more than transmission, a force that does not have to move from subject to object but may fold back, rebound, recursively amplify" (24). Brinkema's definition moves affect from out of the body and also from a vague or nebulous notion of ineffability into a highly relational and exteriorized form. In considering affect as first and foremost relational, I try to consider the affective dynamics between texts, among texts and spectators, spectators and temporality, and finally spectators with one another. Given my investment in affective "in-betweenness," I depart from Brinkema in that I do not believe affect's primary location is in film form. Rather, it can be located, albeit only partially, momentarily, and provisionally, within the interplays between subjects and objects. See Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

³¹ For Deleuze, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); for Latour, see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³² In relation to Derrida, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

³³ Patricia White's sublime piece, "Lesbian Minor Cinema" (*Screen* 49, no. 4 [December 1, 2008]: 410-25), is the best example I have come across of a queer film scholar using Deleuze and Guattari. Here White adapts their notion of "minor literature" to Chantal Akerman and Sadie Benning's work in their depictions of queer

minors. Note that White avoids a dogmatic usage of their theories, borrowing some of their lexicon, but never in devotion or fidelity to their creed.

³⁴ I am influenced in my use of “political imaginary” by Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman’s writing on field imaginaries. See Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) and Donald E. Pease, “New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon” *boundary 2* 17.1 (Spring 1990): 1–37. Both want us to be aware of unconscious and unspoken ideals that fuel disciplinary engines. For Wiegman, in the context of cultural studies, there is no way out of these silent aspirations. In fact, they often become sources for renewal and regeneration, as ways to reinvest in a field, or produce new ones. The danger is that sometimes they replicate the old structures even as they purport to do something new. For me in terms of the work here, I do not see political imaginaries as crippling. I subscribe to the belief that we should see political imaginaries as always shifting and moving with time, likely to be supplanted or, at best, supplemented. The main motivation for critical theory, for me, is to collaboratively seek social change through ongoing engagement with material culture, not to be immortalized or to have found the answer per se.

³⁵ Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, “Surface Reading: An Introduction.” *Representations* 108, no. 1 (November 1, 2009), 11.

³⁶ For a useful “surface reading” in queer film criticism before such a term existed, see John Champagne’s article “‘Stop Reading Films!’: Film Studies, Close Analysis, and Gay Pornography” (*Cinema Journal* 36, no. 4 [1997]: 76–97). In it, Champagne demonstrates that one can do rigorous theoretical readings within the realm of film and media studies without textual analysis. (Note especially Champagne’s perverse use of Michel de Certeau’s theories!)

³⁷ For other options, “reparative readings,” in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading,” in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); “suspicious reading” and “postcritical reading” in Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); “descriptive turn” in Heather Love, “Close but Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn.” *New Literary History* 41, no. 2 (2010): 371–92.

³⁸ Chris Straayer, *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies: Sexual Re-Orientations in Film and Video*. Film and Culture, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3.

³⁹ *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video*, ed. Bad Object-Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991).

⁴⁰ I similarly posed this question in my article on asexuality and cinema. See Marc Francis, “The Asexual-Single and the Collective: Remaking Queer Bonds in *(A)Sexual*, *Bill Cunningham New York*, and *Year of the Dog*.” *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 31, no. 1 (91) (May 1, 2016): 27–63.

⁴¹ Cohen writes, “For instance, how would queer activists understand politically the lives of women—in particular women on color—on welfare, who fit into the category of heterosexual, but whose sexual choices are not perceived as normal, moral, or worthy of state support?” (442) See Cathy J. Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and

Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 4 (May 1, 1997): 437–65.

⁴² This issue within queer film criticism symptomatizes an impasse at the heart of contemporary queer theory as well. Even with the recent turn towards affect, the experiences and practices imagined within “queer” have not been reexamined for some time. (“Queer” has, however, undergone scrutiny and contestation in the posthuman realm [I am thinking here of Mel Chen and Karen Barad’s work].) This to me is part of a larger impasse within queer theory. But Lauren Berlant reminds us that impasses are not inherently bad; they may elicit annoyance and frustration, but they do not have to be debilitating, fatal, or stunting. Ironically generative, an impasse, Berlant writes in *Cruel Optimism*, is “a thick moment of ongoingness, a situation that can absorb many genres without having one itself—[it] is a middle without boundaries, edges, a shape. It is experienced in transitions and transactions. It is the name for the space where the urgencies of livelihood are worked out all over again, without assurances of futurity, but nevertheless proceeding via durable norms of adaptation” (200). Berlant’s hopeful formulation suggests that an impasse invites states of reflection. But queer film criticism, as far as I can tell, has yet to admit to or even feel the impasse because it is too busy leaping to meet the demands of digital culture or trends in the humanities. In this regard, disappointingly, the question of (human-based) politics has seemed to drop out. But let me be clear: I do not want to return to the 1990s moment in which queer theory felt like a radical rejoinder to the stale state of normativizing gay and lesbian politics. Rather than lament or romanticize a time of sociopolitical excitement and scholarly encouragement that predates the neoliberal nightmare of pressure to stay relevant, “publish or perish,” and speak to legitimized discourses (e.g., “digital humanities”), however, we might take this time to slow down, to resume talking and arguing with each other, to question the state of not only the world but of the field, and to think reflexively about what we sense the field should be doing and what interventions it should be dispensing. For more eloquent thinking on impasses, see Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁴³ See Howard Becker, “Whose Side Are We On?” *Social Problems* 14 (1967): 239–47; Evelyn Hooker, “The Homosexual Community” *Sexual Deviance*, eds. Gagnon and Simon (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 167–84; Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1986).

⁴⁴ There are several theories available on alternate temporality. See Wai Chee Dimock’s use of subjunctive time in, “Subjunctive Time: Henry James’s Possible Wars,” *Narrative*, vol. 17 no. 3, 2009, pp. 242–254; Herbert Marcuse mentions “historical alternatives” in *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991); Stephanie Foote used the term “forgotten futurities” in passing at the closing roundtable at Duke University’s 2017 Feminist Theory Workshop, https://youtu.be/iTXQ_3C3d8E.

⁴⁵ For more on the Production Code, see Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Perennial Library, 1987).

⁴⁶ The ratings system was a double bind for distributors and exhibitors. An “X” rating would brand a film, limiting its viewership, and likely deterring exhibitors from screening it. Many X-rated films then did not get wide release. On the other hand, an X-rating could make its obscenity a *cause célèbre*. Melvin Van Peebles famously marketed *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) with this in mind, including on the poster next to its rating “Rated X by an all-white jury.” For more on the ratings system, see Williams, *Screening Sex*.

⁴⁷ This is in part due to the fact that the most groundbreaking work on HIV/AIDS was being done in video and short form—and both were unsupported by repertory and art houses. Still, I would not rule out its felt presence (in fact, how could AIDS not have impacted programming in some way or another?), but I have not taken the opportunity here to investigate the matter further. In terms of gay and lesbian film festivals, see Frameline’s programming from the late 1980s especially. Frameline has an online archive that includes their programs dating back to 1977: www.frameline.org/festival/program-guide-archive.

⁴⁸ For a list of theater closures in New York City, see Davis, *Repertory Movie Theaters*, 207.

⁴⁹ Richard Laermer, “Revival Houses in the Era of Videocassettes,” *New York Times*, April 15, 1990.

⁵⁰ Davis, *Repertory Movie Houses*, 91. Davis also cites that in New York City, rent prices had already begun to increase, pushing out repertory houses whose profit was not enough to keep up with the mushrooming real estate market. This would seem to anticipate New York’s “clean up” during the Mayor Giuliani years and subsequent muscular forms of gentrification that follow.

⁵¹ Davis ends the golden era of the repertory house with the closing of Theater 80 St. Marks in April 1994. Not-so-coincidentally, the Strand closed in 1989.

⁵² B. Ruby Rich, “New Queer Cinema,” *Sight and Sound* 2.5 (September 1992). For an excellent look at how the realities of AIDS imbued New Queer Cinema’s aesthetics, see Monica B. Pearl’s “AIDS and New Queer Cinema,” in *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michele Aaron, (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 23-28.

⁵³ B. Ruby Rich, “Collision, Catastrophe, Celebration: The Relationship between Gay and Lesbian Film Festivals and Their Publics,” “Queer Publicity: A Dossier on Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5.1 (1999), 82.

⁵⁴ This is epitomized by the Thomas Beard-programmed Film Society of Lincoln Center series, “An Early Clue to the New Direction: Queer Cinema Before Stonewall” that ran April 22 to May 1, 2016. Beard says that, “the homoerotic imagination surfaced throughout cinema in manifold ways prior to gay liberation, and its presence wasn’t merely limited to coded glances and flashes of innuendo” (32). The reduction of queer cinema to the “homoerotic imagination” is precisely the issue

here. See Michael Koresky, "Out of the Past." *Film Comment* 52, no. 2 (Mar, 2016): 28-33.

⁵⁵ The fact that repertory programming lives in the following years through the museological framework of places such as MoMA, Pacific Film Archive (PFA), Museum of the Moving Image (MoMI; formerly known as the American Museum of the Moving Image), The Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (renamed in 2001 as the Gene Siskel Film Center), and the Harvard Film Archive, among several others, is a testament to its institutionalization, much as "queer" underwent as well, in both commercial and educational settings in the 1990s.

⁵⁶ Among others, see Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014) and José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

⁵⁷ This was a skill that I was able to hone with fellow PhD students at Middlebury College during a summer 2017 workshop funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

CHAPTER 1

The *Bricolage* Effect: The Post-1968 Turn in Art-House Film Programming

For a cinephile scanning *The Village Voice*'s movie listings in June 1966, the options were by and large what one would have come to expect. Lining the pages were advertisements for theaters such as the Bleeker Street Cinema in the Village screening double features of Fellini's *8½* (1963) and Godard's *Breathless* (1960).¹ On the Upper West Side, the Thalia's Bergman double bill of *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961) and *Winter Light* (1963) might offer air conditioned relief from the sweltering Manhattan streets and apartments. Fast forward three years later, however, and the programming listed in the same section appears as if from another planet. In May 1969, at the Regency, only blocks from the Thalia, one could find Russ Meyer's landmark sexploitation classic *Vixen* (1968), or across midtown at the Coronet, Pier Paolo Pasolini's celebration of anarchic bisexuality in *Teorema* (1968).²

In 1977, the *Los Angeles Times* observed—rather belatedly—the same phenomenon. Creating a survey of local LA theaters “specializing in a new sort of presentation,” one reporter commented that patrons, strangely enough, had come to regard this eclectic programming interchangeably as “revival” and “alternative.”³ Comprising these programs were “cult films (*Harold and Maude*), classics (*The Maltese Falcon*), movies of redeeming value that missed commercially (*Medium Cool*), older foreign entries (*La Dolce Vita*), all-time favorites (*Singin' in the Rain*), and a general grab bag assortment, from Woody Allen (*Sleeper*) to Lina Wertmuller

(*The Seduction of Mimi*), from Chaplin (*The Gold Rush*) to Fields (*The Bank Dick*).”

Theaters around town, the article notes, had seemed to merge “revival,” once considered the stuff of appreciation, and “alternative,” that which existed on the fringes of aesthetic and social decency. Given this potpourri mixture of films, the reporter’s last category of “grab bag assortment” therefore reads as a kind of odd tautology, a sum of which all those genres preceding it in the list together constitute. In 1968, one can find a host of examples of films of disparate traditions, genres, and taste strata regularly intermingling in art-house programs in major U.S. and European cities.

By the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, this intermingling accelerated and resulted in a complete redefinition of “art house,” and more importantly, what forms of pleasure and satisfaction it was meant to proffer. In view of this, we might therefore consider this *Los Angeles Times* survey an apprehension of a phenomenon that had been developing alongside other cultural trajectories of the time. Perhaps this tardy discovery seems symptomatic not of obliviousness on the part of the journalist but of a manifest moment, that is, the moment in which a historical juncture becomes so clear that it can no longer be ignored, inaugurating its description if not celebration.

This chapter identifies a major shift in film programming from the 1960s to the 1980s. During this period, I argue, programmers exercised eclecticism not seen before, mixing filmic traditions and genres, low-, medium-, and high-brow tastes, and thereby effectively ditched thematic or tonal coherence. I call this multifarious

assembling of filmic texts “the *bricolage* effect.” *Bricolage* is a concept-metaphor for programming that is promiscuous, ad hoc, heterogeneous, playful, anti-routine, and open-ended in meaning. By using “*bricolage*,” I intend to invoke genealogies of art practices predicated on collecting rubbish, found objects, or parts of objects to produce out of them work that has oftentimes meant to be ambiguous, multivalent, messy, elusive, and therefore encouraging a reception more of curiosity and hypothesis than of steadfast and literal meaning.

This chapter tracks programming of the pre-1968 era to help produce a genealogy of models that anticipate and influence repertory and art-house programmers during the 1970s and 1980s, when *bricolage* sensibility reaches its zenith. By interposing programming crucially within the feedback loop of production and reception of the time, this chapter aims to explain this era’s (sub)cultural flows through, in part, what and how audiences watched, for programs are themselves indicators of the protean and contingent relationships between spectators and exhibitors.

Historically anchored questions are here coupled with theoretical inquiries about what impact such programming had on the psychic and affective lives of urban spectators who frequented these spaces. In this sense, the *bricolage* effect in film programming is not just about decentralizing “the masters” or disrupting and thus reestablishing new “artful” taste arrangements, but also about endeavoring to find out what epistemic and affective connections might form when disparate texts are put in dialogue with one another. Before 1968, art-house spectators could largely stay

within their taste- and content-based comfort zones. In the decades following WWII, when art cinema in the U.S. grew in popularity, independent art cinemas tended to exclusively show the work of European and Japanese “auteurs,” experimental or avant-garde, classical Hollywood, and silent-era favorites or rarities.⁴ Beginning in 1968, however, spectators no longer could rely on the consistency of art-house selections to guide them towards certain philosophical or ethical relations to the world. It began to elicit more affectively active spectatorial engagements because the exhibited films of clashing traditions (e.g., blockbusters, exploitation, erotic art films, “trash,” etc.) along with their programmatic combinations were more sensuously animating than those of decades prior.⁵

Bricolage-style programming was thus meant to be jarring: it shocked spectators who were preoccupied with cultural capital or intellectual value, two things that art cinema is supposed to promise. For this reason, the *bricolage* effect is a site of affective disruption. Even though by the 1980s this style of programming becomes routine and synonymous with Euro-American intellectual cultures, individual programmers left their distinct marks on theaters by deploying their own idiosyncratic sensibilities to delight, confront, and confuse audiences.

It is by no coincidence that queer films become a staple of repertory programming at the same time that the menu patrons can come to expect at revival houses dramatically expands. What new forms of queerness become sensed or even thinkable as a result of this “promiscuous” programming? There were many spatial, intertextual, and social developments that converged during this era to produce new

knowledges of the body and its relation to other bodies in space, thereby bringing about queer forms of knowing and questioning. The precipitation of queer films in this moment becomes a locus for the *bricolage* effect at the same time that *bricolage*-style programming makes it all the more probable for queer films to claim a place in the art-house milieu, no matter the specific programmer's sexual orientation or justification for selection.

The queer developments that I situate in this chapter will therefore tend to tie back to the theme of heterogeneity, of efforts to marshal or assemble an array of communal, affective, textual, and ideological difference, to allow meanings to regenerate out of ostensible randomness. Art-house cinema comes to signify a space of convergence for different forms—the high, middle, and low—of queer representation. Of course, there had been for some time the coded films of Hollywood (e.g., films by Dorothy Arzner and George Cukor) and the avant-garde (e.g., Jean Genet and Jean Cocteau), but now there existed legible and overt queer films that fit in high aesthetic traditions programmed alongside “trashy” ones by directors John Waters and Paul Morrissey. The programming of queer films of this era invokes a definition of *bricolage* that traffics in impurity and heterogeneity. As Hal Foster defines it, “*bricolage* is a process of textual play, of loss and gain...*bricolage* cuts up, makes concrete, delights in the artificial—it knows no identity, stands for no pretense of presence or universal guise for relative truths.”⁶ Clearly *bricolage* within Foster's articulation shares a resemblance to “queer” as knowing “no identity,” connoting fluidity, liminality, instability, and thus abolition of any essential truths. We might,

therefore, be moved to regard film programming of this time—itsself marked by the promiscuity of *bricolage*—as shaping polymorphous definitions of “queer” to include a range of tastes, aesthetic traditions, bodily performativities, and so forth. Within this collision course, new types of queerness emerge and are inflected by the programmatic schemata in which they are situated (which will, crucially, be analyzed in more detail in the following chapters).

The account that I give here is by no means meant to be utopian, sexual or otherwise. Even given this confluence of film types—from blockbusters to tawdry exploitation films to arcane foreign fare—art-house cinemas do not become populist sites of class erasure; to the contrary, even as the definition of “art” expanded, the theaters remained privileged sites of viewing in which the selections were still largely dictated by the white heterosexual men at the top.⁷ Art-house cinemas, as distinct from mainstream multiplexes scattered about the country, continue through the late 1960s and up to the present to be rather exclusive spaces for the largely white middle to upper classes in pursuit of intellectual exertion and cultural capital.⁸

However, it should not be understated that programming participated in the twentieth-century cultural transformations that undid a long history in which class and taste were in tight correlation. The values associated with the middle and upper classes underwent dramatic change by this time. Cinema 16 programmer Amos Vogel observed the tides changing as early as 1965. In his address to the Independent Film Importers and Distributors of America, Vogel comments on “new audiences” emerging at the Film Society of Lincoln Center that, “seem to have left behind the

simple formulas of the neo-realists and humanists, without giving up their concern with human issues; they abhor the empty sexual titillations of so many of our home-grown films and favor the less hypocritical sexuality of certain European movies.”⁹

Vogel here locates the beginning of a trend that would soon become apparent by the end of the 1960s in the baby boomer generation: they wanted nothing to do with their parents’ sexual culture. The much-discussed but irreducible social transformations during this period in the U.S. are familiar but still bear repeating: civil rights and later anti-Vietnam War activism ignited other forms of protest and liberation (such as the gay and lesbian movements, second-wave feminism, and the black power movement, just to name a few); experimentation with drugs and sex became common practices among the younger generations; Marx became a central figure in intellectual circles and in the academy; and the new mainstream—from *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) to Jimi Hendrix—was no longer populated with sanitized images that characterized the 1950s and early 1960s. The countercultural stage was set and it would shake the world of art-house cinema as well.

Following Vogel’s observation, many changes took place during these years to remake the interactions between programmers and spectators. A form of filmgoing that was nascent in the 1960s (conspicuous mostly in underground art scenes like Warhol’s Factory and Film-Makers’ Cooperative) exploded by the 1970s.¹⁰ A new kind of cinephilia that was drawn to the offbeat, the perverse, the obscene, the deviant, the subversive, the transgressive, and sometimes, the exploitative emerged out of these new social and affective landscapes. Whether audiences of the late 1960s

and 1970s went to the art-house cinema to gawk or have their horizons expanded, they could nonetheless experience a composite assortment of films that ranged from highbrow foreign films (by the “great” auteurs such as Bergman, Fellini, Pasolini, Antonioni, Ozu, Varda, Godard, etc.) to what Jeffrey Sconce calls “trash” or “sleaze” cinema (by directors such as Paul Morrissey, John Waters, Russ Meyer, etc.). Certain art-house programming practices prior to and during this period helped establish a basis for this intermingling of tastes and styles that was able to take full shape by the early 1970s. By looking at this era of art-house cinema’s programming, an alternate history materializes where different tastes, politics, and sensibilities converged to form what one might call a “habitus” less predicated on categorization or identification than on open possibilities. Crucially, these factors enabled new sexual and gender deviant imaginaries to form.¹¹

Whose Definition of Art?

In order to begin thinking about how taste formations were revised during the 1970s and 1980s, it is first crucial to revisit the history of how art cinema was culturally regarded in the decades prior. One of the most prevalent understandings of art cinema that pervades to this day holds that it follows high art and literary traditions, adapting for the moving image the aesthetic aptitude and philosophical interests of the intelligentsia, thus sustaining investment in modes of elite cultural appraisal. This reading of what constitutes art-house cinema suggests that it has

attracted high-class audiences who have maintained an academic interest in the world and its history, preoccupying themselves with aesthetic matters above all else.

But the cinema (even “art cinema”) is not philosophy; from its beginnings it was associated with low forms of entertainment (such as vaudeville) and modern technological estrangement rather than the “arts.” Barbara Wilinsky notes, in one of the most insightful studies of postwar art-cinema-going culture, that the description of art cinema as distinct and, oftentimes, against the mainstream, anti-Hollywood, outside commercialism, and reserved for educated populations is more the purported image that art cinema produced for itself than anything steeped in the actual history of its content and reception.¹² Even scholarship is guilty of propagating this resilient mythology. For instance, Wilinsky debunks Peter Lev’s 1993 definition that art cinema seeks to “display new ideas of form and content... aimed at a high culture audience.”¹³ Wilinsky spends a considerable portion of her book disputing this, demonstrating that the middle class—from the postwar era to the present—have used art films for “cultural capital” (Bourdieu’s term), not actual upward mobility. For this reason no strictly class-based definition of art cinema will suffice.

Wilinsky seems swayed by John Twomey’s content-based definition of art-house cinema, which he formed as early as 1956. Twomey includes in his definition: “films from other countries, reissues of old-time Hollywood ‘classics,’ documentaries, and independently made films on offbeat themes.”¹⁴ There are issues with this codification, as Wilinsky notes, including what an “offbeat theme” might mean. Such a qualification is highly subjective and changes through time; what was

“offbeat” in 1956 is quite different from what it might mean today. At the same time, Twomey’s taxonomy does seem to cover many of the bases of what diachronically comprised art-house cinema through the years, and remains rather relevant to the present. His delineation is especially potent if we look at “art house” through the lens of its theaters’ programming. Dating back to the postwar era, art-house fare can be seen as positioned against the dominant cinematic idiom and social codes of *its respective time and place*, providing for audiences a gateway to the “unfamiliar.” Twomey’s description therefore largely (if not almost perfectly) captures the art-house ontology from his times up through today, whether in the context of a museum, revival house, or independent theater.

The crux of this ontological debate is thus predicated, on the one hand, on categorization and, on the other, taste. While historians seek stable taxonomies and consistent spectatorship typologies (based on class and racial privilege, among other markers), in actuality, art-house cinema is an elusive and highly mutable classification—barely even a genre or mode—that is at the mercy of highly contingent social and industrial conditions.¹⁵ In this chapter and throughout this project as a whole, I try to engage dialectically with questions of taste and classification as diachronic constructions. This does not mean simply accepting that “art house” means different things at different moments; instead, I suggest “art house” be treated as oscillatory and protean, vacillating in its disposition to both cling to and shed past understandings of and future possibilities for what can be considered

“art house.” By the late 1960s, force exerted upon its borders would eventually engender its expansion.

There are several salient instances in the art-house exhibition history of programming that troubled and expanded the boundaries of artful taste. The earliest U.S. example may be that of Iris Barry’s programming at MoMA beginning in 1935.¹⁶ When it was unpopular to do so in a “high art” setting, Barry showed such early films as *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903), *A Trip to the Moon* (Georges Méliès, 1902), and *Intolerance* (D.W. Griffith, 1916).¹⁷ Film at this point was rarely seen as an esteemed art form, and, as Haidee Wasson has brilliantly shown, Barry’s approach was not to expose audiences only to the “great work” of those European directors who at that point already occupied a place in the modernist art canon (e.g., the surrealists and Dadaists as well as directors Fritz Lang, F.W. Murnau, and Jean Epstein), but to also convey that commercial films from the U.S. contained their own brand of formal and technical artistry.

These now-outdated films (by Griffith, Porter, and Méliès) did not necessarily go over well with audiences. Wasson notes, “They talked loudly during screenings...They laughed at tragic heroes and weeping women, cackling with abandon at the sight of violent deaths.”¹⁸ Strikingly, Barry continued to show these early films despite their unintended response. For her, a history lesson did not always have to be serious—in fact, she on occasion described this laughter as a sign of affection for older films.¹⁹ This shows the extent to which Barry welcomed the audience’s affective range in their encounters with unusual objects. Barry continued

to blur the boundaries of genre and taste throughout her tenure at MoMA. One telling series from 1939 integrated documentaries and genre films (such as the western and the gangster film) into its aggregate of art and popular offerings.

Wasson explains that Barry's programming straddled the line between populist and intellectual appeal, in a mix characteristic of MoMA's institutional politics at this time. Museums were during this period moving away from being sacred spaces for upper-crust patrons, instead moving towards inclusion and education for the masses. Barry's programming methods were in the spirit of this effort, doubly elevating mass-distributed films to the status of art while rendering art itself as a category that could be accessed and experienced by the "common" person. Barry's programming represents an early attempt to use tactics of eclecticism to reorient the ways in which art was conceived, determined in large part by who should be included in its address.

It must be noted, however, that eclecticism does not automatically equate to democratization. Amos Vogel's programming at Cinema 16 in the years of operation from 1947 to 1963 parallels Barry's diverse approach, but also diverges from it. He operated within the highly insular workings of a membership-based film society, not a public institution such as MoMA in the midst of populist reform. Located in New York City as well, the programming team at Cinema 16 exhibited work assumed to be of marginal interest. Unlike Barry, Vogel did not program films with linear narratives and coherent diegetic worlds that were (and, indeed, still are) characteristic of Hollywood cinema. Instead, Vogel and his indispensable team (which included his

wife, Marcia, and assistant Jack Goelman) strove to serve a “double purpose”: to promote appreciation of “superior and avant-garde films” as art forms and to “provide its audience with a more mature realization of the nature of this world and of its manifold problems” through scientific and educational films, i.e. documentaries, according to its mission.²⁰ Indicative of this, in a 1950 program, Vogel showed Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali’s surreal classic *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) alongside Pare Lorentz’s Marxist-inflected *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936).²¹ Even though there was clearly precedent for Vogel’s alchemical programming found in Barry’s sensibility, it was still distinct from its counterparts; nothing else like it seemed to exist at the time.

Cinema 16’s non-profit business model, as I have already indicated, was marked by a degree of exclusion because it required membership. Vogel and his team did not fence off its operations in the name of intellectual exclusivity or arrogance. They used the membership model as a way to maintain a steady flow of money that could be used for space and print rentals.²² The exclusive premise of the film society also allowed them to exhibit provocative and even illicit films that would experience intense censorship and many times print seizure, especially within the anxious sociopolitical climate of Cold War America. By policing its boundaries, Vogel was able to show the audacious work of avant-garde makers such as Maya Deren, Shirley Clarke, Kenneth Anger, and Gregory Markopoulos, all of whom integrated perspectives on gender and sexuality that existed on the fringes of public discourse at

the time. Including such work thus further inscribed within art-house cinema queer affinities that would become unmistakably prominent by the late 1960s.

After Cinema 16's dissolution in 1963, Vogel moved to the Film Society of Lincoln Center and started the New York Film Festival, but did not stay for long. He later turned to teaching film history rather than programming. His 1974 book *Film as a Subversive Art* gives us substantial clues as to what films he would have likely programmed had he remained a programmer into the subsequent decade. Vogel's use of the term "subversive" in this context is vertiginously capacious—including everything from Buster Keaton films to Nazi propaganda to medical birthing films. Crucially, Vogel included "homosexuality and other variants" in his section on the end of sexual taboos, proposing a new canon constituted by deviant sexual politics that cannot be narrowly defined as "homosexual." Vogel defines this category not through identity (as is suggested by "and other variants") but by films' depictions of generally silenced or invisible sexual taboos (including even bestiality and necrophilia).²³

In isolation, Vogel's novel deviant classification might appear singular in form; however, such connections were being forged by programmers by the 1970s (a point on which I elaborate in Chapter 2). The films Vogel was "programming on the page," if you will, were prominent and canonical at the time his book was published. The films he cites in his chapter on "homosexuality and other variants," including, *The Conformist*, *Un Chant D'Amour* (Jean Genet, 1950), *Portrait of Jason* (Shirley Clarke, 1967), and *Fireworks* (Kenneth Anger, 1947), were regularly being shown at

art-house and repertory cinemas. Repertory and art houses especially *were* investing in taboo subject matter. Perhaps Vogel was not so much steering knowledges and sensibilities by this point as he was reflecting those of the 1970s. In a way, they had caught up with him. His willingness to showcase films by Kenneth Anger and Gregory Markopoulos at Cinema 16, for example, had paved the way for others to take notice of queer and deviant art films. By virtue of these practices, art cinema was putting disparate forms of deviance in dialogue, in turn undermining the respectable decorum expected of the content filling calendars and of the audience filling the theaters.

Vogel's interest in queer films begs the question of sexual politics. If film can be a "subversive art," is it then subverting classical understandings of "art" or is it subverting, by way of artistic representation, established cultural categories, assumptions, expectations, norms, and pleasures? This turns on the question of how Vogel regarded the category of "art" overall. Throughout his career, Vogel seemed to vacillate in his position on this topic. Not unlike Barry, at times he seemed poised to lower the esteemed classification of "art" through the expansion of its borders, whereas at others he appeared to argue, in the spirit of the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, that film fit within tight definitions of "art" as it had been classically delineated. Within this undecided definition of "art," then, something like Kenneth Anger's short films, for example, which are full of popular cultural references, subcultural queer practices (e.g., BDSM and the occult), and formal experimentation are compatible with Cinema 16's mission as well as Vogel's variable classification of subversive filmmaking.

They are representative of his mixed intentions—at some times to subvert cultural values and at other times to subvert definitions of “highbrow taste.”

Vogel’s vacillation is symptomatic of the emergent changing modernisms of the 1960s that populated his world. These modernisms were saturated with intertextual forms of generic allusion that emanated from cultural objects belonging to various tiers of the taste strata.²⁴ The French and Japanese New Waves, for instance, incorporated aesthetic influences from Hollywood as well as avant-garde traditions, despite their place in what Peter Wollen once called “counter-cinema,” an independent antidote to the capitalist machine that is Hollywood.²⁵ By the 1970s, this cyclonic modality of *bricolage* in which the high-, low-, and middle-brow collide would come to inform a large swath of urban repertory film programming sensibilities. For instance, programmers were inclined to show *Breathless* alongside Hollywood gangster films that influenced Godard rather than the work of Francois Truffaut or other French “masters.” They were inclined to show Andy Warhol’s *My Hustler* (1965) in a double bill with its Hollywood double *Midnight Cowboy* (John Schlesinger, 1969). In this sense, programmers were not averse to “teaching” their audience that New Wave or underground work had a symbiotic and tense relationship to the middlebrow and mainstream. The two would dialectically form a feedback loop together, despite an elite assumption that New Wave and other “art” or avant-garde cinemas aimed to fully counter the passive viewing experience of a bourgeois Hollywood aesthetic.

Some may be quick to read these filmic blends as signs of diminishing taste structures. It might seem that with art-house cinemas now playing high-budget, Oscar-winning, mass-distributed films, all bets are off. Taste, however, has a highly durable character that can transform the category of “artfulness,” a quality that is still dictated by a certain privileged caste of individuals. As Pierre Bourdieu writes in the introduction to his study of taste often cited by film scholars, “To the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools or periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of the consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of ‘class.’”²⁶ One might then assume the rest of Bourdieu’s *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* would confirm over and over again this thesis. Curiously, however, film scholars rarely note that Bourdieu finds many inconsistencies and complications in his case studies. The book is full of exceptions, instabilities and instances of fluidity within the historically rigid and class-ridden system of taste. Unsurprisingly, Bourdieu conducted his research for his dizzyingly comprehensive study in 1963 and 1967-68. Major social changes were underway in France—as well as much of the world—at this time (typified, of course, by the May 1968 riots). My point is that all of these factors magnify the futility in making steadfast claims about what high, middle, and low taste look like.²⁷

Bricolage-style programming is not an exception to but working in tandem with Bourdieu’s theories, showing that taste is a moving target, shifting within what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls “culture on the move,” even as class determines it and it determines class. Taste is therefore a dynamic feature of society; it is not

institutionally fixed but rather culturally situated, shifting continually with changing mores, class and educational structures, and demographics.

In his slightly later writings, Bourdieu explains that, “the work of art is an object which exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art.”²⁸ In order for an object to be considered “art,” it must be labeled as such by an expert or set of experts, such as publishers or art traders/dealers, as having value, both monetarily and intellectually.²⁹ Bourdieu emphasizes that the dealer has a financial stake in the product to whose endorsement he must fully commit. Note Bourdieu’s description of this production-distribution process, which bears some resemblance to film exhibition as well:

The ideology of creation, which makes the author the first and last source of the value of his work, conceals the fact that the cultural businessman (art dealer, publisher, etc.) is at one and the same time the person who exploits the labour of the ‘creator’ by trading in the ‘sacred’ and the person who, by putting it on the market, by exhibiting, publishing or staging it consecrates a product which he has ‘discovered’ and which would otherwise remain a mere natural resource; and the more consecrated he personally is, the more strongly he consecrates the work.³⁰

Here Bourdieu charges art discourses with overdetermining the role of the author, and forgetting to take into account the “cultural businessman” who effectively classifies the work as “art” and helps to produce those knowledges of value. We might say the same thing for filmgoing as the role of the director or “auteur” is prized while the programmer who presents the film to audiences is left in the shadows.

There are limits to this analogy. Most prominently, cinema adheres to different industrial standards and protocols altogether than the “fine arts” (painting,

drawing, print-making, installation, and sculpture). Nonetheless, programmers do work to an extent as cinema's "art dealer," functioning as intermediaries or middlemen along the production-reception circuit on the side of reception and consumption. Bourdieu classifies the role of the curator as similar to the critic, protector of a field's respective canon of "consecrated" work. Programmers/curators filter out the many options for screening based on their discriminatory tastes, while critics, in written form, guide spectators towards certain directors, genres, and trends by many of the same guidelines as programmers. So even though *bricolage*-style programming expanded the art-house film canon, programmers were still the arbiters of this taste expansion, guiding audiences to certain objects over others that may be available in the cultural field.

But post-1968, programmers, whose tastes deeply mattered, no longer relied on older classical and avant-garde aesthetic ideals to justify their decisions. In the spirit of leftist countercultures that were sweeping across young urban enclaves, they applied Marxist, revisionist, and liberation ethos to their craft. And they could cite a work's political value *as long as* it fit within the loose parameters of "taste." This shift has many implications that span discourses of many minoritized cinemas within the Euro-US context (e.g., postcolonial cinemas), but I want to emphasize most that many programmers of the time treated eclectic programming as a political act. It suggested that no longer could culture and subculture be neatly divided. No longer did films correspond essentially with any class category.

This social consciousness in part allowed queer films in the years following the Stonewall Riots to be relevant and granted visibility in art house spaces. At the same time, it was a *certain* kind of politics that ushered these films into repertory circulation. A politics of sexuality that might interrogate homophobia, repression, and heteronormativity was not their overt objective. Rather, their aim was to disrupt outmoded attitudes of what should be deemed worthy of the category of “art” and the status quo in the abstract. Even lesbian, gay, or bisexual-identified programmers had to negotiate this stance when they programmed queer content, oftentimes leaving them unable to frame a series through sexual politics (outside of gay and lesbian film festivals, of course). Programming queer work or work that could foster queer readings thus tended to signify a contempt for the “establishment,” or conventional thinking overall, and not specific normative cultural procedures that ostracized, maligned, disavowed, and neglected “offbeat” sexual and gender identities and practices.

That is not to say that programmers, especially queer ones, could not smuggle in a sexual politics that might rewire (dare I say “reprogram”) spectators’ routinized habits for thinking and feeling at the cinema. Fabiano Canosa, the programmer of the esteemed First Avenue Screening Room starting in 1973, and later, the Joseph Papp Public Theater in 1979, was one gay programmer who rarely if ever programmed series that directly named sexual politics. However, he frequently incorporated queer tastes and sensibilities into his programming, and kept a political and cultural awareness of films that appealed to many kinds of marginalized tastes. Canosa’s

former assistant of many years, Stephen Soba, identified in an interview with me the style of programming overall in those days as quite “spontaneous” and “ad hoc.”³¹ In recalling Canosa’s temporary fixations with auteurs, stars, or national cinemas, Soba named several auteur-oriented series that memorialized the work of Luis Buñuel, Sam Fuller, Nicholas Ray, Bernardo Bertolucci, Chantal Ackerman, Douglas Sirk, among many others. They also developed retrospectives that centered on stars such as Judy Holiday and Elizabeth Taylor. These retrospectives incorporated queer content across sensibilities and eras and welcomed opportunities to question heterosexist reading practices. But Soba also gave the example of “films of the civil rights movement” as a program more socially and thematically based than others. They also created programs that honored marginalized national cinemas (such as that of Hungary or Canosa’s native Brazil). The point here is that Canosa used his programming to underscore a *politics of marginality*, putting to social use what Soba referred to as “salonified” and “eclectic” approaches.

Canosa’s work at the Public Theater was not without precedent. His goal to put certain filmmakers who had otherwise been overlooked or seen as inferior (in the case of B-movie directors Nicholas Ray and Samuel Fuller) “on the map” typified the art-house programmer’s quest to expose audiences to work they had not encountered before. Canosa’s taste, as representative of other programmers at the time, was “all over the map,” without allegiance or devotion to one school or approach to filmmaking. Thus the intention to grant visibility to overlooked films and makers may have appeared a symptom of fickle and mercurial taste oscillations. From another

angle, however, the assortment, variety, eclecticism, and promiscuity that defined the character of repertory programming could be translated into a politics of taste as well as of time and place, in an age of converging political discourses and redrawn parameters for what subjectivities mattered and were worthy of attention, and in a location in which people of different identities, experiences, backgrounds, and proclivities met in the streets, in bars, and in the theaters of New York City. Canosa, as well as many of his counterparts, therefore conceived of a programming model that marshalled not only texts and tastes but discursive affinities that mirrored that of the city itself.

Canosa's penchant for textual, taste, and discursive intermingling was a reflection of his fandom for wildly popular film critic Pauline Kael, a serious cineaste as well as shrewd commentator on pretentious and elite cinephile cultures and attachments. Kael herself had programmed for years in Berkeley, California at the Cinema Guild from 1955 to 1960, writing program notes that would anticipate her witty and oftentimes cheeky descriptions of films both good and bad.³² Jeffrey Sconce smartly historicizes the impact that Kael's reviews had on audiences tired of the Hollywood conventions to which they had become all too accustomed. Sconce echoes Kael's provocation that true cinephiles, "talk less about good movies than what they love in bad movies."³³ For Kael, the cinema was not meant to be a space of simply quiet reverence for "great" films nor a mere rejection of those that do not pass muster. Rather the cinema, even when it was situated within the confines of "art,"

was often a conduit for arriving at delicious descriptions and unpredictable thought experiences, the raw material for intellectual experimentation.

The cult of Pauline Kael (her fans were known as “Paulettes”) helped to establish a new tone and set of expectations within intellectual audiences more likely to greet a Hollywood film with equal parts incredulity, sardonicism, and wonder than the earnest generation of cinephiles that came before them. Critics such as Kael and Parker Tyler wrote in the snarky (and very queer) tradition of social commentators such as Dorothy Parker and Oscar Wilde, effectively using criticism as a vehicle for wit, to delight in the bad and transform the boring into fodder for ridicule, and thus remake attachments through the image of camp pleasure.

more than anything they are representative of trends at the time to disarticulate cinematic history from its taste-based classifications. In lieu of established taste, they sought out a different way of watching that did not fall back on stiff protocols that would keep the art-house cinema entrenched in qualified cerebral satisfaction. This exhibition and critical climate therefore opened audiences up to encounter or reencounter films that could be met with affects as wide ranging as sardonicism and mockery sparked by camp, or curiosity spurred by deviant sexual practices dramatized on screen, or even critical modes incited by the programmatic schemata of double bills and thematic series. Such affective possibilities extended beyond the textual and into the spatial, bodily, and phenomenological, to which I will now turn.

Lusty Adjacencies

Programmers and spectators alike have been heavily informed by their urban contexts. Take the case of the Pacific Film Archive (PFA), located in Berkeley, California. PFA's founder, Sheldon Renan, has cited the Cinémathèque Française (helmed by famed programmer Henri Langlois) in Paris as the model for the institution; the PFA too wanted to be a dedicated space for serious cinematic viewing, reflection, and conversation.³⁵ No doubt PFA's programming has been shaped by the academic and countercultural energies of the Berkeley area that surround it. In New York City, each art-house theater of the 1970s and 1980s channeled the distinct flavors of its encompassing neighborhood. The Village, where the Bleeker Street Cinema, Film Forum and the Quad were located, was a contact zone for all kinds of

social deviants: the gays and lesbians of the West Village, the gangs and punks of the East Village, the homeless population on the Bowery, and bohemians of all stripes across the neighborhoods carrying on the contrarianism that came before them in the moody energy of the beatnik generation of the 1950s and the idealistic humanism of the hippies in the 1960s.³⁶

New York City is a particularly striking example of a unique urban space because of its multiple conflicting cultural and historical associations with, on the one hand, elite intellectualism, and on the other, vice such as prostitution and pornography. Art-house cinemas merged these associations, in part due to the fact that they programmed European films, attacked in the U.S. for their morally lax depictions of sex and sexuality. No doubt there is a history there. In the postwar years, Barbara Wilinsky argues, the censors and Hollywood constantly condemned art-house films for using obscene and overly sexual content to sell tickets (which was sometimes true but often inflated by moralists). In 1949, *Variety* commented on one film society's advertisements; the Foreign Films Movie Club's "promotional literature," they said, "is frequently angled like an exploitation house's marquee."³⁷ Wilinsky says the same worked in reverse: "Because of the connection between foreign films and risqué entertainment, 'grind houses' specializing in exploitation films, such as Chicago's LaSalle and Studio Theatres, also showed foreign films."³⁸ Repertory and porn theaters in Times Square, an area known for vice, could also be found mixing their content because of these associations, or in the very least, internalizing the logics of nearby theaters if not the actual content.³⁹

In light of this mixing, disparate audiences found themselves convening in previously uncharacteristic spaces, some devoted to the “skin flick” and others more to art cinema. In her book *Lewd Looks*, Elena Gorfinkel summarizes several accounts from the mid-1960s of the veteran “hard-breathers” sharing the house with “Vassar girls in pony tails and young men with beards” curious to see what had been forbidden.⁴⁰ Gorfinkel notes that Russ Meyer and Radley Metzger were especially central to this pivot. Metzger aimed his films such as *Camille 2000* and *Therese and Isabelle*, both of which depict homosexuality, to appeal to, as a critic at the time wrote, “sophisticated married couples in the mid-30s’ rather than aging insurance salesmen with their finger poised behind their suitcases.”⁴¹ Metzger’s films retained a liminal status, balancing on the fence between art-house and soft-core pornography, and thus attracting audience members from both sides of the aisle.

Likewise, Meyer positioned himself as an auteur of the erotic, wielding the ability to cross over from the soft-core circuits of adult movie theaters into the repertory and art-house spaces, and finally, the mainstream with the Twentieth Century Fox release of the Roger-Ebert-scripted *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*. I was surprised to discover that both Metzger and Meyer were invited (separately) to MoMA in 1971.⁴² One of Meyer’s visits that year was framed within an effort to discuss censorship. Despite an attempt to elevate the film from a lower taste status, it elicited what Gorfinkel describes as a “collision between differing cinematic taste publics.”⁴³ Regardless of MoMA’s cultural esteem, lower-class spectators came out and did not hesitate to audibly react to the film throughout. The boisterous “bodily”

affect of a more working-class audience met in a contact zone the average MoMA patron, supposedly lured by the more “intellectual” considerations of Meyer’s experimental style and creative freedom. These accounts of differing demographics grappling with each other’s presence in the theater demonstrates the deepening blurring and confusing of taste boundaries that prompted the blurring of spectatorial boundaries as well. Where once a person could count on MoMA’s screenings to be reserved for populations proficient in highbrow intellectual traditions, there now existed the possibility of uncertain encounters with the surrounding bodies as well as the film itself.

Despite the observed tension at MoMA, it could easily be argued that such conflicting affective forces push against one another (even at a non-conscious level), encouraging those present to rethink the object at hand. As such, Meyer’s films can no longer rely on a taste-determined set of connotations; the intellectuals are given a chance to infuse sensation, desire, and camp into their readings just as those who enjoyed Meyer’s work as shallow entertainment might find an opportunity to reframe their knowledge within the museological. Affect plays a key role here in that, as Teresa Brennan puts it, “emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another.”⁴⁴ I would add spectatorial adjacency to Brennan’s list of the many scenes in which affect is transmitted, and I would suggest that such relations change films’ respective tones.

As Gorfinkel notes, the sexploitation genre, once one of the few ways to get even a peek at nude bodies alluding to or simulating sexual acts in motion, became by

the 1970s a source of campy humor for sophisticated urban audiences. Films self-conscious about their obscenity now reeked of datedness if not cultural irrelevance. But crucially, their programming continued, not in the porn theaters where hardcore was now the main entrée, but in revivals and art houses. The shifting attitudes towards sex, which I will discuss momentarily, are pivotal to this transformation, but sexploitation's staying power also suggests an accrual of affective possibilities that had either not been present before the 1970s or only existed in sensed form; a collage of affects, if you will, is produced out of their multivalence. Based on their selections, programmers considered the many audiences for these films as well as their attendant pleasures: for some, sexploitation films had historical meaning, while for others, comedic value, and still for others, perhaps even titillation, be it residual or a fetishizing of the past, or a mixture of both. Programmers, in their *bricolé* sensibilities, tried to anticipate and stay attuned to this motley of affects, and to diffuse their resonances across potential audience types and their assumed attachments.

As taste borders were trespassed, so were those between sexual identities. In the 1970s, young heterosexual urban dwellers had started to take note of the gay male practices of cruising, group sex, and nonmonogamy that had been in place for some time. Historians of sexuality have intimated that heterosexual couples and singles alike wanted "in" on the fun too.⁴⁵ Though often overlooked, the cinema played a major part in this cross-pollination. One primary example is the exhibition of *Boys in the Sand* (Wakefield Poole, 1971).⁴⁶ Wakefield Poole's Fire Island-shot gay hypnotic

pornographic fantasy, it has been documented, was seen by straight as well as gay audiences upon its release in 1971 and throughout the decade in cities across North America and Europe, where it was programmed repeatedly.⁴⁷ As many pornography historians have discussed at length, *Deep Throat* (Gerard Damiano, 1972) was by and large the first pornographic film that made it acceptable for couples to watch explicit content in public together, but one could see *Boys in the Sand* as a precursor to this moment. Heterosexual couples and singles may not have gone to see *Boys in the Sand* because they necessarily desired to see gay sex (though, of course, they could have), nor only to experience Poole's sophisticated *mise-en-scène* and editing, but to learn what it meant to be sexually uninhibited, to be empowered to deepen one's own erotic imagination, and to be infected by its picturesque and exuberant depiction of sexual freeness as a spirit to which to aspire.⁴⁸ In HBO's *The Deuce* (2017-), one episode included a scene where a sex worker takes her gangster boyfriend to see the film. Even as the boyfriend, played by James Franco, tries to avert his eyes, he remains intrigued by the sexual technique presented on screen.

With the rise of hardcore pornography and censorship cases' victories in the court came a proliferation of porn theaters in several U.S. cities, none more concentrated than New York City. Samuel Delany, in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, explains that large movie houses by the early-to-middle seventies underwent a mitotic conversion into smaller theaters that would serve a sexually awakened, largely male, public.⁴⁹ Delany eloquently recounts his days frequenting these theaters and the sexual encounters that would take place there. Delany writes

that the absence of male homosexuality “from the narrative space on the screen proper is what allowed it to go on rampantly among the observing audience...”⁵⁰ The theater here becomes a meeting ground for straight men, gay men, bisexual men, indifferent men, curious men, and so on seeking the shared atmosphere of arousal that such a semi-public space could offer. Perhaps it makes sense that in this era of intense gay and lesbian identity politics, from the days of gay liberation in the 1970s to the ACT UP and AIDS activism of the 1980s, the darkness of the theater provided opportunity for unclear or uncertain subject positions, a space of contingency within which inchoate pleasures could emerge.

At this time too entertainment spaces such as live concert venues and nightclubs were becoming adjacent to theaters. In London, the Scala Theater would during the 1980s host all-night continuous screenings alongside their dance spaces. Making interchangeable the partygoer and moviegoer, attendees could take a break from dancing to watch *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978) or *Performance* (Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg, 1970) next door, just as moviegoers might be energized by the party next door in order to sustain their nocturnal marathon. In Berlin, the Kant Kino showing New German Wave films of Fassbinder and Wenders was located alongside the Kant Kino Music Hall where bands such as X-Ray Spex and Culture Club performed. Back in the United States, the Fox Venice in Los Angeles, as the *Los Angeles Times* commented, “prides itself as a community center with segues into live, ethnic shows, political benefits and concerts...”⁵¹ The theater’s owner told a reporter at the time that, “the whole idea is that the local movie theater doesn’t have to be a

crass supermarket, a cold image with people sitting in a cold box watching film on a cold screen.”⁵² While cinema had since the early twentieth century been intertwined with civic activity in multipurpose spaces, the latter half of the century returned it to its almost Vaudevillian roots, in which films and other communal and entertainment events were conjoined, only this time differently invested in new music genres (e.g., punk, disco, techno), art movements (e.g., performance, “happenings,” pop, feminist), and leftist political causes (e.g., civil rights, national and indigenous liberation, feminism, gay liberation, Marxism).⁵³

The importance of these phenomena vis-à-vis the *bricolé* shift in programming is that the cinema’s bodily and sensorial connotations shift with this rise of porn theaters and nightclubs, themselves proximate to and sometimes cross-fertilizing with art cinemas. Delany’s treatment of sex as a hobby repurposes the space of the cinema and its dominant ontology, which requires of its spectators that their attention be directed forward towards the screen. By the 1970s and 1980s, the cinema as a quiet, disciplined site primarily designated for affectively restrained viewing is undermined by the many co-constitutive adjacencies and permeations of the art house to the spheres of pornography, and of music/nightlife to cinema. These lusty adjacencies find themselves encoded in the filmic texts themselves, which respond to and are tailored for the increasingly lively programmatic environment of the art-house and repertory cinema.

Promiscuous Programming

The incorporation of cult, exploitation, and B-movies into art-house programming by the early 1970s was a programmatic realization of an already-present linkage in alleged tawdry content found at both porn and repertory theaters (though, of course, to drastically different degrees). Art-house cinema's reputation between the postwar era and the late 1960s had been paradoxical in this regard; on the one hand, elite, dry, and cerebral, and on the other, synonymous with nudity, adult themes, and the showcasing of sexual taboos. By the 1970s, however, art-house cinemas no longer cared to submerge, disavow, or eclipse its prurient connections. Within the backdrop of shifting sexual norms, they could now flaunt and further profit off their ill repute, which would lead them to welcome the "trashy" content to which they had, at worst, repudiated or, at best, avoided in the previous era.

Landmark legislation to decriminalize the sale, distribution, and purchase of pornographic material made it all the more possible for art-house programmers to invite softcore and "art porn" into their spaces.⁵⁴ The baby boomer demographic who no doubt comprised an overwhelming share of these audiences, especially for evening or late-night screenings when older patrons were presumed to be at home in bed, had a hunger for such depictions. Alongside their patronage at the revival and art houses, the baby boomers were central to what became known as the "sex industry," full of erotic commodities from manuals/guides such as *The Joy of Sex* to magazines like *Penthouse* to 8 and 16 mm porn films to toys such as vibrators playfully rebranded for the liberated consumer. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman describe this as a

time when, “Americans came to accept pleasure as a legitimate, necessary component of their lives, unbound by older ideals of marital fidelity and permanence.”⁵⁵ With the notion of “marriage as the privileged site for sexual expression” burst asunder, singles and unmarried couples found themselves going to the cinema to seek out representations of sexual and romantic interaction that had before their generation been largely unthinkable. Art-house cinema satisfied this liberatory drive to explore, probe, question, and ultimately discover new pleasures.

The definition of art-house cinema as, like the museum, a space of education, reflection, and intellectual exercise and exchange began to further erode by the early 1970s, when films such as *I am Curious Yellow* (Vilgot Sjöman, 1967), *Belle de Jour* and *Last Tango in Paris* became “must-sees” for many regular urban moviegoers, not only the sophisticated cineaste. As a consequence, the art-house cinema’s association with graphic or explicit sexual content further deepened. Nevertheless, as Linda Williams has noted, art-house going audiences could claim the alibi of narrative sophistication so often connoted by the “tasteful” foreign film in order to distinguish *their* “scopophilic” tendencies from those elicited by hardcore pornography. *In the Realm of the Senses*, a sensation at the time on multiple fronts, embodies this paradigm whereby perverse content is housed within the arty style, in this case, that characteristic of Oshima Nagisa’s work. The sex, however, rather than being tempered by the sublime artiness of the film’s aesthetic, was all the more shocking and, at the end, horrific because of it. As Williams says of her own experience seeing it at the time, “the film [was] at once too real, too hard-core, and too beautiful to

fathom.”⁵⁶ *In the Realm of the Senses* (which I will return to several times throughout this project) does not stand alone in its visceral depiction of perverse erotic life. The films of Ken Russell, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Bernardo Bertolucci, to name a few, wrested audiences out of their conventional knowledge about sex while retaining the prestige of “art,” within and without its shifting guises.

The low aesthetics of John Waters and Paul Morrissey that became so central to the promiscuity of *bricolage*-style programming have historical precursors that run independent of highbrow queer imaginaries. Janet Staiger has shown that the underground work of Warhol, along with that of Kenneth Anger and Jack Smith, must be placed in a pre-Stonewall nexus of queer underground production that lay the groundwork for later gay liberation efforts. Staiger suggests that it was not the outright politics of those films that were funneled into gay liberation politics post-Stonewall, but rather their ability to break with the “accommodationist” appeals of the prior “homophile” movements caught between the poles of pathologization and respectability. Staiger describes a scene where male heterosexual programmers such as Jonas Mekas (founder of the Film-Makers’ Cooperative in New York City) and Amos Vogel played key roles in heuristically leading queers to “de-shame” their identities, histories, and sexual practices. Staiger animatedly writes that, “for one thing, these films were not embarrassed by their sexual deviance. They flaunted it and played with it. For another, the sexual deviance was, within its contemporary gay hierarchies, the most underprivileged—it was directed towards fairies and drag queens, not respectable middle-class gay men.”⁵⁷ An inchoate form of “trash” was

already amenable to some art-house circles in the mid-1960s; as Staiger notes, the “flaunting” of sexual otherness was central to the artistic production of this work.

Paul Morrissey’s trilogy, *Flesh*, *Trash*, and *Heat* (1972), which features regulars from Warhol’s Factory such as Holly Woodlawn, Jackie Curtis, and Candy Darling, further enlarged the Warhol brand in broader art-house outlets. As early as 1969 (the same year of the Stonewall Riots), Morrissey showed *Flesh* in MoMA’s Cineprobe series, a program devoted to socially and stylistically provocative work. Shaky cameras, long takes, improvised dialogue, oddball characters who spanned the gender and sexual spectrum, and transgressive themes comprised Morrissey’s films. His intent, as he made it known, was to comment on the moral dissolution and degeneration of the American family, but many critics notice that the films appear more to be humorous experiments in taste and art, not unlike the work of a later addition to the art-house scene, John Waters.

John Waters’s films were distinct in that they followed a radically different camp and amateur sensibility than Warhol and his ilk (who tended to explore sexuality through boredom, quotidian observation, and inactivity [hence all the long takes]), but they did not resemble those of the venerated auteurs (e.g., Pasolini and Visconti) either, whose work was already speaking to the enduring elite art and literary canons. On their own then, Waters and Morrissey symbolized a disavowal of and therefore a departure from the aesthetic sobriety of queer underground auteurs that came before them.⁵⁸ Midnight cult films such as *Female Trouble* and *Pink Flamingos* celebrated a visual palette that stemmed more from home movies than

anything that was regularly screened at the art-house cinema. The films' anti-social and subversive content, however, made them akin to a lineage of banned and censored films. They could fit within the programming not because they had nowhere else to be screened but because they defied the codes of propriety that had for so long kept certain films on the margins or even largely unseen. Art-house programmers and exhibitors like Canosa prided themselves on bringing rare films and other obscure moving-image media out of the shadows and into view for inquisitive audiences. Programmatically, this content allowed art-house theaters to position themselves as sites of revelation and discovery, granting visibility to social pariah and unseemly acts otherwise obstructed from view.

Towards a Theory of (Deviant?) *Bricolage*-Style Programming

Thus far I have tracked the interpenetration of texts ("high," "middle" and "low" genres; high-budget and independent; Hollywood and global; intellectual and sensual), collision of demographics and affects (straight and LGBT/queer; young and elderly; serious and sardonic), panoply of uses and purposes (theater as convivial site of sex, socializing, retreat, exploration, and even partying), which all constitute a historical moment in which art-house and repertory spaces underwent dramatic cultural and spatial shifts. In addition, a distinct emergent cinephile culture also formed, marked by bookshops and stores such as New York's Cinemabilia, devoted to fan magazines, production stills, posters, and other memorabilia of interest to

aficionados.⁵⁹ Programming itself ingested these multiple factors and catalyzed their transformations through the years.

Old distinctions of taste, content, style, and pleasure that had been in place for generations in the U.S. would appear to be breaking down at this historical juncture. These markers in place, the urban habitus itself appears a multifarious, heterogeneous assemblage of moving parts that I have hitherto been referring to as *bricolage* in relation to programming. Taking a more aerial viewpoint of *bricolage* to describe the cultural conditions of the 1970s and 1980s would bring us close to Derrida's notion that discourse itself is a *bricoleur*, "borrowing one's concepts from the text of a heritage."⁶⁰ Derrida's redefining of discourse itself as a site of *bricolage* is a response to Claude Lévi-Strauss' conception that mythical thought is not a product of deliberate engineering but rather *bricolage*: it uses the "debris of events" as its inventory to construct the logics and ethics that govern a given culture.⁶¹

Still bearing Derrida's usage in mind, I want to return to a more specific use of *bricolage* and *bricoleur*, not in its strictly historical or anthropological implications, but in its practical ones.⁶² To this end, I would propose, via Lévi-Strauss, the repertory-house programmer is a kind of *bricoleur*. Note the resemblances as Lévi-Strauss describes the role, which is worth citing at length:

His first practical step is retrospective. He has to turn back to an already existent set made up of tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and, finally and above all, to engage in a sort of dialogue with it and, before choosing between them, to index the possible answers which the whole set can offer to his problem. He interrogates all the heterogeneous objects of which his treasury is composed to discover what each of them could 'signify' and so contribute to the definition of a set which has yet to materialize but

which will ultimately differ from the instrumental set only in the internal disposition of its parts.⁶³

Lévi-Strauss regards the initial stage of *bricolage* as requiring retrospection in the same way that a repertory-house programmer must assess the past to create new or at least fresh meaning out of it. Lévi-Strauss also acknowledges that each aspect within the *bricoleur*'s inventory has the potential to signify something particular depending on its employment over other pieces and placements within the set. Similarly, we might see the programmer-*bricoleur* as a shepherd of intertextuality, guiding spectators and viewers towards a certain set of beliefs, sensations, acknowledgments, and so on, all through the materials that are already at her or his disposal.

Richard Schwarz, the 1970s programmer of the Thalia in New York City, perfectly embodies this image of the programmer-as-*bricoleur*. Before buying a lease for the theater, Schwarz had worked a series of odd jobs that would seem to prepare him for such a role. While still enrolled at Emerson College, he worked part-time examining films for obscenity for the Boston district attorney; after graduating in 1974, he worked for a movie theater specializing in blaxploitation films; he even at one point did lighting for Chesty Morgan, the famous exotic dancer and star of Doris Wishman's sexploitation film *Double Agent 73* (1974).⁶⁴ Schwarz earned a name for himself after opening the restored Thalia in 1977. Ben Davis provides several accounts of patrons who considered Schwarz's programming to be unique among the assortment of repertory houses. "While Schwarz programmed the typical fare of a serious cinematheque...he mixed these with the quirky, rare films that he unearthed," from forgotten cartoon shorts to the "first retrospective of silent screen legend Louise

Brooks, including a rare showing of her bizarre B-Western swan song, *Overland Stage Raiders* (1938), opposite John Wayne.”⁶⁵ In fact, Schwarz became known for editing together compilations of Hollywood outtakes whose copyrights had been left in the public domain, screening them at the Thalia, and then offering them for distribution. The outtakes included stars such as Humphrey Bogart, Bette Davis, and Errol Flynn in vulnerable and comedic moments that might run counter to their image as poised, disciplined actors.

Editing together these compilations, Schwarz exemplifies the *bricoleur* that I described earlier via Hal Foster who literally assembles the neglected or discarded shards of film history into some kind of sum total, heterogeneous as it may be. Taking the programming sensibilities of fellow *bricoleur*-programmers Vogel and Barry a step further, Schwarz spotlighted both the remnants of the filmic past “unworthy” of attention and those déclassé films of Russ Meyer, Roger Corman, and Ed Wood, Jr. that had been deemed “trash” and “sleaze.” Schwarz’s love for disparaged cultural objects seemed to extend into the realm of identity as well. Schwarz programmed alongside the European masters what Davis calls “outré subjects of sexual orientation and gender identity, such as a double feature on homosexuality, *Boys in the Band* and *A Different Story* (1970), and another on transsexuality—*The Christine Jorgensen Story* (1970)...and John Dexter’s *I Want What I Want* (1972).”⁶⁶ Schwarz’s own gay identity could have very well played a role in his interest both in disreputable films and overshadowed queer ones. Yet queer programming was neither necessarily nor primarily done by queer programmers. On the contrary, Schwarz could be seen

deploying a queer sensibility that is characteristic of many urban art-house programmers at the time, regardless of personal identity.

It may be tempting here to position the programmer-as-*bricoleur* (that Schwarz and others such as Canosa embody) as an early symptom of “postmodernism.” A stylistic movement that allegedly took hold by the 1980s, historians and critics characterize “postmodernism” as having a disregard for cultural distinctions, leading to hodgepodge aesthetics in which quotation, reference, pastiche, and appropriation signify globalized capitalism’s tragic envelopment of society. Dick Hebdige’s description of subculture as *bricolage* deepens these connections, especially within marginalized spaces of cultural production. Hebdige positions teddy boys, mods, and punks as, “*bricoleurs* [who] appropriated another range of commodities by placing them in a symbolic ensemble which served to erase or subvert their original straight meanings.”⁶⁷ Hebdige believes that subversion in these cases is mostly wishful thinking, since material and commodities are still tethered to capitalist modes of production no matter what efforts claim to resignify them.

This is a tenet of the kind of thinking of “postmodernism” that would come to be affiliated with literary and cultural theorist Frederic Jameson.⁶⁸ Such an application might be fine if postmodernism did not carry strong currents of condemnation or celebration with it. Because “postmodernism” is so frequently subject to intense valuation, it is difficult to locate in it subject-object formations that do not evoke kneejerk responses. To some, postmodernism promises the freeing eradication of difference, and to others, the lamentable desegregation and

decontextualization of discourses that had hitherto made history and therefore human existence legible and distinct from mediation.⁶⁹ Postmodernism and its critiques therefore do not serve us in thinking about programming as a desire-inducing apparatus that profoundly altered spectators' awareness of sexuality during this period.

What existent theories might then help engage the bodily, sensorial, affective, and ruminative dimensions of spectatorship in light of programmatic considerations? Scott MacDonald has theorized Amos Vogel's programming at Cinema 16, which for him, encouraged optimal forms of reflection not only upon the texts themselves but upon the social, and, at times, political, conditions of its respective spectators. MacDonald frames Cinema 16's collisional form of programming as "dialectical." He observes,

One form of film collided with another in such a way as to create maximum thought—and perhaps action—on the part of the audience, not simply about individual films but about film itself and about the social and political implications of its conventional (or unconventional) uses. The similarity to Eisensteinian dialectic is more than accidental; Vogel and [his assistant] Goelman were great admirers of the Russian filmmaker.⁷⁰

MacDonald's deployment of "dialectic" casts Vogel's programming as having a montage-like quality that physiologically and cognitively re-formed spectators' understandings of the world. Certainly MacDonald's formulation is quite convincing given the surprising and clashing film styles and genres Vogel marshaled. No doubt also Vogel had leftist leanings typical of postwar U.S. intellectuals that did at times permeate certain selections.

On the other hand, I am more inclined to think of Vogel's programming (and others like it) more accurately as *bricolage* because, in part, such vibrant and energized politics were not always and essentially at the heart of Vogel's programming practices. There were times when Vogel sought to "shake up" sedentary understandings of art and what it was capable of, and there were other times when he reinforced classic notions of art. Let us not forget also that he was more ready to frame film as an art form (albeit "subversive") than as a form of activism. *Bricolage* does not imply any kind of politicized essence, nor does it assign spectatorial effect to a form (which was, effectively, Eisenstein's aim). Rather it characterizes a form and suggests possibilities for reception of that form.

MacDonald's claim is an extension of his position within a larger conversation in film studies about the educational role of programming. These academic voices seem to all agree that film programming is meant to, first and foremost, as Chon Noriega puts it, "incite questions" in the audience.⁷¹ In her essay "The Ethical Presenter: Or How to Have Good Arguments over Dinner," Laura U. Marks briefly describes scholar-programmers' differing approaches. Marks explains, "I could summarize them as: Scott [MacDonald], respect the work; Patty [Zimmerman], respect the audience; Robin [Curtis], use argument to respect work and audience."⁷² Under debate then is a rather odd binary opposition. The struggle appears to be between a loose educational model of programming in which spectators are allowed to explore and discover meanings on their own, and one in which they are more directly steered towards the programmer's intended meaning. For Curtis, Marks

elaborates, “a curated program is an argument, a well-defined, defensible, pertinent statement. An argument needs a thesis. And a thesis needs a verb. Without these, a curated program is meaningless.”⁷³ Curtis’s curatorial aim, it would appear, is more on the *didactic* side; spectators should emerge from the experience with an altered view or consciousness, a changed perspective on art, politics, culture, or another discursive field that mirrors the programmer’s intent.

I propose *bricolage*-style programming as a counterapproach to this. It employs what we might call a *heuristic* educational mode, that is, one driven by proposition, suggestion, self-direction, and curiosity over determinacy and resolution. It allows films of disparate substance, theme, taste, and context to be put in conversation, to wait and see what emerges. In this scene of potentiality, *bricolage*-style programming recognizes that the knowledges and sensations that any given program might evince are legion and largely indeterminate in their use. This strategy guides the spectator, who then shapes the encounter to perhaps create some kind of gestalt out of it. There exists also the possibility that the spectator might resist such impulses for coherence and walk away with more selective understandings of the films’ dialogic meanings.

Despite differences among these models (the *didactic* versus *heuristic*), Marks emphasizes programmatic approaches that are invested in the ethical dimension of filmgoing. When she calls the programmer or curator an “ethical presenter,” she is not, it appears, asking that the person elect a series of films that simply project a code of conduct onto the audience, but is thinking in a more Spinoza-inflected way about

an ethics of bodily capacity. A curator's role, in this light, is to prompt spectators to, as affect theorists like to put it, affect and to be affected.⁷⁴ Filmic assemblages catalyze certain reactions, and allow viewers to respond either in sync, in tension, or in ambiguity should the work or series of works foreclose any easy readings. Though they are unlikely to come right out and say it, art-house and repertory programmers are often enough interested in ethics. They put in conversation not only films but the different elements that comprise being affected *by films*; who their audience is or likely to be for a given program, what time of day, what the socio-political backdrop for its exhibition is, and so on (among other practical concerns such as print availability and affordability) are considerations that help programmers to treat texts as richly connotative parts contingent upon their spatiotemporal relations. Perhaps, then, it is not so much about being an ethical presenter as much as it is about fostering an ethical scene within which spectators may encounter and reencounter films, each other, and even themselves.

From a less optimistic perspective, *bricolage*-style programming might appear the ultimate gamble for programmers in that the already-variable conditions for public enjoyment of films is only magnified by textual unpredictability. Without a sturdy platform on which a series can rest, who is to know what meaning an audience will take away from their viewing? How then could a programmer be an "ethical presenter" if she or he is unable to fully command a calendar's motley parts? These debates among theorists of film programming, which turn on whether or not programming should be guided by an organized principle, or if spectators' should

attempt on their own to create sense of the parts, strikingly enough parallels conversations that art-house and repertory programmers had been having for years. Ben Davis discusses that this debate gained traction by the mid 1980s, just as many revival houses in New York were closing or converting to first-runs.⁷⁵ The programmers at the Regency Theater in New York City professed their love of thematic series or theme bills instead of what Davis catachrestically deems “random programming.”⁷⁶ One programmer even suggested that the future of repertory cinema exhibition *depended* upon theme bills. “The *Harold and Maude*, *Casablanca*, *King of Hearts* thing is just passé,” he told *Newsweek* in 1987. “But if you bring back *Harold and Maude* as part of an intergenerational sex film festival, you have a hit.”⁷⁷ Indeed, thematic series became repertory programming’s *modus operandi* by the 1990s and have persisted to this day. The other side of the debate saw limitations in this model, which would keep moviegoers who aren’t fans of a specific genre, star, or movement out for the series’ delimited time period. In addition, and on a more epistemological front, we might further extrapolate that this model also forestalls opportunities for exploration and discovery that might come with what might appear more “scattershot” forms of programming, especially as they might exist in double bills where disparate films were put in dialogue for an audience that remains for both co-features.

Ben Davis rightfully notes that both sides of this debate are “absolutist;” indeed, through the years repertory programming often combined both thematized series (both over the span of a given week or month, or on a day of the week for a

month, for instance) and eclectic mixtures of double-feature and single screenings.⁷⁸ Further, in many ways they both activate what Julia Kristeva calls intertextual “transposition”—a shuttling of texts to new contexts within which their meanings change.⁷⁹ So while more *bricolage*-style schemata might allow spectators to more freely discover meanings through proximity to another film or screening, themed series, where films are more situated within certain discursive fields, still allow for dynamic and unplanned semiotic and sensorial interactions. *Harold and Maude* (Hal Ashby, 1971), which I discuss several times in the following chapters, placed within something like an “intergenerational sex film festival” might steer audiences towards embracing intergenerational desire when previous exposure to judgmental depictions may have caused them to be averse to it. Another series such as a star Ruth Gordon or director Hal Ashby retrospective, or one on films from 1971, would likely elicit a completely different set of intellectual and affective assemblages, some, for example, queer, and some not so much. My point here is that both programmatic formats—the highly *bricolé* and the more systematic—have the capacity to forge novel modes of intertextuality that might jettison routinized forms of knowing and feeling. By the 1990s, *bricolage*-style programming goes out of fashion along with repertory houses themselves; programmers were then more conservatively inclined to *primarily* program older films that could cohere with and be safely situated within a series guaranteed to draw a predictable audience.

Coda: Recovering Bygone Traditions

The widespread obsolescence of *bricolage* sensibility in programming is something to be mourned. When satisfying loyal audiences is privileged over taking risks and surprising one's audience, art-house cinema regresses back to a dominant mode that predates the late 1960s, when one was asked to adulate auteurs, respect and appreciate esteemed high art traditions, and order knowledges of genre and taste.⁸⁰ It stays within the realm of the "already-said" about film history, and maintains comfort zones rather than producing contact zones, compounded all the more by the digital era of algorithmic curation (e.g., Netflix's *cinematch*) and righteous politics (e.g., "trigger warnings"). These highly predictable and anodyne practices keep old social categories and structures firmly in place, stalling revisionism and critical meditation in an age that desperately needs them.

Sexual and gender nonconformity—especially as it moves outside the also routine categories of LGBT—now has become more difficult to encounter if it is not within one's generic taste parameters. I would argue that it is for this reason that several once-canonical queer films have dropped out of the canon and out of programming circuits. Without a secured fan base or a clear location within the queer spectatorial imaginary, programmers are unlikely to take the financial risk to show films that do not fit neatly into a taste, genre, style, or even tonal classifications. Given this loss, I engage more closely with these forgotten films (such as those dizzying and perverse explorations of Ken Russell, or a film such as *Myra Breckinridge*) in the chapters to come than with films that remain canonical to this day.

The next three chapters will deploy this notion of *bricolage*-style programming to explore how it impacted the sexual politics of art-house cinema. In the wake of the Production Code's abolition and in the throws of sexual liberation, art-house cinema puts into conversation highly varied sexual desires and deviant gender performances. This motley mixture allowed spectators' imaginations to run wild. Even when films punished characters for their queerness, programming gave spectators the capacity to mold and remold representations, in turn undermining moralism, redefining it as camp, or even being titillated by its verboten framing. In this sense, "sexual politics" is not meant to simply reflect the "zeitgeist" or legible political ethos of the moment, but also to ascertain within the *bricolage* what is imagined, inchoate, sensed, as well as embodied and lived.

Notes

¹ *The Village Voice*, June 30, 1966, 20-1.

² *The Village Voice*, May 1, 1969, 46; *The Village Voice*, May 15, 1969, 46.

³ Grant Lee, "A Never-Ending Film Festival," *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1977.

⁴ Though I am not providing an overall portrait of of repertory and art-house cinema programming pre-1968, I have looked at *The Village Voice* listings between 1965 and 1968, as well as Pauline Kael's programming at the Cinema Guild in Berkeley during her tenure (1955-60), which all conform to this trend. This is why Vogel's programming was unique. It showed educational films, documentaries, propaganda, as well as avant-garde work, but this an exception to the rule (which in part explains his esteem).

⁵ Some scholarship has alluded to this, but not through the lens of programming. See, for instance, J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Midnight Movies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983); Joan Hawkins, *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); John Cline and Robert G. Weiner, eds. *From the Arthouse to the Grindhouse: Highbrow and Lowbrow Transgression in Cinema's First Century* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010).

⁶ Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art." *October* vol. 34 (Autumn 1985), 64.

⁷ The decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s tend to be separated in other film histories as well as cultural studies—and for good reason. Major sociological, political, and economic shifts took place during those years. More recently, however, cultural theorists have begun to link these decades as part of a slow progression towards what many call "neoliberalism," that is, the amplified convergence of ideologies of capitalism with those associated with the Enlightenment. With the idea of the welfare state in crisis, ideals of individual freedom became increasingly linked to economic responsibility—you are the one who must generate the means to have "the good life." Neoliberalism is also associated with widespread privatization; everything becomes an opportunity for capital gain. In many ways, *bricolage*-style programming conforms to this entrepreneurial model that trades on making use of every corner of the market. Programmers strategically marshaled films from across the taste strata, it would seem, to garner the widest audience, to make sure they could turn a profit. Within this reading, programmers look an awful lot like mainstream and Hollywood cultural producers who would rather turn a profit than make and exhibit work that thoughtfully responds to or steers spectators' worldviews in meaningful ways. The ease with which art-house programmers incorporated 1980s blockbusters into their calendars is a testament to their need to stay within a market that, with the advent of video recording technology, begins to recede. At the same time, programmers' arrangements, whatever the intention might have been, uprooted deeply embedded partitions between the kind of fare that was deemed worthy of intellectual reflection and that which belonged to more consumer-driven middle- or low-brow traditions.

⁸ This is based on interviewee comments made in interviews I conducted with programmers and spectators present at the time. Strangely, I have yet to find an actual study on art-house audience demographics in terms of gender, race, and class. For other demographics information, see Barbara Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) and Bruce A. Austin, "Portrait of an Art Film Audience," *Journal of Communication* 34.1 (Winter 1984): 75–87.

⁹ Amos Vogel, "Risks and Rewards of Cinematic Clairvoyance." Series III: Writings, 1896-1996, Box #132. Amos Vogel Papers, 1896-2001, Columbia University.

¹⁰ See Williams, *Screening Sex*, and Osterweil, *Flesh Cinema*; Staiger, "Finding Community in the Early 1960s: Underground Cinema and Sexual Politics," in *Perverse Spectators*, 125-160.

¹¹ In reference to ACT UP activism, Deborah Gould uses the term "emotional habitus" to describe the urgency that imbued these sites of protest. An emotional habitus is constituted by, "socially-constructed...taken for granted understandings or schemas in any social grouping...[that] provide members with a disposition or orientation to action" (33). Gould, wonderfully remolding Bourdieu's lexicon, writes that, "operating beneath conscious awareness, the emotional habitus of a social group provides members with an emotional disposition, with a sense of what and how to feel, with ways of figuring out and understanding what they are feeling" (34). See Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

¹² Wilinsky asks, "Was the art film industry ever interested in being an alternative culture that was 'left alone,' or was it simply interested in its *image* of exclusivity? Did art house operators, perhaps, exploit the appeal of being part of an alternative culture detached from concerns about mass audience, yet market this distinction to as many people as possible? Since at least the 1940s, art cinema has balanced its desire for difference and its desire for maximum profits" (5). And later, on the ontology of art cinema, she writes, "Rather than accepting a static notion of the art film as an abstract concept, we become aware of the instability of the notion of the art film and it becomes clear that entire art film industry was needed to ground the art film, define the term, and determine the values of the growing art film phenomenon. As the exhibition sites for art films, art houses helped to establish art cinema's image as well as its qualities" (39). See Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters*.

¹³ *Ibid*, 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 13.

¹⁵ For an updated version of this debate now set on a global scale, see Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover's introduction to their anthology *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁶ The film society movement formed in Europe before it took off in the United States. See Richard Abel's account of 1920s cine clubs in Paris in *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

¹⁷ See Wasson, *Museum Movies*, "Appendix: Film Programs of the Museum of Modern Art, 1934–1949," 195-208.

¹⁸ Wasson, *Museum Movies*, 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 133.

²⁰ Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16: Documents toward a History of the Film Society*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 6.

²¹ See MacDonald, *Cinema 16*.

²² They may have been able to get around the high cost of union projectionists too, but Vogel—a leftist to the core—agreed they should go union. See MacDonald, *Cinema 16*, 43.

²³ Amos Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art* (New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2005), 235.

²⁴ See Noël Carroll, “The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (And Beyond),” *October*, vol. 20 (Spring 1982), 51-81.

²⁵ Peter Wollen, “Godard and Counter-Cinema: *Vent D’Est*” in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, ed Bill Nichols, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 500-508.

²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 1-2.

²⁷ See, for example, all the variations of the petite bourgeoisie that Bourdieu provides in *Distinction*. It forestalls any overarching claims that can be made about taste and its direct and determined correspondence to class.

²⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), 35.

²⁹ Bourdieu writes on the power of the art dealer, “he is the person who can proclaim the value of the author he defends (cf. the fiction of the catalogue or blurb) and above all ‘invests his prestige’ in the author’s cause, acting as a ‘symbolic banker’ who offers as security all the symbolic capital he has accumulated (which he is liable to forfeit if he backs a ‘loser’)” (77). See Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*.

³⁰ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 76.

³¹ Stephen Soba in discussion with the author, July 2014.

³² It was unusual to see such a personal touch in calendar plot summaries. In a September-October 1960 program, Kael writes, “*Touch of Evil* is a flamboyant shocker which has something, but not very much, to do with drugs and police corruption in a border town. What it really has to do with is love of the film medium and all its stylistic possibilities; and if Welles can’t resist the candy of shadows and angles and baroque décor, he turns it into stronger fare than most directors’ solemn meat-and-potatoes.” (“Cinema Guild,” Pacific Film Archive [BAMPFA], Berkeley, CA)

³³ Jeffrey Sconce, *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.

³⁴ One should also note a shift in European film festival culture during this time. At festivals such as Cannes and Berlinale, Thomas Elsaesser notes, “sweeping changes were made by adding more sections for first-time filmmakers, the directors’ fortnight (*Quinzaine des réalisateurs*) as well as other showcase sidebars” (78). Though it is

not clear by Thomas Elsaesser's description how long these changes lasted, it does show that there was an expansion of directional recognition and maybe even taste within these contexts. For more on this, see Thomas Elsaesser, "Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies of Cinema in Europe (2005)" in *The Film Festival Reader* (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2013).

³⁵ For more on BAMPFA's history, visit: <https://bampfa.org/about/history-mission>; and see Lee Amazonas, "Guerilla Cinematheque Comes of Age: The Pacific Film Archive,"

Chronicle of the University of California: A Journal of University History, No. 6 (Spring 2004): 147–59.

³⁶ Anthology Film Archive began in the Village and then moved to Soho in 1974 and then moved to its current home in the East Village in 1979, according to its website, www.anthologyfilmarchives.org/about/history.

³⁷ Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters*, 99. Parallel to this, Eric Schaefer has demonstrated that poster and marquee advertising were key to exploitation cinema's promotional strategies in his book "*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*": *A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

³⁸ Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters*, 124.

³⁹ YouTube alone offers rich amateur footage of Times Square marquees. See: Zerkzeez

"Dirty Seedy Old Times Square and 42nd St. ("The Deuce") before gentrification," YouTube, March 2, 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=MS7Q3tcnHWM, and MyFootage.com, "1970s New York Adult Theaters Marquees Stock Footage HD," YouTube, January 9, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Pp0VoR2pPI.

⁴⁰ Elena Gorfinkel, *Lewd Looks: American Sexploitation Cinema in the 1960s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 210.

⁴¹ J. Doerfler, "Radley Metzger: Let 'Em See Skin..." *Boston After Dark*, February 9, 1971, 16.

⁴² Elena Gorfinkel, *Lewd Looks*, 219. I found documentation on Meyer's visits while conducting my own research at MoMA, but I learned about Metzger's appearance from Gorfinkel's book.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 3.

⁴⁵ John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman write, "For many, sexual promiscuity became part of the fabric of gay life, an essential element holding the community together. Yet the fact that such sex businesses [such as bathhouses, bars with back rooms, and porn shops] could operate in the 1970s relatively free of police harassment and that the media could spotlight them in discussions of gay life says as much about heterosexual norms as about those of gay men." D'Emilio and Freedman don't directly state that straight people adopted gay male norms, but they further intimate it with the following passage. "In the larger metropolitan areas, male homosexuals were no longer serving as symbols of sexual deviance, their eroticism no longer divided the good from the bad. Heterosexuals sustained vigorous singles

nightlife, and advertised in magazines for partners; suburban couples engaged in mate-swapping; sex clubs were featuring male strippers with women in the role of voyeur. By the end of the decade, some ‘straight’ men and women were even patronizing a heterosexual equivalent of the gay bathhouse, as the success of places like Plato’s Retreat in New York demonstrated. The experience of the urban gay subculture stood as one point along a widened spectrum of sexual possibilities that modern American now offered” (340). See John D’Emilio and Estelle Freeman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁴⁶ There are other examples of this as well. In January 1973, Carnegie Hall Cinema did double-bill performances of the “two best reviewed male films of 1972,” *Left Handed* (Dir. Jack Deveau) and *American Cream* (Dir. Rob Simple). “Carnegie Hall Cinema,” Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA.

⁴⁷ See Cindy Patton, *L.A. Plays Itself/Boys in the Sand: A Queer Film Classic* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2014); and José B. Capino, “Seizing Moving Image Pornography,” *Cinema Journal* 46, no. 4 (2007), 122.

⁴⁸ Bathhouses would also open up to the general public periodically for cabaret and variety shows. Heterosexuals would enter into these otherwise exclusive spaces for gay sex, and be introduced to a world to which they may have had no idea. *Saturday Night at the Baths* (David Buckley, 1975) contains wonderful documentary footage from one such evening of entertainment. Coincidentally, film exhibitor and programmer Jackie Raynal edited the film.

⁴⁹ Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 16-17. At the same time, Delany erroneously states that, “By the early seventies the movie industry was already reeling under the advent of video home technology.” This is a decade too early; VHS was still in the 1970s a new technology (in a format war with Betamax) and too costly for the average consumer. Other factors leading to this mitosis are more likely: Times Square’s increasing association with vice, and thus the decline of big movie palaces in the area, and the legalization of porn.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁵¹ Grant Lee, “A Never-Ending Film Festival.”

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ For more, see the Fox Venice’s memorial website:

www.virtualvenice.info/media/fvt.htm.

⁵⁴ See Gorfinkel, *Lewd Looks*.

⁵⁵ D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 327.

⁵⁶ Williams, *Screening Sex*, 184.

⁵⁷ Staiger, *Perverse Spectators*, 149.

⁵⁸ Consider the work of Gregory Markopoulos and Jean Cocteau. Kenneth Anger’s work is not necessarily sober, but his experimental and nonlinear form align him with a highbrow tradition.

⁵⁹ A *New York Times* article 1970 lists several stores that had close proximity to theaters such as the New York Theater and the Quad Cinema. See “Cinemabilia, in

the Village, Traces History of Film,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1970. Cinemabilia, James Wolcott points out, was owned by the manager of the post-punk band Television, and their bassist also worked there. Here we have yet another situation in which the music of the time crossed into cinephilic energies. See “The Decline (and Rise) of the Cinema Revival House,” *Vanity Fair*, January 27, 2018.

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 285.

⁶¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 22. Lévi-Strauss writes, “Mythical thought, that ‘bricoleur’, builds up structures by fitting together events, or rather the remains of events, while science, ‘in operation’ simply by virtue of coming into being, creates its means and results in the form of events, thanks to the structures which it is constantly elaborating and which are its hypotheses and theories” (22).

⁶² Derrida’s effort to widen the application of *bricolage* (so much so to the point of deconstruction), to make it a metaphor for discourse overall, is useful in this historical-cultural context.

⁶³ Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 18.

⁶⁴ Davis, *Repertory Movie Theaters*, 146.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 150.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1979), 104.

⁶⁸ For Jameson, postmodernism’s defining trait is the spatialization of time. When everything begins to cohabitate in the congestion of culture, when simultaneity takes the place of periodization, we lose the ability to think historically, and to think through connections beyond what they mean at the moment of their encounter. Jameson’s definition would seem to capture repertory and art-house cinema’s predilection for troubling the divisions between different histories, tastes, geographies, and genres, to the point where one could argue (albeit not without hyperbole) that it erases such distinctions and creates a spatialized form of temporality within the parameters of the repertory program. And certainly postmodernism, as it has been periodized by Jameson and others, coincides with the period of *bricolage*-style programming. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

⁶⁹ See Terry Eagleton, “Capitalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism,” *New Left Review* (July 1, 1985): 60-73.

⁷⁰ MacDonald, *Cinema 16*, 10.

⁷¹ Chon Noriega, “On Curating,” *Wide Angle* 1 (4) (1995), 297.

⁷² Marks, *The Ethical Presenter*, 37.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 39.

⁷⁴ Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁷⁵ Davis, 90.

⁷⁶ It is catachrestic because “random” makes it sound arbitrary. Even when programmers operate from their viscera over “rational thinking,” their selections are not merely “random.” At the same time, I cannot find a better qualifier for this at the moment, hence: catachresis.

⁷⁷ Bill Barol, et al., “The Last Picture Shows,” *Newsweek*, June 8, 1987.

⁷⁸ Davis, 218.

⁷⁹ See Allen, 47-56.

⁸⁰ Phillip Lopate has the opposite observation. He believes that the incorporation of trash and exploitation continues to this day to be the dominant repertory fare. But his argument doesn’t track. For the most part, museums are the dominant public viewing spaces for repertory cinema, and they tend to show “art cinema,” true to its name. Lopate writes, “What has changed...is not much the opportunity to see good films but the way they are packaged. In brief, we have gone from a time in the Sixties when the emphasis was placed on making a more or less agreed-upon canon available to the novice film buff, to a smorgasbord of “edgy” hors d’oeuvres and a neglect of the meat-and-potatoes classics. This trend began with the rediscovery of film noir and pre-Code Hollywood, then extended to “bad movies” seasons featuring the likes of Ed Wood, to J-horror, giallo softcore porn, sexual or ethnic identity niche packages, and so forth. All of these fringe subgenres have value in filling out the capaciousness of cinema, but the result is that it is now easier to see a sadistic gore-fest like Takashi Miike’s *Ichi the Killer* than the transcendently compassionate works of Max Ophuls, or a Mario Brava psychological horror film (good as those are) than the masterworks of John Ford. Many of the old Thalia/New Yorker staples rarely get projected: Hollywood Seventies movies seem to have replaced the second-tier classics by G.W. Pabst, Marcel Carné, V.I. Pudovkin, Rouben Mamoulian, René Clair, Robert Flaherty, Jacques Feyder, Julien Duvivier...” See Philip Lopate, “The Heroic Age of New York Movie Theaters,” *New York Review of Books*, November 6, 2017. Accessed online. www.nybooks.com/daily/2017/11/06/the-heroic-age-of-new-york-movie-theaters/

CHAPTER 2

“Cavalcades of Perversions”: Deviant Film Programming as Redefining Queer Politics

John Waters’ 1970 film *Multiple Maniacs* opens with a sexual freak show situated in the middle of a white suburban community. A group of suburbanite spectators is slowly lured into the carnival tent and exposed to a range of distasteful exhibitions: puke eaters, fiendish fetishists who lick bicycle seats and armpits, and exhibitionist pornographers documenting their sexual indiscretions. The straight-laced attendees serving as proxies for a mainstream movie audience look on in horror at what the attraction’s showman calls “assorted sluts, fags, dykes and pimps,” all part of “Lady Divine’s Cavalcade of Perversions.” “Sluts” here seems to capture any person exhibiting their sexual impropriety, and “pimp” anyone monetizing it. Surely the showman fits the bill for a “pimp,” but one could argue that John Waters himself, as the director and producer of such content, is “pimping out” these sexual deviants to the filmgoing public as well.¹

On the one hand, the scene enacts well-trodden anxieties about who gets to look, and how biases manifest in those looks. These fears are then displaced and projected onto those being looked at. On the other hand, *Multiple Maniacs*—parallel to many other films in the John Waters corpus—appears to relish this exact phenomenon. It seems aware of the “mixed company,” as performance artist Taylor Mac likes to call it, of the audience of the movie theater in which it plays—a motley of hetero-, homo- bi-, and pansexuals, perverts, cinephiles with unconventional tastes,

censors and their supporters, and maybe even those simply sheltered but curious. All in attendance for their own reasons, it might be assumed, the film caters to some spectators' wild desires and instigates others' even wilder phobias. This is no doubt part of the thrill. This "cavalcade" of sexual freakery, with its mixed address, therefore might complicate a closed circuit understanding of spectatorship that would separate the queers from the straights, the deviants from the "normies." The questions of *who* is watching and *how* they are watching might be as unanswerable as they are irrelevant because the deviance that exists within the audience may be as copious, varied, and untraceable as that which occupies the sick diegetic worlds of John Waters's films.

These "multiple maniacs" were frequently in foul company in a programmatic sense too. *Multiple Maniacs* played in 1981 at the Nuart Theatre in Los Angeles as part of a ten-week program on Thursdays called "Outlaw Cinema."² The program was described by the theater as one comprised of "anti-social filmmaking attitudes from John Waters to Herschell Gordon Lewis, Kenneth Anger to Paul Morrissey, Pier Pasolini to Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Andy Warhol to Roman Polanski." Topics such as sadomasochism, fetishism, gender transgression, and sex work united all these filmmakers under this degenerate heading, as proposed by the theater's programmers. It should come as no surprise that *Divine*, pictured in the top right of the calendar, should be its poster child for outlaw depravity. To top it off, the program designers dutifully arranged the calendar boxes for these dates at an angle, juxtaposed

to the standard 90-degree axes that populate the rest of the schedule. These films, it suggests, pose a threat to the entire programmatic—perhaps even social—order.

The Nuart’s definition of “outlaw” here sheds the usual machismo image of the cowboy or gangster, a long cherished figure among cinephiles. Instead the theater deploys the term in a manner more akin to transgender activist Kate Bornstein’s usage in her book *Gender Outlaw*: someone who “subscribes to a dynamic of change, outside any given dichotomy,” “who regularly walks along a forbidden boundary or border...”³

had become taxonomized, regulated and policed in the name of modern social order and regulation.⁴

Urban art-house and repertory cinemas of the 1970s and 1980s were temples devoted to outlaw and deviant practices. They flaunted perverse expression as social critique, commonly within the same double bill or across a week or month's selections. These films were not in any way marginal in art-house contexts—spanning cities, venues, and countries—and thus comprised a large subset of its fare. Their appeal may have ranged tonally, stylistically, and narratively, but they all shared an aim to disrupt respectable bourgeois moralism and sex negativity. They sought to dispose of the old sexual order that had tried to sweep unsavory sexual tastes and gender play under the proverbial rug. Henceforth, for the sake of brevity, I will call this kind of programming “deviant programming” to describe an array of spectatorial effects it made possible, regardless of the conscious intention behind the programming.

Here I am building upon my idea of “the *bricolage* effect” (Chapter 1), which characterizes a shift in programming practices that began in the late 1960s and reaches its apex by the 1980s. This style of programming subordinated spectatorial reverence to auteurs and high art traditions, which was the predominant approach pre-1968, and shifted to eclectic experimentation with taste boundaries and content-based comfort zones. Given its penchant for textual difference and promiscuity, one effect of this *bricolé* approach was that it welcomed queer films all the more. Here I will elaborate on this point and, further, describe the potential impact on frequent

spectators whose worlds were opened up by the abundant forms of desire that unfolded on screen. The textual range in *bricolage*-style programming broadened not only viewers' epistemic scopes but also their affective range for encountering sexual alterity. Not to project onto this reception a telos as reductive as "acceptance" or "embrace" of sexual diversity, I instead locate within these intertextual arrangements opportunities for transformative reflection and play with suggestive content.

Extending from this *bricolage* sensibility then is the multifarious category of sexual deviance. Sexual deviance, I would argue, is a useful critical category here, similar to "queer" when it is, as David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz regard it, a "subjectless critique" rather than an identity category.⁵ Indexing sexual otherness across bodies, spaces, and histories helps recognize that, as Dana Seitler notes of freak photography, "the perverse body was saturated with various intersecting discourses about sexual vice, racial purity, and 'gender trouble' simultaneously."⁶ (And I would add disability and class to her list as well.) Perversion and degeneracy is therefore historically and socially enmeshed in a skein in which certain bodies and practices are marked as culturally invalid.

I want to emphasize that this idea of sexual deviance as a critical category is not meant to be inherently a source of empowerment or pleasure *or* one of trauma; it depends greatly on the case. The programs with which I engage here that evoke critique do not simply set out to defend or celebrate deviant behaviors, types, and practices; they often confront them in painful and uncertain ways. The work of Ken Russell, whom I will discuss, emblemizes this traumatic past, in which physical

violence and psychological disturbance is a direct result of sexual repression.⁷ John Waters, on the other hand, champions “freakery” and deviance, having characters release inhibitions spectators may not have even known were there.

By forcing audiences to face the pleasurable as well as the painful sides of this history, deviant programming might help us to begin thinking about what political concerns queer theory might rally around if it was not preoccupied with “LGBT” as *the* ultimate indicator for queerness. Recuperating the queerness of these programs, and the political force they make available, undermines a textbook narrative of queer history. To recover the politics of the deviant canon means tapping into a parallel affective history and temporality, where what is inchoate or exists in the recesses of subjectivity and consciousness is just as important as what is explicitly said, known, identified, and recorded. As Raymond Williams suggests in his famous essay, “Structures of Feelings,” affect can be a robust tool for the historian who engages with, “not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity.”⁸ Programming, as a practice that must take into account audience pleasure (be it in the form of intellectual critique, fleeting delight, or some mixture thereof), serves as an index for what desires and interests percolated among filmgoers at the time. While these “feelings” or, put more broadly, affective potential, might not resemble “politics” in a conventional sense, a deviant set of politics, for which I will advocate, can be retrofit to deviant programming and filmgoing practices of the 1970s and 1980s. As I will demonstrate, the ethical framework for difference that exists within

the spaces of these programs, if one knows how and where to look for it, can be fertile ground to rethink what is and is not working in contemporary queer politics.⁹

Art-house cinema calendars, often with showtimes arranged in a uniform gridded fashion, were rich nexuses of erotic difference. These films make proximate denigrated practices that run the gambit of what Gayle Rubin refers to as the “outer limits” of sexuality: intergenerational sex, non-procreative sex, sadomasochism, transsexualism and transvestitism, sex work, and various kinds of fetish and kink.¹⁰ The practices and types encompassed by the “outer limits” throw into crisis the centrality and safeguarding of sexual and gender normativity. Though Rubin is speaking from within anthropology and not visual culture, I am still drawing upon her idea of a radical sex politics primarily because her classification of the “outer limits” bares resemblance to what one would find exhibited repeatedly at the art-house cinema of this time. In addition, programmers allied these works in ways that befit Rubin’s coalitional political imaginary of a united front to end sexual and gender discrimination.

My main claim in this chapter is that programming created these nexuses or matrixes of difference and provided recursive opportunities for viewers to rethink the terms of sexual and gender alterity, to probe the conditions of being other, and thus facilitate imaginative forms of cross-identification or comparative rumination. Queer and deviant spectators in particular were given recurrent opportunities to see unavoidable parallels or connections between their own queer experience (whether performed or concealed) and another’s. This could take many forms. For those self-

aware, such programming might help provide an anonymous social space in which one can be other with others. For other more reluctant attendees, it might help awaken desires or lead one to question a social or private fantasy.

Audiences' corporeal and sensuous educations took place in the space of programs, whether for those in constant, obsessive attendance, or for those more sporadic attendees, for whom a double bill might leave a profound impression upon their bodies and psyches. Even if spectators did not identify with the acts or characterizations exhibited on screen, programming, by way of textual proximation, maximized interpretative strategies as a way to grapple with social paradigms and assess, intellectually and affectively, points of contrast. By virtue of being proximate to other bodies in the anonymous space of the cinema, exposure to deviant expressions quietly opened up questions in the room that may indeed be felt if not become audibly or visibly known: Are there people here to whom this pleasure (also) speaks? What has been their experience? Such a dynamic, which programming as well as the spatial makeup of the cinema helps facilitate, exposes that cinema, contrary to many theories of spectatorship, serves less simply as a window for viewers to peer into another world or at the other. Nor is the screen simply a mirror for viewers to seek for and gaze at themselves. In this formulation, the theater is a site of visual and affective proposition, inquiry, and heuristic possibility. It becomes a time-based source to collectively explore what gaps and overlaps in experience, fantasy, pleasure, trauma, and critique might exist and circulate.

Recurrent Reclassifications

By the late 1960s, European and U.S. art cinema had begun to, without abandon, take on deviant subject matters. Sexually unsanitized films such as *Belle de Jour*, *Portrait of Jason*, *The Damned*, *Fellini Satyricon*, *Flesh*, *Funeral Parade of Roses* (Toshio Matsumoto, 1969), *Midnight Cowboy*, *Mondo Trasho* (John Waters, 1969), *Multiple Maniacs*, *Teorema*, and *The Killing of Sister George*, emerged as early portrayals for the period, and which began to regularly populate art-house and repertory programs in cities across the U.S.¹¹

This was by no means the first time sexual deviances had been shown on screen. Group sex, cross-dressing, and sadomasochism had been depicted in the avant-garde shorts of Kenneth Anger, Barbara Rubin, and Jack Smith. Underground soft-core pornography, such as those popularized by pinup model Bettie Page, circulated still and moving images of bondage, domination, and sadomasochism (BDSM). Similarly, sexploitation films—especially “roughies,” which included darker depictions of sexual violence than the “nudie cuties” before them—exposed a range of deviant practices (ranging from rape to BDSM to sex addiction to gender reassignment surgery) to mostly male audiences starting in the mid-1960s.¹² The significant difference between soft-core pornography and these later art films, however, was both in their tonal and aesthetic treatment of sexual otherness. While sexploitation films had intended to sensationally arouse the envisioned male spectator, and was done so by way of makeshift production and distribution means, the art cinema carved out a space for deeper reflection upon the state and history of

perverse desires. Certainly titillation was bound up in their marketing, and was a byproduct of subject matters such as sex work (as seen in *Midnight Cowboy* and *Flesh*), but art films aspired to more creative explorations of sexual aberrance, wanting also to speak directly to the contemporaneous countercultural zeitgeist of permissiveness pervading youth demographics.

Deviant films would continue to accrue in the following years. The main players included *Death in Venice*, *The Decameron*, *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, *Myra Breckinridge*, *Last Tango in Paris*, *In the Realm of the Senses*, *Pink Flamingos*, and *Trash* (Paul Morrissey, 1970). Programs made proximate the phenomena of sexual perversion (i.e., fetish and kink), labor (i.e., sex work), gender nonconformity (i.e., trans experience and identity), and non-normative sexual and romantic arrangements and attachments (i.e., nonmonogamy, singlehood). No doubt the box-office success of this wave of films in the early 1970s only encouraged more deviant films to be made and their programming to accelerate as well.

Unlike “Outlaw Cinema” at the Nuart, programmers did not tend to explicitly frame their selections as having deviant appeal; many examples existed in implicit forms, inviting audiences to probe the conditions of being deviant without a clear sense of what that designation might mean. Case and point: the Roxie Cinema in San Francisco in November 1977 did a double bill of Tod Browning’s *Freaks* (1932) and four Kenneth Anger short films.¹³ Catercorner in the same calendar sits a double bill of two queer cult classics: Warhol’s *Lonesome Cowboys* and the Maysles’ *Grey Gardens* (1975). *Freaks*, it could be argued, appears as an outlier here, but when put

in conversation with the overtly gay experimental work of Kenneth Anger, and then *Grey Gardens*, a film about social outsiders that has a major queer following, the term “freak” appears much more capacious. Such textual proximity might encourage viewers to explore what it means to *feel* like a freak, and what it means to pay the price for existing on the fringes of compulsory sexual, bodily, and economic normativity.

Bricolage-style programming makes all the more possible this expanse of sexual connotation; crucially, it also allows disparate sets of identities and practices to convene within the space of the program. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender content at this point had no other exhibit home, and so it could be logically placed within a broader nexus of deviance (recall Amos Vogel’s classification in *Film as a Subversive Art*, “Homosexuality and Other Variants,” discussed in Chapter 1). Interestingly, the 1977 Roxie calendar is positioned on the threshold of the emerging category of “gay cinema” and “lesbian cinema” as it became publically recognized and discursively inscribed. In 1977, San Francisco had its first *official* gay and lesbian film festival (followed by New York City in 1981 and Los Angeles in 1982).¹⁴ That same year, Richard Dyer’s *Gays and Film* was published, carving out a legitimate academic space for the study of homosexuality and film. (A special section on “Lesbians and Film” in *Jump Cut* edited by Edith Becker, Michelle Citron, Julia Lesage and B. Ruby Rich would follow in March 1981.) Therefore, ten years existed between the start of the programmatic shift towards *bricolage* and the emergence of “gay and lesbian cinema” as a legible classification, during which time queer films

were orphans, roaming through deviant matrices and connecting to many affiliations.¹⁵

As Vito Russo was touring his lecture series *The Celluloid Closet* (then to be published in 1981), repertory and art houses by and large were still programming deviant films in the manner they had been for over a decade.¹⁶ The “Outlaw Cinema” series from 1981 testifies to this, as well as “Sexuality in Cinema,” a series at the Film Center at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1984, in which films as far ranging as Fassbinder’s *In a Year of 13 Moons* (1978) and the more recent Ulrike Ottinger film *The Image of Dorian Gray in the Yellow Press* (1984) played with the classic *Cat People* (Jacques Tourneur, 1942).¹⁷ Programmers—many of whom, we should not forget, would have certainly identified as heterosexual and male—may appear to us now as backwards or out-of-sync with the times, for they did not alter their practice to conform to a gay and lesbian social and filmic consciousness. From another angle, however, we might consider the ways that programming retained queer films’ less systemized meanings from the previous decade, thereby rejecting an “LGBT” identitarian circumscription. Intentional or not, art-house cinema proposed its own counter-narrative to the gay and lesbian film festival milieu and academic discourses.¹⁸ Their sensibility much more matched Gayle Rubin’s than those writing queer film history.

Alongside entrenched classifications and genres, art-house and repertory programming—signature of the *bricolage* effect—would make ad hoc and highly contingent genres out of their “sandbox” of selections. At the Thalia, Richard

Schwarz, the theater's queer programmer and owner, would often thematically frame double bills. On a Sunday in May 1979, *I am Curious Yellow* and its sequel *I am Curious Blue* (Vilgot Sjöman, 1967) screened under the heading "SEXUAL CURIOSITY;" Mondays that month were all tearjerkers, one week showing a double feature of "DOOMED ROMANCES," *Back Street* (David Miller, 1961) and *Intermezzo* (Gregory Ratoff, 1939).¹⁹ Such framing suggests parameters within which attending spectators were meant to think or feel. It uprooted filmic and cultural taxonomies, unmooring familiar form from routinized effect. Caught in these oscillations of unmaking and remaking, queer films were all the more subject to provisional genera and thus given opportunities to be distributed among identity categories.

Consider a Marlene Dietrich and Josef von Sternberg retrospective at the Roxie in 1988. One triple bill including *The Blue Angel* (1930), *The Scarlett Empress* (1934), and *Shanghai Express* (1932) was framed as "*Fascinating Fetishism*."²⁰ On the one hand, Dietrich's queer appeal seems steeped in accounts of her lesbian desire. On the other, lesbian fandom might here be coupled with or even displaced by spectatorial predilection for fetish that cuts across identities. Even the film's description in the calendar gives a hint at this. It quotes an unnamed critic from a 1930 Berlin publication: "She sings without involvement, unemotionally. But this sensual lack of emotion is stimulating. She's vulgar without acting."²¹ Dietrich in this excerpt recalls Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, in which the cold

master withholds from her masochistic slave affective legibility. Dietrich withholds from the audience, trapping spectators of all persuasions in her inscrutability.

This is but one way to read the “fascinating fetishism” saturating this Dietrich-von Sternberg triple bill. The fetishes made possible by the arrangement are legion, distinct for each desiring spectator. Thus deviant programming does not necessarily seek to exhaustively address all desires that might be in the room; rather it succeeds in producing numerous potential outlets to exercise silenced or highly coded deviant desires. Producing transient or ephemeral frameworks and categories, perhaps lasting no longer than the ephemera of the program in which they could be discovered, the programming might nevertheless reverberate in the bodies and psyches of those attending the screenings.

Parker Tyler, in his book *Screening the Sexes*, appears influenced by these protean programmatic object formations that surrounded him at his local art-house, independent, and repertory theaters. Note, for example, his discussion of what he calls “the fatal kinks” represented in art-house films through the years. Though *Screening the Sexes* was published in 1972, it is very possible Tyler went to go see a program like that at the Elgin in Manhattan where he lived in January 1973, where *Performance*, *The Devils*, *Rosemary’s Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968), and *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* all played within the same week.²² All of these films subject both characters and spectators to varying visceral degrees of “fatal kinks,” giving the French expression for orgasm, “*un petit mort*,” a whole new meaning. In his chapter on the topic, Tyler, in echoes of Georges Bataille and Sigmund Freud, studies the

uncomfortable proximity of death to sensuality he sees depicted throughout cinema's history. Moving from *In Cold Blood* (Richard Brooks, 1967) and *Les Diaboliques* (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1955) to the work of Ken Russell and Tennessee Williams, Tyler writes of what he calls "pathological sex," where it is not the individual that is pathological but sex itself, transformed into a "base parody of the romantic love-death, the vestige of ancient ritual."²³ Neither "fatal kinks" nor "pathological sex" has been conceived of as a critical organizing principle in film history, despite its resounding presence in the programmatic structures of 1970s and 1980s repertory theaters.

Tyler's ability to playfully erect provisional categories for sexual deviance shows that he was influenced by programmers' practices, and perhaps they were by his mischievous practices as well. It is clear that the associations that Tyler draws on or the categories of queer cinema that he constructs are not willfully arbitrary, idiosyncratic, or simply "playful" in any facile sense of the term, but rather were catalyzed by the programming of his moment. In this sense, *Screening the Sexes* constructs a deviant canon by way of highly contingent and imaginative categories that are discovered in the process of attending screenings, and which may change depending on the arrangement they are seen within. Such an approach to sexuality jettisons stagnant categorization, claiming instead a highly mutable set of guidelines that might cluster deviant practices and experiences only to offer them back up for another perverse schema.



Figure 3. More of Parker Tyler's imaginative categories (from *Screening the Sexes*)

I would like to think, then, that Tyler's writing could be regarded as a robust primary source for queer film history if viewed in tandem with programming. What might it mean to reconsider Tyler's argument that, "sex is a predilection of the mind and senses, and is not answerable to nature's dually blunt decision about gender?"²⁴ Might this be a precursor to queer theory's axiom on gender and sexual binaries, or to its propensity to treat gender as not only fiction but *genre*, as Jack Halberstam once put it?²⁵ Queer film criticism has much to gain from revisiting Tyler's writing in that it offers ways to reencounter not only queer leanings within programming but also those excluded identities, experiences, and practices that programming actually included, even as queer theory has virtually left them behind.

Some queer film studies have taken excursions to explore what Stuart Hall calls “weak, emergent, and marginal minorities” that lack discursive and political viability.²⁶ For example, Richard Dyer broaches the subject of pedophilia, or more specifically, ephebophilia, in his essay on “the sad young man,” which outlines the historical fetishization of the forlorn queer boy youth.²⁷ Dyer’s analysis, though brilliant in its intermedial engagement with this taboo history, however, keeps any implicated pederastic gaze at a safe distance. This ephebophilic voyeurism is paradigmatic across media—from classical paintings to paperback fiction to Hollywood films—his method seems to indicate, but it stops short of what looking relations such a figure might prompt. Likewise, Alexander Doty was an astute scavenger of fetishistic signifiers, though they almost always referred back to LGBT identity categories.²⁸ These “representational codes” of fetish in his film analyses are often behavioral manifestations of repressed and sublimated LGBT psychic formations as opposed to fetishes in their own right, that is, practices and desires that might cut across the hetero-homo divide, and thus be in need of distinct analytical procedures. Both of these relationships to deviant desire are representative examples of scholars reining in queerness, the former approach distancing the phenomenon from intimate communal affiliations with what could be seen as unethical or even illegal conduct, and the latter colonizing sexual deviance that could be varied and difficult to attribute to one group or another, claimed in the name of “LGBT.”

What might it mean to mobilize this history of deviant programming as a way to attend to the socially unwelcomed and uninvited sexual and gender deviants who

subtend rather than compete with LGBT outcasts in their transgressions? Using programming then as the source material for re-envisioning queer political imaginaries not only does the empirical work of inclusion but also raises the ethico-political stakes for pleasure at large, confronting us with the question of whose desires and fantasies are and aren't deemed viable and appetizing and why. Reading the programs as intertexts full of semiotic potential is one way to get at this issue. But semiotic formations do not work in isolation; rather they rely upon the embodied experience at the cinema as well, an interplay of surfaces that act upon the body. Deviant imagery within the sensorially profuse site of the theater, I will go on to demonstrate, takes on more than just incitement to perform in real life what is presented on screen. It endows the viewer with much more than just a mimetic capability.

The Mimetic Question

Several film historians have remarked on the ways in which racy art-house cinema—first within the 1960s New York underground, and later post-Production Code—radically reinvented art-house spectatorship as, to quote Ara Osterweil, “a participatory realm of assault and seduction.”²⁹ Much of this work has been fascinated with the question of mimesis, that is, the extent to which sexual depictions onscreen exert such a force that they bear repeating, copying, and imitating in the lived world.³⁰ As Linda Williams notes of her own experience watching films such as *Last Tango in Paris* and *Deep Throat*, “there is no question that these [sex] acts

rebounded in me and that I did reencounter my own body watching these acts.”³¹

Williams argues that these films were “sex aids,” giving her new awareness of different kinds of sensation with different parts of the body, but that this process was always screened, mediated, and understood as part of the constructed universe projected on the screen, or, in a word, vicarious.

Similarly, Vivian Sobchack might call this experience one of “sensual catachresis.” Catachresis is the process by which we fill in or approximate a gap in language.³² Sobchack applies this to the cinema, where the spectatorial process, “fills in the gap in its sensual grasp of the figural world onscreen by turning back on itself to reciprocally (albeit not sufficiently) ‘flesh it out’ into literal physicalized sense.”³³ In this dark space, the body is asked to grapple with and therefore fill in for the shortcomings in an effort to convert the onscreen representation into one that can be felt, touched, and apprehended in the embodied world. In this view, as in Linda Williams’s, the cinema does not aim to simply simulate embodied experience, which would predicate it on its own failure, but rather enables “enhanced and intensified reciprocities in filling its own insufficiency.”³⁴ In other words, together spectators engage in “sense-making” that can engender unique affective formations, not incite a search for ones that can be deemed “real,” immediate, and authenticated through the moving image. So, if not through mimesis, how might we form a textual basis for Williams and Sobchack’s profound discoveries at the cinema? What does something like “sensual catachresis” look like within the programmatic context of repertory and art cinema?

Deviant programming in many ways displaces the question of mimesis, making room for more *oblique* forms of cross-identification, curiosity, play, and critique that can arise at the cinema.³⁵ Programming, as a process of resignification through amalgamation, welcomes a new sensorium that puts spectators' own desires in dialogue with those of others and of those which are depicted on screen. It situates these knowledges in the in-between spaces that are extensions of textuality. Distinct from the question of mimesis, this presupposes that the desires that programs index are more often than not in misalignment with each other and with spectators, and will enter into a porous exchange where they are unlikely to fully align with the spectator's experiences, desires, fantasies, and expectations. It introduces to some what others know firsthand, and it allows these relations to collide in the contingency of the darkened cinema.

Programming thus seems to support Vivian Sobchack's proposal that we rethink processes of spectatorial identification, "relating them not to our secondary engagement with and recognition of either 'subject positions' or characters but rather to our primary engagement (and the film's) with the sense and sensibility of materiality itself."³⁶ Within this experience, spectators might not go looking for themselves in the diegetic space of the film, but rather gravitate towards material matter such as texture, mood, color, and affect. But subjectivity and objectivity are not mutually exclusive terms, as Sobchack acknowledges elsewhere; the crux here seems to me more that one does not need to locate oneself reflected in the onscreen image to either identify with or glean pleasure from it. For those with deviant desires,

programming—by way of putting texts in conversation, and creating a series of resonances and meanings that emanate from and between them—makes it all the more possible to recognize a discursive version of the self inscribed in a film or set of films, caught in knotted discourses of gender and/or sexual alterity.

A December-February calendar from the Nuart in late 1979 and early 1980 helps to clarify this point.³⁷ I have here listed all the screenings that have deviant or queer content and/or appeal, including a Marlon Brando retrospective and Russ Meyer triple bill:

Friday, Dec 29	
<i>Madam Kitty</i> (Tinto Brass, 1976)	<i>The Night Porter</i> (Liliana Cavani, 1974)
Tuesday, January 2	
<i>Cathy Tippel</i> (Paul Verhoeven, 1975)	<i>Women in Love</i> (Ken Russell, 1969)
Friday, January 5	
<i>Satyricon</i>	<i>Roma</i> (Federico Fellini, 1972)
Wednesday, January 10	
<i>Exhibition</i> (Jean-François Davy, 1975)	<i>A Labor of Love</i> (Robert Flaxman and Daniel Goldman, 1976)
Wednesday, January 17	
<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (Elia Kazan, 1951)	<i>The Men</i> (Fred Zinnemann, 1950)
Friday, January 19	
<i>Andy Warhol's L'Amour</i> (Paul Morrissey and Andy Warhol, 1973)	<i>Bad</i> (Jed Johnson, 1977)
Monday, January 22	
<i>Outrageous</i> (Richard Benner, 1977)	<i>Sunday, Bloody, Sunday</i> (John Schlesinger, 1971)
Tuesday, January 23	

<i>Sebastiane</i> (Derek Jarman and Paul Humfress, 1976)	<i>Maîtresse</i> (Barbet Schroeder, 1975)
Wednesday, January 24	
<i>Julius Caesar</i> (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1953)	<i>Mutiny on the Bounty</i> (Lewis Milestone and Carol Reed, 1962)
Thursday, January 25	
<i>A Star is Born</i> (George Cukor, 1954)	<i>Auntie Mame</i> (Morton DaCosta, 1958)
Saturday, January 27 (triple bill)	
<i>Beyond the Valley of the Dolls</i>	<i>Supervixens</i> (Russ Meyer, 1975)/ <i>Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!</i> (Russ Meyer, 1965)
Monday, January 29	
<i>Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom</i> (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975)	<i>The Decameron</i>
Wednesday, January 31	
<i>Reflections in a Golden Eye</i> (John Huston, 1967)	<i>The Fugitive Kind</i> (Sidney Lumet, 1960)
Tuesday, February 6	
<i>A Slave of Love</i> (Nikita Mikhalkov, 1976)	<i>The Conformist</i>
Wednesday, February 7	
<i>Last Tango in Paris</i>	<i>Burn!</i> (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1969)
Friday, February 9	
Best of 2 nd Annual New York Erotic Film Festival	
Wednesday, February 14	
<i>On the Waterfront</i> (Elia Kazan, 1954)	<i>The Wild One</i> (Laslo Benedek, 1953)
Thursday, February 22	
<i>Bilitis</i> (David Hamilton, 1977)	<i>Therese and Isabelle</i>

Though this calendar was especially saturated with deviant material, it was by no means an exceptional case among other calendars of the time. Hosts of programs such as these existed throughout cities in the 1970s and 1980s, and in addition, more than half the films listed were in continual circulation in art cinemas, even when they were not in particularly queer double-bill arrangements such as these. What is significant, then, is not that deviant films figure so prominently here, rather it is the deviant range of this selection. Certainly there are films that depict homosexuality or garner gay and lesbian audiences (e.g., the Brando series, *Bilitis*, *Therese and Isabelle*, *Outrageous*, *A Star is Born/Auntie Mame*, etc.), but more germane here is that neighboring these texts are films that involve BDSM (*Madam Kitty/The Night Porter, Maîtresse*), sex work (*Cathy Tippel, Exhibition*), and bi- and pansexuality (*Satyricon, Sunday Bloody Sunday*). They are conjoined here to animate an incommensurable assortment of deviant practices.

I do not want to determine some master meaning behind or authoritative reading of the accumulation of these texts. Instead, I am far more interested in the cohabitation and comingling of these texts to produce what we might want to call something like a “deviant index,” a collection of taboos, perversions, fetishes, and “turn-ons” that then might indirectly become substance for inspiration, critique, or arousal.³⁸ “Index” here then carries a double meaning: first, it indicates to something that is on screen that can also be lived, embodied, and sensed in the actual world. Second, it accounts for the many forms of sexual deviance that accrue under the

umbrella of “deviance,” creating a running list of sexual otherness that could be witnessed at the art-house cinema.

The 1979 Nuart program exemplifies the ways that repertory and art-house cinema created knowledges of desire that for audiences had been unthinkable or inaccessible beforehand. As Foucault has demonstrated, to give desire a language, or in this case, representation, is to make it thinkable and available for use. Deviant cinema, first, endows the spectator with a sense of “firsthand” visible access to novel pleasures. It exposes to them in a condensed amount of time a myriad of potential desires that circulate outside of heteronormative protocols. This exposure then structures the spectatorial imagination, through such things as narrative, design, performance, and so on, which work to create a context—a set of conditions—within which the pleasure is seen and (re)imagined. The Marlon Brando retrospective alone serves as material brimming with fetishistic as well as kinky potential: the leather aesthetic of *The Wild One*; the sadomasochism in *Last Tango in Paris*; the voyeuristic infatuation with—gasp!—the “sad young man” in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. Brando as Stanley Kowalski, the fetishized image of blue-collar brute masculinity, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, it should be noted, has occupied a lustful place in the American imagination since its midcentury release.

This may be starting to sound rather mimetic: spectators are influenced by the imagery that they turn into their own private (but sometimes public) fantasy. An imitation hypothesis only works, however, if spectators’ desires correspond directly to single texts. Programming, especially in the 1970s and 1980s when double bills

were the norm, shows that we are better off thinking about pleasurable texts in clusters and composites, making them into memorable or resonant parts for the spectator. It is an apparatus that fragments, producing connective tissue among texts, bodies, sensations, and ideas rather than a wholesale or rational knowledge. It is within these liminal spaces, these sensorial hinges and fringes, that films “rebound,” to use Linda Williams’ word, in the mind and body of the spectator.³⁹

Using the 1979 Nuart calendar as representative, it may seem odd to put films such as *The Night Porter*, *Sunday, Bloody, Sunday*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* in conversation, given the fact that they each feel and look so different. In addition to their dissimilar tonal, generic and stylistic markers, these films all span the strata of taste, and were made within divergent cultural contexts. Nevertheless, it is their exhibition context that suggests they *do* fit within the same deviant universe. Apropos of the *bricolage* effect, here we might think of the ways that tastefulness gets compromised underneath the heading of deviant programming. Where *A Streetcar Named Desire* elsewhere gets claimed as an American canonical classic (I read and watched it in my high school English class), here it is injected with the erotic charge of power relations, for instance, that may not look so different than the sadomasochistic realizations in *The Night Porter*. It literalizes what in Chapter 1 I described as “promiscuous programming,” putting in collision incongruent sexual proclivities to form an orgiastic explosion of fantasies and styling for spectatorial fantasies.

By generating contact zones among these deviant texts, programming thus acts on the ambiguities and overlaps between them, forging relationships, parallels, affinities, and alliances that make them all the more porous. The basis for this intertextuality could be characterized fittingly as *iterative* instead of mimetic, in the sense that Rey Chow propounds in her consideration of “new materialisms.”⁴⁰ In fact, Chow puts iteration in opposition to mimesis; for her, desire becomes refracted and inflected when it is transposed, “located in the interstices of interactions between people” rather than reliant upon a model for direct imitation (as is the case with mimesis).⁴¹ We might then extend Chow’s corrective further into relations not only between people but between objects and people as well. Within the deviant program, an *iterative* space between spectator and screen, reader and text, is wedged open, enabling the body to seek out reparative tactics that do not merely copy that which is on screen, but help to shape the affective encounter with it.

This further explains Samuel Delany’s experience at porn theaters where homosexual acts would transpire in front of the heterosexual pornography flickering on screen. There are no identitarian links between representation and act in this scenario; it is the affective and tonal transfer that initiates the contact, in turn troubling the distinct boundaries between and therefore the properties governing hetero vs. homo subjectivities.⁴² The specific pornographic titles exhibited in the theaters in *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* are extraneous to Delany’s point; it could have been any title really—it matters more that porn provided the material conditions within which same-sex desire could manifest.

To discuss programming, however, *is* to think about specific titles and their potential intertextual impact. Such selections can move audience members to interact differently with others once the movie ends and the lights come up. Current programmer of the Nuart Mark Valen recounted to me his experience seeing Radley Metzger's *Score* (1974) for the first time as a teenager in Los Angeles upon the film's release. He recalled a friend, a fellow "film nerd," asking him one day if he wanted to see the film. As they sat and watched, it became all the more apparent to Valen that his friend had used *Score*, a quintessential swinger film that explores themes of bisexuality, as a vehicle to come out. (Indeed, some time after that the friend did officially—albeit redundantly—"come out" to Valen.) The film does include a crosscut sequence of same-sex male as well as female copulation, but the film is by no means a "gay film." Still, it figured as a way for this friend to come out of the closet.

There are several justifications for selecting *Score* in this case. Unlike a film such as *A Very Natural Thing* (Christopher Larkin, 1974), an explicitly gay film that came out that same year, *Score* is certainly a more coded choice, masked by Metzger's usual predilection for lesbian and heterosexual desire (and not gay desire).⁴³ From a certain perspective, then, his friend was motivated to take him to see *this* film because he was repressing his gay identity. But more than just repression lingered in the affective space between Valen, his friend, and the film. As a 1970s sexploitation film, *Score* espouses a carefree attitude toward sex, one that had become associated with the genre in the wake of hits such as Vadim's *Barbarella* (1968) and

Russ Meyer's *Cherry, Harry, and Raquel* (1970). *Score* was then "safely" heterosexual to an extent, but tonally it transmitted a relaxed attitude towards sexual experiences that could not be contained to identity formations, instead caught in a web of indeterminate sexual signifiers. The ending perfectly illustrates this undecidability: the couple new to swinging leaves their former lovers for a third (interestingly, a man and not a woman!), seemingly beginning their journey as a threesome, or what we might today amusingly call a "throuple."

Palpable questions and contingencies were sure to cluster around this experience: Are we looking at the same things? Is he trying to tell me something, or get me to tell him something by recommending *this* film? What will we say to each other when it's over? These questions are sure to send the ego into a frenzied, perhaps fraught, state that cannot find relief within the mold of identity per se. For Valen, the experience of seeing *Score* for the first time with a friend, who he would later confirm was gay, is momentous because it helped him to situate his identity in relation to another, but of course it leaves open the question of what exceeds articulation, of what sensations *Score* produced that did not fit within the tidy subject formation of "gay" or "homosexual." The ways in which viewing position and the object meet and miss each other is wonderfully representative of the contingent relational facets that develop in response to deviant content. In terms of witnessing unconventional sexuality at the cinema, spectators overall are consciously and/or non-consciously met with ontological and affective questions not unlike those Valen faced: Why am I here? What has brought others here? Who will be inspired and who will be displeased

by the film's proposition? These questions displace that of mimesis, a rather reductive way to think about what reception is made possible by the dialogic programming of suggestive and explicit content.

Sobchack's notion of "sensual catachresis" could be repurposed and usefully mobilized here to capture that which falls between experience, articulation, and identity—that which, in the context of deviant programming, recognizes the gaps between the desire depicted on screen and those of the spectator. In pursuit of trying to understand or feel that erotic propulsion, deviant programming offers spectators multiple moments to explore the contingency of one's own desire as it relates to those of others. Here then is a site of simultaneous (re)cognition—the visual and aural access to unusual pleasures—as well as what Sobchack calls "sense-making" or "sense-ability," that is, affectively engaging with those erotics, and by way of individual inflection, turning them into material for one's own desires and fantasies. "Sensual catachresis" is that gap that marks the interrelatedness of one's world as it tries to encounter the world of others, the world on the screen, and a world yet to be experienced. Filmic narration, style, and tone, which give characters circumstances, obstacles, rhythms, textures, and moods for their pleasures, thus meet spectators in their own embodiments, approximating their desires and those of other non-normative types and practices.

The sensations that programming makes available therefore extend beyond the texts themselves. In fact, deviant programming's many corporeal associations can cut so deep into the urban repertory house ontology that indecorous behavior such as

cruising finds itself commensurable to the space. In discussing the “seedy ambiance” of rundown repertory and second-run houses, Ben Davis adds, “the funky life of these theaters was also well-known for their balconies and bathrooms, which were often choice places for anonymous, generally gay, sex, although heterosexual groping was also an occurrence.”⁴⁴ The back-to-back continuous performances of films in long periods of darkness alone (which I describe in Chapter 4 as “repertory time”) likely established the repertory house as a setting for indecent acts to take place without the threat of a watchful eye. One might then be tempted to call the repertory house itself a deviant space.⁴⁵ Certainly “necking and petting” at the movies had long been hallmarks of dating cultures, but Davis here addresses a phenomenon specific to the shabby architecture of repertory houses. Davis cites one description of the Bleeker Street Cinema, for instance, as a “classy dump.”⁴⁶ The Elgin, situated in a pre-gentrified and racially diverse Chelsea, had a “tacky” and “rundown” façade, punctuated with a “marquee that lacked apostrophes.”⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ Add to it the dingy and uncomfortable seats coming apart at the hinges, the scent of transient populations mixed with stale popcorn, the repertory house in a state of disrepair and neglect may very well have symbolized the sense of rejection, marginalization, and disrepute that queers had long been subject to and felt.

The programming too boosted this association. Repertory fare, against a mainstream market that prizes freshness and originality over longevity, is waste product—irrelevant and tired—and misaligned with the contemporary moment. The work of Elizabeth Freeman and Heather Love illustrate the ways in which queer

cultural production indexes feeling *out of sync* with the normative time (Freeman calls it “chrononormativity;” for Love, “feeling backwards”) of social “progression,” of longing to linger on feeling adrift, discarded, and “off.”⁴⁹ Perhaps this kind of queer temporal deviation is one explanation for queer love of “the classic”—the abandoned object—that might run counter to the backwards figure or stereotype of the “old queen” who romanticizes a pure moment that never was. Regardless, repertory fare is the queer unwanted child in this exhibitiv family.

The queer personification of the repertory house is perhaps best dramatized (should we even want to use the word in its classical sense) in Tsai Ming-Liang’s *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003). The film follows the patrons of a dilapidated repertory house on the eve of its closure. Buckets are scattered about the hallways to catch dripping water from the torrential rainfall; bodies move slowly as they cruise one another in bathrooms and alleyways; *Dragon Inn* (King Hu, 1967) plays to an audience of both the emotionally disinterested and the emotionally shattered. The film anticipates with a heavy heart the ramifications of losing and then forgetting such a space as the repertory house, specifically as the phenomenological specificity of embodied space gets replaced by the easy accessibility of virtual ones. *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is thus not so much an ode to old movies such as *Dragon Inn* as much as to communal experiences with them, messy, inconvenient, distracting, and unpredictable as they can be.

Tsai Ming-Liang seems to be taking his cue from Roland Barthes, who writes in his eloquent essay “Leaving the Theater,” that he feels at the cinema he has two

bodies at once: “a narcissist body which gazes, lost, into the engulfing mirror, and a perverse body, ready to fetishize not the image but precisely what exceeds it: the texture of the sound, the hall, the darkness, the obscure mass of other bodies, the rays of light, entering the theater, leaving the hall...”⁵⁰ Barthes does not tell us what he is watching; in fact, he doesn’t seem to care. He instead *feels* the cinema alive and pulsating, dark, lonely, exciting, uncertain, and tranquil all at once. We might go as far as to say that Barthes senses the queer temporality of the repertory house, the movement of time back and forth through bygone eras converging with present sensations, the merging of mediation and embodiment.

Tsai Ming-Liang’s film and Barthes’s essay both capture the non-mimetic relations among spectators and spectators to screen. The cruising patrons in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* and Barthes’s distracted body in “Leaving the Movie Theater” are a testament to those affective components of filmgoing that are often seen as excessive, extraneous, remainder, or superfluous. Underlying much film theory is the belief that cognitive energy must be directed towards the object in order for proper meaning to be produced. In the realm of sexuality and cinema especially, this meaning tends to be associated with the mimetic, that is, how audiences directly respond to the sexual imagery on screen, be it resulting in vicariousness, reenactment, or disavowal. The programming of sexually provocative and evocative work, however, throws this notion into crisis. It optimizes the intertextual matter that dwells between text and reader. It allows sensations and knowledges to develop tangentially alongside cognitive engagement with filmic texts. Deviant programming thus serves as an *open*

horizon of spectatorial imaginaries that cannot be predetermined or foreordained; the textual schema laid out within the series or calendar guides spectators, who from there forge their own pathways to pleasure.

Morality and Pathology

Not all of the films that index deviance had an optimistic outlook on sexuality; in fact, a great portion of them offered rather nihilistic and disturbing depictions of sexuality and its history. Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* has become a notorious case. Adapting Marquis to Sade's writing to fascist Italy, *Salò* was repeatedly programmed throughout the 1970s and 1980s, despite its many calls for censorship.⁵¹ The film, which was Pasolini's last before his mysterious assassination in November 1975, features perverse fascists who torture their young rebel prisoners. Unsettling compulsory sex acts from anal rape to coprophilic force-feeding reach their crescendo in the finale in which a series of bodily mutilations are carried out by the sadistic captors. To be clear: the film is not an indictment of all forms of sadistic perversion, rather it incisively repudiates its use for violent state control.⁵² The idea that perversion needs context becomes all the more apparent in that *Salò* was programmed along with films from Pasolini's trilogy of life series. One such film was *The Decameron*, programmed with or proximate to *Salò* many times, including the 1979 Nuart program under discussion here. It too indexes scenes of fetish (such as a forbidden narrative about nuns having sex with the convent

gardener) but here it is free of dark overtones, perhaps safe within a romanticized premodern milieu.

Ken Russell's films as well as Pasolini's were among some of the most popular sexually provocative work shown at art-house cinemas at the time. Contrary to Pasolini, however, sex appears to almost always connote doom in Russell's films. In *The Music Lovers* (1970), Richard Chamberlain portrays the famous Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky as he battles to suppress his homosexuality, which is only momentarily remedied by his marriage to Antonina Miliukova, played by Glenda Jackson. Miliukova ends up in an insane asylum and Tchaikovsky dies of cholera. In *The Devils*, a sexually repressed and humpbacked nun accuses an attractive and corrupt priest of possessing her. In the end, the hysterical nun, played by a young Vanessa Redgrave, undergoes an exorcism (in one sequence of many that suggest female hysteria is a product of orgasmic suppression) and the priest is burned at the stake. As these brief synopses of narrative outcomes illustrate, it is easy to make the case that Russell's films do not so much as indict any primordial sexuality but rather interrogate the state, social, religious, and medical apparatuses that seek to suppress it. Because this structures the majority of Russell's morality tales, the fate of sexuality seems inevitable here, impossible to recuperate because the power structures at play are too potent in the face of individual desire.

Films such as *The Music Lovers*, *Valentino* (1977), *Savage Messiah* (1972), and *The Devils* were canonical in urban art houses—programmed innumerable during the 1970s and 1980s—but have since fallen into obscurity. Many are available for

distribution, but perhaps programmers avoid the films due to their unrelenting and unappetizing critique of sexual repression. Russell's work oftentimes makes a Grand-Guignol spectacle of sexuality as feverish, excessive, wild, and terrifying. By today's standards, it may be inconceivable to think spectators would sit and watch double bills of Russell's films, or return to see them over and over, as the continual programming of his films during the seventies and eighties indicates. Take, for instance, the case of the Bleeker Street Cinema located in Greenwich Village, New York. In its summer 1977 calendar, the Bleeker Street Cinema asserted in its calendar description of *Women in Love* that Russell "breaks the bonds of sexual repression."⁵³ Subsequently, it exhibited a series of Ken Russell double features for its Winter 1977-1978 calendar: *The Music Lovers* was paired with *Savage Messiah* and *Women in Love* with *The Devils*.

Russell's conspicuous critiques of sexual restraint, however, only gain currency when assessed alongside other texts proximate to it. Among other films programmed during the same season at the Bleeker was *Tristana* (Luis Buñuel, 1970) and *Death in Venice*, as well as a Tennessee Williams double feature of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Richard Brooks, 1958) and *The Rose Tattoo* (Daniel Mann, 1955). All of these films present historical contexts or allegories for the pernicious effects of sexual repression. These films all simmer with anxious sexual paralysis or ill-fated efforts to exorcise desire. While they may have a proclivity to designate sexuality hazardous, their narratives try to expose the historical and habitual structures of repression that cut across differences of gender, sexual identity, class, and nation.⁵⁴

On the one hand, Russell's oeuvre is unnerving in its confrontation with bourgeois sexual moralism. On the other, his frenzied aesthetic—what critic Michael Dempsey once described as “hyperthyroid camp circuses”—demonstrate that the path to doomed sexuality is paved with perversion and kink, and this in and of itself can be a point of arousal.⁵⁵ After all, Parker Tyler in his *Screening the Sexes* chapter on “fatal kinks” muses that Ken Russell “finds it so easy to turn the straight into the kinky.”⁵⁶ Note that what stands out for Tyler is not the grave ramifications of sexual repression (as if Tyler was one to take such lessons at face value!) but the indexing and accumulating of taboo pleasures and their dizzying and untamed renderings in Russell's films. The programming of films such as *The Devils* and *The Music Lovers* likewise dislodged any claims to realism by making their hyper-stylization all the more salient. Take, for instance, *The Devils*' placement in a December 1978 program at San Francisco's Strand Theatre, shown that day alongside *Performance* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.⁵⁷ These latter two films' play with sexual and gender categories, reveling in the anarchy of unmoored desire. Such readings make them rather fitting bedfellows for *The Devils*, which is about sexual impropriety driving a theocratic state into disarray. Redgrave's sexual releases at the end then might, strangely enough, parallel Brad and Janet's awakening in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, when they allow themselves to be seduced by a disguised Dr. Frankenfurter, or, at the end, when they are seduced by the drag they had previously found so degenerate.

Even a Fall 1976 calendar for the Carnegie Hall Cinema in Midtown Manhattan—*The Music Lovers* screening in a double feature with Visconti's *Death in Venice*—seems to market forbidden lust alongside the doomed narrative outcome for the protagonists.⁵⁸ (Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* spends the entire film dying of heart disease.) Within the same calendar, the Carnegie Hall Cinema also screened Jean Genet's avant-garde classic *Un Chant D'Amour* and the documentary *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (Dušan Makavejev, 1971) about psychologist Wilhelm Reich, both of which celebrate sexual indulgence as a way to rupture sexually oppressive institutional logics. Despite the aesthetic and intellectual sophistication of these texts, with genealogical ties to high-brow art, music, literature, and even science, their artiness can thus be overpowered by their sexually adrenalized force. Deviant programming here might shift critical emphasis away from arcane and artful conceit to instead underscore the subversive resonances among texts that together index not only the power of sexual expression but, ironically, also the allure of its repression.

Their narratives therefore become indexes for—or to—erotic pleasure rather than morality tales that either baldly condemn or celebrate sexual variance. Within a programmatic scene, the possibility for narrative dislocation is amplified, leading spectators to be able to negate or negotiate films' messages about sex (as doomed, corrupted, unsafe, etc.). There is also potential for this devaluation to become an abject source of titillation for a spectator who loves the forbidden or reviled. In either formulation, programming gives the spectator range to playfully select from the

proposed deviant referents. As Mikhail Iampolski notes of spectatorial cognition, intertextuality “exists not on film or on paper but in the memory of the viewer or reader. Meaning is generated between a physically given datum and an image residing in the memory.”⁵⁹ As itself *iterative*, memory functions here within a Bergsonian-Deleuzian tradition as dwelling in non-conscious, conscious, and physiological subjective spaces. Deviant programs that contain films with risqué and suggestive content activate this corporeally profuse set of meanings, and thus urge spectators to skew or even abort the material presence of a single film. The memory in this case does not so much as “screen” the moral schema of the film as much as it sees it as having either no use value or an inverted use value, the “message” now becomes a source of pleasure. The motley of perversions performed in these films are thus amalgamative, accumulative, and agglutinative, seeping into each other’s pores, and inevitably generating intertextual points of contact that reside in the bodily memories of audiences, many of whom return for more.

A Most Unusual Home

Working across this matrix of deviance entails returning again and again to the question of how one deviant form bears connections to others. A calendar full of deviant programming offers viewers ways to develop dialogic understandings of different kinds of sexual and gender pariahs, to see representations that depicted the horror of their subjugation, and to allow them to revel in discovering the pleasure of a new kink, fetish, or relationship unfolding on screen. By creating contact zones of

sexual and gender difference, deviant programming forged queer kinships among films that might ally in their abjection. I invoke the metaphor of kinship here not to signify the usual close relations or grouping criteria (such as through fixed genres, national contexts, or eras), but more broadly to include forms of belonging and affinity that might exist across deviances.⁶⁰

Programming, I have already shown, creates families of sorts out of erotic alterity. Repertory and art-house calendars created for varying deviances a shared universe. Programming thus established affective clusters in which spectators might be more likely to acknowledge forms of stigma and marginalization that cut across desires and practices regarded as unfit for productive normative life. As queer theorists have shown, at the center of productive normative life is the prized image of the heteronormative family. It is then by no coincidence that these composites of deviant life—what I am thinking of as families—together uprooted the treasured figure of the traditional white heterosexual family at the center of so much film and media. Deviant programming would counterpose idealizations of upstanding relationality by assembling stories of misfit youth and of cross-generational desire, all to destabilize persistent familial sexual and gender structures.

The 1952 Hollywood classic *Member of the Wedding* (Fred Zinnemann), based on the book by bisexual author Carson McCullers, had become such a symbol of familial romantic, sexual, and gender transgression through its repeated programming during the 1970s and 1980s. The film tells the story of a tomboy named Frankie (referred to in the voiceover as an “unjoined person”) who gets jealous when

her brother and his fiancée marry and decide to move away from home. Frankie, though an outcast, nevertheless has strong bonds with her black caretaker (played by Ethel Waters) and her effeminate male neighbor. Patricia White beautifully suggests that the film, “enacts a fantasy of autonomy and difference. Three outsiders—an adult Black woman, a sissy white boy, and his preteen tomboy cousin—figure the gap between hegemonic representation (the idealized picture of happiness that is the white wedding) and those who are disposed of the image.”⁶¹ In 1976, the film played at the Carnegie Hall Cinema in a double feature alongside *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955).⁶² Like *Member of the Wedding*, *Rebel Without a Cause* has also been seen as an allegory for queer youth, with extra-diegetic knowledge of homo- and bisexual stars Sal Mineo and James Dean animating its subtext. Both films also render the normative familial unit a highly restrictive barrier to alternate forms of profound belonging.

Observe the San Francisco’s Times Theater schedule for March 1973.⁶³ The films that were screened in the weeks leading up to *Member of the Wedding* included, one week prior, *Auntie Mame*, a film about a sensitive orphan boy who forms a close bond with his eccentric aunt; and weeks prior to this, Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Teorema*, involving an elusive bisexual guest who dismantles a family by seducing each member. It was unusual for a classical Hollywood non-genre film to be programmed so frequently at this time. As such, *Member of the Wedding* found itself in deviant company, upsetting heteronormative sedimentation of family existence, and undoing

the routinized psychosexual structures that establish a set of finite possibilities for subjectivization through parental identification or its failure.

Programming such as this invokes Sara Ahmed's account of what she refers to as "queer phenomenology," a mode of disorientation in which the taken-for-granted backdrop of heterosexuality is thrown off balance and made unrecognizable by queer lines of bodily orientation.⁶⁴ The films themselves disrupt normative logics. Together they help to render the repertory house itself a deviant space that turns away from norms and towards alternate forms of intimacy and belonging. Not just typical melodramas in which the home is a site of crisis in need of realignment, these films are much more interested in what it means to live within the conditions of *misalignment* and *maladjustment*. Outsiders Julie Harris and Ethel Waters in *Member of the Wedding*, the campy Rosalind Russell in *Auntie Mame*, as well as the enigmatic Terence Stamp in *Teorema* all become players in a story that might queerly reimagine, out of the debris of the nuclear family, life anew, rendered pleasurable not in spite of but *because of* its disorientation.

The Times Theater showed *Member of the Wedding* in a double bill with *Harold and Maude* in the March 1973 calendar. No doubt the two have certain thematic parallels (e.g., absent parents, feelings of estrangement, teenage angst) that connect them in their rejoinder to the familiar familial narrative. *Harold and Maude's* intervention runs deeper than this still, made salient by its programming with *Sunday, Bloody, Sunday* in a double feature at St. Marks Cinema in Manhattan in 1972. *Harold and Maude* is known most, perhaps, for its titular protagonists' "odd"

intergenerational coupling. Strikingly, and most important vis-à-vis deviance, neither *Harold and Maude* nor *Sunday, Bloody, Sunday* offers psychoanalytic justification for this intergenerational desire by way of desire for a parent or child. In *Sunday, Bloody, Sunday*, the bisexual young artist, whose restlessness may be seen as arrested development, could have found relief in the figure of his male lover, a workaholic doctor, or in his female lover who would offer him a healthy heterosexual outlet. But in the end, the artist craves neither the domestic nor the financial stability either lover can offer, and suffers no consequences for his dispositions.

As for *Harold and Maude*, the two are generations apart (she is old enough to be his grandmother), yet form a durable romantic bond. The film showcases an intergenerational romance without reducing the characters to pathological case studies in which Harold, the teenager, needs a parental figure and Maude a substitute for a nonexistent offspring. Inversely, Maude, a Holocaust survivor who *should be* cynical and decrepit, actually provides Harold the open spirit he needs to proceed in life, and Harold provides a reciprocal excitement for Maude in her final days. The cross-generational reality of their relationship is not incidental despite the fact that it is not a point of conflict in the film. In fact, the film effortlessly integrates into their relationship (which first appears a friendship full of support and care) a romantic dimension that also provocatively entails sexual attraction.

Harold and Maude offers an overtly reparative depiction of deviant forms of attachment. Spectators whose desires lack acknowledgement or visibility in other representational spheres might very well find refuge at the art-house and repertory

cinema because films such as *Harold and Maude*, *Member of the Wedding*, and *Sunday, Bloody, Sunday* were screened without apology and without hesitation. And moreover, they were screened *repeatedly*, allowing meanings and feelings to generate outward from each iteration. Deviance therefore is always on the move, seeking new semiotic affinities, new potential alliances, and bringing to bear new ethical concerns about the valuation of sexual outliers.

These programmatic combinations of deviant films exemplify the extent to which programmers would adhere unlike types, experiences, and practices that undo the heteronormative structures of the biologically-bound nuclear family. In doing so, programming effectively restructured those ties in the image of queer disruption. Through depictions of chosen and unintended families (*Member of the Wedding* and *Auntie Mame*), of unconventional forms of attachment (*Harold and Maude*) and of de-pathologized forms of desire disruptive of parental-offspring paradigms (*Sunday, Bloody, Sunday*), deviant programming allowed those imaginaries to flourish, and also encouraged forms of queer kinship untethered to sameness or likeness as being markers for the ties that bind us. Given these programmatic arrangements, programmers clearly imagined spectators who longed to see otherness on screen and anticipated that they might find relief in like company. These intertexts dramatize the pain of stigmatization, but also, ironically, offer their audiences chances to experience pleasure in seeing largely unthinkable desires realized on screen. In the company of other “degenerates,” and in the deviant threadbare space of the dark repertory house, such desires finally come home.

Coda: Deviance Retrofitted

As repertory houses began to close in the late 1980s, and art-house programmers began to depend more on the series model of programming to attract their expected crowd of cinephile devotees, less and less deviant arrangements appear on calendars. *Pink Flamingos* and *Harold and Maude* continue to screen, but they find themselves more in the company of safer and more prosaic selections. Even with the decline of deviant programming, still, its influence can be felt echoing into the 1990s, especially in independent cinema. Sundance becomes the home for curious deviant objects we associate with the New Queer Cinema (*Paris is Burning* [Jennie Livingston, 1990], *Poison* [Todd Haynes, 1991], *Swoon*, *The Living End*), as well as award winners *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (Steven Soderbergh, 1989) and *Crumb* (Terry Zwigoff, 1994). We might wonder then what textual arrangements directors such as Greg Araki, Todd Haynes, Steven Soderbergh, and Terry Zwigoff experienced at their favorite cinemas to make their imaginations so incredibly perverse and diffuse in their perversion.

Every now and then there are even contemporary hints of deviant programming that honor its history. The American Cinematheque at the Egyptian Theatre in Los Angeles in July 2017 did a series called “RATED X: NOT FOR CHILDREN (BUT NOT FOR PORN).” Included were almost exclusively films, not-so-incidentally, between 1968 and 1989 such as *Female Trouble, If..* (Lindsay Anderson, 1968), *Performance*, *The Devils*, *Last Tango in Paris*, *The Decameron*,

Arabian Nights (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1974), *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (Pedro Almodovar, 1990), and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* (Peter Greenaway, 1989).⁶⁵ Even LGBT film festivals surprise from time to time with their interest in deviant matters. In 2014, the provocative and depraved German film *Wetlands* (David Wnendt) was screened as part of the World Series program of San Francisco's 38th annual LGBTQ film festival Frameline. Peculiarly, the film offers little attention to same-sex desire, contained only to one scene where the protagonist sleeps with a female sex worker. In fact, the previous 100 minutes are so full of relishing taboo fetishes that range from defecation to genitalia shaving to female-on-male rim jobs that the lesbian desire is nearly lost in a sea of sexual debauchery. Perhaps, then, the capacity for programming to engage with sexual deviance as a critical category is not totally lost. Perhaps it is just reserved for those special occasions when the pressure to sell tickets is eased, or, in the case of the American Cinematheque series, when the films are likely to bring an audience because they already have established cult followings.

Regardless of its fate, I have here wanted to recuperate deviant programming to indicate an alternate queer politics in which LGBT is not centralized, or when deviant performativities and embodiments are not merely "stand-ins" for LGBT representational codes, but rather richly personify their own modes of signification. I have tried to gesture at the ways that more capacious understandings of queerness as deviance entail deeper ethical implications for sexual politics. Deviant programming of the 1970s and 1980s thus resembles the protean classifications we see in Gayle

Rubin's writing on radical sex politics. Rubin calls upon sexual and gender minorities to recognize the ways in which they are co-constitutive in their oppression, produced out of embedded normative sets of knowledges and regulations that maintain institutional and representational stratification. Taking up such an approach in queer film criticism might forge parallels, overlaps, and entanglements among stigmatized desires.⁶⁶ Programming of the 1970s and 1980s offers this political imaginary; by virtue of films' dialogic capacity in a program, the entangled histories of deviant subjects are allowed a space to comingle and to probe the conditions of non-normative life.

As opposed to more deterministic genre formations and taste stratifications, programming can be seen as a more ad hoc practice where inventive, albeit temporary, groupings and clusters of films produce novel potential for ideation and affective associations. By making use of the *bricolage* effect, deviant programming generated a field of convergences of disparate parts that tend towards heterogeneity over synthesis. The differences present don't seek accord, but thrive on the incommensurability that ensues. Programming practices thus assembled these seemingly incommensurable pleasures to encourage reflection upon their repressed expressions in mediated and lived forms, and thus form a basis for ethical relations across sexual difference.

Deviant programming drew upon films that were known as "bad objects," producing those toxic attachments that in psychoanalytic terms keep a person from reaching normal and healthy patterns of sociality and intimacy. Films that are part of

what I call the deviant index should be, in this sense, steered clear of should a spectator want to find beneficial sources and models for satisfaction and enjoyment. My point all along, however, is that programming calls into crisis straightforward hermeneutics and normative notions of mimesis, which serve as foundations for so much thinking on the semiotic-phenomenological interactions between sex on screen and spectatorial embodiment. Without a mimetic model to rely on, the spectator further deviates from the textual grip of the film, giving the imagination ample room to roam. As I will continue to demonstrate in the next chapter, queer films that might be seen as “bad objects” are therefore capable of doing many things for viewers, even when there is overwhelming consensus that they are indeed full of harmful and malignant imagery. The next chapter further advances a theory that supplies audiences with semiotic and affective command in the face of the hegemonic powers that be.

Notes

¹ For more on *Multiple Maniacs*, see Chris Holmlund, “John Waters: *Multiple Maniacs* Relaunch.” *Film Quarterly* 71, no. 1 (September 1, 2017): 97.

² Nuart Theatre’s program archive, Los Angeles, CA

³ Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* (N.Y: Routledge, 1994), 97.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

⁵ David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, introduction to “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?” eds. David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, *Social Text*, nos. 84 – 85 (2005): 3. For their inspiration, see Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxvi.

⁶ Dana Seitler, “Queer Physiognomies; Or, How Many Ways Can We Do the History of Sexuality?,” *Criticism* 46, No. 1 (Winter 2004): 71-102.

⁷ Seldom were these connections overtly framed *as political*. For instance, it was common for the work of makers such as Chantal Akerman or Kenneth Anger to be positioned as high art or experimental cinema over, say, a form of social critique by the heterosexually dominated community of programmers, critics, cinephiles, and even the makers themselves. This tendency positioned the films as *formal* disruptions, their deviance as a way to “stick it to the man,” but not as ways to rethink the sexual and thus social orders to which many attendees prescribed. Such an acknowledgement, after all, might expose the ways in which sexism and homophobia can be structured and formalized, sewn into the fabric of a film’s narrative and visual economy. For instance, displays of women’s bodies, especially bare breasts, were typical of sexually provocative art-house fare, and to this day remain the conceit and marker of “racy” material. By and large, sexism, homophobia, racism, among other forms of subjugation, could and did thrive in art-house circles, in part because of intellectual appeals to form rather than to more holistic social views that could attend to the linkages among those sexually relegated, which includes women, people of color, LGBT people, and anyone else who does not conform to the straight white masculine male ideal. For this reason, the deviance of these films should not be recovered with the promise of utopian relief. They must be carefully sorted and deliberated on as queer fodder for an alternative set of politics.

⁸ Williams, “Structures of Feeling” in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132.

⁹ Another version of this chapter would have explored more deeply the connections between the sociological interest in deviance, typified by the work of Erving Goffman, Evelyn Hooker, Howard Becker, and John H. Gagnon. An entire generation of college-educated adults were influenced by these discourses. As Chuck Kleinhans writes, “we might note that in 1960s America, after the basic college introductory course, the favorite sociology course for undergraduates on many campuses was Sociology of Deviance, often known by campus slang as ‘Nuts and Sluts.’” (100).

One has to wonder what impact this had on intellectual cultures at large, and thus the production and reception of deviant films. See Chuck Kleinhans, "Pornography and Documentary: Narrating the Alibi," in *Sleaze Artists*, 96-120.

¹⁰ Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 267-319.

¹¹ See chapter 1 for social changes in the US that catalyzed the production of this work. See also Williams, *Screening Sex*.

¹² See Gorfinkel, *Lewd Looks*.

¹³ "Roxie Cinema," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA

¹⁴ "Frameline," MoMA Archive, New York City, NY

¹⁵ I am taking up this epistemological turn not so much to historicize queer cinema's codification by the late 1970s (i.e., an LGBT-centric classification that has remained firmly in place to the present day) as much as to better understand the malleable and permeable notions of queerness that circulated within art-house and repertory programming in those early years. With the notion of gay or lesbian cinema discursively faint in the early 1970s, and then by the late 1970s, nascent, connections among non-normative desires and practices could be forged. No doubt the Stonewall Riots and the gay liberation movement of the time had made "the love that dare not speak its name" public, couched within the lexicon of empowerment. But while gay rights activists sought employment equality and legal protection against harassment and violence, their concerns had yet to make their way fully into the realm of cinema and media cultures. One might then go as far as to say that there was not yet a complete language or discourse for homosexuality within film culture and certainly not within the academe. If sex operates within its modern formation through language and discourse, as Michel Foucault has demonstrated, its lack thereof within filmgoing cultures becomes cause for unscripted and unpredictable interchanges among what was deemed sexually "other." See Foucault, 83.

¹⁶ Russo claims them in the name of critique. See Chapter 3 for more description of this history.

¹⁷ "Chicago," MoMA Archive, New York City, NY. For more an analysis of sexuality in *Cat People*, see Alexander Doty and Patricia Clare Ingham, "The 'Evil Medieval': Gender, Sexuality, Miscegenation, and Assimilation in *Cat People*" in *Bad: Infamy, Darkness, Evil, and Slime on Screen*, ed. Murray Pomerance (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 225-238.

¹⁸ Admittedly, I am being a bit polemical here. In the U.S., there were occasional gay and lesbian series in art-house cinemas, but these were not all that common. For instance, Davis references gay themed film series at the Bleeker Street Cinema, but does not give examples.

¹⁹ Davis, *Repertory Movie Theaters*, 153.

²⁰ "Roxie Cinema," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA

²¹ Ibid. The only information given is that the excerpt comes from the Berliner Borsen-Courier, 1930.

²² *The Village Voice*, January 25, 1973, 79.

²³ Tyler, *Screening the Sexes: Homosexuality in the Movies* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1973), 285.

²⁴ Tyler, *Screening the Sexes*, 5. Queerness gets a Nietzschean-Wildean treatment in his writing (see especially the section entitled “One thing is needful” in Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*). Perhaps this is part of the reason that Tyler’s work has been seen by queer film criticism as merely idiosyncratic musings rather than scholarship. For more on this, see Chapter 3.

²⁵ Judith Halberstam, “F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity,” in *The Lesbian Postmodern*, ed. Laura L. Doan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

²⁶ Stuart Hall, “Deviance, Politics, and the Media,” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove (New York: Routledge, 1993), 66.

²⁷ Richard Dyer, “Coming Out as Going In: The Image of the Homosexual as a Sad Young Man,” in *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

²⁸ See Alexander Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Doty, *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

²⁹ Osterweil, *Flesh Cinema*, 15.

³⁰ This makes perfect sense given Linda Williams is considered one of the founders of “porn studies,” with her book *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”* seen as a landmark scholarship on the topic. In it, she critically examines pornography’s aim to elicit orgasm in its imagined male spectator by making the male orgasm (imaged through male ejaculation) a privileged site of visibility. Mimesis is therefore central to this problematic. Vivian Sobchack, on the other hand, comes from the direction of phenomenology and philosophy, and therefore engages more with an art-house and mainstream canon. For Williams on Sobchack, see *Screening Sex*, 19-20.

³¹ Williams, *Screening Sex*, 125.

³² See also Amy Villarejo on “lesbian” as catachrestic in *Lesbian Rule: Cultural Criticism and the Value of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

³³ Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 82.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ These are significant theoretical dilemmas, which frequently circle back to the perennial question of how much influence moving-image representations of corporeal modes (be it sex or violence) have on spectators’ minds and bodies. These politically charged questions have legal, psychological, and other institutional implications, if not ramifications, and deserve the in-depth studies they have received.

³⁶ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 65.

³⁷ Nuart Theatre’s program archive, Los Angeles, CA

³⁸ This in some ways conjures up Charles Sanders Peirce notion of the “degenerate index,” that is, a signifier that contains no information that nonetheless orients a person towards a subject (a pointing finger, for example). Only for Peirce the “degenerate index” is “contentless;” it is purely referential in nature and thus helps to

chart designations. The difference here is that these representations, though perhaps orienting spectators' bodies toward sensations and knowledges, are not without information or content. In a cognitive sense, the referents have narrative weight to them, which gives them distinct connotation for spectators, either in a synchronic sense in a given program or diachronically, as films are paired with or situated within a matrix of other films through time. For more on Peirce's degenerate index, see Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958).

³⁹ I cannot help but also think of B. Ruby Rich's wonderful notion of the "audience cut" (as opposed to the "director's cut"), "shaped by a call-and-response pattern of group acceptance and disavowal of whatever dares to parade by on screen." See Rich, *New Queer Cinema*, xxvii.

⁴⁰ Chow beautifully writes that for Judith Butler, "'What 'performs' does not exhaust the 'I' or '[determine] it fully in advance' - and thus to the possibility of subversion. In this way, even the oppressive conformity inscribed in the speeches, actions, and rituals of, say, compulsory hetero- sexual normativity becomes, paradoxically, a kind of still-malleable material, a porous 'ground' on which alternative performances (of seemingly fixed identities) may be reiterated, played out, and reinvented" (230). See Rey Chow, "The Elusive Material: What the Dog Doesn't Understand," in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, eds. Diana H. Coole and Samantha Frost, 221-33, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁴¹ Chow, *The Elusive Material*, 228.

⁴² See Champagne, "'Stop Reading Films!,'" for an analogous argument.

⁴³ This would also seem to neutralize any "scarcity" argument that might suggest without easy accessibility to explicitly gay content, they were forced to see *Score*.

⁴⁴ Davis, *Repertory Movie Theaters*, 22.

⁴⁵ Mark Valen recalled that the grindhouses by Times Square had been notorious for their balconies. We might then regard the repertory theater as a distant cousin to the grindhouse.

⁴⁶ Davis, *Repertory Movie Theaters*, 171.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 94.

⁴⁸ Conversely, the kitsch of the Theatre 80 St. Marks was almost tailor-made for queers, with its uniformed ushers in buttoned tailcoats (more reminiscent in design of a marching band than a movie palace) greeting patrons at the door. Davis calls Theatre 80 St. Marks, the "Lower East Side version of Grauman's Chinese Theater" (117).

⁴⁹ See Heather Love, *Feeling Backwards: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge,

Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁵⁰ Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater," 349.

⁵¹ Christopher Roberts, "The Theatrical Satanism of Self-Awareness Itself," *Angelaki* 15, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): 29-43.

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- ⁵² For careful analyses of Pasolini's use of perversion, see Thomas E. Peterson, "The Allegory of Repression from *Teorema* to *Salò*," *Italica* 73, no. 2 (1996): 215–32; and Tony Cesare, "Pasolini's Theorem," *Film Criticism* 14, no. 1 (1989): 22–25.
- ⁵³ "Bleeker Street Cinema," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA
- ⁵⁴ For more on Ken Russell, see Barry Keith Grant's "The Body Politic: Ken Russell in the 1980s in *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), 182–194; and *Ken Russell: Re-Viewing England's Last Mannerist*, ed. Kevin M. Flanagan (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009).
- ⁵⁵ Michael Dempsey, "Ken Russell, Again: In Print and Film," *Film Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1977): 19–24.
- ⁵⁶ Tyler, *Screening the Sexes*, 314.
- ⁵⁷ "filmcalendar," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA
- ⁵⁸ "Carnegie Hall Cinema," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA
- ⁵⁹ Iampolski, *The Memory of Tiresias*, 250.
- ⁶⁰ See Judith Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" *Differences* 13, no. 1 (May 1, 2002): 14–44.
- ⁶¹ White, *Uninvited*, xii.
- ⁶² "Carnegie Hall Cinema," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA
- ⁶³ "filmcalendar," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA
- ⁶⁴ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
- ⁶⁵ Even more imaginative, BAMcinématek (as part of the Brooklyn Academy of Music or BAM) programmed in 2014 a series entitled "Vengeance is Hers," that focused on films about women seeking retribution for violence or harm done to them and/or the ones they love. Films as far ranging as *Coffy* (Jack Hill, 1973), *Ms. 45* (Abel Ferrara, 1981), *Medea* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1969), and *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (Chantal Akerman, 1975) filled this feminist program. What made it radically deviant perhaps—besides the fact that it forcibly excises men from the diegetic space of the screen—is that many of the films, in their membership to genres such as horror and exploitation, revel in bizarre characterizations, taboo desires, and worlds thrown off kilter.
- ⁶⁶ The tide may be changing. Over the past few years, there has been a wave of books on deviant sexualities and film; none, however, explicitly set out to challenge the field of queer film criticism. See Nicholas De Villiers, *Sexography: Sex Work in Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); *Tainted Love: Screening Sexual Perversion*, eds. Darren Kerrand Donna Peberdy (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017); *Sex and Storytelling in Modern Cinema: Explicit Sex, Performance and Cinematic Technique*, ed. Lindsay Coleman (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2014); Carol Siegel, *Sex Radical Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); Katharina Lindner, *Film Bodies: Queer Encounters with Gender and Sexuality in Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018).

CHAPTER 3

For Shame! On the History of Programming Queer “Bad Objects”

Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates. Because the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did.

-Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and
Reparative Reading”

In 1990, right as the New Queer Cinema was about to take flight at film festivals across North America and Europe, San Francisco’s fourteenth annual Frameline Film Festival for gay and lesbian cinema programmed a retrospective series on women-in-prison films including *Caged* (John Cromwell, 1950), *Prisonnières* (Charlotte Silvera, 1988), and *Scrubbers* (Mai Zetterling, 1982).¹ The accompanying description in the Frameline program states the series’ purpose: it was part investigation of the heterosexual male fixation on lesbian desire and part exploration of female empowerment and lesbian spectatorial looking relations that could be gleaned from the genre. Given that this genre was among the most disdained by feminists throughout the 1970s, clearly Frameline’s programming had signaled a sea change. Had lesbian feminists left behind their critiques of sexploitation films, with their excessive displays of bare breasts and stereotypical depictions of hysterical and prurient women? What had transpired in the 1980s, perhaps even as early as the

1970s, to encourage such a reconsideration? Even if it was not a complete reclamation, a spectatorial positioning that was once unthinkable had manifested in the form of an institutionally supported and tangible phenomenon: the film series.

In this chapter, I argue that programming—that is, the practice of selecting and grouping films to be exhibited for a specific cinema and audience—played a pivotal role in the shift towards loving queer “bad objects” that had long been accused of producing homophobic and transphobic injury, shame, self-loathing, and stigma. In limiting my scope to the 1970s and 1980s U.S. context, I examine how the ongoing programming of women-in-prison films, lesbian vampire films, and Russ Meyer’s “skin flicks” reoriented queer film history itself. I here bring to bear multiple ways to narrate this history, throwing into crisis a unilineal telling that positions trauma at the center, as is the case in many histories, and pleasure at the margins of queer spectatorship.

Here I pursue two interconnected propositions related to programming, the first of which is meant to be an intervention and the other more descriptive.² First, I tackle queer film criticism’s difficulty historicizing spectatorial pleasure for and, crucially, *with* mainstream cinema.³ I suggest that programming, as a facet of exhibition studies, might direct the film historian towards intertextual readings of filmic assemblages, encouraging a sort of reparative historicizing. Within this methodology, the historian forges a relationship to the past that does not presuppose loss, deficiency, and pain but rather one of openness to various positions that one can have to a past context. Secondly, I zero in on several specific programs to

demonstrate how programming leads to reparative relationships with individual films. As I will explain, this comes with some temporal remove, but it more so entails accepting films as what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick refers to as “part-objects,” or what Richard X. Feng deems—in his recuperation of Nancy Kwan—“scavenged bits and pieces,” those shards or fragments of texts that can unmake and remake attachments.⁴ Here I trace the reevaluation of films such as *Daughters of Darkness* (Harry Kümel, 1971), *Caged*, *The Big Doll House* (Jack Hill, 1971), and *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* via repertory and gay and lesbian film festival programming to explain what tactics queer spectators have adopted to conduct reparative readings.

In my research, I found only one article on how queer spectators recuperate “bad objects” that have in the past been associated with epistemic or representational harm.⁵ One such convincing reading attributes the shift to time: temporal distance strengthens forms of detachment and disavowal that then lead to a troubling case of historical amnesia. In other words, given that queers were considerably more oppressed and repressed—especially before queer went in vogue and became mainstream in 1990s North America and Europe—previously injurious representations could now be read as quaint or campy, a relic of social panic or phobia that has since diminished. Compelling as this kind of reading may seem at first glance, it ignores the fact that homophobia and sexism might still be of concern (not just disavowed) in contemporary reparative reading practices. Moreover, it locates reclamation primarily along generational lines, which, in effect, elides reparative readings of films at the time of their releases prior to the 1990s. Assessing

the programming of these “bad objects” adds complexity to these narratives because they become part of what cultural theorists call a *contact zone* in which other texts and histories collide, where desires struggle to find articulation even as their presence is felt within a curated network.⁶

Reparativity is a less reactive and more robust framework for approaching these questions than the notion of “reclamation,” which suggests some kind of cultural ownership, or “negotiation,” which suggests wishful thinking and feeling on the part of the spectator. “Reparative reading” has become a popular practice adopted by queer theorists of affect since Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick first employed Melanie Klein’s psychoanalytic concept in her essay, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You’re so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You.” This essay, which urges critical theory to integrate joy, pleasure, and healing into its analyses of culture, has also made some cameos in film and media studies.⁷ Strangely, however, no one has considered it in relation to those films that have been maligned in the past but then later exonerated. “Reparativity,” in my conception of the paradigm, is not meant to simply explain a kind of unadulterated pleasure that takes the place of negative feelings. It leaves room for a plentitude of spectatorial psychological and emotional experiences of which empowerment, ambivalence, and shame are but a few. Like Patricia White’s use of the psychoanalytic term “representability” instead of “representation,” “reparativity” over “reparation” here attempts to gesture at what is available and apprehensible—as an open question or

proposition—to a spectator, as an option that may prove enriching *or* insufficient in the end.⁸

Reparativity is full of productive contradiction and imaginative incommensurability. As Sedgwick argues, it is “possible in turn to use one’s own resources to assemble or ‘repair’ the murderous part-objects into something like a whole—though, I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole.*”⁹ In lieu of a hope for finding a wholly satisfying object for attachment, implicit here is a sense that marginalized subjects produce alternate practices for seeking out those nourishing “part-objects” in popular culture. Invoking a kind of disidentification, Sedgwick regards pleasure as already contaminated—it is a mixture of tropes, attachments, fantasies, and disavowals that can be revised and reworked. I would suggest that this produces a more ethically inclined *politics of pleasure* that enables the cohabitation of critique, fantasy, recognition, identification, curiosity, and ambivalence, sometimes simultaneously.

Literary and media theorists tend to use “reparative reading” in terms of attachment to the object, that is, to the text. In order to seek out pleasure, these theories hinge upon a notion that subjects are not at the mercy of the external object but can find modes of adjustment or coping in order to change the attachment to the object. But this chapter takes a step back from this by not presupposing that it is first and foremost the relation to the object that is being repaired. So what relation, in turn, *is* being repaired? Programming, as central to queer spectatorial reparativity, makes clear that besides the relation to the text, there is also one’s relationship to the

communal, that is, the public and counterpublic, that can oftentimes undergo repair. There is also one's relation to history itself, which might be conterminous with an imagined community. And then there is the possibility of repairing or healing the relation to the self, and the self as part of a community or several communities, or the self as part of the historical present.¹⁰

My point here is that programming illuminates the ways that reparativity courses along several vectors—some intersecting—that might lead to loosening the grip of the text as authoritative and monologic. Throughout this chapter, I take the Barthesian stance—i.e., that the power of readers' subjectivities can undermine the role of the author—even one degree further by suggesting that within the scene of programming, the text can easily become subordinated to social conditions such as communal response.¹¹ I contend that this pleasure for *and* with “bad objects” comes as a result of moving through, not simply displacing, a layered affective repertoire. As Lauren Berlant writes, “the very shifting of the subject in response to its own threat to its self-attachment can be the source of an affective creativity that is not just a fantasmatic toupée, but also the possibility of a recalibrated sensorium...”¹²

In many historical cases, programming, is a diachronic process of mapping and remapping spectatorial sensoria. Repertory and film festival programming can motivate spectators to love their attachments to objects rather or more than the objects themselves. Communal responses and awareness of historical modes of representation are therefore central to reparativity. In this light, camp readings are a much-discussed queer reparative strategy that requires the affective nearness *and* distance that come

with insider recognition and enjoyment of recycled tropes and clichés that accrue over time and through communal interaction. In this sense, programming, through iteration, makes clichés and tropes identifiable and locatable, and thus useful for parodic ways to not only approach the text but also reimagine worlds.

In this chapter, revival and art-house cinema programs function as intertextual matrices that are acute indicators of spectatorial desires. As I analyze ephemera such as theater calendars, programs, and memos, I uncover the political possibilities gestating underneath their surfaces. This entails doing intertextual readings to speculate how spectators made sense of the aggregate of films they saw over a period of time. I sense that this is a rather new approach so it comes with some disclaimers. First, I do not aim to recuperate the legacy of queer programmers, of which there were many in the art-house scene, but instead focus my efforts on theorizing what affective activity was fostered by the programming of queer films as they were put in conversation with one another. Given my emphasis on “spectator-centric” intertextual readings, I do not provide close readings of individual films. The repertory and art-house cinema, as intended for frequent spectators and cinephiles, is here treated as an ideal site for situating reparativity, which, I suggest, is in part enabled by the call to *feel intertextually* and thus loosen the constraints of individual objects and their negative connotations.

Trauma Trouble

In queer film criticism, mainstream cinema has long stood as the culprit of distasteful depictions of LGBT people. To many critical and scholarly accounts, its history is laden with ruthless Hollywood executives sensationalizing or censoring sexuality and gender variance. Accordingly, Hollywood and other mainstream industries made films littered with vilified stereotypes of the helpless pansy, the prurient lesbian vampire, the self-loathing and confused closet case, the insatiable bisexual, and the depraved transsexual. And as one might assume, their narrative outcomes were almost always bleak.¹³ This is, of course, if the film could even get away with explicitly representing queerness instead of just alluding to or encoding it, as was the case during the years of the Hays Code. For critics and scholars, these texts reflected an oppressive culture determined to malign queers. The result of these depictions, it has been argued, is to help construct or reinforce harmful ideas, and also, for queer spectators, to produce feelings of self-disgust and inadequacy. It is in this way that trauma and harm—both self-inflicted and potentially motivating hate in others—get centralized in queer film historiography.

The main force, figure, and teller of this convincing narrative is Vito Russo, whose book, *The Celluloid Closet*, may have seemed just the antidote. Stemming from a leftist gay liberation ethos, Russo's view was that Hollywood, as the great generator of cultural myths, had perpetuated homophobia by monopolizing the hearts and minds of American spectators. Russo tended to stick to the party line: a good queer film had to be anti-escapist and anti-fantasy (ironically, he deemed *Rocky*

Horror Picture Show an “expert satire”); depict the effects of homophobia (a little self-loathing was fine, but not too much); treat queer characters with compassion; emphasize dimensionality over stereotyping; give authentic glimpses into the lived experience of gays and lesbians (read: white and middle-class); and, crucially, provide characters with a chance to pursue a future of self-acceptance. This telling privileges “positive representation,” with affirmation leading us on the righteous path to healing.¹⁴

The Celluloid Closet might now read as a time capsule of an important moment in gay rights history, one that bears little resemblance or relevance to the present. If read as criticism from a moment, Russo’s text might lose some of its grip on readers.¹⁵ The issue, however, is that *The Celluloid Closet* is read as a definitive history that purports itself as tracking representation through the years; in actuality, it maintains a focus on Hollywood and enjoins its readers to adopt a certain kind of interrogative practice that takes representation at face value. It convincingly smuggles in an ethical proposition that keeps it feeling relevant to this day. Its limited epistemic and affective range is the reason that, along with the fact that *The Celluloid Closet* is highly accessible and digestible for undergraduates, it is still so pervasive in the academe today. From gender studies to film studies, the text is regularly a staple on syllabi alongside Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman’s documentary of the same name. It comes as a package deal, its argument and thesis a streamlined, teachable narrative of queer film history, with the book ending right before, and the film with, the New Queer Cinema.

The documentary, Heather Love suggests, echoes Russo's aim to chart what she provisionally calls the "trauma of queer spectatorship."¹⁶ However, Love shrewdly observes that something felicitous happens in translation. Though following the same overall structure as the book, the documentary version of *The Celluloid Closet* (1995) replaces Russo's narration with a polyphony of voices—ranging from scholarly expertise to personal anecdote—from critics, actors, and directors who all have close relationships to the queer films cited. Love writes, "the use of interviews creates the atmosphere of a group screening, in which knowing subjects speak over and against the images we see on the screen and also drain them of their pathologizing force."¹⁷ Love here pinpoints how the documentary functions as a (conscious or not) reparative modifier to Russo's severe approach, lending other viewpoints and positions to a queer spectatorial past. I would build upon this by noting that the film is able to mitigate the perceived trauma of queer spectatorship by giving necessary voice to negative affects, but then also by restoring the place of pleasure, awkward and shameful as it may be at times.¹⁸ Take, for example, Quentin Crisp, elegant as ever, expressing his love for and identification with the stereotype of the sissy. (I cannot help but wonder what Russo might have thought of that.) By including clips and romantic montages from queer films, or films with sparse queer moments, the documentary tacitly sidesteps Russo's line of argumentation thereby enacting a form of reparative historicizing that subordinates trauma to pleasure. It brings to bear the alternate histories, where structures of *multiple* feelings are brought to the fore.

From a reparative vantage point, scholarly queer film historiography begins to look, as Sedgwick would put it, quite “paranoid.” After all, the narrators of this history meet Sedgwick’s criteria for paranoid readings: to anticipate an object’s harm; to have faith in the ideological exposure, demystification, and decryption of its harm; and to generate others’ analogous participation by way of making paranoia teachable and mimetic. I want to stress that Russo is not the only paranoid reader in this historiography, despite his resounding influence.¹⁹ One need only go to the library and open up most queer film history texts to find that this was and still is the dominant order of things.²⁰ Reparative historicizing, in contrast, might first require for the subject some affective space from historical objects; this might serve as a precursor to seeking out sources for alternate experiences, for instance, where pleasure dared to exist. Reiterating the epigraph that begins this chapter, I invoke Sedgwick to emphasize that pursuing reparativity allows a reader to, “entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did.”²¹

So how to produce a reparative counter-narrative? One could argue that such a reparative approach to history is not entirely foreign to queer film criticism.

Alexander Doty’s theoretical inquiries into popular culture and the film canon, for instance, reveal the ways that close reading and autobiography can work in tandem to locate queerness *within* the text, not grafted onto it, as heterosexist mentalities would have us believe. *Pee Wee’s Playhouse* (1986-1990) and *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, King Vidor, George Cukor, Richard Thorpe, Norman Taurog, 1939) are but

a number of texts Doty seeks to decode as containing LGBT characters and narratives. Doty's mission, after all, is to explore what pleasure or critiques can be discerned on the part of queer viewers who have been historically sidelined.²² As poignant and, at times, uplifting as his work has been, Doty's predominately psychoanalytic readings are meant to channel the history of queer spectatorship, not locate it. Programming, as a tool for reparative historicizing, can serve to support but also complicate Doty's readings. As an exhibition practice that works in a feedback loop to cater to spectators' desires at the same time that it disrupts and redirects those desires, programming challenges taken-for-granted notions about queer spectatorship, in turn lending insight into the conditions through which new sensations and new understandings of old sensations can emerge.

Oddly enough, one need not stray too far from Russo's biography to detect a counter-narrative that is historically situated in the programming of his time. The November/December 1978 program from the Roxie Cinema, located in the Mission District of San Francisco, provides a fascinating wormhole into a queer kind of affective intermingling. Nestled in the middle of the calendar grid is a box that reads "**THE CELLULOID CLOSET**" in bold capital letters. The event is described as follows:

Combining his interest in films with gay activism, Vito Russo has spent a great deal of effort in documenting, analyzing, and criticizing the portrayal of homosexuality in the cinema. His forthcoming book *The Celluloid Closet* looks at the stereotypes and role models that the silver screen has presented of and to the homosexual. His lecture will document the changing image of gays in film with excerpts from several dozen films, including *The Children's Hour*, *Advise and Consent*, *Victim*, *Broadway*

*Melody, The Boys in the Band, Call Her Savage, Tea and Sympathy, and Sunday, Bloody, Sunday.*²³

One might expect the month's other programming to move along the same grain as Russo's thesis, but on the contrary, and not unlike the documentary adaptation of his book, the program reveals a different story. Strung across the calendar are double bills of significant queer films, many of which get but brief mention in Russo's text: a weekend exploring Italy's perverse sexual history with the help of Pasolini's *Decameron* and Fellini's *Satyricon*; another weekend of what the programmers called "camping out," enlisting the film *Outrageous*, which tells the story of an aspiring drag queen, and the documentary cult classic *Grey Gardens*, where aspirations go to die and then are immortalized in the text itself; just below is a John Waters double bill of *Desperate Living* and *Female Trouble*; the calendar even gives a peak into the programming for the first week of January 1979, which includes a "Decodada" pairing of *Salome* (Charles Bryant, 1923), starring lesbian actress and the film's producer Alla Nazimova, and Jean Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet* (1932), which has garnered queer readings through the years due in part to its maker's open bisexuality.



Figure 4. One locked closet and a whole lot of open doors, Roxie's winter 1978 calendar

This 1978 calendar lends intertextual evidence to queer film history's multi-narrativity. The Roxie program assembles films made by queer auteurs and amateurs, straight documentarians, and collaborations among the sexually ambiguous and sexually resolute. As suggested in my abbreviated descriptions of the films, a

fantastical cosmos of decadence cuts across many of these selections, whether couched in the extravagant failures of *Grey Gardens* or *Desperate Living*, or in the nostalgia for queer mythology in the perverse Italian double feature and “Decodada” evenings. In this instance, reparativity therefore does not hinge upon a total re-reading of the films in and of themselves, but is an effect of reading through a program’s assemblage. It challenges Russo’s thesis because it makes clear in an empirical sense that, alongside the problematic representations manufactured by Hollywood, there also existed a counter-narrative highly accessible to urban audiences. I read this calendar as a history where pleasure dared to exist, an exercise in reparative historicizing that leaves room to retrofit a multifaceted queer history ripe for recuperation to queer theory’s explicit affection for decadence, camp, insouciance, and resilience.

Calendars such as this one could be positioned as *contact zones*, which are, as Donna Haraway aptly defines them, “material–semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another.”²⁴ For Haraway and many other affect theorists, contact zones are spaces of possibility, contingency, reflection, and productive tension. Programs embody these kind of contact zones where different objects meet to foster new connections amongst themselves and new knowledges on the part of spectators. Films converge with and diverge from one another, congeal and fail to meet, form dialectics and parallels, cross-pollinate and cross-pollute.

We might see the meeting ground of the double bill “camping out,” in which *Outrageous* and *Grey Gardens* were paired together, as a contact zone that further

cultivated queer reading practices. The Maysles brothers' 1975 documentary *Grey Gardens*, about mother and daughter fallen socialites living in their dilapidated East Hampton mansion, contains but one LGBT character. But by the programmatic framing device of "camping out," spectators were encouraged to look at the film through a queer lens, just as its co-feature demands. The film's camp factor is felt strongest in "Little Edie," presenting to the camera her bizarre musical numbers and makeshift outfits; for some, she might resemble a drag queen on her last leg. This would in part explain how the film has been treated as a queer allegory for outsidership and endurance in the face of social ruin. Here the contact zone of the calendar meets the contact zone of the theater, where we might assume many spectators had an awareness of *Grey Garden's* queer sensibility in this instance, especially given the cinema's neighborhood adjacency to the Castro in San Francisco. In this sense, "camping out" is a framing device that reinforces the representational codes of queerness by producing for those just discovering the film, or perhaps validating for those more familiar with it, queer ways of feeling like a social outlier, misfit, or freak.

This Roxie calendar also exemplifies the ways that histories themselves clash within their own kinds of contact zones. Russo's formulation of injurious representation as dominant meets the dominance of its pleasure-inducing counter-history within the exact same schedule. These, however, might be received as competing strategies for reparativity which emerge from discordant or asynchronous temporalities, as Elizabeth Freeman might call them.²⁵ After all, one could argue that

finding solidarity in critique of the queer clichés and stereotypes that populate film history is a reparative move in the communal sense. This is akin to what bell hooks describes as the “oppositional gaze” that finds a “pleasure in interrogation.”²⁶ At the same time, this form of collective comfort still keeps a paranoid view of objects—they set out to injure. An alternate history of pleasure is one that must be discovered elsewhere, perhaps not in historicity itself but by discerning how we, as Richard Dyer puts it, “feel the historicity of our feelings.”²⁷ Programming provides such an outlet.

The contact zone of the program reveals what Raymond Williams calls “structures of feeling” that brim underneath the surface of what appears a fixed or finished history. Williams writes that, “even where form and response can be found to agree, without apparent difficulty, there can be qualifications, reservations, indications elsewhere...”²⁸ Those “exceptions,” Williams suggests, also crucially structure history, despite the fact that they often go unnamed, overlooked, unarticulated, or silenced. Perhaps the queer structures of feeling created in this Roxie calendar have been sidelined because they do not register as commensurate with or illustrative of the identity formations of the time. The calendar’s intertext is not “political” in the sense that it does not exemplify a legible liberation ethos that would have been popular at this point in San Francisco and other U.S. cities. At the same time, they index a silent yet salient position that cannot be simply reduced in presentist terms to one of “pride” or “empowerment.” This history indicates thornier, and again, more contaminated forms of pleasure.

Cohabitation of affects here parallels the cohabitation of histories at tension with one another. Here we might discard an idea of pleasure as simply “feeling good,” or more specifically, finding resolution within that satisfaction. Doing so might open us up to a nexus of muddier affective engagement that traverses uncertainty, curiosity, incredulity, critique, and identification, which can together form the reparative scene, for the historian as well as for the viewer at the time. Reparative historicizing is thus in part a process of speaking to or orienting us towards pre-emergent and even manifest desires and critiques that cannot in their present find narration or description. They must be sought out in marginal sources of affect such as programming. Within this trajectory full of detours, pauses, and eruptions are the seeds of ethically attuned pleasure for *and* with the “bad objects” to which I now turn.

Across Time

Recognizing and activating the coexistence of multiple histories can happen from the vantage point of temporal removal. I want to sharpen this point by saying that attending to time’s passing is not the same thing as adhering to a progressivist conceit that “it gets better.” Oppression thrives in forms too covert or invisible to confirm such a hasty claim. At the same time, one is more likely to form a reparative relationship to a problematic film when one acknowledges that they are in a different moment than when the film was first released. This is precisely the kind of “temporal

awareness” that Meira Likierman, in analyzing Melanie Klein’s concept of reparation, says orients a person towards making good with his or her objects.²⁹

The camp reading is a perfect example of how this operates. As Susan Sontag claims, “things are campy, not when they become old—but when we become less involved in them, and can enjoy, instead of be frustrated by, the failure of the attempt.”³⁰ For Sontag, a reparative reading of camp might be most rewarding for a spectator when the camp is unintentional. By this account, earnest representations, or better, representations perceived as *earnest* at the moment of their release, age to become pleurably ironic, inflated, and mannerist, and therefore fail to be taken seriously in contemporary encounters. We might consider films such as *Cruising* and *The Killing of Sister George* as optimal examples of camp “bad objects” because their tropes and their stereotypes of gays and lesbians as perverse fetishists are that much more conspicuous today. Their repetition can now be so effortlessly detected that the retrograde depictions become amusing.³¹

Repertory programming—the name itself suggestive of *repetition*—can incite these forms of camp recognition. As Andy Ditzler has noted in his recent dissertation on the subject, programming reveals that cinema is “not just an art of time, but of *relation across time*,” thus offering multiple moments for spectators to reencounter “bad objects” outside of their original historical contexts.³² It is crucial to note that these forms of revision do not happen in isolation but among other people, including strangers and friends. The discernment of camp is especially contingent upon communal affective responses. Consider the concordant laughter that might permeate

through a room, a potential sign of knowing irony or incredulity. Celine Shmizu vividly describes this spectatorial scene when she recounts her experience seeing the stage musical *Miss Saigon* with fellow Asian and Asian American girlfriends, all of whom jeered and laughed at the show's fantasy of the docile Asian woman.³³ This communal response served to loosen the object's grasp, and therefore create distance from it. At the same time, as Shimizu notes, this distance does not undo the attachment as much as create a disobedient relation to it. We might call this insubordinate relation a "camp reading." Repertory programming facilitates reading practices such as these, which help to reorient pleasure as a way to grapple with, not necessarily counteract, the retrograde.

The theater in this case is what Deborah Gould calls via Pierre Bourdieu an "emotional habitus," a contact zone that provides clusters of bodies with a set of parameters and expectations for how to think and feel, guiding desires and ruminations without fully determining or dictating them.³⁴ The cinema, similar to the live theater in this sense, allows audiences in the dark to move affectively together with the potential of the current changing direction, yielding new sensoria and ideologies often simmering beneath the surface, at times brimming over. This meeting ground of subjectivities and bodies might also yield a felt dissidence, one that Shimizu describes in her discussion of the post-show confrontation with other Asian(-American) female spectators who felt that the group's mockery extinguished the power of the performance's pathos. The contact zone here is also a contested zone where difference is sensed and might then be confronted.

Similarly, Vito Russo reported that at the Frameline Film Festival in 1988, “a screening of the 1936 classic *Dracula’s Daughter* (Lambert Hillyer) was marred by audience members’ mindless knee-jerk booing of sexist remarks, which,” he adds, “prevented more sophisticated audience members from hearing all the dialogue.”^{35 36} Whether Russo’s quarrel is with the audiences’ lack of decorum, or with their rigid attitudes, the latter of which suggests he himself experienced a reparative shift in his views of old Hollywood films during the 1980s, is debatable. But more relevant here is the fact that there existed concurrent and clashing relations to *Dracula’s Daughter* that caused a felt friction in the theater. Did the programmers anticipate this reaction? Did they think *Dracula’s Daughter* had camp value, and therefore the audience would find the “bad object” amusing? Did they regard it as a worthy artifact of historical curiosity? Or was it meant to force audiences to take stock of what had and had not changed in queer representation in the passing of time?

The Frameline programming from a year prior provides some clues. In 1987, one year before *Dracula’s Daughter* had its spotlight screening and three years before the women-in-prison series with which this chapter opens, curator, filmmaker, and critic Andrea Weiss gave a presentation at Frameline on the lesbian vampire film, and similar to Russo, used clips from films such as *Dracula’s Daughter* and *The Hunger* (Tony Scott, 1983) to probe the question of queer representation.³⁷ The description of Weiss’s presentation in the program is welcoming of debate but goes as far as “to explore what possibilities, if any, these films hold for subversive reinterpretations by gay and lesbian audiences.”³⁸ Immediately following Weiss’s presentation was a

screening of *Daughters of Darkness* at the same venue, the Castro Theatre. Why *Daughters of Darkness* and not another lesbian vampire film? A strict historical logic might position the reparative readings of the lesbian vampire film—with its themes of sexualized contagion—as evidence of queer defiance against the sex-phobia brought on by Reaganism and AIDS. While this may in part provide a synchronic explanation, it does little to account for the diachronic workings of programming *across time*, which cultivated contact zones of colliding meanings and feelings that reverberate into this later moment of the genre's reassessment.

Seven years prior to this presentation, in the summer of 1980, the Castro had decided to continually screen *Daughters of Darkness* as part of their summer midnight series “until further notice.” Even nine years after its initial release, *Daughters of Darkness* had clearly left its mark on queer spectators. Alone *Daughters of Darkness* is fairly homoerotic and even feminist. In her book, Andrea Weiss notes that the film “tends deliberately to subvert the lesbian vampire genre” by making heterosexuality “frighteningly abnormal and nightmarish” and the queer desire a “welcome alternative.”³⁹ In the same Castro Theatre calendar from 1980, several other films with lesbian themes or appeal played alongside *Daughters of Darkness*. These films included *Pandora's Box* (G. W. Pabst, 1929), *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1972), and *Ninotchka* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1939).⁴⁰ For lesbian regulars at the Castro, exposure to these other representations might spur comparative thinking. A queer female viewer might see *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and *Daughters of Darkness* only and be aroused by sadomasochism in both

films' depictions of master-slave scenarios. Or she might see the contrast between depictions of sadistic lesbians in such films as *Pandora's Box* and *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and that in *Daughters of Darkness*, favoring instead the otherworldly version Delphine Seyrig's vampiric character offers.

The extra-diegetic, or what Gerard Genette calls the "paratextual" (such as audience knowledge of Louise Brooks's and Greta Garbo's queer sexualities), here might also team up with the intertextual to strengthen queer spectatorial associations.⁴¹ In these situations, which are but a few in a multitude of possibility, *Daughters of Darkness*, because it was repeatedly programmed, is given opportunities to incite reparative readings. These arrangements illustrate what Patricia White, among other queer film historians, has argued: "reading formations evolve in relation to extra-cinematic practices such as gossip and subcultural codes as well as [promotional] intertextual matrices."⁴² In this case, the program is one of those intertextual matrices. *Daughters of Darkness*, far from a lone lesbian text is infected by the others that surround it, endowing it with multiple associations and meanings that echo into its later reception.

Russo's observation at Frameline one year after Weiss's presentation attests to the fact that reparativity is a communal experience that seldom happens fluidly. The simultaneity of these discordant affective economies demonstrates a divide not just in reading practices but also in what programming is meant to do. Andrea Weiss, I would argue, frames the space of the cinema as one of proposition, of reconsidering visual objects whose modes of reception and therefore signification did or at least

could shift. Repertory programs and series including “bad objects,” in this light, might be seen as laboratories that leave room for reflection and revision; not as tools to segregate the past and present, but to put them within each other’s shifting orbits. The programming of the lesbian vampire film series might be best engaged with through Judith Butler’s (via Michel Foucault’s) definition of critique. A practice that actually suspends judgment, critique is best understood as a reflexive nodal point in which one acknowledges one’s subjectivization through a text and thereby “risks one’s very formation as a subject.”⁴³ For Butler, critique is an insecure “juncture where social norms intersect with ethical demands.”⁴⁴ Critique might therefore open up a door to pleasure, but a pleasure that invites protean affective interaction in lieu of or before the cementation of opinion. These programs thus mark an opportunity for spectators to develop a critical practice out of rumination, which might indeed lead them to develop several positions on any given text simultaneously, to interpret the texts’ interpellative power, and to respond to them anew. Programming could very well be seen as a form of critique that opens the door for thinking “critical” more capaciously.

Picking up the Pieces

When critique is treated as such a precarious exercise, as Butler suggests, the reparative process is likely to start with hesitation. The 1990 women-in-prison series at Frameline, with which this chapter starts, speaks to this point. Note the ambivalence in this excerpt of the series’ description:

The punishment of female criminals has provided fodder for the male gaze and generated B-movie fare for decades. What happens between women when they are locked up together has pandered to the misogynist and prurient point-of-view; scratching and hair-pulling usually ensues. On the other end of the scale, the survival of women within a patriarchal justice system (albeit administered by other women) is a worthy and necessary subject to explore.⁴⁵

The description goes on to say that *Caged*, *Prisonnières*, and *Scrubbers* represent “different points within this continuum.” The blurb is forthright in its critique and then tentative in its pleasurable recuperation of the women-in-prison genre. The parenthetical note, in which the author(s) demonstrates suspicion for a women-based power structure, qualifies the series’ ability to be a “necessary subject to explore.” However, this prose reveals only part of the story. Across the program’s binding is a frame enlargement from *Caged* featuring Hope Emerson as the cruel matron and Eleanor Parker as her prisoner prey. The image of the two women takes up the entire page and across the middle of it in large bold letters reads, “**lusty and lawless: the lesbian prison picture.**” There exists a split between the program’s two marketing strategies, one couched in feminist repudiation, and the other belonging to an exploitation tradition of sensational advertisement that is meant to appeal to viewers’ “lusty” desires.



Figure 5. "When You're Good to Mama..." Frameline 1990

The ostensible ambivalence of this publicity—surely a product of contradictory readings—could be read as a sign that the festival organizers resigned themselves to an affective impasse. However, we might also see this incongruence as an inchoate attempt to rethink the use value of camp within critical procedures. Judith Mayne’s scholarship on the women-in-prison film is illuminating here in that she employs the genre to make room for what I regard as a politics of pleasure. Admitting at the start that, “there is much to love, and much to hate, about the women-in-prison film,” Mayne writes that these films nevertheless offer, “spectacles of female bonding, female rage, and female communities, with strong doses of camp and irony.”⁴⁶ Ironically, Mayne observes an earnest representation of female rebellion and

empowerment in an otherwise campy style. This becomes a canny technique for Mayne to forge a reparative connection to the objects.

Take, for example, Mayne's telling analysis of one scene from *The Big Doll House*, a Jack Hill women-in-prison film in which Pam Grier plays a dominant lesbian. Grier's character, who happens to be named "Grear," is left no choice but to perform unsavory sexual favors for the sleazy deliveryman in order to procure drugs for her addict girlfriend. When the deliveryman identifies her as a lesbian, Grear, in classic Pam Grier blaxploitation fashion, knowingly mocks his masculinity with a cliché.⁴⁷ Mayne aptly recounts the scene: "'Strange desires creep up on you like a disease,' she says and tells him that her lesbianism is curable with a 'real' man—like him. One assumes that this is a performance, and it is certainly in keeping with the overall campy tone of the film."⁴⁸ Mayne here registers the scene's irony, a sardonic gesture at the homophobic (and here homosocially-inflected) cliché that "she just needs the right man" to set her straight. In fact, one could say that this line of dialogue alone—which makes light of the myth of the lesbian contagion—sums up the camp pleasure of both women-in-prison films and the lesbian vampire films programmed in retrospect, the idea of queer contagion and recruitment closer now to humorous than it was during the days of Anita Bryant. All the while, Mayne acknowledges that this moment of camp is doing a distinct kind of reparative work separate from soberer reparative aspects of the text. Reluctant to call the films outright "feminist," Mayne claims, "it is precisely the coexistence of exploitation with feminism—sisterhood with attitude—that makes [them] so interesting."⁴⁹ Mayne

here separates the reparative components of the text that are incommensurate in tone and utility, yet they nevertheless provide the raw material for pleasure.

Like the layout of the Frameline program, Mayne approaches the text, and by extension, the genre, as already fragmentary, a composite made of incongruous parts that require disparate reparative aims. Because the texts are recognized as “part-objects,” they allow room for a depressurized form of spectatorship that is not in pursuit of a total identification. By identification, I mean the idea that one feels present and recognized in the world of the text. When moments of identification happen in reparative camp readings of “bad objects,” they may require spectators to recognize their own subject formation out of those shards, perhaps to even see their desires reflected in and/or produced by those fragments.⁵⁰ And by contrast, spectators might take pleasure in those disidentifactory moments that index stereotypes or simulacra that feel absurd and highly constructed.

Just as programming leads to reparative reading practices, as the Frameline programs on lesbian vampire and women-in-prison films exemplify, the inverse is also true: reparativity can be programmatic. These series are affective training grounds for how to unmake and remake attachment forms that do not overly invest in the object as whole or deterministic. Camp readings as critical practices that make use of excess—what Sedgwick affectionately calls “waste or leftover products”—are very much honed and inherited within queer cultures.⁵¹ Pedagogies of camp retrain—reprogram, even—the sensorium, and disarticulate pleasure from simplistic notions of identification. Suddenly, identification is found in the lowbrow codes of drag and

freakishness in *Grey Gardens*. It is found in the female solidarity in film such as *Caged*. Within queer modes of spectatorship that are learned, often passed on from generation to generation, there exist many other forms of attachment, such as humor that arises from spectators' recognition of clichés (*Les Biches* [Claude Chabrol, 1968]); the retrospective curiosity of imagined queer life (*Cruising*); the gratification derived from hyperbolic, unbelievable desire as it can only be realized on screen (Russ Meyer's films).

I am describing here spectatorial scenes that are not so much “strategies for survival” as much as they are ways to learn pleasures, which pivot on oscillatory processes of affective distance and nearness. Within these moments, one courses through relations to objects, histories, communities, and the self to produce healing in the most unlikely of places (i.e., “bad objects”). Rather than constructing a one-size-fits-all or righteous theory, reparativity necessitates complex understandings of the ways in which it is programmed and organized across time and across an assemblage of objects that cannot in and of themselves hold the mythic power of total redress.

As I have already described, reparative ties to “bad objects” are more likely to happen when time has passed between the film's release and its reevaluation. Repertory programming, as a practice that resuscitates texts time and time again for new contexts, puts films in diachronic contact with others that in turn infect their meanings. Programming is therefore a praxis that strengthens intertextuality, that is, the connections among various texts put in contact with one another. Critics such as Vito Russo, for instance, came to expect certain double features, thus linking films to

one another in their intertextual connectedness. But the reverse can also take place; because intertextuality implies continual semiotic and affective motion, the intertextual tapestry frequently gets rewoven. This dynamic also profoundly impacts its reparative potential by allowing spectators to distinguish and put to use the many discrete parts that comprise the object.

The programming and reparative readings of Russ Meyer's sexploitation films provide evidence of this paradigm. The exhibition history of Meyer's work alone lends itself to an assorted trajectory that spans porn theaters, mainstream cinemas, and art houses.⁵² Meyer's films, which went through numerous legal battles throughout the 1960s, made their way into art-house cinemas and even museum spaces because they were interpreted as anti-establishment anthems against censorship and celebrations of over-stylization, in turn appealing to the intellectual crowds who found artistic merit in in pulpy and campy aesthetics in the wake of Warhol.

Films such as *Vixen* and *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* were repeatedly programmed at art-house theaters across U.S. cities such as New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles throughout the 1970s and onward. As early as 1971, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City exhibited Meyer's work, taking it out of the softcore pornography theaters and into the venerated museum space. This did not happen at random. *Vixen* and *Cherry, Harry, and Raquel* were first shown in July 1971 as part of MoMA's "Cineprobe" series, which aimed to confront spectators with, as it was stated in a MoMA press release, "images that shock; ideas that are provocative; points of view that are controversial."⁵³ Meyer was

invited back to participate in Cineprobe in October to come discuss the censorship of his exploitation films throughout the 1960s. Unsurprisingly, censorship was a hot topic at this time in light of the recent reversal of the Production Code, now replaced by the ratings system. Partly a product of his prolific career, the censorship he experienced throughout it, and this recent turn in censorship history, retrospectives of Meyer's work can be found occurring at art-house cinemas throughout the 1970s, both within the U.S. and abroad.

Meyer was known for casting busty women and, in line with other exploitation films, depicting lesbian desire. The lesbian desire serves to epitomize anarchic worlds where, as Kristen Hatch puts it, masculinity is in a "state of disarray."⁵⁴ Clearly intended to be salacious, the films' art-house afterlives have also brought focus away from the sexual content and more towards Meyer's ingenious use of editing, cinematography and music that both amplifies the films' pulpy conceits as well as pushes them in the direction of aesthetic veneration. These dual tracks (the prurient and the virtuosic), which sometimes converge and other times diverge in reparative criticism of his films, suggest that programming fractured Meyer's work in that certain moments signify artfulness, while others lowbrow humor or carnal thoughts.

B. Ruby Rich's 1995 rereading of *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* embodies these cleavages in taste as they become part of a productive site for textual regeneration. In reencountering the film upon its rerelease twenty years after having first seen it, Rich noted that what at the time appeared "retrograde male-objectification of women's

bodies and desires further embellished by a portrait of lesbianism as twisted and depraved,” had morphed into a “celebration of bad-girl empowerment,” and for dykes, a “shit-kicking history” delivered in the form of “frenzied femmes whose approach to men lies halfway between Sharon Stone [from *Basic Instinct*] and Hothead Paisan.”⁵⁵ Rich here revises the opinions of the film she held in the 1970s through fictional cultural icons of the 1990s. The intertext that Rich produces serves to further fragment the film, to parcel out its associations. Her reparative reading results in a destabilization of the text that both undermines a male gaze while it also underscores Meyer’s penchant for overthrowing manhood in service of rendering a formidable portrait of femininity, a sentiment that Kristen Hatch echoes in her analysis of Meyer’s oeuvre. I would venture to say that the aesthetic consideration, even reverence, in the art-house scene carved out a path for Rich and Hatch to do feminist reparative work with the film, while at the same time, be able to affectively engage with it as a sensational object.

With their dizzying montages and paradoxical tonal mixes of moralism and rebellion, Meyer’s films like *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* and *Cherry, Harry, and Raquel* are sites of *bricolage*, a sampling of cheap gimmicks and aesthetic talent. The temporal remove that fuels opportunities for his work to be reconsidered seems to highlight these heterogeneous aspects of his corpus. We might therefore see this formal heterogeneity mirrored in the layout of Rich’s article for *The Village Voice*. Below her review of *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* is an ode to the film’s star, Tura Santana. Rather than, as Barthes has suggested, allowing the cult auteur to “nourish”

the text “in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child,” Rich cleverly reminds the reader that auteurism falters in the face of a film’s collaborative tendency.⁵⁶ Rich, aware of how a film’s cult value can increase with time, uses its rerelease as a recuperative opportunity to spotlight Santana, who, she writes, “should now be eligible for cult status if not outright goddesshood.”⁵⁷ And like that, Santana gets reinstated within the film’s authorial history. Like Mayne’s consideration of Pam Grier’s recurring roles in women-in-prison films, Rich uses the star to muddy the film’s identity, here dominated by Russ Meyer as a cult auteur reigning over the exploitation genre. Instead, she uses the reparative opportunity to demonstrate that the “bad object” does not belong to Meyer, nor even Santana, but that it is an assembly of its parts, which generate new meanings as the film resurfaces across time.

These rereadings come to demonstrate not just the range of evaluative criteria available to the canny spectator, but to exemplify that this range expands as it becomes increasingly part of intertextual nexuses. This expansion opens up a space to love the clichés presented in mainstream representation as both comfortingly familiar and risibly fabricated, or even bathetic. What emerges is a simultaneous love of the object’s affective distance and nearness, of its representational impossibility and sense that it may have, through cultural mythology and fantasy, also structured one’s own desires. Though these readings are not always immediately available, they might emerge in a context that is much more hospitable to the idea of women’s sexual agency.⁵⁸ They may require the temporal awareness and distance that come with

programming's propensity for textual intermingling, which amplifies camp imaginaries.

Spectatorial Specters

Cheryl Dunye's 1996 film, *The Watermelon Woman*, is a testament to the pleasure and pain derived from reorganizing the salvaged parts of texts and histories. It is a film assembled from the ruins of a largely oppressive history of black women's filmic representations. Shot in documentary style but a work of fiction, the film follows Cheryl, a documentarian and video store clerk, in search of Fae Richards, a black actress from the 1930s and 1940s who performed mammy roles and was rumored to be a lesbian. In one scene, Cheryl pays a kind of homage to Richards by lip-synching to a VHS copy of a fictitious film called *Plantation Memories* that plays beside her. But while Cheryl pays tribute to Richards, she simultaneously mocks the campy inflated pathos that imbues Richards's performance. Donning a headscarf like the one Richards wears, Cheryl brings Richards's presence out of the film and into her world, in effect probing the conditions of their shared experiences.

The Watermelon Woman, in reconstructing an imagined history of black lesbian subjectivity, does so by way of "bad objects," including tawdry antebellum South melodramas. It makes reference to other filmic texts as well, including a moment that seems to gesture at programming. Towards the beginning of the film, Cheryl meets her soon-to-be girlfriend, Diana, at the video store. In deciding what to watch, Diana asks, "*Cleopatra Jones, Jacob's Ladder, or Personal Best?*" In the end,

Cheryl picks the blaxploitation hit *Cleopatra Jones* (Jack Starrett, 1973) and *Repulsion* (Roman Polanski, 1965) with Catherine Deneuve, despite the fact that Diana's proposal to watch *Personal Best* serves as a coded way for her to "come out" to Cheryl. Cheryl has already said it's two-for-one day, so effectively she programs a double bill for Diana. By choosing these two "bad objects" over *Personal Best* (Robert Towne, 1982)—an explicitly lesbian but mainstream film—Dunye constructs a program that proposes a queer history that puts a premium on the dialogic capacity of a blaxploitation film and horror film, both without lesbian implication, over one with overt lesbian representation. *Cleopatra Jones* and *Repulsion*, the latter of which centers on a woman who has a hysterical aversion to men, it's implied, might more strongly invite the notion of expendable masculinity and recentralize the women in the films' narrative and visual spaces. Moreover, these two films belong to a constellation of lesbian intertextuality. The sequel to *Cleopatra Jones*, *Cleopatra Jones and the Gold Casino* (Charles Bail, 1975), it has been argued, strongly suggests a lesbian representability, and *The Hunger*, one of Catherine Deneuve's later films, is explicitly homoerotic.⁵⁹

Through Cheryl's curation for Diana and her own parodic reenactment of "bad objects," Dunye delivers an assemblage of part-objects, part-identifications, and part-fantasies that coalesce into a scene of queer black female pleasure. The presence of camp in Cheryl's program helps disassemble the films into part-objects. Verisimilitude jettisoned, the indexed "real" blown asunder, the political imaginaries of the spectator are left ample room to roam, to play out alternate scenarios, and to

entertain critical fantasies. Camp enjoyment likely motivates a selection of *Cleopatra Jones* over *Personal Best*, possibly to the dismay of those who believe overt and “realistic” representations of queers is the best way to arrive at some “truth” about queer experience. Dunye produces an intertext out of her disidentification, a compound of both existing texts and imagined ones that have been erased or forgotten. *The Watermelon Woman* is thus an invocation of both the ghosts whose traces are inscribed in texts and ones that remain unverifiable, the stuff of gossip and myth.

The montage devoted to the life of Fae Richards at the end of *The Watermelon Woman* might be seen as culmination of all of Cheryl’s efforts to recuperate queer marginalized histories—painful and utopian—by proceeding with a reparative gesture towards Richards and the subjective histories she represents. *The Watermelon Woman* itself would appear to serve as a reparative *text*, reaching beyond a recuperative conceit to salvage a story that would otherwise have been historically sublimated or silenced; more so, the film casts an intertextual and citational constellation that invites the specter of black lesbian spectatorial history.

In the film *Ghost Dance* (Ken McMullen, 1983), Jacques Derrida states that cinema is an art of battling ghosts. As Akira Lippit points out, it is, for Derrida, also a medium of echoes and “narcissism adrift.”⁶⁰ According to Lippit, a viewer is led into a series of feedback loops of reflection upon the self in relation to the other, and back again, not unlike what we see transpire in *The Watermelon Woman*. Lippit describes an ethical spectatorship that can form out of Derrida’s notion of “generous

narcissism,” which continually orients and re-orientates a spectator inward and outward, back and forth, between the self and other, and in the case of *The Watermelon Woman*, self and history, history and community, self and text, and onward. Programming’s diachronic power to repair lies in these endless loops across time and space. It is what forestalls any mastery over the reparative experience with the “bad object,” itself subject to processes of endless fragmentation and therefore multitudinous resignification.

Programs that recover queer “bad objects,” I have tried to argue, resist the ossification of meaning and affective experience because they produce intertexts that are in continual flux, moving with and against their cultural backdrop. For instance, the programming of *Daughters of Darkness*—how it brushes up against and is inflected by other lesbian texts; how it is resurrected throughout the decade; how it comes to be indicative of a kind of “guilty pleasure”—represents the manner in which films are but moving parts in intertextual networks that stretch across time. This is why any static definition of pleasure will not suffice. It cannot be captured in one mode of absorption or ecstasy, as it has been argued in the past, nor solely in the “interrogation” of retrograde and problematic imagery. The pleasure then is neither one of negating nor negotiating the trauma—as if pleasure and trauma could be neatly opposed—nor is it due to a process of compartmentalizing. Pleasure for *and* with the “bad object” is a movement between different relations and strategies made available through reparative opportunities. The critique, curiosity, wish fulfillment, fantasy, and

identification comingle to produce the pleasure felt within the reparative reading, dialogic as many repertory calendars or programs themselves.

Camp readings put into crisis conservative views of identificatory practices and modes of recognition. Conversely, we saw readings of campy texts that do not rely solely on verisimilitudinous collapse to be their benchmark for pleasure. From Rich to Mayne to Dunye, these thinkers index their fantasies in relation to historicity. Camp offers opportunities to discern and then gain distance from recycled tropes and clichés. Repertory programming especially as a practice that *repeats* screenings of cult films makes legible these tropes through accretive means. This coupled with films' passages from low forms of trash to venerated objects in institutions such as museums make "bad objects" ripe for recovery. In acknowledging this, a scene for fantasy that values a politics of pleasure is able to be constructed out of the accessible fragments.

I have argued that repertory movie houses, where providing pleasure is as central to their business model as invoking nostalgia, helped to facilitate both subsequent and contemporaneous moments of reparative readings. As examples from the Roxie, the Castro, and Frameline demonstrate, programming fosters different modes of intertextual overlap, parallel, and even dissidence, and that these are continually up for grabs depending on the context, viewer or moment. The examples of the women-in-prison and lesbian vampire film series explain how reparative gestures can come to be accompanied by other positions and sobering inquiries. Reparativity, therefore, demands a process of moving through various affective

positions and coming out the other side transformed by the objects we should, hypothetically, just renounce.

In order to exemplify an overall attraction to these programs and their varied reiterations, however, trauma as an undergirding and binding principle of queer spectatorship has to be decentered, and pleasure reinstated as a potent rationale for spectatorial appeal. For me, it has been crucial to separate the past and the present—to take stock of the changes in queer identities and rights throughout the twentieth century—while resisting progressivist impulses to espouse a tidy history. Reparative historicizing is therefore necessary if queer subjectivities are to be done justice. It is with the help of affect theories of contact that I retrofit pleasure to sites of queer potentiality.

Despite the many queer scholarly and critical projects that refuse to admit to pleasure for *and* with “bad objects,” perhaps queer film and media history has spoken for itself. In the 1990s, villainous gays and lesbians filled the screens in films such as *Swoon* and *Poison*, both made by queer directors. Diachronic programming all the more explains how it came to be that New Queer Cinema filmmakers unabashedly incorporated the “low” taste of queer “bad objects” into their indie aesthetics, as is so often argued but without historical substantiation. A call for sanitized and uplifting depictions subsided by the 1990s, but the academe had yet to catch up. It is my hope that this chapter presents a way to better theorize the place of pleasure, in all its political incorrectness and messiness. Perhaps then we might be able to give

ourselves the room to realize the uncomfortable intimacy between historicity and potentiality.⁶¹

Notes

¹ “Frameline,” MoMA Archive, New York City, NY

² This is a nod to the “descriptive turn” Heather Love describes in “Close but Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn.” While I worry that this methodology runs the risk of depoliticizing cultural studies, it has use value at times, especially in instances when objects require a double take.

³ My use of “with” here takes after Lauren Berlant’s. She writes, “I do not read things; I read with things. When I read with theorists, with art, with a colleague or a friend, *to read with* is to cultivate a quality of attention to the disturbance of their alien epistemology, an experience of nonsovereignty that shakes my confidence in a way from which I have learned to derive pleasure, induce attachment, and maintain curiosity about the enigmas and insecurities that I can also barely stand or comprehend. This is what it means to say that excitement is disturbing, not devastating; ambivalent, not shattering in the extreme. Structural consistency is a fantasy; the noise of relation’s impact, inducing incompleteness where it emerges, is the overwhelming condition that enables the change that, within collaborative action, can shift lived worlds” (125). See Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁴ Peter X. Feng, “Recuperating Suzie Wong: A Fan’s Nancy Kwan-dary” in *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism*, eds. Darrell Y. Hamamoto and Sandra Liu (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 47.

⁵ See Anne Crémieux, “Exploitation Cinema and the Lesbian Imagination,” *Transatlantica* 2, 2015.

⁶ See Donna Jeanne Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); and Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*.

⁷ See Caetlin Benson-Allot, “Looking for *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, Or, Strategies for Sitting with the Abject Archive,” *Feminist Media Histories* 1, no. 3 (2015): 127-162; Susan Crozier, “Making it After All: A Reparative Reading of The Mary Tyler Moore Show,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* vol. 11, issue 1 (2008): 51-67; Susanna Paasonen, “Strange Bedfellows: Pornography, Affect and Feminist Reading,” *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 1 (2007): 43-57; Pawan Singh, “Queer Bollywood: The Homo-textuality of Celebrity Talk Show Gossip,” *Spectator* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 18-24.

⁸ White, xxiv.

⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading,” in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press), 126.

¹⁰ I am adopting Lauren Berlant’s usage of the “historical present” in her book *Cruel Optimism*.

¹¹ See “Death of the Author”

¹² Berlant, *Sex, or the Unbearable*, 61. The second part of the sentence reads, “. . . as when a comic orientation toward aggression and pleasure produces new capacities for bearing, and not repairing, ambivalence.” My sense is that there can be more relationships to ambivalence than are suggested by the dyad of bearing/repairing. In

The Female Complaint, Berlant notes, “the usual solution to the conundrum of ambivalence” is “to understand it as a crisis that can first be fixed by attachment to a new form from which one can then be liberated until the next crisis, and so on.” (261) Ambivalence here provides a kind of railway switch to guide temporary attachments. But couldn’t it also be a kind of “holding station” like the one Berlant refers to in her discussion of the impasse? For more on impasses, see *Cruel Optimism*, 199.

¹³ Here is how the story tends to go: in pre-code Hollywood and European films, there were quite overt representations of homosexuals and gender deviants. When the Production Code was instated, Hollywood had to encode representations of queer people, exacerbating already rampant homophobia and transphobia. The course was set and—with only a few unanimously embraced films—it would not be until the 1990s that queers would really get to make their own films that would “authentically” and “realistically” speak to their struggles.

¹⁴ It would be disingenuous to suggest Russo’s views were only one-note. A critic with a rhetorical strategy but a critic nonetheless, Russo’s tastes and philosophies would—as parenthetically noted above—vacillate at times. One can find Russo’s pleasures make brief appearances in the pages of *The Celluloid Closet*, especially in his expressed love for *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Mädchen in Uniform*. Still, these moments are few and far between in his polemical text.

¹⁵ Parker Tyler’s *Screening the Sexes*, which is somewhere between a precursor and counterpart to *The Celluloid Closet*, has aged this way because it has not been seen as academic or historical enough. Roger N. Lancaster writes, “which method has prevailed and not just in writing about film is not difficult to discern. Even in the heyday of queer theory (which was supposedly presided over by a carnivalesque and transgressive ethos not unlike the unruly deity Tyler dubbed “Homeros”), the real money was in scholarship that ruthlessly demonstrated, one more time and with ever more exacting theoretical firepower, the heteronormative character of this text or that discourse.” See Roger Lancaster, “Text, Subtext, and Context: Strategies for Reading Alliance Theory.” *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 1 (2005): 22-27.

¹⁶ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 15.

¹⁸ Love’s point is in service to her thesis that shame and melancholia continue to live on in the postmemory and affective lives of the very queers who disavow it, her adversary appearing to be queer liberal ideology rather than anything steeped in intellectual work in the academe and beyond.

¹⁹ There are some exceptions to this. In the queer film criticism canon, B. Ruby Rich, Alexander Doty, Judith Mayne, and Patricia White have numerous generous readings of “bad objects.” Richard Dyer’s brilliant essay, “Judy Garland and Gay Men” (in *Heavenly Bodies: Films Stars and Society*, 1986) poignantly demonstrates the affective ties between gay fans and their diva.

²⁰ Besides Russo, see also Harry M. Benshoff, *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

²¹ Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," 146. By "the past," does Sedgwick mean historicity itself, its retelling, i.e. the construction of history, or could she be speaking to the presence of multiple histories and temporalities? Even the endnote following the sentence in her essay does not provide ample clarification.

²² In *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon* (New York: Routledge, 2000), Doty writes,

"'mainstream' films and other popular culture texts and performers, for all their potential to alienate, have been, and continue to be, positive formative influences for many lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and other queers" (15).

²³ "Roxie Cinema," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA. Russo did several lectures on the subject throughout the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s. See Michael R. Schiavi, *Celluloid Activist: The Life and Times of Vito Russo* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

²⁴ Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 4.

²⁵ See Freeman, *Time Binds*, 12.

²⁶ bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 126.

²⁷ Dyer, *Pastiche*, 130.

²⁸ Williams, "Structures of Feeling," 130.

²⁹ Meira Likierman, *Melanie Klein: Her Work in Context* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 127.

³⁰ Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp" in *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966), 285.

³¹ See especially D.A. Miller's cheeky exegesis of *Cruising*, *Film Quarterly* 61 no. 2 (Winter 2007): 70-73. I take up a variety of readings of *Cruising* that accumulated throughout the years in my forthcoming video essay for *[In]Transition* entitled "Cruising *Différance* in 3 Scenes."

³² Andy Ditzler, "Cinema and Curation," 124.

³³ Celine Parreñas Shimizu, *The Hypersexuality of Race: Performing Asian/American Women on Screen and Scene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

³⁴ See Gould, *Moving Politics*, 33-4.

³⁵ Vito Russo, "Losing it at the Movies," *Advocate* 504 (July 2, 1988), 56.

³⁶ The clashing that Russo describes is ironic for several reasons. Most conspicuously, his sentiment is shocking in that it seems to wholly contradict what *The Celluloid Closet* enterprise set out to do: to advocate for more authentic representations of LGBT life in the face of hackneyed and harmful typologies.

³⁷ "Frameline," MoMA Archive, New York City, NY

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Andrea Weiss, *Vampires & Violets: Lesbians in Film* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 101.

⁴⁰ "Castro Theatre," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA).

⁴¹ Several other factors play a part as well, such as a theater's ongoing programming, or the programming at nearby theaters that the spectator might also frequent. Take, for example, the 1980 program at the Castro Theatre that was devoted to screen divas

(referenced also in the Introduction). Surely both Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich provided cross-appeal for queers of all genders and straights of different persuasions. And in New York City, the Carnegie Hall Cinema encouraged its own intertextual and affective spectatorial practices. In 1976, it exhibited *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and *Les Biches* in a double bill. Two years later it presented *Mädchen in Uniform* in contrast to *The Children's Hour*.

⁴² Patricia White, *Uninvited*, xviii.

⁴³ Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in *The Judith Butler Reader*, eds. Judith Butler and Sara Salih (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 320.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ "Frameline," MoMA Archive.

⁴⁶ Judith Mayne, *Framed: Lesbians, Feminists, and Media Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 114.

⁴⁷ For a reparative reading of Pam Grier's star persona, see Chris Holmlund, "Wham! Bam! Pam! Pam Grier as Hot Action Babe and Cool Action Mama," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 22, no. 2 (March 9, 2005): 97–112.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵⁰ Amy Villarejo has also expressed this sentiment. In *Ethereal Queer: Television, Historicity, Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), she writes, "[Television] is deserving of deeper analyses of its specific function as a technology of sexual becoming and erotic life beyond the terms of *recognition* and *identification* most often used to describe relationships between spectators and particular programs" (7).

⁵¹ Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," 150.

⁵² The art-house reverence of Meyer's work is representative of what I've deemed in Chapter 1 *bricolage*-style programming, which was characteristic of the 1970s and 1980s art-house scenes. During this period, programmers exercised infidelity to the auteurist bias of their forefathers and foremothers. They instead leaned into eclecticism, mixing filmic traditions and genres, low-, medium-, and high-brow tastes, and effectively ditching thematic or tonal coherence.

⁵³ "Cineprobe," MoMA Film Library.

⁵⁴ Kristen Hatch, "The Sweeter the Kitten the Sharper the Claws: Russ Meyer's Bad Girls," in *Bad: Infamy, Darkness, Evil, and Slime on Screen*, ed. Murray Pomerance (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 146.

⁵⁵ B. Ruby Rich, "What's New, Pussycat?" *The Village Voice*, January 17, 1995.

⁵⁶ Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 145.

⁵⁷ Rich, "What's New, Pussycat?"

⁵⁸ It is worth noting here the place of programming within feminist film criticism. In art-house series or at festivals, it was common to see low-brow and high-brow fare coexisting. For example, it was frequent to find the films of Dorthy Arzner programmed alongside *Mädchen in Uniform* and experimental work by Carolee Schneeman and Constance Beeson. This heterogeneous mixture was, in part, because of the few examples available of work done by women directors. One could argue

that this animated the imagination of lesbian film critics by opening them up to serious scholarly or critical considerations of work deemed low-brow or trashy. Additionally, the practice of reading “against the grain” became a feminist strategy. One can see some continuity between this practice and reparativity.

⁵⁹ See Jennifer De Vere Brody, "The Returns of *Cleopatra Jones*," *Signs* 25, no. 1 (1999): 91-121.

⁶⁰ Akira Mizuta Lippit, “Plus Surplus Love: Jacques Derrida’s Echopoiesis and Narcissism Adrift.” *Discourse* 37, no. 1 (October 7, 2015), 88.

⁶¹ Realizing this temporal separation invites the question of generational division, which I raised in the beginning. However, because I am also dealing with the baby boomer generation, I am putting aside for a moment how subsequent generations might encounter them. Surely this is a worthy topic of investigation, to be saved for another essay at another time.

CHAPTER 4

Repertory Time: Theorizing Queer Double-Feature Spectatorship

In her 2008 essay on Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino's box-office disappointment *Grindhouse*, Caetlin Benson-Allott uses the much-anticipated double-feature release to eulogize cinema as a whole. *Grindhouse*'s sheer existence, she proposes, serves as an "homage to exploitation films and a metonym for the obsolescence of theatrical exhibition," the latter of which is a casualty of the latest digital tidal wave of streaming and high-definition "quality television." Benson-Allott suggests that the films failed to resonate with moviegoers because, "cineastes who remember grindhouses are not exploitation fans and nouveau-exploitations fans do not remember grindhouses."¹ In other words, there were not enough younger fans of the exploitation genre who mourn its theatrical extinction and thus romanticize its 1970s heyday to bring about revenue at the box office; it needed a nostalgic, aged cult crowd that indeed might be too marginal. But *Grindhouse* was not just an exploitation or grindhouse feature; it was released as a *double* feature. Was this in part its Achilles heel? Such an acknowledgement begs the question, then: Who, if anyone, mourns the double feature?

Before answering this question, it is imperative to disentangle cult, exploitation, and B movie genres from the double-feature phenomenon. Benson-Allott's formulation is one of many to maintain a widely held association of double features with cult cinema. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, a midnight sensation that

has endured to this day, also did much to fasten this link. In its opening number, a giant pair of red lips appear on screen and lovingly sing about times at the science-fiction “late-night double-feature picture show,” repeated in the song’s chorus. The double bill’s cultural mythology aside, however, cinephiles who can remember the time of original grindhouse films might recall that, in actuality, double features were ubiquitous. Less an event, unique attraction, or small subset, they were part and parcel of the repertory and second-run movie-going experience. In fact, they were the dominant repertory exhibition mode for most of the latter half of the twentieth century. If one went to the repertory cinema throughout the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, *and* 1980s, it would be difficult to find a repertory house that did not regularly show double bills.

Double features (alternatively called “double bills,” “twin bills,” “dual bills,” and “double programs”) have had a long life in cinematic history and were not originally restricted to the repertory house. By 1931, 90% of Chicago theaters overall, for instance, showed double features.² Theater owners learned fast that it was a smart business model. Audience members would be charged for the price of one admission, and even if it meant more for print rental costs, the increased ticket and concessions sales would make it worth the exhibitors’ while. Theaters’ efforts to capitalize on this did not go without contention, and the history of the double feature is laden with legal struggles between local theaters, distributors, and the studios.

Scholars have adequately captured these battles in exhibition studies. However, few, if any, have dwelled on the ideological implications of a filmgoing

experience that was framed as plural, that is, a dyad of two films shown back-to-back. The fact that the historical phenomenon was so pervasive might have caused scholars to take it for granted, effectively leaving a theoretical blind spot. This inquiry is especially significant within the art-house milieu, where programmers might consider taste and aesthetics alongside, if not above, commercial gain. How did art-house programmers negotiate satisfying audiences with what they already knew and delighting or challenging them through exposure to content that might surprise them? What kinds of interplays of signification were formed out of these double feature arrangements? This chapter aims to fill this gap by answering these questions.

Double bills, I propose, are excellent microcosms for programming itself; highly concentrated exercises in intertextual cross-pollination and juxtaposition, they generate meaning within the minds and bodies of spectators. Surely the assertion that double features could leave a deep impression upon spectators hinges upon the fact that moviegoers would stay for both films (as was intended). Admittedly, I was surprised to hear from many older colleagues and friends that this was indeed the norm. Even if one had seen either the first or second film to screen in a double bill, it was typical to stay for both, especially because this would be the only way to see films prior to the proliferation of Video Home Systems (VHS) and video stores, that would enable one to replay a film countless times. I call this ritual of going to the repertory cinema for extended periods of time—sometimes even triple bills or all-night marathons of films shown in succession—*repertory time*.³ Double bills effectively structure repertory time because they are its *modus operandi*. Repertory

time could be described as immersive viewing in that, while spectators would usually be given a brief intermission between films, they remained in the theater for three to four hours (but again, sometimes longer) at a time.

Repertory time is also one of *repetition*. Cinephiles and frequent spectators were likely to reencounter over and over again films that they loved, that posed intellectual challenges, or were simply paired with co-features they longed to see. Repertory time, in this sense, would seem to embody Peter Wollen's description of cinephilia as an "infatuation with film, to the point of letting it dominate your life...as the symptom of a desire to remain within the child's view of the world, always outside, always fascinated by a mysterious parental drama, always seeking to master's one's anxiety by compulsive repetition. Much more than just another leisure activity."⁴ Though I am more inclined to refer to spectatorship overall in the conditional or subjunctive tense (rather than "always" something), Wollen's lyrical description of a religious devotion to cinema—one that is consuming, compulsive, and yet might bring with it an openness to the world—is a behavioral or habitual effect that is integral to the repertory time that I explicate here. In what follows, I describe cognitive-affective activity that is a product of long stretches of time spent at the cinema in front a projected image, where spectators fluctuate in states of focus and distraction, reflection and captivation, engrossment and alienation.

Repertory time is an institutional attempt to sustain cinephilia through reconfiguration and thus reencounter with films that spectators might have already seen. This chapter argues that double features were modes for renewing texts through

their viewing contexts. Their reshuffling, I illustrate here, puts into practice what semiotician Umberto Eco, via Charles Sanders Peirce, has called “unlimited semiosis.” The signifieds housed within these films shift as they move through different arrangements, creating chains of signification that stretch onward from every viewing scenario. Even though certain double features become famous (and infamous)—that is, certain films become associated with others through their programming—these films already contain the potential to be paired with another feature, in turn producing an endless source of meaning regeneration. Art-house programmers and curators therefore led spectators into a space of polysemy by converging different films and seeing what might result from their affective contact.

I have thus far argued that film programming fostered reparative readings of queer “bad objects” for LGBT viewers, and that it also made proximate deviant sexualities and gender expression for self-identified LGBT and straight audiences alike. This chapter is meant to recapitulate these points but, crucially, as they are inflected by repertory time. Queerness emerges from their double-bill formations. First, I will demonstrate certain double features’ critiques of naturalized modes of heteronormativity; second, inversely, their efforts to immerse spectators in queer diegeses; and third, their capacity to revise connotations of “bad objects” to make them ripe for reparativity. Within these models, I draw upon the double bills’ dyadic mutuality, commonality, tension, ambiguity, and undecidability. These forces, I stress, are contingent upon subject positions and do not cancel one another out. They can coincide within even a single viewing scenario. Such protean and mutable

dynamics are a product of the durational intensity of repertory time and yield semiotic and affective regeneration with each occurrence.

A History and an Education

Nickelodeon theaters as far back as 1908 began advertising something they called “double features,” comprised of two or more films or illustrated songs.⁵ By the 1910s and 1920s, as moving pictures became longer and integrated more intricate narratives, the “double feature” grew into the phenomenon of two feature-length films shown back-to-back. Exhibitors used this idea as a promotional strategy and to increase competition with movie houses that only showed one feature per price of admission. By the early 1930s, it was clear that double features benefitted discount theater exhibitors more than others in the distribution circuit. Given that audiences consumed films at twice the rate they would have otherwise, studios could not keep up unless they turned out a faster product. This resulted in the production of what became referred to as B movies, which would often play after the A movie, or spotlighted feature. B movies became synonymous with lower quality pictures, a term that is still used today, though out of its original context.⁶ Studios struggling to keep up and audiences displeased with poor options, distributors and studios called for government regulations, citing mostly the unfair competition leveraged by the discount theaters over their more distinguished counterparts.⁷ To add to it, employees complained that the increase in double features led to increased hours.

Despite these tensions within the industry, moviegoers returned time and time again to cinemas with package deals. This invokes an image of endless consumption, an insatiable spectator willing to watch anything and everything just to be granted time in front of a screen. Further, this invokes the archetype of the Depression-era spectator who compulsively attends the cinema to escape his or her daily troubles. The cinema, as a wish fulfilling machine, not only offers fantasy through its weekly rotations but also through its durational capacity to relieve people of their daily burdens for elongated periods of time.

Robert Hayden's 1980 poem "Double Feature" conjures up the kind of immersive fantasy that the double bill offered. Describing his wonder as a young black child going to Detroit theaters in the 1920s, Hayden writes, "At Dunbar, Castle or Arcade/we rode with the exotic sheik/through deserts of erotic flowers; held in the siren's madonna arms/were safe from the bill-collector's power." Hayden describes the escapism that a double bill promised. By referencing the bill collector, Hayden suggests that the double feature offered relief from disenfranchisement and even poverty. Hayden's allusion to the "exotic sheik" also obliquely recalls a racial fantasy that would have been further sustained by the "double fantasy" of the twin bill. By the end of the poem, Hayden appears to extinguish this fantasy. He ponders, "What mattered then the false, the true/at Dunbar, Castle or Arcade,/where we were other for an hour or two?" The use of "other" is curious here, both alluding to a sense of absorption where one can forget one's own black identity within the prospect of

escape, while maintaining a sense of self-recognition, reminded perhaps by the racist theater policies and atmosphere common to US cinemas at this time.⁸

Hayden's poem vividly describes a profound scene of subjectivization prompted by a double feature. It not only epitomizes film's ideological suturing capacities but also amplifies them through its durational quality. I assume Hayden as a child at a 1920s for-profit cinema inclined to show commercially robust fare was exposed to the likes of Rudolph Valentino playing a sheik or Al Jolson in blackface. Problematic and decontextualized representations such as these help to oppose, though not without complication, commercial-mainstream time and repertory time. Even fast forwarding thirty or so years, mainstream cinemas would have had no interest or obligation to stimulate reflection upon the films they exhibited. These spaces, one could assert, would not likely have sought to disrupt the status quo but rather capitalize on it. Though the art-house context should by no means be regarded as a fully emancipatory and progressive space, still, we might see the double feature doing other work in a repertory context than in one of commercial novelty. Surely repertory houses were profit-driven, but repertory time could, in contrast, immerse spectators in the unfamiliar, the foreign, the strange, and the idiosyncratic to encourage reflection rather than escape.

Programmers continually strategized ways to expose patrons to films beyond their immediate interest, all the while staying mindful of the ticket sales needed to keep their theaters in operation. Ben Davis cites several approaches that New York City programmers took, mobilizing their keen awareness of intellectually hungry city

slickers.⁹ First, programmers would oftentimes base one of their selections in a double feature on the guarantee that it would attract an audience. Whether the film already had a following (sometimes cult), was a box-office success in the past, or a rarely screened print of a famous film, programmers could then take a risk in selecting the film's partner. At times this was another hit or canonical film, but there were instances when programmers would exhibit an obscure or rarely shown print to go with it. Some even took a chance by screening a film that in the past had been a flop but now merited reconsideration. Dan Talbot, the longtime programmer of the The New Yorker Theater, was famous for putting together two disparate films from completely different traditions, countries, time periods, etc.¹⁰ He did this to wrest spectators of their comfort zones and expose them to content that they might otherwise overlook or willfully avoid.

The ordering of the films exhibited in double bill might matter when only one double feature performance would take place per day. Programmers would try to show the main attraction at a prime time in order to draw the biggest audience. Frequently, however, double bills screened in what were called "continuous performances," with films playing all day long on a loop. Because patrons could anticipate films replaying, they might come late or in the middle of one film, watch the entire co-feature that followed, and stay for the beginning of the film they had walked into partway through. For this reason, scheduled order was often enough not of major concern for programmers.¹¹

Davis explains that double bills could come as part of a larger series or festival (organized around a star, director, genre, theme, national cinema, movement, etc.) or be randomly scheduled and change day-to-day. They also might be part of a festival or series that shows on a certain day of the week for a period of time (e.g., pornography exhibited on “Blue Mondays”) or one that takes up an entire week or several weeks (e.g., a weeklong Film Noir series). These festivals and double features, Davis stresses, provided an “invaluable educational function” before or outside of university settings offering film production or studies courses.¹² Sitting and watching two Busby Berkeley films or Hollywood musicals from the 1930s, for instance, increased spectator awareness of style, trends and paradigms within a historical moment, and, of course, in the spirit of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* and Andrew Sarris, different auteurs’ artful predilections.¹³ Repertory cinemas of the 1950s and 1960s were training grounds, instructing the public on the medium’s aesthetic, and even at times, social power.

As Haidee Wasson has shown, MoMA’s first film curator and archivist Iris Barry, within the atmosphere of progressivism, began this practice some thirty years prior, by way of integrating the then middle-brow medium of cinema into the institution’s museology. Barry, Wasson underscores, did not bow to the “ascendant Eurocentric critiques of film” but instead treated “film’s role in aesthetic and social critique more as a question than as a forgone conclusion.”¹⁴ Barry’s work, I would propose via Wasson, lay the groundwork for those later programmers who aimed to

use the cinema as a kind of classroom—though free from its didactic procedures—for learning about film history.

If indeed repertory time could be considered educational time, programmers conceived of a different kind of education than one of straightforward art appreciation, especially in the turn towards eclecticism that took hold by the 1970s. Contra the art-house cinema's dull cerebral connotation, here is a model predicated on surprise, defamiliarization, and even destabilization. *Bricolage*, I proposed, is not just about decentering “the masters” or disrupting and thus reestablishing new “artful” taste arrangements, but also about endeavoring to find out what epistemic and affective connections might form along the lines of disparate texts being put in dialogue with one another. The double bill, itself a textual assemblage, asks of texts what they can do, that is, what political imaginaries they make available for spectators who make meaning out of the ostensible randomness.

Despite the fact that double bills had been part of the repertory programming practice for some time, the Bleeker Street Cinema's deployment of this practice offers insights into how a cinema could make use of textual mutability. Marshall Lewis, who was the Bleeker Street Cinema's programmer in the early to mid 1960s, was known for turning necessity into ingenuity. Due to austere budgetary restraints, the cinema would rent a limited group of films for the year and recycle them into different combinations. Ben Davis cites the examples of Ingmar Bergman's *Naked Night* (1953) being paired with Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* (1953), and then *Ugetsu* with Jean Renoir's *La Grande Illusion* (1937).¹⁵ This rotation of films might appear

financial suicide to a contemporary viewer (/user), who, beset by an onslaught of online streaming options, might assume that spectators would grow bored with the selection and go to another cinema. In reality, the Bleeker had packed houses. Lewis's method yielded a successful and sustainable business model. Its success implies that devoted and repeated audience members did not avoid seeing a film again, or several times over, when paired with a film that may have not seen.

In celebrating Lewis' approach, Dan Talbot noted that "it was like going to a film academy."¹⁶ Given the double bill's ability to immerse spectators as well as disrupt pleasures, attachments, assumptions, and predilections, Talbot's comment deeming the Bleeker Street Cinema a "film academy" is curious because it invites the question of a repertory education. Many art-house and repertory programmers, it should be noted, were averse to academic studies of the moving image. For many, their chosen reception was steeped in a pleasure that was jargon-free and immune to rigorous explication and critical justification.¹⁷ But in Talbot's formulation, the double-feature paradigm is a quasi-institutional twin to the film academy, which enacts a certain didacticism through repetition and duration. For example, within a film course, one would likely not only watch an Alfred Hitchcock or Yasujirō Ozu film, but dissect it scene-by-scene, shot-by-shot, to more deeply understand and come to appreciate the stylistic components of artful filmmaking. Repertory time could indeed perform a similar function through prolonged exposure to a text or series of texts within the same director's oeuvre, a national movement, or historical moment.

Programming, in this sense, similarly facilitates repetition as a mode of analysis. It encourages dissection and appreciation through recursive viewing opportunities.

If one were to approach Talbot's compliment as more a simile or point of comparison, that going to the Bleeker Street Cinema was *like* going to a film academy, instead of *actually going* to a film academy, its didacticism could look more like heuristic experiments in meaning production than disciplined methods in film loving. In other words, far from the protocol of doing deep and close analysis in a classroom, these double features could move spectators to feel and think through interactions between texts in unstructured manners. The Bleeker Street Cinema thus offered, through recycled yet reshuffled double features, opportunities to encounter chains or relays of signification. Semiosis in this sense is less a product of regimented imperatives to love the object and either aspire to reproduce it or revere its aesthetic value than it is a testing ground in which to probe the conditions of relationality and connection of text to text and text to world. These programmatic processes are not simply of thematic yoking or parallelism but of dynamic epistemic reconfiguration and affective collision.

Davis's historical account implies that double bills were not random. While the programming's theme might change day-to-day, the pairing on a particular afternoon or evening had to correlate in some way, even if it remained a mystery to the curious audience until they witnessed or felt a schema emerge, sometimes hours or days after a screening. At the same time, the relationships between co-features should not be regarded as inevitably symbiotic. There were many times when double

bills thrived on radical discontinuity or dialectical opposition. There were also times when it might have been difficult to distinguish the symbiotic from the antagonistic. When two films may appear thematically, stylistically, or contextually commensurate, they may in fact be affectively incongruous. Or two films could equally be at tension with one another or find compatibility based on the angle from which or lens through which a spectator perceives them. In what follows, I provide a protean schema of semiotic engagement with double features that will purposefully oscillate between the two poles of symbiosis and tension. With the help of some central films (e.g., *The Lovers* [Louis Malle, 1958], *Last Tango in Paris*, *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, *Cruising*, and *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*), I traverse their different readings to illustrate that these texts were and are in continual semiosis, shifting in meaning due to their arrangement and context. Parallelism and incommensurability, and the sliding of one into the other, offer audiences multiple strategies for interpreting and putting to ideological use the texts they receive.

Fantasy, Interrupted

Louis Malle's French classic *The Lovers* was repeatedly screened at art-house cinemas throughout the 1970s. Audiences of the time would likely have been familiar with the film's backstory: Around the time of the film's initial release in 1959, a theater owner in Ohio was fined for showing the film because the county and then the state deemed it "obscene." The case went to the Supreme Court in *Jacobellis v Ohio*, and in 1964, the film was finally exonerated.¹⁸ Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart

famously asserted that the film did not contain obscenity worthy of censorship, for, he stated, “I know it when I see it.” The film was purported to be obscene because the protagonist, a wealthy housewife, makes the decision to leave her husband for a young archeologist, still virtually a stranger, who picks her up off the side of the road when her car breaks down. Linda Williams takes note of the “long scene of adulterous lovemaking that was so intrinsic to the film that it could not...be cut without doing extreme violence to the narrative.”¹⁹ Though the film might have appeared sexually conservative at this point to a young urban art-house crowd of the 1970s, its reputation for challenging US obscenity laws would have been of historical interest to cinephiles.

More can be said about the film’s ongoing appeal than first meets the eye. Its position in relation to other films with which it was programmed lends nuance to the film’s enduring legacy. On August 25, 1974, the Elgin Theater in Manhattan screened *The Lovers* on an all-day loop in continuous performances with Agnès Varda’s *Happiness (Le Bonheur)* (1965).²⁰ Agnès Varda was already a venerated “Left Bank” director within the art-house scene and larger French New Wave movement, most famous for her film *Cleo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7)* (1962). Besides being a historical artifact, *The Lovers* would have likewise had auteurist appeal, given Louis Malle’s place in the pantheon of beloved European directors. In light of these factors, it can be difficult if not impossible to determine what might have attracted spectators to a double bill such as this one. Was it Malle’s canonical status? Varda’s unique

perspective as a woman filmmaker? The novelty of a critical film screened less often (and perhaps unseen) or the comforts of one that many find sublimely romantic?

The messages of the two films—*The Lovers* and *Happiness*—could not be further apart. While *The Lovers* appears to advocate for the pursuit of love as the pursuit of freedom and joy, Varda's film reveals the gendered asymmetry of these aspirations. In *Happiness*, a housewife drowns herself after discovering that her husband has been having an affair, which he refuses to dissolve. Rather than deciding to end with the protagonist's death, the film follows the widower as he pleads that his mistress marry him and help parent his now motherless children. The film ends hauntingly with the new family enjoying a daytrip to what appears to be the same location where the wife had committed suicide. In contradistinction to *The Lovers*, *Happiness* does not welcome freedom in love, suggesting instead that women's roles are as replaceable as normativity is replicable. In both cases, the endings are meant to shock but to disparate ends. Where Malle uses narrative surprise to accentuate the spontaneity of love and its ability to remedy crippling ennui, Varda depicts love that does not find relief from the mundane. In fact, the cyclical workings of heterosexual mundanity—in its promise of romantic “happiness”—conceals the sexism that structures it. The last shots of these two films perfectly capture their narratives' stark contrast: one set of lovers running off together, filled with euphoria and hope for the future; the other set, now part of the recalibrated family, walking off together in chilling amnesia, and into the recursive patterning of heteronormativity.

The juxtaposition of these two films—united, of course, by the fact they are both French and interested in women’s points of view—would not have been lost on the room. For this reason, the exhibition context of this double bill is crucial to understanding these potential exegeses. Davis describes the Elgin where this double feature played as a Spartan theater housed in a rundown building in the middle of pre-gentrified Chelsea. The audience, Davis notes, was primarily young and intellectual. *Happiness*, for a politically and intellectually aware audience, provides a corrective of sorts to the fantasy *The Lovers* proposes, familiar in its bromidic love-conquers-all message. Even if the audience was not made up of young activists, their knowledge of second-wave feminism could easily make the intervention in *Happiness* all the more legible. Seen alone, *Happiness* makes a clear case against heteronormativity and sexism. Seen with *The Lovers*, suddenly the film is anchored in and works to counter a textual and mediated history that positions romance as the cure for all ills. *Happiness* in this case is disruptive and disjunctive, historically, textually, intellectually, and affectively. The film might be seen as a *lever*, as Derrida and Spivak describe the device, prying open and exposing the naturalized ideology that its co-feature reproduces.²¹

On the surface, the great tonal, stylistic, and narrative distance between the two texts might appear to ensure greater dialectical thinking and feeling on the part of the spectator, as *The Lovers/Happiness* double feature illustrates. *The Lovers* billing in continuous performances with *Last Tango in Paris* at the Carnegie Hall Cinema in September 1976 might appear to have a similar effect.²² Pauline Kael, in her famous

rave review of the *Last Tango in Paris*, noted that there was, “something like fear in the atmosphere of the party in the lobby that followed the screening” she attended.²³ The fear that Kael sensed may be a product of what Linda Williams identifies as a film about sex—a practice often associated with life affirmation, whether through reproduction or *jouissance*—that is here driven towards death, specifically murder.²⁴ *The Lovers*—a credo that advocates one “surrender to love” in order to right all wrongs, heal all wounds—would thus appear in diametric opposition to *Last Tango in Paris*, tonally, narratively, and ideologically.

But look closer and *The Lovers*’s ending might appear ironic when set against *Last Tango in Paris*. Consider a reading of *The Lovers* as a text that comments on the implausible and even ridiculous euphoric pursuit of reparative love, a trope intrinsic to sustaining heteronormativity. From this angle, the nihilism of *Last Tango in Paris* might infect the idealism of *The Lovers*, rendering it a delusion or impossible romance. In this sense, *The Lovers*’s abrupt ending—read as a desire to circumvent memory and history through the spontaneous fantasy of futurity and reciprocity—is reframed as critique of manufactured transcendental love.²⁵ *Last Tango in Paris* does not so much undercut *The Lovers*’s “inherent” optimism here as it unearths the criticality that dwells in an alternate reading of its narrative structure, found perhaps in “reading against the grain.”²⁶ Within these assemblages, all three films—*The Lovers*, *Happiness*, and *Last Tango in Paris*—whether one might be compelled to deem them queer or not on their own, are suddenly available for the queer modes of critique ignited by, crucially, repertory time.

Repertory time is therefore occasion for hermeneutic revision. Programming double bills can entirely revise the connotations and thereby the decoding strategies of spectators who aim to understand arcane forms of signification common to art-house screens. By virtue of spending concentrated amounts of time watching films, spectators are asked to make connections and locate disjunctions between films and their meanings. In the cases just described, double features catapult films into unpredictable affective associations that at times might result in the unease of conflicting messaging. However, this unease can help illuminate, in the tradition of dialectical materialism, the world's hegemonic structuring. As Laura Marks writes, "the curator is responsible for synthesizing meanings that emerge from the dialogue between the work and the world."²⁷ Repertory time is therefore not isolated from the lived world, but provides a heuristic pedagogy to help face it, interpret it, reimagine it, and even rescript it.

Programmers repeatedly made use of double bills to forge dialectical critiques of normative worldviews. The Times Theater in downtown San Francisco in March 1973 juxtaposed Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema* with John Huston's *Reflections in a Golden Eye*.²⁸ The former perversely celebrates the unraveling of a bourgeois family when a handsome stranger comes to stay with them, seducing each one and stripping them of the comforts of their entrenched identities. The latter, in contrast, castigates queer desire as being the culprit for domestic anxiety and dissatisfaction. Not so differently, Northside Theatre in Berkeley in November 1973 screened *Sunset Boulevard* (Bily Wilder, 1950) opposite *Harold and Maude* for an entire week to call

attention to polar-opposite depictions of intergenerational desire.²⁹ In the noir classic *Sunset Boulevard*, Gloria Swanson plays the notorious aging screen star Norma Desmond who preys on a young William Holden, sucking his lifeblood to satisfy her own unrelenting quest for a comeback. While *Sunset Boulevard* dramatizes the power differential between the two lead characters, *Harold and Maude* delightedly extends romantic capability to the two surprising lovebirds—sixty years apart in age—as they take solace in their outsidership.

These double features offer spectators a space to feel through divergent ideological production, inciting queer reflection upon the constructs that make certain desires thinkable and acceptable and others unsavory and alien. These double bills pass the test for what Laura Marks positions as “ethical” programming in that they seem to contain arguments that invite “agreement, qualification, or dissent” through both ideation and sensation.³⁰ They offer queer points and counterpoints on which their audiences are encouraged to ruminate, giving them space to foster generous readings of nonnormative pleasure as opposed to its admonishment.

At the same time, these dialectical readings only cohere if the films are read earnestly or seriously. *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, starring queer icons Elizabeth Taylor and Marlon Brando, and *Sunset Boulevard*, starring silent screen diva Gloria Swanson, already carried deeply queer star-based connotations, narrative aside. If the two films are read through camp or incredulous lenses, they might elicit an empowering mockery, in which homosexuality and intergenerationality can be pleasurably recuperated. If camp is in part about loving failure, Marlon Brando and

Elizabeth Taylor's histrionic performances, the film's meandering narrative, and its bizarre fixation on equine affection all produce a text that lends itself to camp readings. And in particular it forms an unintentional or naïve brand of camp, which Sontag praises as the most rewarding kind of all.³¹

My intention here is not to exhaust all possible readings, but rather to show that in these dyadic formations, that which appears dialectical and conflicting on the surface cannot be trusted to be the conclusive reading. Each relay generates new points of contact where new continuities and discontinuities can form. In the case of *The Lovers*, its repertory life as experienced in repertory time keeps it in semiotic motion and therefore irreducible in its polysemy and affective capacities. In elaborating on Peirce's notion of unlimited semiosis, Eco writes, "from a sign which is taken as a type, it is possible to penetrate, from the center to the farthest periphery, the whole universe of cultural units, each of which can in turn become the center and create infinite peripheries."³² *The Lovers*, taken as representative of all films put back into repertory circulation over and over again, creates new centers and new peripheries that expand in meaning and repurpose the film for eras past and eras to come.

Repertory time, in this formulation, is definitively anti-absorptive even as it is immersive. To do their dialectical work, these double features rely upon the prolonged attention of spectators, and spectators' willingness to resist absorption into classically-made films' diegetic fantasies. These examples contrast Hayden's description of his experiences as a child going to the commercial cinemas. These

arrangements dislodge the passive viewing that has come to be associated with continuity editing, verisimilar *mise-en-scène*, and trained acting. Instead, they turn texts such as *Sunset Boulevard*, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, and *The Lovers* on their heads, encouraging reflection upon the sexual and romantic conventionality and normativity on which these films appear to place a premium (when viewed solo, outside their programming). However, as I will explain next, double bills can also favor pleasurable critique or critical pleasure, not only to decode or lay bare the hegemony lurking beneath representation but also to help imagine worlds beyond the immediate and dominant ones to which spectators are all too accustomed outside the cinema.

Queer Diegeses

Inversely and alternatively, the double feature can offer a more exuberant queer kind of immersion than those just discussed. I have already argued that double features were not at all exclusively made up of cult fare. Certain cult film double bills were nonetheless uniquely able to plunge spectators into queer universes. Cult films in many ways emblemize the ways that repertory time serves as a radical departure in sensibility and taste from the normative codes of propriety. These double features—often comprised of exploitation and B movies—offered highly concentrated periods of time in which ruptures of heteronormativity could be felt and even distributed throughout the audience.

No doubt there exists a wealth of cult films with a queer charge and appeal to them. Some of the most salient examples are the films of Ed Wood (e.g., *Glen or Glenda*) and John Waters (e.g., *Pink Flamingos*) as well as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which have tended to hold symbolic value for the rebellion against the dictates of taste for straight culture rather than bear much weight on sexual politics. By wresting queer cult films from the stronghold of heterosexist cinephilia, it is here I want to gesture at the ways in which they reorganized normative sensibilities and did so through repertory time. Russ Meyer's *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*—a film that is not necessarily centralized in gay film history but is noted for its campiness—is a prime example of this kind of work. It joined other films in double features that, as Susan Sontag posits about camp, spring “from an irrepressible, a virtually uncontrolled sensibility.”³³

This prolonged exposure to queerness through camp might suggest that double features operated as safety valves for their straight fans (who cannot or do not live out those transgressive fantasies) and queer audiences (who find relief in liberated worlds where they can picture “being themselves” openly).³⁴ Such a reading might assume the theater to be a site of closure, an exception to the world outside of it. I insist, contra such a limiting reading, an immersive repertory queer experience forms not only a temporal but also an epistemological and affective break from the normative propulsion of quotidian life. Cinema is thus a place of sense-making, in the way that Vivian Sobchack describes it, but in its queerest moments, it is also a space of *non-sense-making*.³⁵ Queer double features do more than offer glimpses into absurd

worlds of base desire and humor; they drench the sensorium with an irreverence that must then rebound and grapple with the normative world outside the theater.

Queer cult films paradoxically offer immersed spectators views into deviant worlds, giving them fragmented attachments to reimagine their lived worlds. It is the prolonged engagement with these films as parts—“waste products,” in Sedgwick’s terms—reorganized within spectators’ sensorial and cognitive capacities that make them all the more likely to linger in the minds and bodies of spectators. Umberto Eco maintains that cult films are always already composites or “intertextual collages” that elude a logic of totality, seamlessness, and polish. Using *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) as his example of a cult film, Eco claims that fans of the film, “unhinge it [and] break it up or take it apart so that one then may remember only parts of it, regardless of their original relationship to the whole.”³⁶ *Casablanca* is for Eco a “hodgepodge of sensational scenes strung together implausibly,” which makes it ideal as a cult text.³⁷ Despite the criticism that Eco’s claim can be applied to any number of films that are nowhere near “cult,” his point that cult films live on in their “glorious incoherence” accurately captures the extent to which cult films are loved precisely because they are disjointed, narratively, logically, philosophically, and aesthetically.³⁸

The cult film *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, released in 1970 in the midst of the counterculture movements in the U.S., fits Eco’s definition as well as complicates it. Fans of Russ Meyer who went to see the film will have been well aware of his idiosyncratic attitudes towards sex and morality that are reiterated in the film. Its ideological incoherence—on the one hand, damning a culture consumed by sex and

fame, and on the other, mocking one of piety, righteousness, and censorship—helps to foster readings that highlight the film’s uneven tone, which fluctuates between melodrama, comedy, horror, and, of course, softcore pornography. Meyer’s feverish montages of sex- and rock ‘n’ roll-obsessed teenagers—an apparent product of a corrupted culture—ironizes the moralism that was employed to attack his sleazy pictures. On its own, the film satirizes a widespread belief that counterculture was dismantling the fundamentals of a civil society through permissive drug use and promiscuity.

Beyond the Valley of the Dolls several times screened with another tale of debauchery and rebellion—*Myra Breckinridge*, based on the popular book by queer author Gore Vidal. To say the least, the two films are indeed *beyond* the pale. They also sprang from the same studio, 20th Century Fox, which made them easier to package together.³⁹ In *Myra Breckinridge*, the titular character, a transsexual woman played by Raquel Welsh, goes to Hollywood to try to inherit her uncle’s acting school and destroy the values of the repressed and idealistic students who attend it. Both films equally mock hippie subculture and the larger repressed culture it intends to defy. They are steeped in a camp logic and sensibility that knowingly confounds classical conventions of narrative economy and coherence. In this sense, both films, while immersing spectators in worlds that turn on inflated sentimentality punctuated by sudden montage-induced ruptures, are “gloriously” incoherent in the way Eco describes. In the same manner that Sedgwick talks about camp, they leave behind “waste products” with each viewing, in which spectators take and remold their parts

into reframing devices for receiving the world as camp instead of camp as representative of one exceptional version of the world.

The two films' play with excess invokes a Bakhtinian notion of the "carnavalesque." As Robert Stam has explained it, "the carnivalesque principle abolishes hierarchies, levels social classes, and creates another life free from conventional rules and restrictions."⁴⁰ The "carnavalesque" echoes the carnival time of the Middle Ages by incorporating into its aesthetics a loosening of social codes that must at other times be blindly abided by. Laughter, Stam points out via Bakhtin's writings on Francois Rabelais, is a central component of the carnivalesque. It "becomes the form of a free and critical consciousness that mocks dogmatism and fanaticism."⁴¹ I underscore this particular point because it conveys the subversive parody that the *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls/Myra Breckinridge* double bill channels. The communal aspect of the theater parallels the carnival in this sense in that an audience responds audibly to, even at times competes with, the images and sounds supposedly centralized by the big screen they share in front of them.

This double feature's sensibility can be applied to numerous other arrangements. Just consider these perverse worlds produced through repertory time: Paul Morrissey's *Heat* and *Trash* at the Bleeker Street Cinema in summer 1977; *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (Rainer Fassbinder, 1973) and *Les Biches* at Carnegie Hall in fall of 1976; and *Liquid Sky* (Slava Tsukerman, 1982) and *The Hunger* at the Vista Theatre in Hollywood in fall 1984.⁴² These double bills represent the extended lengths of time in which richly textured and transgressive worlds are animated to the

One question manifested in this conceptualization of the carnivalesque is whether it is confined to the spatiotemporal boundaries of repertory time. Can such textual and text-audience interplay bleed into quotidian life, even political life? Several scholars have noted, for instance, the carnivalesque quality of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* midnight screenings.⁴⁴ At these highly participatory shows in which audience members act out and respond audibly and physically to the film, participants of various gender identities also cross dress, sport outrageous makeup, and disrobe to golden underwear and lace garter belts. But by Monday they are back to their proper gender-conforming attire as they rush off to their nine-to-fives without a trace of the weekend's degeneracy. Within this model, where the topsy-turvy practice of gender ambiguity and reversal are coupled to the unfastening of gender's correspondence to object choices, there is an imperative to return to productive life. Productive life (of labor, reproductive futurity, and consumerism), as Jack Halberstam and Elizabeth Freeman have emphasized, is enmeshed, if not synonymous, with normative time.⁴⁵ It must forget that of queer repertory time. The closure that marks the completion of the show is the closure of queer potentiality. There is no ripple, only momentary relief.

This narrative of the contained carnivalesque implies that the immersion double bills provide do not leave lasting impressions on spectators. It is undergirded by a logic of performed and avowed identity and reduced to a conscious and decisive interaction with the text. Little, however, can be fully determined about the reverberated impact such a double bill as *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* and *Myra*

Breckinridge might have on the body. In comparing Bakhtin's carnival to Nietzsche's Dionysian fete, Stam offers that, "Both celebrate the body not as a self-contained system delineated by the ego but rather as the site of dispersion and multiplicity."⁴⁶ This "excessive body that outstrips its own limits and transgresses the norms of decency," I would claim, is not one that retreats once it exits the doors of the cinema. The vestiges of the filmgoing experience continue to resonate within the bodies of spectators. Further, the queer reverberations may or may not result in immediate ideation on the part of spectators; instead, they might simmer or find themselves manifest elsewhere, in other viewing contexts or other pleasure practices.

The dispersion and multiplicity of which Stam speaks sounds similar to the dismantling and subjective experience of cult films that Eco discusses. This similitude suggests that spectatorial interplay with cult texts is framed by destabilized and fractured versions of the world that counteract otherwise normative conceptions of the world that operate on pretenses of consistency, normality, order, equilibrium, and cordiality or conviviality. The queer delight in the pairing of a double feature such as *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* and *Myra Breckinridge* or *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Myra Breckinridge* is a surrender to a fragmented existence, not where social bonds and self-sovereignty are broken and must be mended (in the Marxian tradition of renewed sociality), but where desires, identities, perceptions, and fantasies are but part-objects that undercut the fantasy of social amicability. Further, these double bills, while immersing spectators into queer worlds that celebrate disjunction, spotlight the artifice of desires rather than naturalize them. Perversion

within this scene of spectatorship can be reduced neither to a Freudian return to some original site of trauma nor an instance of pre-oedipal or pre-symbolic release, but rather a product of (inter)textual mediation that constructs erotic, queer, anti-verisimilar, and unruly imaginaries.

Texts and lived experience press against one another in a generative dialectical play that is a defining characteristic of the queerness that can be discovered (psychically, affectively, and/or intellectually) within the space of certain double features. Using *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* as an index for deviant non-sense-making, we might take its screening with *Mandingo* at the Nuart Theatre in August 1979 as an example of the perverse enjoyment of sexploitation in a highly mediated sense.⁴⁷ *Mandingo* (Richard Fleischer, 1975) (which, it should be noted, was inspiration for Tarantino's *Django Unchained*) is set on a plantation where torrid affairs take place between white masters and black slaves, the latter of whom are used in slave fighting matches. Linda Williams situates the film's release historically in a "moment in American culture when mainstream audiences, black and white, began to find titillation—not just danger—in depictions of interracial lust."⁴⁸ Williams goes on to demonstrate how interracial taboo (especially between black men and white women) plays out later in hardcore pornography as a fetishized remnant of one era's racist threat.

The threat of stereotyped black hypersexual masculinity is in part attenuated (but by no means eradicated) due to temporal (post-civil rights era) and stylistic (the campiness of sexploitation) distance, but this attenuation is also programmatic. Given

that the film was programmed with *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, Meyer's extreme camp—itsself not contingent upon temporal remove but legible upon the film's release—makes the taboo of interracial desire safer for audiences to enjoy. *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* serves as both a relaxant and stimulant at once. It complements *Mandingo*, itself tawdry because it is part sexploitation and part cheap melodrama, by establishing a tone of “veri-dissimilitude,” where what is represented on screen does not aim to mirror “real life.” But crucially, both films, though heavily stylized, offer depictions of black characters that are not simply stock. They have fully teased out psychologies, desires, and drives. Parallel to Judith Mayne's thinking on women's prison films, here the campiness (indexed by excess) and the solemnity (indexed by the real) cohabit and oscillate in their tensions and compatibilities.

This *bricolage* sensibility throws into crisis any temptation to frame these double features (or much repertory programming of this time, for the matter) as a syntagm, a conglomerate of parts that yield a lucid system.⁴⁹ Where a syntagm strives for intelligibility and coherence, here the repertory programming, though certainly including some thematic programs that are indeed coherent, thrives on unpredictable and bizarre combinations. The titillating appeal of films such as *Mandingo* or *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, might thus be better seen as a result of an *agglutinative* process, where new connective tissue among its discrete parts yields new sensoria and meaning.⁵⁰ Certain features of the films' narratives and style latch onto one another, even becoming unmoored from a totalizing ideological schema of a given text. In this nexus of deviant programming, signifiers of gender and sexual nonconformity (such

as interracial desire) are extracted and isolated from their sources and then reconfigured along with their contextual residue to produce new intellectual and affective configurations that alter the connotations of the objects themselves.

All the while, they retain traces of their narrative locations. Here identities and experiences cross-pollinate and cross-pollute while also maintaining distinct narrative and stylistic characteristics, production contexts, and social issues and types. This is most palpable in the June 1981 example of the double feature of *In the Realm of the Senses* and *Last Tango in Paris* screened at the Strand Theatre in San Francisco.⁵¹ Emanating from disparate cultural and national contexts, the two films unite in their Bataillian take on sexuality and kinky sexuality.⁵² *In the Realm of the Senses*, a 1976 Japanese art-porn film based on real events also ends in murder, in this case, with a geisha castrating and murdering her beloved customer when he tries to leave her. Further, *In the Realm of the Senses* and *Last Tango in Paris* unite in their portrayals of unsustainable sexual obsession in that the main characters isolate themselves from the outside world to create utopias of continual pleasure—a temporary fantasy that ends in tragedy.

Such unbearable and uncontainable love and lust become the things of camp, of inflated pathos and excessive style. In this case, however, improbable love looks and feels different than what one might see in the *The Lovers/Last Tango in Paris* double bill. *In the Realm of the Senses* and *Last Tango in Paris*, whether read through high camp or earnestness, offer consolation for spectators' own relegated and inconceivable desires and feed the imagination of those whose desires are stuck

within a normative sensorium. In either case, the style and narrative events diverge and converge, weaving in and out of the detailed, verisimilar sex acts they depict and the hyperbolic form in which they are couched. The parceling out of these films' attributes become the raw material for agglutination. It allows the films to retain their distinctions at the same time that it encourages their corresponding kinks to intermingle and to even lose, under certain circumstances, their textual grip.

Queer spectators might come to identify with or recognize these aspects due to the fact that so much of queer love, belonging, intimacy, and desire was at the time and still remains to an extent impossible, invisible, and unthinkable in the public sphere. These films, despite their blatant heterosexuality, might actually have queer affinities (with shame, concealment, and alienation) that become legible within the immersive deviant universes pieced together through repertory time.⁵³ By bringing silenced desires out of the shadows, a deviant double feature such as *In the Realm of the Senses* and *Last Tango in Paris* salvages these representations for viewers who know this erasure, censor, or censure all too well.

There are limits to how much these two films can be used for deviant erotic empowerment. *In the Realm of the Senses*, not unlike Ken Russell's *The Devils*, reinscribes the stereotype of the hysterical woman who compulsively craves orgasms. The film's unstimulated sex, which functions as a visceral visual metaphor for the deeply penetrating lust that the two characters have for one another, might help justify the protagonist's rage in the end (that, again, leads to castration and murder). Even more fraught is the information that came out more recently about the infamous

“butter” scene in *Last Tango in Paris* in which Maria Schneider is anally raped by Marlon Brando. All parties—Schneider, Brando, and Bertloucci—attest to the fact that the sex was simulated, yet the scene was not in the script and a nineteen-year-old Schneider was coerced by the director and Brando (the one who allegedly came up with the idea that day on set) into doing it.⁵⁴

This production backstory, which surfaced years after the film’s release, does not necessarily negate spectators’ or programmers’ uses of the film in the 1970s and 1980s, when it was still part of the repertory cycle and thus its canon. Repertory time carved out prolonged contact with this deviant content, allowing spectators’ imaginations to run wild. But this information, along with a more critical view of *In the Realm of the Senses* as having sexist implications, does complicate their individual legacies. It also reins in a romanticized view of repertory time as freeing from social constraints and realities. These canonical films are thus potent examples that show we cannot simply ignore history in the name of celebrating timeless allegories of kink as deviant. Additionally, spectatorial strategies of fragmentation are that much more necessary as an alternative to lauding an entire text for its transgression, and as a result, ignoring its relation to vexed power structures.

Reparative Time

Programmers have created in the past and continue to create series and double bills with target demographics in mind. For instance, it is well documented that exhibitors and programmers assembled double features of “weepies” during the 1940s

and 1950s to attract female moviegoers, or that “ethnic theaters” in the U.S. programmed films with black, Latino, and Asian populations as their assumed address.⁵⁵ By the 1970s, gay men and lesbians had become their own market for programmers. The commercial success of films such as *The Killing of Sister George* and *The Boys in the Band* proved to cinemas that they could capitalize on films of particular “gay interest” or with “gay appeal.”⁵⁶ This is not to say only LGBT spectators went to see the films, but rather that programmers could rely on the business of a minoritized segment of the population, hungry to see representations of “themselves” on the big screen.

Vito Russo was keenly aware of this marketing strategy. In his chapter on the 1970s, Russo argues that Hollywood’s retrograde and stock depictions of queerness symbolize both a backlash against the progress made within the gay liberation movement of that time as well as an effort to parlay and profit from it. Demonstrating the sly influence programmers have on their audiences, Russo takes note of a popular double feature. He pointedly writes, “The gay cult film *Something for Everyone* (Harold Prince, 1970), often shown on a double bill with *The Boys in the Band*, is a good example of the way in which a gay audience is lured into supporting a negative image of itself in response to an attractively homoerotic but ultimately destructive sensibility.”⁵⁷ Russo goes on to argue that Michael York, who stars in *Something for Everyone* and then later starred alongside Liza Minelli in *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972), made a career for himself playing bisexual characters. In *Something for Everyone*, York seduces an entire affluent family, one-by-one, in order to climb the social ladder

(York's motivation an inversion of Terence Stamp's in *Teorema*). For Russo, this was but another example of the insidious and deceitful bisexual who was not to be trusted.

Russo is quite correct to point out the two films' topical bonds. They are unified by the gay appeal of which urban art-house programmers would have been well aware. In addition, they were both released in 1970. But beyond the superficial markers of "queer interest," their co-presence may be difficult to ascertain. *The Boys in the Band*, based on Mart Crowley's play of the same name, takes place one evening as seven friends gather for a birthday party. As the night wears on, their internalized homophobia becomes all the more apparent as the culprit of their fraying lives. Russo's mention of these two films in the same breath suggests that while they might not appear to participate in the same exact representational politics, the homoerotic draw of *Something for Everyone* conceals the disparaging and self-loathing subtext of both films. This reading is not necessarily incorrect. Still, as described in Chapter 3, Russo's reading practices had a tendency to be univocal and earnest (in stark contrast to his counterpart Parker Tyler). This much is clear in his binding of the two films to one another, but what interests me more than that in this instance is Russo's use of "often" to frame the films' adherence to one another. It is a rhetorical strategy that is not completely false but rather misleading.

One can find several instances of the *Something for Everyone* and *The Boys in the Band* double bill. In my research, I found two examples in the San Francisco Bay Area alone. The films were shown together at the Castro Theatre in September 1978 and the UC Theater in February 1978.⁵⁸ At the same time, I found a host of other

cases of the films being paired with other queer films. For instance, *Something for Everyone* was also shown repeatedly with *Cabaret* in cities and theaters throughout the country. Here the conceit of the double bill is star Michael York, and, as Russo points out, York as the bisexual opportunist. This double feature supports Russo's argument that York's corpus further cements notions of bisexuals as shifty, fickle, and ultimately operating out of self-interest. However, switching to Eco's "infinite peripheries" allows *Something for Everyone* to be dissociated from York's career choices, and recontextualized as doing other things with bisexuality than simply sensationalizing it and using it as a plot device. Treating *Something for Everyone* as a marker or index for programmatic rearrangements, just as I did with *The Lovers*, a reparative schema begins to form out of otherwise stereotypical representation.

The Times Theater in San Francisco showed *Something for Everyone* with *The Killing of Sister George* on one occasion and *Flesh* on another.⁵⁹ In both screening scenarios, class is pushed to the foreground. Many studies have looked at the contrast between George, the outspoken unapologetic butch who symbolizes blue-collar brutishness, and the power femme BBC-executive in *The Killing of Sister George*. In *Flesh*, Joe Dallesandro is a street hustler whose clients span the gender spectrum. Both examples—*Something for Everyone* with *The Killing of Sister George* or with *Flesh*—add a class inflection to sexuality (only one co-feature carrying over a cultural fascination with bisexuality). In *Flesh*, there is a documentary slippage to Dallesandro, who, in his real life before becoming the hunky poster boy for Warhol's Factory, was a bisexual nude model and hustler. The overlap between character and

actor in the intersecting space of labor and desire might as a result tip the reading of *Something for Everyone* as strictly a case of malevolent or conniving bisexuality into a critique of class and social mobility within the historically rigid European systems of nobility.⁶⁰

Repertory time here is reparative time for queer spectators in search or in need of less damaging representation. As I suggested in the previous chapter, programming can be reparative just as reparativity can be programmatic. The programming is reparative in that it restructures the film's connotations and readings by changing proximities to other texts over and over again. Reparativity is programmatic in the sense that it is an iterative process whereby one remaps and thus reconstitutes attachments to objects. These various versions of *Something for Everyone*—itself a different film within different contexts—allow queer viewers who might have come to the cinema in search of identification and visibility to move through the film's injurious aspects to find a mode of critique or reading that produces healing. One need not discern or detect an affirmative version of oneself in order for it to constitute reparativity. The interplays among criticality, sardonicism or incredulity, and imagination can be the ingredients to reshape problematic representations. Double bills, as do the programs discussed in Chapter 3, provide much of the fodder for these textual revisions.

In this regard, *Cruising* and *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* deserve some attention in the context of double features. Seen as two of the most controversial wide-release films of the 1970s to deal with sexuality, they were positioned as products of the

newfound freedoms afforded in the post-Production Code era of Hollywood filmmaking as well as a backlash against the social movements running parallel to it, most notably gay liberation and second-wave feminism. Both films featured major stars at the time—Al Pacino and Diane Keaton—cruising in bars late at night, immersing themselves in worlds unthinkable until the baby boomers came of age. Given the two films’ many correlations, one might assume their pairing in double bill exhibition. In fact, I found no such case of it. Perhaps this is because their mixture might be combustible. Their heated responses lingered for at least the decade following their releases. Programmers might in turn avoid patron grumbling or, worse, financial risk—both in the short- and long-term—that might be too much for smaller cinemas to handle. While avoiding their direct interactions, programmers did exhibit these films through the years, carefully profiting from their controversy, but also carving out new paths for their reevaluation and reconsideration.

One such pairing was *Cruising* with *American Gigolo* (Paul Schrader, 1980) at the Strand Theatre in April 1981.⁶¹ It is likely that the films were exhibited together in part because of their thematic ties—both films, as well as *Looking for the Mr. Goodbar*, feature straight characters traversing the debaucher of commercialized urban sexual pleasure. While *Cruising* galvanized the gay and lesbian community to protest its production and distribution (and also, crucially, the participation of real-life gay men playing extras), *American Gigolo* garnered little to no critical attention from the community for its own brand of homophobia. Activists were likely too distracted by the more publicized depiction of the “lascivious” gay lifestyle depicted at length in

Cruising. The question might become: Is this double feature intended to create continuity and connect the two films in their homophobic depictions? Or is there another way to read their coupling?

I here quote Robin Wood at length, both in his remark on the community's oversight in its response to *American Gigolo* as well as his reading of the film itself:

...Homophobia is central to *American Gigolo*. It was playing without protest in the same Toronto theater complex where gay activists were picketing *Cruising*; I find it incomparably the more offensive of the two films, and would argue that its social effect is probably far more harmful, being covert and insidious (in addition to the fact of the film's trendy commercial success). The entire progress of the protagonist, Julian (Richard Gere), is posited on the simple identification of gayness with degradation. Julian, the gigolo of the title, is accorded the status of Existential Hero because he takes pride in bringing frustrated middle-aged women to orgasm (for suitable monetary compensation). He is trying to forget a past when he used to "trick with fags," and is threatened with having to return to it, coerced by a black homosexual pimp and criminal.... The fact that the ultimate Schrader villain is both black and homosexual can scarcely be regarded, in the general context of his work, as coincidental.⁶²

The fact that Wood finds *American Gigolo* "incomparably" "more offensive" than *Cruising* (the latter of which, for Wood, is incoherent and renders the cause of queer villainy too undefined to locate) suggests that it is working in the same vein of *The Lovers/Happiness*, *Teorema/Reflections in a Golden Eye*, and *Harold and Maude/Sunset Boulevard* double features. *Cruising* is what exposes the repressive and ultimately heinous characterization of gayness in *American Gigolo*. What in *Cruising* can be perceived as ambiguous, confused and confusing, campy even, *American Gigolo* employs as mere narrative device, a reviled queerness against which the male heterosexual protagonist is redeemed.

Looking for Mr. Goodbar could similarly be resituated within a tradition of programmatic reparativity. The film was subject to more analysis and post-distribution criticism than *Cruising* because feminists took to task the ending of the film above all else. Keaton's character, Theresa, in the end dies at the hands of a (closeted gay) man she brings home for a one-night stand. Feminists read this ending as a backlash against their call for sexual equality in the face of a double standard that permitted men promiscuity but shamed women for open sexual expression. The ending, which follows a series of scenes where Theresa fails to strike a balance between her professional life (read: responsibilities) and her party life (read: pleasures), was interpreted as Theresa's "price to pay" for cruising in bars and sleeping with strangers. But not unlike *Cruising*, critics and historians have asked whether the ending punishes the protagonist and thus moralizes to or cautions its female audience, or if it indicts the culture that enables or perpetuates such sexist views, in turn punishing its audience who are presumably complicit in stratified social norms.⁶³

These debates, undergirded by exegeses yet divorced from exhibition history, are likely to run out of steam. In the face of hermeneutic impasse, the film's double-bill history illuminates its reparative potential. Both the UC Theater and the Strand Theatre screened *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* with *Klute* in 1978.⁶⁴ Released in 1971 (six years before, and in many ways, a world apart from *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*), Jane Fonda stars as a call girl who helps detective John Klute find a killer. Like many of the double features already discussed, the films have a thematic link in that they

both explore female sexuality. But while Theresa in *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* tests the waters of sexual autonomy, disarticulating sex from romance, Fonda's character, Bree Daniel, resents being a sex worker, and in the end tries to reform herself by living the "straight and narrow," in this case, moving out of her apartment and in with Klute. Bree questions if this is possible, and the film ends asking its audience if she is so indelibly marked as to be unfit for the virtuous good life.

As with *The Lovers* and *Happiness*, these juxtaposed endings, one where the protagonist is coldly mutilated and the other where she tries to surrender to the humdrum domestic good life, seem to exemplify feminist critiques of films where a woman is either rebuked for pursuing pleasure on her own terms or learns to contain and channel them into healthy, heterosexual, and monogamous coupledness. This pairing paves the way for a reparative critique of a gendered system that continually handicaps women's sexual autonomy. The dialectic that emerges helps to uncover a feminist critique that is reparative if we take reparative here to connote a pleasure that might also come from an oppositional gaze of interrogation.⁶⁵

At the same time, another kind of reparativity can manifest from these distinct scenarios. Opposite the somber life of sex work and reclusion Bree leads, Theresa's swinging single life, albeit subject to violence in the end, outshines the gloomy aesthetic and characterization in *Klute*. Interwoven in the many scenes of Theresa enjoying life lived among strangers at clubs or bars are scenes that portray men as the main source of toxicity in Theresa's life. Just counterpose the style of *Klute*, where the camera remains at a cold and distant remove from Bree as she smokes alone in her

apartment or seduces her customers, to that of in *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. In the latter, the audience is taken closer into the frenetic energy of Theresa's life, in close ups of Keaton's face as she orgasms, or through flashbacks of her childhood. This leads us back to the question of blame for Theresa's murder, but this time posed through pleasure-seeking that is not strictly sexual in the private sense but social and public, and it is a public full of male domination that abruptly halts Theresa's flourishing.⁶⁶

To reiterate, I have not aimed to exhaust the potential intertextual readings of these films that were shown together. There are many cogent ways to make sense of their juxtaposition that move beyond restrictive binary logic. Eco reminds us of this by way of his allusion to "infinite peripheries" cultivated by semiotic processes. I would argue that intertextuality—left undiscussed by Eco in relation to unlimited semiosis—amplifies these opportunities. "Unlimited" here does not simply mean a person can derive whatever meaning they want from the text.⁶⁷ On the contrary, a text's meaning is moored by context and discourse; these cannot be jettisoned willy-nilly. We cannot ignore the fact that Theresa is murdered at the end of *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. We cannot ignore that *Cruising* follows an abhorrent cinematic legacy littered with examples of queers as psychopaths. At the same time, what I have tried to illustrate is that historical context is never static. It is something that continually unfolds, undergoes revision and reassessment as new information emerges or old information is questioned. Looking into programming, I want to stress, helps to reposition the procedures by which scholars understand films synchronically in their

moment of release and diachronically as they are reprogrammed and reconsidered affectively and intellectually.

Double bills, as intertexts that foster reparative sensoria alongside new forms of apprehension, epitomize that, as Kathleen Stewart might put it, “thought is not the kind of thing that flows inevitably from a given ‘way of life,’ but rather something that takes off with the potential trajectories in which it finds itself in the middle.”⁶⁸ A given double bill, a film series, or a calendar’s larger programming schema are some of these potential trajectories for this cognitive-affective reparative work. Multiple hermeneutic trajectories exist within these operations, intersecting and diverging through time. The textual forces that films exert on one another can thus ignite *repetitive* opportunities for *reparative* longing. Double features, especially within the idiom of *bricolage*-style programming, metabolize the manifold waste products, those “bad objects” repudiated and disavowed. They become the source material for regeneration out of the ultimately unlimited resource we might call something like the past.

Coda: The Present (and Future) of Immersive Spectatorship

Repertory time, as I have conceptualized it in this chapter, virtually comes to an end by the 1980s and early 1990s due to the proliferation of VHS. The rise of Blockbuster Video and niche independent video stores meant that people no longer needed to go to the repertory cinema to see old classics, cult films, obscure foreign features, or even semi-recent releases at their second run. Repertory houses thereafter

go into decline, with only a few lasting through the years. Within VHS time, one can watch on one's own schedule, stop, rewind, fast-forward, pause, and watch the movie over and over again. The chance to repeatedly watch a film mimics, if not magnifies, the compulsive and recursive cinephilic habits of repertory time.⁶⁹ On the down side, it also eliminates the ritual of communal viewing, and more to the point of this chapter, the opportunity for unlimited semiosis that double features generate. VHS and home viewing of film and media find their own collective forms of queerness (such as bootlegging), but the experience of sitting next to strangers in a dark room, without control of the moving images or the setting as well as, at times, without knowledge of a co-feature, becomes an increasingly marginalized experience.⁷⁰

Long-duration viewing has more recently taken the form of “binge-watching,” a term that emerges in the 1990s and grows exponentially in the 2000s alongside the expansion of DVD, DVR (Digital Video Recorder), as well as what TV historians like to call “quality television.”⁷¹ Netflix helped usher binge-watching into the age of streaming in 2008 when they began offering high-quality streaming of films and TV shows on their website. Within five years, the Netflix TV-production assembly line would seem to roll out a new series every week, with Amazon and Hulu following suit, further mainstreaming the phenomenon of binge-watching. This kind of immersive viewing is informed, in part, by the algorithms that extrapolate from user's past selections, browsing history, and even scrolling patterns (among a plethora of other factors). The interface even entices the viewer/user to keep watching once one film or TV show has finished by inserting suggestions, its curation an automated

predictor of taste in lieu of a human curator's ability to surprise, confound, and disorient a viewer's taste to their eventual delight, curiosity, or frustration.

Skilled human curation is not completely extinct (yet), as evidenced by the perseverant yet scarce energies of repertory houses in cities across the United States. Even more alarming, an already uncommon practice was post-2000 given the diminutive of “microcinema” to signify the small organizations that exhibit films and moving-image media for groups of less than forty to fifty people in “multipurpose” spaces.⁷² In New York, however, repertory programming remains popular at Film Forum, Anthology Film Archives, MoMA, MOMI, and in Chicago, the Music Box and the Gene Siskel Film Center.⁷³ The 2016 opening of the Metrograph Theater in New York City's Chinatown brought with it the first non-museum-affiliated repertory programming that the city had seen in over a decade. Its playful anti-institutional personality shines through in its programming, a considerable amount of it queer. In its first summer, it did one weeklong program on disco and the movies and another on films starring the pop star Madonna. In Los Angeles, The New Beverly, Quentin Tarantino's cinema, and the American Cinematheque at the Egyptian Theater are devoted to double features at a low price. These Los Angeles cinemas are the only among those listed here to do regular double features. In this sense, repertory time and repertory programming have largely bifurcated, preserved only in those rare spaces that dare to serve a small cinephile market.

Film festivals—all which range from the high-profile international markets of Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and Cannes to the moderately-sized,

quasi-indie cinephile gatherings of South by Southwest (SXSW) and Sundance to the retrospective sites of worship of silent or rare film prints of Bologna to the microcinema-style local happenings of less than a hundred people—have preserved and protected the classic filmgoing model of being in a dark room full of strangers all watching the same film or media.⁷⁴ These are specialized—both in terms of time and space—and often costly, tending to remain within the niche interests of those who want to and can devote swaths of their time to highly concentrated viewing. Festival time is not repertory time, even when its fare is akin to the repertory house. Even at Bologna, spectators rush to get to screenings, attendance is often limited, and attendees are forced into a daze from all the watching.⁷⁵ Historically, repertory cinemas did offer marathon viewing, but that was by no means their *modus operandi*. In contrast to the festival, repertory time has quotidian intervals, is punctuated by lived experience, and includes an ever-changing audience of strangers, dependent upon the day and time.⁷⁶

Throughout this chapter I have tried not to make claims about the “effects” queer or deviant double bills have on spectators but to pry open spaces of multivalence and polyvocality that such viewing phenomena engender. If anything, double features disrupt a logic of a stable text that entails secured analysis or interpretation. This is in large part due to the fact that the double bill is predicated on intertextuality that is immediate and put into practice. As I have demonstrated, these chains or relays of signification enabled spectators to think and feel through different

versions of the “same” film. Double features thus provide opportunities for moviegoers to both *feel intertextually* and *feel intertextuality*.

In an age before the software-engineered programming of taste done by algorithms, human programmers and spectators had to consciously and non-consciously work reciprocally with one another. There were ways in which double bills were meant to fulfill audiences’ fantasies of nostalgia or social harmony (e.g., double features of Classic Hollywood musicals), but there are enough instances where programmers set out to introduce audiences to unfamiliar or even uncomfortable content, as the example of *Happiness* being shown with *The Lovers* illustrates. Even when double bills seemed aimed at making profits off of salacious content, there existed a powerful epiphenomenal potential for spectators to be transformed by these films’ configurations within the larger scheme of a cinema’s programming.

Repertory programmers, whether intentionally or not, prompted hermeneutic exercises in spectators who were asked to think and feel within the space of a dyadic viewing rather than one of singularity. As I have indicated, audiences were frequently asked to hold conflicting thoughts and affects together, urging them towards new openings for critique and pleasure both with their given objects and the world beyond the cinema. What in part made filmgoing so exciting at this time, besides the collective experience and novelty of seeing prints of older films pre-VHS, was discovering what new knowledges and sensations might emerge from unexpected permutations. While theorists have elaborated on the important contextual aspects of screening environments and architectures, type of audiences, and image and sound

quality, it is my hope that this chapter—or, rather, this project overall—has put into the conversation the context of programming. This constellation-producing practice puts films in dialogue with other films, constituting and reconstituting their affective and cultural meanings that reverberate into pasts and futures already felt and futures still to come.

Notes

¹ Caetlin Benson-Allott, “*Grindhouse: An Experiment in the Death of Cinema*,” *Film Quarterly* 62:1 (2008), 20-24.

² Gary D. Rhodes, “‘The Double Feature Evil’: Efforts to Eliminate the American Dual Bill,” *Film History: An International Journal*, 23:1 (2011), 57-74.

³ This may sound like a play on Mary Ann Doane’s concept of “cinematic time,” detailed in her book, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). For Doane, cinematic time as a product of modernity condenses time, standardizes and mathematizes it, and keeps a record or archive of it. Doane is not so much interested in the question of immersion and prolonged exposure that I describe here. Repertory time then is a *version* of cinematic time, but with different implications than those Doane describes in her account. She does, however, address cinephilia towards the end of the book, a point which seems to intersect with my interest. Primarily through the writing of Paul Willimen and Miriam Hansen, Doane frames cinephilia as a pleasure of contingency. It seeks out contingency in the accidental, the micro, the gesture, negatively defined as that which “resists systematicity, rationalization, programming, and standardization” (229). Cinephilia is a site of particularity—“unique to the viewer”—and thus “unsharable and inarticulable” (228, 227). The spectator here is absorbed by the detail that is, or rather, *feels* like, his or her own. Doane’s account of contingency is predicated on the image. My interest in the contingent, however, is located in the viewing experience itself—that is, the physical conditions of the theater, one’s mood and the distinct mood diffuse throughout the room, the films with which it is programmed, as well as those experiences out of the theater that make a person want to return to a text, or which shape a text, such as critics’ or friends’ readings, or a change in world or local events.

⁴ Peter Wollen, *Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film* (London; New York: Verso, 2002), 5.

⁵ Rhodes, “‘The Double Feature Evil,’” 57.

⁶ Susan Ohmer, “Speaking for the Audience: Double Features, Public Opinion, and the Struggle for Control in 1930s Hollywood.” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 24, no. 2 (February 1, 2007): 143–69.

⁷ See Rhodes, “‘The Double Feature Evil.’”

⁸ See David Marriott’s discussion of *Native Son* in *On Black Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

⁹ Davis, *Repertory Movie Theaters*, 30.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ And for the purposes of my study here, I do not put much stock into the order in which the films played because, in this recursive viewing environment, it would not have been uncommon for many spectators to have already seen one or both films in a double feature, perhaps even earlier that day (as part of a continuous performance).

¹² Davis, *Repertory Movie Theaters*, 8.

¹³ Historians mark Francois Truffaut's 1954 article in *Cahiers Du Cinéma*, "Les Politiques des Auteurs," as the beginnings of this discourse. Andrew Sarris' 1962 essay "Notes on the Auteur Theory" then imported the concept into the United States. See Donald E. Staples, "The Auteur Theory Reexamined," *Cinema Journal* 6 (1966): 1-7.

¹⁴ Wasson, *Museum Movies*, 108.

¹⁵ Davis, *Repertory Movie Theaters*, 42.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ It would be useful to have a more detailed study of programmers' attitudes towards film studies, especially as the field takes up semiotics, Marxism, feminism and other structuralist approaches post-1968.

¹⁸ See Gorfinkel, *Lewd Looks*; and Williams, *Screening Sex*.

¹⁹ Williams, *Screening Sex*, 114.

²⁰ *The Village Voice*, August 3, 1972, 45.

²¹ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, lxxvii.

²² "Carnegie Hall Cinema," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA.

²³ Williams, *Screening Sex*, 119

²⁴ Williams explains that Bertolucci was inspired by the writings of Georges Bataille, who wrote that eroticism is an attempt for bodies to find continuity and unity only for it to vanish and give way to discontinuity, that is, the reality that humans will always return to their singular states upon the break with erotic time and space. For Bataille, erotic impulses attempt to overcome this discontinuity. If *Last Tango in Paris* is about the sex drive driven to its logical limits (that is, death) in the Bataillian sense, it is also effectively about the unsustainability of erotic fantasy to translate to "real" life. The last tango between Brando and Schneider at the end of the film, full of maudlin frenzy and awkwardness, exemplifies this discontinuity, a prelude to the film's representation of the most extreme discontinuity of all: murder. See Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death & Sensuality* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986).

²⁵ The modern culture industry of romance and sentimentality has long invested in the idea of lovers becoming vulnerable and therefore coming undone as the ultimate sacrifice to love's sustainability. As Lauren Berlant aptly notes in *The Female Complaint*, "when people enter into love's contract with the promise of recognition and reciprocity, they hope memory will be reshaped by it, minimizing the evidence of failure, violence, ambivalence, and social hierarchy that would otherwise make love a most anxious desire for an end to anxiety" (179). See Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

²⁶ For more on "reading against the grain," see, Aspasia Kotsopoulos, "Reading Against the Grain Revisited" *Jump Cut*, no. 44 (Fall 2001).

²⁷ Marks, "The Ethical Presenter," 43.

²⁸ "filmcalendar," Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Marks, "The Ethical Presenter," 43.

³¹ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 282.

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- ³² Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 122.
- ³³ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 284.
- ³⁴ In their psychoanalytic comparative study of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1994), Betty Robbins and Roger Myrick write, “The fetish is...represented politically in *Priscilla* in a way that is missing in *Rocky Horror*, a move which further acts to throw the construction of gender into relief” (275). See Betty Robbins and Roger Myrick, “The Function of the Fetish in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.” *Journal of Gender Studies* 9, no. 3 (November 1, 2000): 269–80.
- ³⁵ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 4-8.
- ³⁶ Umberto Eco, “‘Casablanca’: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage.” *SubStance* 14, no. 2 (1985): 3–12, 4.
- ³⁷ Eco, “Casablanca,” 3.
- ³⁸ For the critique of Eco, see Barry K. Grant “Science Fiction Double Feature: Ideology in the Cult Film” in *The Cult Film Experience: Beyond All Reason* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).
- ³⁹ They showed together in double bills also in more mainstream theaters. See *The Village Voice*, October 15, 1970, 60.
- ⁴⁰ Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 86.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*, 87.
- ⁴² “Bleeker Street Cinema” and “Carnegie Hall Cinema,” Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA; Nuart Theatre’s program archive, Los Angeles, CA.
- ⁴³ Bruce A. Austin locates 1977 as the year *Rocky Horror*’s midnight screenings became a national phenomenon. See Bruce A. Austin, “Portrait of a Cult Film Audience: *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.” *Journal of Communication* 31, no. 2 (June 1, 1981): 43–54.
- ⁴⁴ For more on *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, see Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, ed. *Reading Rocky Horror: The Rocky Horror Picture Show and Popular Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
- ⁴⁵ See Freeman, *Time Binds*; and Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.
- ⁴⁶ Stam, *Subversive Pleasures*, 89.
- ⁴⁷ Nuart Theatre’s program archive, Los Angeles, CA.
- ⁴⁸ Linda Williams, “Skin Flicks on the Racial Border: Pornography, Exploitation, and Interracial Lust” in Linda Williams ed., *Porn Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 290.
- ⁴⁹ I say this because a substantial amount of repertory programming today, which tends to be associated with museums and major institutions such as the Film Society of Lincoln Center, BAMPFA, MoMA, etc. is indeed synagmatic in that programs tend to be *thematized* and unified by a particular auteur, actor, movement, era, nation, etc.
- ⁵⁰ “Agglutination” is a phenomenon found both in biology and linguistics that occurs when simple parts form masses, clumps, and compounds with other simple parts, without resulting in full assimilation. In language, agglutination means rearranging

and reassigning prefixes and suffixes to help generate new connective tissues among words and concepts never before considered. (For instance, the prefix “bio-,” meaning “life,” continues to finding new suffixes, as does the suffix “-poiesis,” which comes from Ancient Greek understandings of making, producing, and forming.)

⁵¹ “Strand Theatre,” Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA.

⁵² See Bataille, *Erotism*.

⁵³ See Chapter 2 for discussions of Gayle Rubin’s “outer limits” and a Butleresque notion of “queer kinship.”

⁵⁴ For more information, see Bonnie Malkin, “Last Tango in Paris director suggests Maria Schneider 'butter rape' scene not consensual,” *The Guardian* 3 Dec 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/dec/04/last-tango-in-paris-director-says-maria-schneider-butter-scene-not-consensual> and Lina Das “I felt raped by Brando,” *Daily Mail*, 19 Jul 2007: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-469646/I-felt-raped-Brando.html>

⁵⁵ Historians studying nonwhite spectatorship have noted the ways in which certain movie theaters in areas with a high black or Latino population programmed with the ethnic group in mind. See Jacqueline Stewart’s *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and Laura Isabel Serna’s *Making Cinelandia: American Films and Mexican Film Culture Before the Golden Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁵⁶ I have yet to find a source that speaks directly about how exhibitors and programmers considered gay and lesbian audiences, but growing numbers of queer double bills solidly indicates this.

⁵⁷ Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*, 190

⁵⁸ “filmcalendar,” Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ *Something for Everyone* is set in Bavaria and based on a German book, but was adapted to the screen by a British screenwriter and features an all-British cast speaking English. The argument can easily be made that the film comments on the British class system, but I say “European” here to include the film’s German literary roots.

⁶¹ “Strand Theatre,” Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA

⁶² Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 53. It is unclear if the two were playing a double bill in this exact instance.

⁶³ For more discussion of *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, see Molly Haskell, “Exposing a Nerve,” review of *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, *New York*, October 31, 1977; Fran Moira, Margie Crow, and Terri Poppe, review of *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, *Off Our Backs* 7, no. 10 (December 1977); Caetlin Benson-Allott, “Looking for *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*,” *Feminist Media Histories* 1, no. 3 (July 1, 2015): 127; Robin Wood, 2003; Bruce LaBruce, “Bruce LaBruce’s Academy of the Underrated: *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*,” *Talkhouse*, July 19, 2016.

⁶⁴ “filmcalendar,” Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA

⁶⁵ hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze,” 1992.

⁶⁶ I am invoking Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant's challenge to the privacy of sexuality in their excellent piece "Sex in Public." See Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books, 2002).

⁶⁷ Eco writes, "Contrary to contemporary theories of drift, hermetic semiosis does not assert the absence of any univocal universal and transcendental meaning" (3). Umberto Eco, *Drift and Unlimited Semiosis*, Distinguished Lecturer Series, Bloomington: Indiana University, 1990.

⁶⁸ Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 128. This is not the same thing as saying affect works beyond or somehow outside of signification, which I do not believe.

⁶⁹ For more on these changes, see Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

⁷⁰ For more on bootlegging subcultures, see Lucas Hilderbrand's *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

⁷¹ The *OED* says the term originates in the 1990s. The earliest scholarly text I could find using it is an article by Barrie Thorne, "The Seven Up! Films: Connecting the Personal and the Sociological," *Ethnography* 10, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 327–40. For more on streaming and binge-watching, see Kevin McDonald and Daniel Smith-Rowsey, eds. *The Netflix Effect: Technology and Entertainment in the 21st Century* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

⁷² For more on microcinemas, see the "Exhibition Guide" issue of *Incite! Journal of Experimental Media and Radical Aesthetics*, edited by Brett Kashmere, No. 4 (2013); and Rebecca Alvin, "A Night at the Movies: From Art House to 'Microcinema,'" *Cinéaste* 32, no. 3 (2007): 4-7. In New York City, some of the more popular microcinemas are Light Industry and Union Docs, both based in Brooklyn. For queer cinema, there is also the series *Dirty Looks*, which changes venues with each screening, ranging from MoMA to The Eagle.

⁷³ Phillip Lopate writes about contemporary art-house programming, "I do not think we need to lament so lachrymously the decline of the repertory houses, since new ones such as the Metrograph and the renovated Quad keep appearing, the venerable Film Forum keeps chugging along, and the nonprofit institutions, such as MoMA, the Film Society of Lincoln Center, the Museum of the Moving Image, Japan Society, BAM, and the Asia Society, do a bang-up job of presenting new and old global cinema." See, Lopate, "The Heroic Age of New York Movie Theaters."

⁷⁴ It is suspicious that these film festivals grow in popularity at the same time that VHS starts to dominate the market and repertory houses plummet in numbers. B. Ruby Rich in conversation suggested to me that this could be due to an emphasis on liveness and newness as the new qualifications of cinephilic experience. Unfortunately, I have not had a chance to pursue this question further here, but this correspondence without a doubt warrants deeper investigation.

⁷⁵ See Jean Ma, "Days of Heaven: Il Cinema Ritrovato on Its Thirtieth Anniversary," *Film Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (December 1, 2016): 68–73.

⁷⁶ At both festivals and in double features, there is an impossible amount of focus demanded of the spectator. But there is always the possibility of distraction or

redirected attention, contemplation, and other behavioral and perceptual markers of spectatorial distance from a text. There is also the possibility of interruption in the theater, due to audience reaction or more banal sources such as candy wrappers and talking. (Virtual Reality [VR]—the new *immersive* videographic technology—in some ways aims to eliminate these conditions by putting viewers directly in the diegetic world.) Though these factors fall outside of the scope of this study, I emphasize that repertory time as immersive is frequently enough not one of escape or continuity, which might call for or induce narrative and stylistic absorption. It is full of disjunction and ambiguity. The immersive quality of repertory time does not therefore foreclose or prohibit the practices of spectatorial distance but rather encourages them and gives them intertextual basis and justification. Even when double bills appear to fully lure spectators into queer diegeses of anti-normative play, the logics and norms of these worlds are incoherent and off-putting, and therefore are not continuous in their ostensibly immersive aim.

CHAPTER 5

Imaging Dialogue: *A Praxis Teaser, Cruising Différance in 3 Scenes, and Triple Bill*

The videographic essay has, within the past few years, become a source for the renewal of scholarly contemplation and critical engagement. It not only animates the texts with which film historians and theorists work, but also activates distinct modes of seeing, discovering, and attending to objects' textual and affective contours. Videographic criticism is a genre dominated by close formal and textual analyses. Essayists often aim to draw our attention to patterns, motifs, details, peculiarities, whether in one text or stretched across many, with or without voiceover. As Eric Faden states in a dialogue with renowned video essayist Kevin B. Lee, videographic criticism further illustrates that, "the whole point of critical analysis is to reveal things that most people would not be able to see otherwise."¹

My entry point into videographic criticism has been different, however. My videographic essays seek to describe forms of spectatorial subjectivization rather than stylistic delineation, in an effort to create what I like to think of as a testing ground for reception.² The individual video essays that comprise this chapter are unified by this interest in reception, which is distinct in method, content, and form from my interest in spectatorship in the written chapters. I find intertextuality (not *text* as it is treated in many video essays) is valuable for this work precisely because it provides conduits towards altered states of thinking and feeling. These pieces use intertextuality in its most affective sense, primarily to help seek out spectatorial

movements oscillating between memory, viscosity, and cognition. In this sense, the intertextuality that I produce in these video essays, by putting films in collision with one another, attends to stylistic paradigms and patterns as they are inflected by the queer subjectivities I have tracked in the text itself.

Videographic criticism is an optimal genre for exploring the intertextual practice that is programming and curation. It turns out that putting together a video essay is not unlike putting together a film program. Both warrant reflection on how audiovisual compositions interact. Videographic essays, through editing, and programming, through scheduling and promotional content (such as schedules and advertisements), catalyze relational thinking and feeling on the part of viewers, yielding novel perspectives on familiar or new texts. The video essay therefore has allowed me as a scholar to explore, in a research-based sense, the intertextual dynamics in the programs I discovered through my research in the archives. Rather than describe them in written form, I had to break the texts down, separating out their scenes or sequences, and seeing which moments resonated together. I then had to shuttle between those filmic texts and the “actual” spectators whose experiences I document in the video essays. This process mandated my getting closer to occupying the headspace and bodies of these viewers, and attempting to mirror that process for the viewer of the video essay, hopefully guided by the intertextuality playing out on screen.

On a research level, then, the process of editing gave me the sensation of “touching the film object,” as Catherine Grant puts it, to feel out the textures and

tones of both the texts and their reception.³ In this sense, videographic criticism gives more immediate affective access to films for both maker and viewer. Further, Corey Creekmur remarks that, “while the practice of videographic criticism may still be invested in explaining *what a film means*, we might now recognize that asking *how a film feels* is another valid means towards that end.”⁴ Creekmur reminds us that feeling, far from being divorced from critical faculties, is actually a necessary part of them.

I use my video essays to do what I cannot do on the page, to test out and supplement my ideas, and to provide readers with a more visceral connection to my subject. For instance, in my piece *Cruising Différance in 3 Scenes*, it was absolutely necessary to convey to the reader/viewer how the film’s energy oozes from the screen in shots that, drenched in royal blues, display undulating torsos covered in sweat on the dance floor and shadowy glimpses of figures as they stroll through a moonlit Central Park. Getting a *feel* for these moments was vital to contextualizing the excerpted critical writing on the film. In my video essay *Triple Bill*, I employ multiple screens simultaneously to simulate the spectatorial experience of holding various texts together at once, to even at times feel overwhelmed by the profuse stimulus of the intertext itself.

While the visual objects shift with each video essay, I consider them all part of an assemblage of work that coalesces around queer reception. The first video essay in the sequence is *A Praxis Teaser*. This “teaser” functions as an introduction or prelude that establishes a set of questions for my research. “Teaser” then is a bit of a

misnomer, given that teasers and trailers are paratexts that aim to encapsulate a finished (or nearly finished) product, and this one points, not to any feature film, but rather orients the dissertation itself. Rather, I wanted to engage with clips from films that figure prominently in the dissertation overall, and use others' experiences and readings of those films as springboards for inquiries into reception. The process of editing this video helped orient me towards the issues and themes that then became the basis for my other video essays in the series. Incorporating a range of films—from *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* to *Midnight Cowboy* to *Un Chant d'Amour*—I created a program of sorts out of queer attachments, shared by older friends and colleagues, and confirmed in the archives within which I researched.

My second videographic essay, *Cruising Différance in 3 Scenes*, zooms into this spectator-text dynamic to take stock of the noisiness of the discourse that surrounds a “bad object” of study. In lieu of telling a unidirectional or unilineal history, *Cruising Différance in 3 Scenes* moves through the different readings of William Friedkin's *Cruising* to allow for a dialectical, multivalent, and polyphonic form of analysis to take hold. Overlaying excerpts from writings by Melissa Anderson, Robin Wood, Alexander Wilson, and D.A. Miller onto scenes from the film gives the viewer a firsthand sensorial experience of the film's vibrant and unforgettable moments alongside their most pointed readings. I use Derrida's concept of *différance* as a way to probe how meaning is in a constant state of deferral, always capable of emerging from the recesses of semiosis. *Cruising* epitomizes the manner in

which a situated past is always under continual revision, reconsideration, and dispute, serving as an ongoing source of affective regeneration.

The final video essay, *Triple Bill*, is the most personal one. It reconstructs a dialogue between my friend and longtime programmer Mark Valen and me. It pairs his indelible experience seeing a double bill of *The Boys in the Band* and *Myra Breckinridge* as a teenager with my own theatrical viewing of *The Dreamers* at around the same age. This video essay uniquely incorporates documentary and autobiographical aspects, denoted by interview footage with Valen as well as photographs of the two of us as teenagers.⁵ On one level, the video nicely activates my arguments in Chapter 4 about double bills. On another, this piece is about intergenerational exchange in which histories collide and make legible parallels and discrepancies in attachments. These three films, with which we both feel a perverse closeness, become a way to channel moments in our lives that would go on to leave an impression and form our desires. All three films then are affective mediators: as we attempt to communicate our distinct experiences we forge an intersubjective scene.

All the video essays are dialogical, staging conversations between spectators, spectators and films, and the films themselves. This dissertation has tried to assemble these various contact zones and explicate their significance in forming subjects' desires and performativities. The main aim of these videographic essays has been to, for me as the researcher, as well as for its viewers, to feel intertextually and dialogically the noisiness of reception. Rather than find comfort in a stable

knowledge of the objects and their critiques, my hope is that these pieces leave the viewer with the feeling that something is unfinished and ongoing. The videos capture, in a way that my writing cannot, that lingering sense that texts and cultures are always shifting under our feet.

For many film scholars, the most disconcerting part of videographic criticism is that the maker must exercise infidelity to the object. They will inevitably cut it up, move the soundtrack around, reorder the images, slow it down, speed it up, change the scale, and distort it. For me, however, this is one of the most exciting aspects of the genre. This freedom also mirrors the processes that certain unruly forms of programming make possible. The *bricolage* effect is a style or mode of programming that relinquishes romantic notions of textual integrity. The videographic essays, while they are works of *montage*, not *bricolage*, result in some of the same rebellious recontextualizing that allows us to imagine other worlds, other pleasures, and other critiques. The video essays included here rebel, to an extent, against the genre itself. Rejecting the videographic essay's tendencies to treat style and text preciously and worshipfully, these video essays, in contrast, attempt to reflect the wayward queer potential of the films that inspire them.

VIDEO ESSAYS:

A Praxis Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/166461668>

Cruising Différance in 3 Scenes: <https://vimeo.com/256688293>

Triple Bill: <https://vimeo.com/250887606>

Notes

¹ Christian Keathley and Jason Mittell, *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound & Image* (Montreal: Caboose, 2016), 30.

² I was first seduced by Caroline Martel's hypnotic long-form video essay *Phantom of the Operator* (2006), a feminist examination of women's labor as telephone operators throughout the 20th century. Martel's use of industrial training and promotional films, commercials, and other media was used less for formal rumination than it was to consider how bodies are formed through technology, representation—in a word—mediation. Martel's haunting voiceover helps to simulate the ways that she forges identification with the specter of the operator, a disembodied voice on the other side of the line, in repeated labor, and in recordings (and now, we might extrapolate, in Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa).

³ Catherine Grant, "The Shudder of a Cinephiliac Idea? Videographic Film Studies Practice as Material Thinking," *ANIKI: Portuguese Journal of the Moving Image* 1, no. 1 (January 2014): 49–62.

⁴ Corey K. Creekmur, "How Does Film Feel? Toward Affective Videographic Criticism," *The Cine-Files* 10 (spring 2016).

⁵ Autobiography functions as a way to confront the issue of the critic and maker feeling near to the objects; it troubles the idea that one should—hypothetically—keep a critical distance. For another example of another video essay that incorporates (albeit minimally) autobiographical aspects, see Michael Talbott's *Encounters*.

<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/12/30/encounters>

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Filmography

Andy Warhol's L'Amour (Dir. Paul Morrissey and Andy Warhol, 1973)
Arabian Nights (Dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1974)
Auntie Mame (Dir. Morton DaCosta, 1958)
Bad (Dir. Jed Johnson, 1977)
Barbarella (Dir. Roger Vadim, 1968)
Belle de Jour (Dir. Luis Bunuel, 1967)
Beyond the Valley of the Dolls (Dir. Russ Meyer, 1970)
Bilitis (Dir. David Hamilton, 1977)
The Big Doll House (Dir. Jack Hill, 1971)
The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant (Dir. Rainer Fassbinder, 1973)
Blood of a Poet (Dir. Jean Cocteau, 1932)
The Blue Angel (Dir. Josef von Sternberg, 1930)
Born in Flames (Dir. Lizzie Borden, 1983)
The Boys in the Band (Dir. William Friedkin, 1970)
Boys in the Sand (Dir. Wakefield Poole, 1971)
Burn! (Dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1969)
Cabaret (Dir. Bob Fosse, 1972)
Caged (Dir. John Cromwell, 1950)
Camille 2000 (Dir. Radley Metzger, 1969)
Caravaggio (Dir. Derek Jarman, 1986)
Casablanca (Dir. Michael Curtiz, 1942)
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (Dir. Richard Brooks, 1958)
Cathy Tippel (Dir. Paul Verhoeven, 1975)
Un Chant D'Amour (Dir. Jean Genet, 1950)
Cherry, Harry, and Raquel (Dir. Russ Meyer, 1970)
The Celluloid Closet (Dir. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 1995)
Cleopatra Jones (Dir. Jack Starrett, 1973)
Cleopatra Jones and the Gold Casino (Dir. Charles Bail, 1975)
The Conformist (Dir. Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970)
The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover (Dir. Peter Greenaway, 1989)
Cruising (Dir. William Friedkin, 1980)
The Damned (Dir. Luchino Visconti, 1969)
Daughters of Darkness (Dir. Harry Kümel, 1971)
Death in Venice (Dir. Luchino Visconti, 1971)
The Decameron (Dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1971)
Deep Throat (Dir. Gerard Damiano, 1972)
Desperate Living (Dir. John Waters, 1977)
The Devils (Dir. Ken Russell, 1971)
Les Diaboliques (Dir. Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1955)
Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press (Dir. Ulrike Ottinger, 1984)
Dracula's Daughter (Dir. Lambert Hillyer, 1936)
Dragon Inn (Dir. King Hu, 1967)

The Dreamers (Dir. Bernardo Bertolucci, 2003)
Exhibition (Dir. Jean-François Davy, 1975)
Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill! (Dir. Russ Meyer, 1965)
Fellini Satyricon (Dir. Federico Fellini, 1969)
Female Trouble (Dir. John Waters, 1974)
Film as a Subversive Art: Amos Vogel and Cinema 16 (Dir. Paul Cronin, 2004)
Fireworks (Dir. Kenneth Anger, 1947)
Flaming Creatures (Dir. Jack Smith, 1963)
Flesh (Dir. Paul Morrissey, 1968)
Fox and His Friends (Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1975)
Freaks (Dir. Tod Browning, 1932)
The Fugitive Kind (Dir. Sidney Lumet, 1960)
Funeral Parade of Roses (Dir. Toshio Matsumoto, 1969)
Ghost Dance (Dir. Ken McMullen, 1983)
Goodbye, Dragon Inn (Dir. Tsai Ming-liang, 2003)
Grey Gardens (Dir. Albert Maysles, David Maysles, Ellen Hovde, Muffie Meyer, 1975)
Happiness (Le Bonheur) (Dir. Agnès Varda, 1965)
Harold and Maude (Dir. Hal Ashby, 1971)
Himself as Herself (Dir. Gregory Markopoulos, 1967)
The Hunger (Dir. Tony Scott, 1983)
I am Curious Blue (Dir. Vilgot Sjöman, 1967)
I am Curious Yellow (Dir. Vilgot Sjöman, 1967)
If.. (Dir. Lindsay Anderson, 1968)
In a Year of 13 Moons (Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1978)
In Cold Blood (Dir. Richard Brooks, 1967)
In the Realm of the Senses (Dir. Oshima Nagisa, 1976)
Indie Sex (Dir. Lesli Klainberg, 2007)
It is Not The Homosexual Who is Perverse But the Society in Which He Lives (Dir. Rosa von Praunheim, 1971)
Julius Caesar (Dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1953)
The Killing of Sister George (Dir. Robert Aldrich, 1968)
Klute (Dir. Alan J. Pakula, 1971)
L.A. Plays Itself (Dir. Fred Halsted, 1972)
A Labor of Love (Dir. Robert Flaxman and Daniel Goldman, 1976)
Last Tango in Paris (Dir. Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972)
Liquid Sky (Dir. Slava Tsukerman, 1982)
The Living End (Dir. Greg Araki, 1992)
Looking for Langston (Dir. Isaac Julien, 1989)
Looking for Mr. Goodbar (Dir. Richard Brooks, 1977)
The Lovers (Dir. Louis Malle, 1958)
Madam Kitty (Dir. Tinto Brass, 1976)
Maitresse (Dir. Barbet Schroeder, 1975)
Macho Dancer (Dir. Lino Brocka, 1988)

Member of the Wedding (Dir. Fred Zinnemann, 1952)
The Men (Dir. Fred Zinnemann, 1950)
Midnight Cowboy (Dir. John Schlesinger, 1969)
Mondo Trasho (Dir. John Waters, 1969)
Multiple Maniacs (Dir. John Waters, 1970)
The Music Lovers (Dir. Ken Russell, 1970)
Mutiny on the Bounty (Dir. Lewis Milestone and Carol Reed, 1962)
My Hustler (Dir. Andy Warhol, 1965)
Myra Breckinridge (Dir. Michael Sarne, 1970)
The Naked Kiss (Dir. Sam Fuller, 1964)
The Night Porter (Dir. Liliana Cavani, 1974)
Ninotchka (Dir. Ernst Lubitsch, 1939)
On the Waterfront (Dir. Elia Kazan, 1954)
Outrageous (Dir. Richard Benner, 1977)
Pandora's Box (Dir. G. W. Pabst, 1929)
Paris is Burning (Dir. Jennie Livingston, 1990)
Pee Wee's Playhouse (TV series, 1986-1990)
Performance (Dir. Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg, 1970)
Pink Flamingos (Dir. John Waters, 1972)
Poison (Dir. Todd Haynes, 1991)
Portrait of Jason (Dir. Shirley Clarke, 1967)
Prisonnières (Dir. Charlotte Silvera, 1988)
Querelle (Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1982)
Rebel Without a Cause (Dir. Nicholas Ray, 1955)
Reflections in a Golden Eye (Dir. John Huston, 1967)
Repulsion (Dir. Roman Polanski, 1965)
Roma (Dir. Federico Fellini, 1972)
The Rose Tattoo (Dir. Daniel Mann, 1955)
Rosemary's Baby (Dir. Roman Polanski, 1968)
Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom (Dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975)
Salome (Dir. Charles Bryant, 1923)
Savage Messiah (Dir. Ken Russell, 1972)
The Scarlett Empress (Dir. Josef von Sternberg, 1934)
Score (Dir. Radley Metzger, 1974)
Scorpio Rising (Dir. Kenneth Anger, 1963)
Scrubbers (Dir. Mai Zetterling, 1982)
Sebastiane (Dir. Derek Jarman and Paul Humfress, 1976)
Seduction: The Cruel Woman (Dir. Elfi Mikesch and Monika Treut, 1985)
Shanghai Express (Dir. Josef von Sternberg, 1932)
She Must Be Seeing Things (Dir. Shelia McLaughlin, 1987)
Show Me Love (Dir. Lukas Moodysson, 1998)
A Slave of Love (Dir. Nikita Mikhalkov, 1976)
Some of the My Best Friends Are (Dir. Mervyn Nelson, 1971)
Something for Everyone (Dir. Harold Prince, 1970)

A Star is Born (Dir. George Cukor, 1954)
A Streetcar Named Desire (Dir. Elia Kazan, 1951)
Sunday Bloody Sunday (Dir. John Schlesinger, 1971)
Sunset Boulevard (Dir. Billy Wilder, 1950)
Supervixens (Dir. Russ Meyer, 1975)
Swoon (Dir. Tom Kalin, 1992)
Taxi Zum Klo (Dir. Frank Ripploh, West Germany, 1980)
Teorema (Dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1968)
Therese and Isabelle (Dir. Radley Metzger, 1968)
Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down! (Dir. Pedro Almodovar, 1990)
Tongues Untied (Dir. Marlon Riggs, 1986)
Totally Fucked Up (Dir. Greg Araki, 1993)
Trash (Dir. Paul Morrissey, 1970)
Tristana (Dir. Luis Buñuel, 1970)
Valentino (Dir. Ken Russell, 1977)
A Very Natural Thing (Dir. Christopher Larkin, 1974)
Vixen (Dir. Russ Meyer, 1968)
W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism (Dir. Dušan Makavejev, 1971)
The Watermelon Woman (Dir. Cheryl Dunye, 1996)
Wetlands (Dir. David Wnendt, 2013)
The Wizard of Oz (Dir. George Cukor, Victor Fleming, Norman Taurog, Richard Thorpe, King Vidor, 1939)
The Wild One (Dir. Laslo Benedek, 1953)
What Have I Done to Deserve This? (Dir. Pedro Almodovar, 1984)
Women in Love (Dir. Ken Russell, 1969)