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## The Routledge Companion to World Cinema

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### Provincialising heterosexuality

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PROVINCIALISING  
HETEROSEXUALITY

## Queer style, World Cinema

*Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover***Introduction**

Queer theory has always asked what counts as a queer text. Is a queer film one made by a filmmaker who is queer, or featuring queer characters, or does queerness rather inhere in a film's political commitment or its affective registers? Is queerness a matter of form? Ten years after the Museum of Modern Art in New York curated an exhibition of LGBT films from around the world, confidently entitling it "Another Wave: Global Queer Cinema", can something like a coherent queer global style be identified? Queer cinema speaks to world politics, whether in relation to globalisation efforts by governments, corporations and NGOs, or in human rights debates, conflicts around national and regional sovereignty, anti-homophobia grassroots organising, or fostering cultures of resistance. Where Western-centric understandings of both film history and queer experience have often viewed Euro-American practices as a norm against which the rest of the world could be compared (and with which it has to catch up), our work begins from an assumption that queerness—in whatever form or style it takes—shapes and always has shaped the world. In contrast to narrow definitions of queer cinema that focus only on Western forms and LGBT identities, we insist that all non-normative modes of being and the texts that register them contribute to queer cinema and its global life. To think queer cinema in the world, we must shift our perspective towards our understanding of film history and of the place of sexuality and gender within it.

In one of queer theory's famous early revisionist gestures, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick brilliantly exposes the heterosexist and ethnocentric unconscious of canon formation. In discussing the question of minority artists, she asks the following:

From the keepers of a dead canon we hear a rhetorical question—that is to say, a question posed with the arrogant intent of maintaining ignorance. Is there, as Saul Bellow put it, a Tolstoi of the Zulus? Has there been, ask the defenders of a monocultural curriculum, not intending to stay for an answer, has there ever yet been a Socrates of the Orient, an African-American Proust, a female Shakespeare?

Moving from the colonialist geopolitics of the traditional literary canon to the question of sexuality, she continues:

From the point of view of this relatively new and inchoate academic presence, the gay studies movement, what distinctive soundings are to be reaching by posing the question our way—and staying for an answer? Let's see how it sounds.

Has there ever been a gay Socrates?

Has there ever been a gay Shakespeare?

Has there ever been a gay Proust?

Does the Pope wear a dress?

(Sedgwick 1990: 51–52)

Of course, these figures are already gay and even the most canonical literary history, Sedgwick demonstrates, was already queer. We can make the exact same move with regard to film history:

Has there ever been a gay Eisenstein?

Has there ever been a gay Murnau?

Has there ever been a lesbian Arzner?

Are cinemas not theatres of deviant desire?

Even working from Western film history, these examples reveal an ideological process that blinds us to the canon's queerness. Queerness animates major trajectories of film form and style. International film histories are already queer and queer experience has always influenced the aesthetics and politics of cinema worldwide.

In this chapter, then, we aim to provincialise heterosexuality. Dipesh Chakrabarty's influential work of postcolonial theory *Provincializing Europe* demonstrated the need to understand modernity without reference to Europe as a centre, and in a similar way, we aim to reframe World Cinema *both* without installing Europe and America as the source of film style upon which all other iterations of film style are based *and* without assuming heterosexuality (its desires, its orientations, its priorities) as the necessary precondition and determinant of the cinematic experience (Chakrabarty 2000). Existing histories of film style are replete with queer filmmakers (Lino Brocka, Chantal Akerman, the Wachowskis) and with queerly-oriented films (*Iskanderija. . . lih?* [Alexandria, Why?, 1979, Egypt/Algeria, Youssef Chahine], *Yeogo goedam II* [Memento Mori, 1999, South Korea, Kim Tae-yong and Min Kyu-dong], for instance, or *El lugar sin límites* [The Place without Limits, 1978, Mexico, Arturo Ripstein]), and any account of contemporary world cinema would include the queer films of Lucrecia Martel, Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Tsai Ming-liang. To understand World Cinema, we argue, it is necessary to take account of its queerness.

### Including queer global film and film theory

But if cinema has always been queer, its Eurocentrism and heteronormativity has worked to minimise and exclude queer global film. How would film history change if it was forced to accommodate films such as *Fukujusô* (Pheasant Eyes, 1935, Japan, Jirô Kawate), a Japanese silent film about a same-sex attraction that develops between two sisters-in-law? *Pheasant Eyes* was based on a story written by Yoshiya Nobuko. Nobuko lived with her female partner, but her relatives continue to control her work, recently refusing its reprinting in a queer anthology. Rarely screened today and not available on DVD, the film is not well known, though copies exist in the National Film Centre in Tokyo. When it has been screened at film festivals in Japan and in Europe, *Pheasant Eyes* makes queer history visible both textually and extra-textually.

However, the visibility of this film (and potentially many more lost or forgotten films) remains constricted by the homophobia and heterosexism of various institutions (family, the marketplace, film historiography).

A similar blindspot can be found occurring at a theoretical level, when, to take as an example Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni's influential polemic, "Cinema / Ideology / Criticism", sexual dissidence is oddly separated from radical politics. Discussing militant cinema, Comolli and Narboni raise "the problem of deciding whether 'underground' films should be included in the category, on the pretext that their relationship to drugs and sex, their preoccupation with form, might possibly establish new relationships between film and audience" (Comolli and Narboni 1977: 30n.7). This article has been foundational to debates in film theory about what constitutes the political in cinema, and how dominant ideologies can be destabilised. It has enabled feminist and queer arguments about the political value of film form, yet it finds problematic a category that in 1969 would certainly have included the films of Andy Warhol, Jack Smith, Jean Genet and Kenneth Anger. Indeed, the article was first published in *Cahiers du cinéma* in the same month that Toshio Matsumoto's queer underground classic *Bara no sôretsu* (Funeral Parade of Roses, 1969, Japan) was released. Sex, drugs and a preoccupation with cinematic form describe Matsumoto's film precisely, and it explicitly ties these qualities to militant politics and a queer resistance to capitalism's globalising violence. Such queer films present a form of militancy that postclassical film theory has trouble including.

*Funeral Parade of Roses* also explicitly reflects on underground cinema and in particular Jonas Mekas, whose name is mentioned several times in the film. Interestingly, Mekas had by this point already dismissed queer desire as a distraction in the work of American experimental filmmakers. Discussing Anger, Smith, and others, and under the heading "The Conspiracy of Homosexuality", Mekas wrote: "The perversion of sex seems to be accepted by these film poets (in their films) as a natural way of life" (Mekas 1955). An otherwise praising review by well-known San Francisco critic Albert Johnson pathologises the film's setting as the "night town of unnatural Toyko" and dismisses the moments of the film dominated by transgender and gender-queer homo men as humorous, satirical and/or a kind of fashion-magazine extravagance (Johnson 1970). When *Funeral Parade of Roses* was released in the US, *New York Times* critic Vincent Canby said of the film that it "keeps up a brave but quite frankly fake front" (Canby 1973). These critical responses echo Comolli and Narboni's ambivalence about the inclusion of sexual politics in the project of political modernist filmmaking, demonstrating the stakes of their comments for a wider film culture.

As if undoing these dismissals, recent film historians have retraced the transnational aesthetic and political allegiances of underground cinema. Juan Suárez insists on the value of transnational and queer structures of influence (Suárez 2014). He links the American filmmaker Jack Smith to Brazilian Tropicalismo (a fusion of 1960s popular and avant-garde culture in Brazil), finding points of contact between apparently disparate nodes of queer visual culture. Queer film histories open up unexpected points of contact, influence and exchange across continents. *Funeral Parade of Roses* rewrites the Oedipus story, transforming and queering the European narrative par excellence into a saga critiquing the economic and social redevelopment of Tokyo. The Greek film *Strella* (*A Woman's Way*, 2009, Greece, Panos H. Koutras) makes a similar appropriation, except this time from within the heart of European classical culture. Both films feature a couple who have sex without knowing that one partner is the father of the other: in *Funeral Parade of Roses* the child is a gay drag performer and in *A Woman's Way* she is a transgender woman for whom the protagonist has long searched, thinking he was looking for his son. Judith Butler has written of *A Woman's Way* as:

perhaps the most important cultural contribution in recent years to thinking about oedipalisation within queer kinship, as well as about contemporary challenges to understandings of sexuality and kinship, all through a meditation on very contemporary modes of living and loving that nevertheless draw on ancient norms.

(Quoted in Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 59)

Employing the frame of queer world cinema, then, demonstrates not only how queers have historically challenged traditional shapes of living but also how desire remains a crucial ground for contestatory politics. Queer film aesthetics create contiguities and affinities across geographic and historical distances, and these aesthetics demand different modes of viewing, attention and critique. Through cinematic means, the shapes of a world remade in queer terms can become known and felt.

### Queer film style

Teresa de Lauretis has influentially defined queer textuality as that which destabilises the signifier (de Lauretis 2011). In other words she argues for the necessity of style to the production of queer culture. Her claim seems compelling, both in the sense of a poststructuralist account of the radical potential of form and language, and in the more everyday sense that queerness has often been associated with swag, panache, fierceness, saunter or exuberant expressiveness. But what is queer film style? Can it be described with critical precision? What pitfalls occur when a concept of queer style is rendered on a global scale? At a 2013 roundtable discussion at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, none of the participants thought that a global queer style was desirable (Capó *et al.* 2013). For filmmaker Jim Hubbard and festival programmer Kam Wai Kui, any globalised vision of queer cinematic style conjured ideas of a prescriptive set of formal codes, a calcifying of creativity that would negate the power of queerness to overthrow conventional ways of thinking and being. We share this anxiety about the potentially homogenising role of film festival culture and film funding institutions. A recognisable style can be stifling as often as it liberates.

Recent work by Nick Davis illustrates the productive potential of thinking queerness filmically. Queer desire cannot be narrowed into a particular universal stylistic idiom, but it can be found in the “desiring-image”, Davis’s neo-Deleuzian term. Precisely because the cinematic image—at its very core—refuses to reify desire into bodies, identities, dualistic genders, it has a potentially radical visuality able to attend to queer being. Davis writes, “desire does not settle into any one arrangement but concerns flows and frictions across *and* with them all [. . .] passing through or forcing changes with subjects rather than belonging to them as static, innate, or identitarian fixtures” (Davis 2013: 20; emphasis in original). Davis’s project depends largely on New Queer Cinema for case studies, but as with Suárez’s transits of influence, Davis is careful not to fasten one particular style to a queer politics. As he writes:

I do not believe that the excitingly collective, eccentrically political, impressively deterritorializing impetus behind New Queer Cinema or behind *any* contemporary queer cinema ever went away [...] To urge those desires and energies toward new frontiers [...] is not to bury but to praise the deterritorializing impulses that constitute a desiring-image in the first place, forcing new productions and responding to the world in its innumerable, changing facets.

(Davis 2013: 247; emphasis in original)

Just as queerness promises to articulate dissident ways of being in the world, Davis prompts us to understand the desiring-image of cinema to be a complex assemblage of collective aspirations, longings and orientations that emerge across subjectivities while never confining itself to a single subject. So, while the desiring-image cannot be pinned down to a single technique or even a collection of formal devices that add up to a coherent style, queerness becomes visible and experiential through film form. Davis's desiring-image complicates notions of style in ways not unlike a perverse adaptation of Miriam Hansen's "vernacular modernism" (Hansen 1999). As an expression of dissident ways of being, style enables us to think queer cinema's worldliness in terms of what Raymond Williams called a "structure of feeling" (see, for example, Love 2009: 11–12; Muñoz 2009: 41).

For Williams, a "structure of feeling" names precisely the type of experience that is not sedimented in ideology or cultural form, and indeed is experienced by the individual in tension with dominant modes of art and life. In *Marxism and Literature*, he writes that this "tension is as often an unease, a stress, a displacement, a latency: the moment of conscious comparison not yet come, often not even coming". This concept, so well-worn in cultural studies, still has the capacity to offer fresh insight, and we find in it a suggestive description of contemporary queer cinematic style. Style, first of all, defines "a particular quality of social experience and relationship" (Williams 1977: 130). Williams does not call for the recuperation of formalism; rather he privileges style as a function of social relations. Style provides a critical access to, and perspective on, "structures of feeling", experiences that confound standard means of registration or representation. And the social relations Williams describes are peculiarly apt to queer experiences: he was writing primarily about the tension between working-class life and official culture in the UK, but the experiences of stress and displacement, of temporal lags and latencies, also speak evocatively to the disjunctive temporalities of queer subjectivity in many parts of the world. Instead of a homogenous official queer style, a structure of feeling rather describes the process by which "affective elements of consciousness and relationships"—feelings that are often thought of as private and subjective—can be analysed in social and historical terms. A queer cinematic structure of feeling would thus locate the "emergent, connecting and dominant characteristics" in queer world cinema, tracing the formal elements that are not immediately apparent to view and yet that articulate the shifting potentialities of queerness in the world (Williams 1977: 132).

Williams memorably describes a structure of feeling as "social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and immediately available" (Williams 1977: 132–134). For Williams, a different orientation to the social requires careful attention to those experiences that are just coming in to being, those experiences that have not yet been "properly" named, or that exist in the pre-discursive and are yet to be co-opted. Experiences, sensations, modes of living and bonding that have not been fixed or reified by mainstream culture remain "in solution". Such experiences do not grant resolution or assurance: rather, they form a vital force that resists calcification and might lead to a cogent critique of the world system. Our theorisation of queer film style extends from Williams' faith in *style* as a means of accessing these precarious modes of experience.

As a structure of feeling, queer cinematic style could be seen as dispersed and diasporic, apparently always diluted by the overwhelming straightness of canonical film histories and always threatened by co-optation or censure. Yet in its temporal and geographical displacements, in its tension with dominant forms and historiographies, queer style articulates a relationship between what can be felt and what can be said. It establishes form as a problem of being in the world. Williams describes "the peculiar location of a structure of feeling", as "the endless comparison that must occur in the process of consciousness between the articulated and the lived" (Williams 2015: 168).

In many queer films, that tension between the experiential and the figurable renders dissident forms of intimacy precisely as problems of cinematic style. The radical shifts in LGBT lives wrought by the forces of globalisation, modernisation and their various resistances have prompted a new structure of feeling, in which emergent modes of relationality can be glimpsed in the visual and affective forms of queer cinema. To assert a queer structure of feeling is thus to valorise non-linear models of influence, to nourish discursively unstable categories of being, to allow that which is “in solution” to matter, and to resist efforts to banish the more dynamic and disruptive modes of experience as “incomprehensible”, “over styled” or “decadent. Williams’s unstable temporality—which is really rather queer—pushes us to understand queer film style as a complex terrain capable of figuring shifting social relations and of rendering new modes of relationality.

### Queering the international film festival film

Perhaps the style most feared by Hubbard and Kam Wai Kui at the London roundtable was what we might think of as the international film festival film. Often the type of art film that travels globally via the film festival circuit is criticised for ignoring the forms and concerns of its home culture in favour of courting cosmopolitan arthouse audiences (Farahmand 2010). Such films can be viewed as elitist, as selling out, and as flattening genuine cultural difference into easily-digestible arthouse style. But what might it mean to look, in these festival films, not for the smoothness of dominant forms but for traces of queer transnational influence and registrations of queer attachments within globalised capitalism? The mixture of realism and melodrama in the British film *Weekend* (2011, UK, Andrew Haigh), for example, resonates with the Indonesian *Lovely Man* (2011, Indonesia, Teddy Soeriaatmadja) and with the Brazilian *Hoje Eu Quero Voltar Sozinho* (The Way He Looks, 2014, Brazil, Daniel Ribeiro). Each film registers the flowering of romantic or familial bonds through sentimental twists of connectivity that are in tension with their naturalistic formal strategies. Urban settings (in Nottingham, Jakarta and São Paulo) embed the difficulties of making and maintaining queer bonds in the normative social spaces of the housing estate, the school, the roadside, and the café. As much as these films speak of what queer lives share, they also articulate the perils and pleasures of a specific place.

This tension can be clearly seen in *Baek-ya* (White Night, 2012, South Korea, Leesong Hee-il), a South Korean drama about a gay flight attendant who returns to his homeland after years away (Figure 28.1). In many ways, the film exhibits formal techniques typical of contemporary international art cinema: it uses extensive shallow focus to isolate characters from their environments, and through unfocused and refracted lights, it effects aesthetic intensities of loneliness and dystopic relationships in late capitalism. It represents urban spaces as both alienated and glamorous, juxtaposing neon cityscapes in long shot with tawdry locations under a highway bridge. However, in its shifts in register, the film intervenes in the politics of desire in a manner similar to that of other queer world filmmaking practices. Moving from restrained art cinematic drama to violent noir and back to melodrama, *White Night* articulates the proximity of homophobic violence to tender romance in the social spaces of many queer people. Maintaining a smoothly consistent tone is impossible in queer life worlds and generic mixing expresses emotional and physical fractures. Moreover, the film formalises a tension between belonging and exclusion, a means by which many queer films since Wong Kar-wai’s *Chun gwong cha sit* (Happy Together, Hong Kong/Japan/South Korea, 1997) imbricate queer relationality and globalised spaces of living.

*White Night* proposes travel and diasporic life as at once freedom and exile for queers. The film juxtaposes Won-Gyu, who left and who has been scarred by this self-imposed exclusion from family and friends, with Tae-Jun, who stayed with his homophobic family and made





Figure 28.1 *Baek-Ya* (*White Night*, 2012, South Korea, Leesong Hee-il) creates a tension between belonging and exclusion in globalised space. © Cinema Dal.

compromises to maintain a community-based life. Won-Gyu's career as a flight attendant enables a certain kind of mobility but his status as a diasporic queer forecloses on any simple return home. And although Tae-Jun has stayed in Seoul, his job as a courier is equally tied to international circulation. Globalisation organises both their lives, and their romantic communications are mediated through courier company notepads and airline IDs. *White Night* uses the discourses of travel found in many films that adopt a "world cinema" idiom, but how it formalises spaces as affective zones of longing, detachment and desire makes it queer. This vision of the world, like Tsai's oddly disjointed and multinodal correspondences in *Ni na bian ji dian* (*What Time Is It There?*, 2001, Taiwan/France, Tsai Ming-liang), insists that the difficulties of mobility and belonging are queer dilemmas, or more accurately, that the disorientating experience of untethering belonging from sharing the same place and time is a queer experience.

In one scene, the film uses a shot that has become a stylistic marker of art films depicting gay sex—a high-angle shot, looking down on the couple from above and behind. This penetrative angle shot is followed by a cutaway to a window, out of which we see the night sky and the Seoul cityscape. In this sequence, we discern a queer structure of feeling that locates intimacy not in shared space but in sharing the same distant view at different times. These distances come together in the space of the film; cinema makes otherwise impossibly opposite vectors of space run side by side. Through Won-Gyu's desire, queerness is closely linked to concepts of home, exile and return, and those places are seen as only semi-accessible to queers. Both the threat of violence and the promise of intimacy are articulated in the film's narration of national, transnational and bodily spaces. The cityscape seen from the window registers at once Won-Gyu's desire for homecoming, a memory of past belonging, and his present disjunctive separation from home. (We can see a similarity to *Happy Together*, a film which through its gorgeous attention to the texture and feel of spaces—overly filled and cramped, or empty and abandoned—draws the viewer into the messy dynamics of gay desire cut through by dislocation, migrancy and homesickness.)

Queerness, here, is felt in the draw of home and relationality constructed as a point of impossibility, melodramatic loss and desire tethered to an uncertain place in the world. The scene deploys



the high-angle shot to place the spectator at once close to the position of the penetrating partner, in a prosthetic subjectivity of active desire, but also above the lovers, pulled back so that we can see the site of a queer sex act, located in this room, in Seoul, with the city just outside the window. *White Night* could easily look like just another festival film, emulating a world cinema style to get noticed in the transnational marketplaces of art cinema. However, when we try to map how the film visualises desire itself and find that desire is so complexly interwoven with the politics of being in a globalised world, we begin to find something specifically queer. Looking for a queer structure of feeling in contemporary world cinema leads us to discern in cinematic styles the condensation of queer experiences that form resistant modes of being and indeed propose different worlds.

### The institutional distortion of patriarchy

If a queer structure of feeling is necessarily dispersed, fragmentary, and often hard to discern, part of what renders it invisible is the institutional distortion of patriarchy. Patricia White has pointed out how few women are seen as stylists of cinema and, moreover, how world cinema as a category is often gendered as male. The politics of film style are not neutral and female directors are less often accorded the status of auteur. For White, lesbian filmmakers such as Zero Chou are given less weight than their male counterparts and style is used as a tool of patriarchy, to dismiss their work as insufficiently artistic (White 2015). We can certainly trace the institutional challenges of viewing lesbian cinema: women find it harder to access film education, production funding, distribution deals and these disadvantages are multiplied when they are queer, of colour, working class, or from the Global South. Queer film festivals disproportionately programme gay male films, in large part because there are fewer lesbian-oriented films being made. Gender is a pressing concern for many queer film festival programmers. And yet, a queer structure of feeling is equally visible in films made by women about female same-sex desire and queer gender identities.

Take, for example, the work of Argentinian filmmaker Lucía Puenzo. Her film *XXY* (2007, Argentina/Spain/France) deploys some aspects of art cinematic realism but its attenuated narration operates more with conceptual affinities than with naturalism. Intersex protagonist Alex's journey toward self-discovery takes place alongside a tension between the city and the country, and through Alex's travels in the woods, the beach, and submerged in water, the film considers how bodily and gendered identities can be articulated within an environment that is at once local and worldly. *XXY* is set in rural Uruguay, and Alex's bourgeois family use the country house as a retreat from discrimination in Argentina. Whereas Alex's parents want Alex to undergo surgery to be assigned as female, Alex resists these forces of normativity, insisting by the end of the film that there is no choice to be made. Alex's father is a marine biologist, and his relationships with the local fishermen and the injured turtle he treats propose biology, ecology and transnational capitalism as closely interlinked. Puenzo's next film, *El niño pez* (The Fish Child, 2009, Argentina/France/Spain), develops her close attention to place and class, this time focusing on a sexual relationship between a wealthy young woman in Buenos Aires and her family's Paraguayan maid. The films are generically quite different—*The Fish Child* shifts registers between art film, noir, and melodrama—but both climax in an assertion of place-ness that allows Puenzo to draw out the intersections of class, ethnicity and desire in a decidedly queer fashion. *The Fish Child* develops Puenzo's mixture of realism and expressionism: where the turtle in *XXY* offered a non-human figure who might (or might not) have affinities with Alex, *The Fish Child* creates a magical realist realm underwater, where a drowned baby might become the mythic fish child. In both films, men threaten bodily harm and queer desire has the potential not only to cross national and class boundaries, but also to escape patriarchal violence.

This intersectional impulse is recurrent in female-authored queer films. *Mosquita y Mari* (2012, USA, Aurora Guerrero) is an American film that was very popular on the queer film festival circuit. Set in a Chicana community in Los Angeles, its lesbian romance plot is as interested in the challenges facing immigrant families as it is in sexuality. Focusing on the pressures of young women with heavy responsibilities for their families' future, it articulates same-sex desire with the complex intersections of economic precarity, gender, class, ethnicity and citizenship status. In a very different cultural context, Filipina director Sigrid Bernardo's 2013 film *Ang huling cha-cha ni Anita* (*Anita's Last Cha-Cha*, 2013, Philippines) is equally adept at joining the intimate messiness of young love with the pressures of community. The film is a coming-of-age story about a twelve-year-old butch girl who falls for mysterious newcomer in town Pilar. The film addresses themes of lesbian identity, queer childhood and female masculinities alongside those of sexism and religion in rural communities. Bernardo worked extensively with non-professional child actors, and this neo-realist-influenced mode of production can be seen also in the films of French filmmaker Céline Sciamma, who is equally invested in the emerging gender and sexual identities of young women. Her three films *Naissance des pieuvres* (*Water Lilies*, 2007, France), *Tomboy* (2011, France) and *Bande des filles* (*Girlhood*, 2014, France) all think through queer adolescence, exploring the multiple pressures of gender and sexual dissidence in girlhood. All three films emphasise the weight of gender norms through the resistances the protagonists experience to moving freely in socially constrained spaces. The deftness of Sciamma's approach—its effective use of realism to lend a leadenness to the mise-en-scène to bespeak how people with non-normative sex/gender orientations can feel abandoned and dislocated right at home, in the places where they were raised—is also its queerness.

### A “storing house for those ‘clandestine counter-memories’”?

Olivia Khoo has argued that the category queer in art cinema tends to exclude Asian woman directors. She writes that “[q]ueer cinema constitutes a more political international dimension of contemporary Asian cinema”, and yet, “the contributions to queer Asian cinema of women filmmakers [. . .] have not been as visible as those of their male counterparts”, largely because much of their work is not feature-length (Khoo 2014: 34). As Gayatri Gopinath insists, how we constitute an archive matters. Global queer lives, she proposes, leave “traces that resist textualization” and locating queer cinema outside of the wealthy centres of cultural production demands that we “rethink what constitutes a viable archive” (Gopinath 2005: 21). To return to Sedgwick, canon-formation matters and imagining a global queer corpus of films is a political project. For Gopinath, a queer archive can be a “storing house for those ‘clandestine counter-memories’” (Gopinath 2005: 21). In queer cinema studies, to ignore short films and genres outside of art cinema is often to exclude the practices of queer women and of filmmakers in the Global South.

Khoo focuses on Asian films, drawing on White's concept of lesbian minor cinema. But as Gopinath's concern for the queer global archive suggests, Khoo's larger questions are productive beyond the specifics of her argument. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature has been productive for thinking about queer textuality and equally for considering cinematic practices outside the major languages of world cinema (whether we understand languages here in terms of film genre, mode of production, or dominant spoken language) (Deleuze and Guattari 1986). Queer film festivals screen a multitude of short-form work that often also circulates online. For example, *t sigo (es p rando)* (w8ing 4 u, 2008, Puerto Rico, Mairym Llorens), is a Puerto Rican short drama shot on a mobile phone that creates a queerly disjointed temporality out of texting and lo-fi images. Two women have arranged to meet at the same time, on the

same beach, every year, but the desired meeting does not take place. Memories of the past mix with a future of 2038 in which the lover has still not arrived. The poverty of Puerto Rico's film industry nourishes such small-scale works, in which the precariousness of queer connections is mediated by equally precarious technologies.<sup>1</sup>

Attending to such marginal practices offers one way to counter the corporate and often neo-colonial brand of globalism that has become so dominant in LGBT culture. As one of the world's biggest and oldest queer film festivals, San Francisco's Frameline has found itself at the centre of these debates over the shape and ownership of queer visual culture. The festival has been at the forefront of programming and circulating international queer cinema, but its relationship to the politics of queer activism has been fraught. In 1996, it took part in an effort to found the first queer film festival in Siberia, which Julie Dorf of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission characterised as "the perfect way to use art as an organizing tool" (Quoted in Taller 1996). That Western acknowledgement of a region through a film festival might lead to protection of queer human rights is a common impetus for a certain kind of liberal LGBT globalism. Beginning in 2007, though, Frameline suffered a series of protests, after it accepted funds from the Israeli government and was boycotted by pro-Palestinian groups for its apparently knowing participation in so-called "pinkwashing" campaigns orchestrated by the Israeli embassy and pro-Israeli lobbying organisations. Following a similar logic, many governments have supplied key funds to film festivals beyond their own national borders. These events do not simply serve to promote the funding nation's queer culture. Instead, the liberal logic of the queer film festival serves an implicit need to deem the funding nation as a homophobic space that requires intervention from the West. Festival scholars Skadi Loist and Ger Zielinski describe how the Saint Petersburg festival depended upon the safe spaces of "local foreign culture venues, such as the Goethe Institute, the British Council and Dutch, Swedish and Norwegian agencies", and these diplomatic venues are also used by festivals in locations such as Kolkata, Beijing, Hanoi and Nairobi (Loist and Zielinski 2012).

But queer cinema has a long history of critical globalism. For example, across the 1960s and early 1970s, Pier Paolo Pasolini was at once an arthouse auteur and a radical political activist. In an essay reflecting on Pasolini's infamous sympathies with the police rather than the wealthy students during the protests of 1968, queer Canadian filmmaker and media activist John Greyson contemplates how Pasolini might react if faced with contemporary anti-globalisation protests and their violent policing methods:

From Eisenstein onwards, the desiring gaze of the committed avant-garde has often come to rest on the bodies of its heroes and foes [...] The questions raised by such gazes are many. Does eroticizing activism run the risk of romanticizing it? Does critique soften when it's mediated by a crush? Is focus undermined when it's distracted by a crotch?

(Greyson 2013: 292)

Greyson goes on to remind us that unruly desires are not, as Narboni and Comolli might conclude, identitarian distractions from politics proper but rather the generative material of radical cinema.

Richard Fung points out that as much as issues of sexuality, Greyson's work is "devoted to theorizing and enacting cross-border affiliation and solidarity" (Fung 2013: 102). This solidarity prompts a very overt question of what it means to be a queer filmmaker in the world, exemplified in his stance against pinkwashing. Fung links Greyson's films to his activism in support of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel. He has made activist films about the politics of BDS (e.g. *BDS Bieber*, 2011, which urged the pop star not to play in Israel), pulled his own film out of the Toronto International Film Festival in 2009 in protest of the

festival's participation in what he saw as pinkwashing, and travelled to Palestine to report on an international medical effort, during which he was arrested and jailed in Egypt for over a month. International issues of social justice are queer issues in this context. Greyson's queer style inheres in resistance to presiding notions of global sexual citizenship, and many contemporary queer films insist that sexual and gender identities cannot be imagined or lived without at once imaginatively reconstituting the world.

Such films do not have to be explicitly transnational: the Bolivian feminist collective Mujeres Creando stage interventions and make activist documentaries such as *Mamá no me lo dijo* (Mom Did Not Tell Me, 2003), which connect the effects of patriarchy, homophobia, neo-imperialism and capitalism in Bolivia to an internationalist resistance to globalisation. Such queer practices imagine the world from a grounded location and a rich political tradition. Often, though, a critique of dominant postcolonial modes of transnational mobility is foregrounded. In Abdellah Taïa's *L'armée du salut* (Salvation Army, 2013, France/Morocco/Switzerland), for instance, a gay Moroccan man trades the claustrophobia of homosexual encounters at home for the racism he experiences as a white man's exotic boyfriend in Europe. Or, to take an institutional example, the Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in Hamburg in 2012 organised a workshop to create short films in solidarity with queers in St Petersburg, together with young people from Russia invited to the festival. Queer film festivals can offer alternative modes of worlding and can turn their globalised status toward forms of solidarity and affiliation that work against globalisation's more pernicious initiatives (precarity, casualisation, etc.).

## Conclusion

As our examples suggest, much of contemporary queer cinema makes a structure of feeling discernible in its spaces of dislocation. As aesthetic endeavours, these films intervene simultaneously in our experience (i.e., our sense of the existing world) and in our political imagination (i.e., our sense of what is possible for this world). In doing so they send ripples through the politics of queer globalism, queering (disrupting) the impulse of both racialised globalisation and LGBT progress narratives. The work of these films to deterritorialise desire via the image also represents an intervention in the rendering of the world, renegotiating the terms of its scale (its proximities and distances) in ways that not only make queer modes of living recognisable and sustainable but also make those modes matter to the world and its history. In other words, bringing a critical attention to particularly queer structures of feeling helps to provincialise heterosexuality. By attending to the disjunctions and tensions—but also the political and carnal exuberances—of queer world cinema, we hope not only to offer a more variegated and complex reckoning of how form works in queer cinema, but also to argue for a queerer account of the film image.

## Note

- 1 We appreciate Vilma Castaneda for bringing this film to our attention.

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