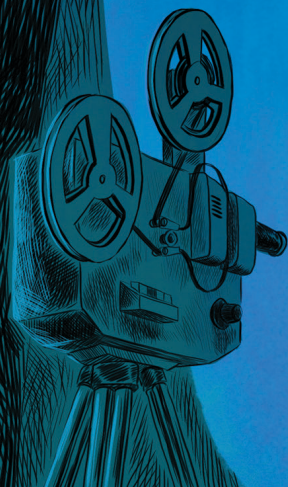


SIDE BY SIDE

Reels of Revolution:
Films that Changed
the World!

THE POWER OF CINEMA



CONTENTS

5 **Victim**

Brian Robinson, Programmer for Flare,
London LGBT Film Festival

14 **In Transition**

Sridhar Rangayan, Filmmaker and Gay Activist,
Festival Director of KASHISH Mumbai
International Queer Film Festival

22 **Germanica is Love.
The Representation of Women
in Valeriya Gai Germanica's Films**

Ksenia Reutova, Film Critic, Journalist

27 **Do whatever it takes
to make your life worth living,
just don't be mean**

Paul ter Veld / Plette de Paulette,
Cofounder and Programmer at TranScreen
Transgender Film Festival Amsterdam

33 **Cinematic Anthems
to Newfound Feminism**

Masha Godovannaya, Film and Video Artist, Curator,
and Natasha Schastneva, Photographer and Journalist

42 **Amos Gutmann – Queer, not Gay**

Yair Hochner, Director of the Tel Aviv
International LGBT Film Festival

REELS OF REVOLUTION

Gathered in this collection is a series of articles which demonstrate cinema's transformative power and how it can not only impact on our lives at a personal level but too have significant influence on much wider cultural, social and even political levels.

This point is most clearly illustrated by Brian Robinson in his article on the 1961 film *Victim* by Basil Dearden, starring the legendary Dirk Bogarde. Achieving, what at that time, almost seemed impossible was a film which directly addressed the issue of homosexuality and set new ground by giving for the first time a sympathetic and compassionate portrayal of what life was like for gay men in 1960's Britain. Robinson, with the use of original archival material from British Board of Censors, offers us a unique insight into how the film was realised and how today it is an undoubted classic, commanding a very special place in British history helping to change public opinion as well as ultimately bringing around the decriminalisation of homosexuality 1967.

As the LGBT movement in India has begun to flourish so too has filmmaking. Sridhar Rangayan explores the work of Bengali director Rituparno Ghosh, whose films are especially known for their boldness, taking on

complicated and sensitive subjects like divorce, widowhood, homosexuality and gender identity. An unabashed cross-dresser, Ghosh cut a striking figure in Indian culture and even today after his death in 2013 holds a very special place in the LGBTQI community in India, having played, through his work, an important role in the emancipatory process.

The work of Valeriya Gai Germanika is often never without heated discussion or controversy. She must be doing something right! In her films she has concentrated on themes of growing-up and coming-of-age offering radically new perspectives, but what of her representation of women? Is she a conformist or as with other themes is she breaking new ground? Ksenia Reutova explores the "enfant terrible" of modern Russian cinema and speculates what we can expect from this pioneer and new breed of Russian filmmakers in the future.

Focusing on the individual and personal is Paul ter Veld (aka Plette de Paulette), one of the founders and a programmer at TranScreen Transgender Film Festival Amsterdam, who takes us on a journey of trans* films made over the last 30 years. The article filled with memories, vignettes from her past illustrates just how films can influence, inspire and give

confidence to individuals to be the people they want to be and become.

Where there is a will, there is a way! The Swedish low-budget produced film *Dyke Hard* by Bitte Andersson was a surprise hit of 2014 and proved that films can be made without access to huge financial resources. Masha Godovannaya and Natasha Schastneva take a closer look at the development of the project, which mobilized very much of Stockholm's LGBTQI community and fully embraced the DIY ethos in order to get the project off the ground.

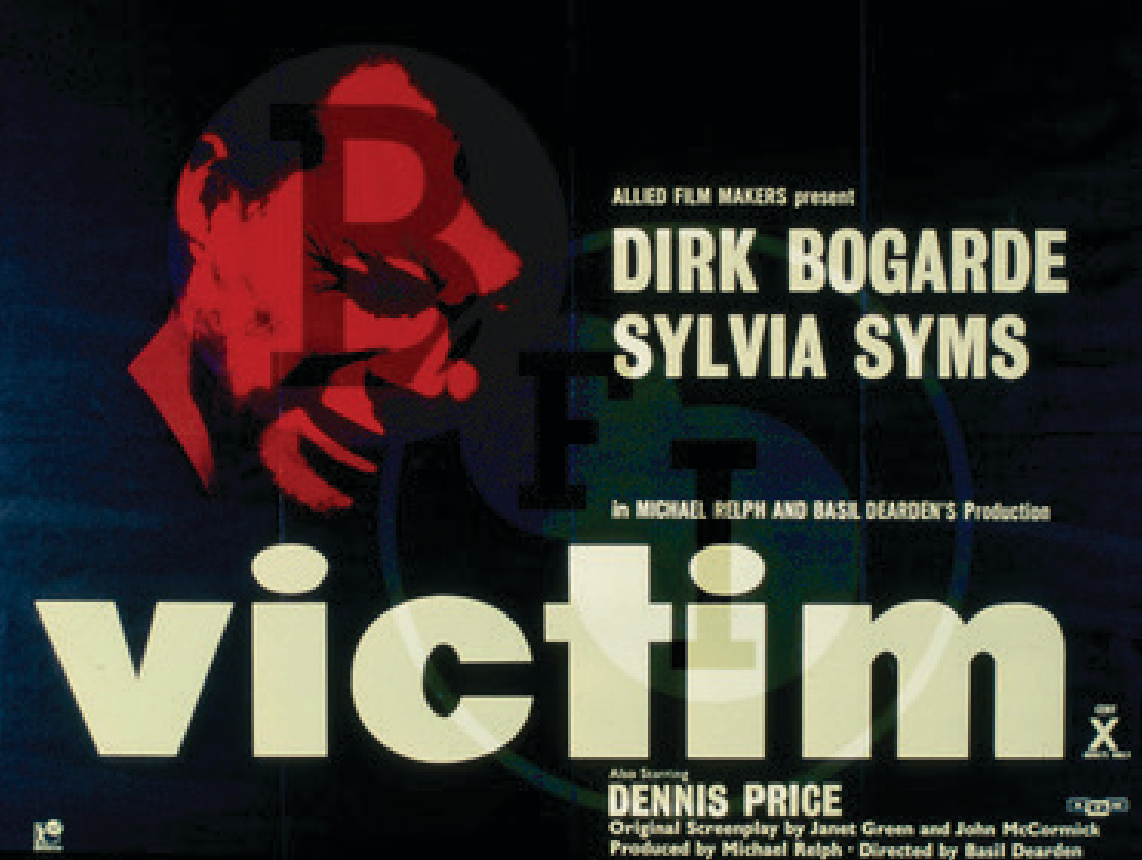
And finally, the art of director Israeli Amos Gutmann is explored by Yair Hochner. Namely for his individualistic and unique perspective on the queer community in Israel, Hochner celebrates Gutmann as: "...the most radical Israeli filmmaker ever to have existed." Today, he remains unequalled, his work still proving to be a challenge even to today's audiences.

We hope you enjoy reading these articles and are even inspired to watch some of the films discussed.

Curator: Manny de Guerre

Many thanks to all the writers: Brian Robinson, Sridhar Rangayan, Ksenia Reutova, Paul ter Veld (aka Plette de Paulette), Masha Godovannaya, Natasha Schastneva and Yair Hochner, who have participated in this collection offering interesting and unique perspectives on the power of cinema.

THE POWER OF CINEMA



Victim



Brian Robinson — has been a programmer for Flare, the London LGBT film festival since 2000. He had a life-changing moment when he attended several films at the British Film Institute's first ever gay film season in the summer of 1977. He is never happier than sitting in the middle of row C as the lights go down.

Victim is a landmark in gay cinema which helped to influence public opinion in Britain, playing an important part in the eventual de-

criminalisation of gay sex which happened in 1967. It is a bold and ambitious film which has no equal for its sophisticated approach to

the issue in the cinema of any country in the world at this date. Among its many claims to fame is that the word homosexual is spoken, for the first time in an English-language feature film.

Although it is clear that the film-makers had a mission to illicit sympathy for the homosexual, they were at pains to make an engaging and popular piece of entertainment at the same time.

It is rare in gay film-making of the period in that homosexuals are at the centre of the plot. There is a cast of gay characters who, although at risk of blackmail and forced to live their lives discreetly, share an assumption that there are opportunities for gay social life and love in the big city.

Britain in the 1950s had seen a great increase in the use of anti-gay laws against gay men and a series of high profile cases such as that against Lord Montagu and Peter Wildeblood highlighted the injustice of the law. The Conservative government set up the Wolfenden Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution in 1954 which aimed to take evidence with a view to reforming the law.

There were almost no public figures who were open about their sexuality. When the Wolfenden Report was

published in 1957 it created a sensation both for its revelations of the existence of homosexuals in great numbers but also for the recommendation of law reform. However, public opinion was not ready for the decriminalisation of homosexuality until the following decade.

Victim was not a small independent production. It was commissioned by one of Britain's largest native film companies, the Rank Organisation. The scriptwriters, a married couple Janet Green and John McCormick had already scored a big hit for Allied Filmmakers with their script for Sapphires (1959) which dealt with the reality of racism in British society. Director Basil Dearden and producer Michael Relph were eager for a follow-up to this success.

Victim's script took almost 5 years to research and write. The interaction of the scriptwriters, the film-makers and the censor's office offers a fascinating insight into the social climate of the time and the film-makers' intentions. The film's marketing and its reception offer another index of what was considered permissible and the risks associated with the production. For most of its development the film had the working title Boy Barrett, named after the young man who is in love with the high-ranking barrister Melville Farr, and commits suicide to protect him from the threat of blackmail. Farr is played by Dirk Bogarde and it is one of the defining roles of his career. Up until this point he had been a handsome matinee idol who had a huge fan base hungry for his



Fulbrook, Calloway, Farr

performances which ranged from war films to romantic comedy or popular drama. At his discovery of the boy's suicide Farr takes on the task of tracking down the blackmailers and bringing them to justice, knowing that he will risk his career, his reputation and marriage. In fact, many worried that to take such a role represented a real risk to Bogarde's own career, but his career flourished in the following decade.

The production team decided that in order not to run the risk of endangering the film they would begin an early dialogue with the censor, John Trevelyan, much of which survives as cor-

respondence in the collections of the BFI National Archive.

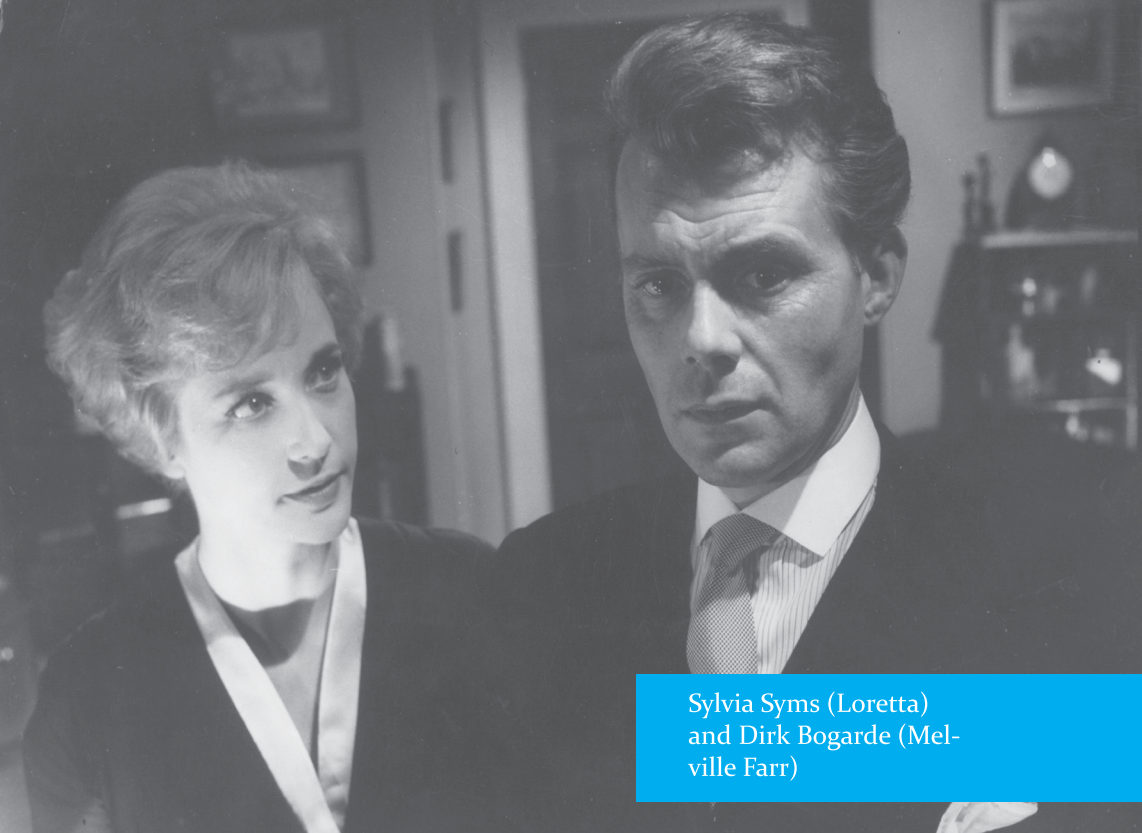
All quotations which follow are taken from these papers and other production correspondence.

**John Trevelyan, British Board of Film Censors, 18th May 1960 —
addressed to Michael Relph, Allied Film Makers Ltd, Pinewood
Studios:**

We have now read the synopsis of Janet Green's screenplay entitled *Boy Barrett*. My first impression was one of some concern since when we discussed this over lunch I imagined that the development of the story would be somewhat different from the way in which it has developed in this synopsis. I understood it to be a story about a Q.C. (Queen's Counsel) at the height of his successful career who was blackmailed for a homosexual indiscretion when he was a young man and who, in order to save other people, sacrifices himself and his career. This indeed a short summary of the story, but as developed there is a good deal more emphasis on the homosexual practices and relationships than I had expected. It is, however, a sympathetic, perceptive and reasonable discussion of a real problem. This kind of analysis presents no difficulties in a book but it does produce difficulties when translated to a medium of public entertainment for the masses. I do not say that the theme is impossible for an "X" certificate film but I do think that great tact and discretion would be needed if the film is to be acceptable not only to us but also to the general public.

As you know, the public reaction on this subject tends to be strong. For the most part, intelligent people approach it with sympathy and compassion, but to the great majority of cinema-goers homosexuality is outside their direct experience and is something which is shocking, distasteful and disgusting. This argues that public education is desirable and indeed it may be, but it also suggests that a film-maker should approach the subject with caution.

This synopsis suggests to us that the film may give an impression of a world peopled with no-one but "queers" since in the story there are so few characters who are not of this kind. It also suggests that the "queerness" may be rather strongly emphasised. To balance this we feel that the more we can see of the characters going about their daily lives in association with other people who are not "queers" in bars and clubs and elsewhere the better. ..Indeed, I hope that you will ...keep the homosexual relationships as far as possible in the background."



Sylvia Syms (Loretta)
and Dirk Bogarde (Melville Farr)

Michael Relph to Janet Green and John McCormick 22nd August 1960:

It is likely to be the first wholly adult and serious approach to homosexuality that the British cinema has made. This imposes great responsibilities and obligations upon us, we feel. ...To make our audience shed its long accumulated prejudice against these people we must show our characters in such depth that the audience will not only pity them (the easiest of all emotions), but understand them and identify themselves to some extent with their problems and emotions.

While great efforts had been made to get the script and the characters right there was a problem in casting. Until very late in the day there was no confirmed actor who would agree to take the lead role. Many who were approached turned it down as too dangerous for their career. Major actors were in serious discussion: James Mason had been approached but had become a tax exile and could not make another film in Britain. Jack Hawkins who had made several films with the production company was evasive about taking on the role and finally decided it wasn't right for him. Stewart Granger was not free on the dates. Sylvia Syms had been an early

choice and although pregnant agreed to take the role because of her commitment to the subject and no other actress would take the part.

The scriptwriters expressed their exhaustion at the seemingly endless re-writes and suggestions for improvement in a letter to the director.

15th December 1960, Janet Green and John McCormick to Basil Dearden:

“We feel very strongly that the time has come to let the Screenplay be, and that the argument of the story has been fully developed. To go further will be to make the Screenplay laboured, and perilously near a tract or lecture. As you know we have studied the subject for years, read almost every book written about it during recent years, and talked with doctors, policemen and inverts themselves. We were quite horrified in retrospect at your suggestion that the Screenplay should be given to an invert to read. Any comments would be biased and disastrous to our respective objective viewpoints.”

So they sent the script to Dirk Bogarde, apparently unaware that he was, himself, one of those people.

The role had originally been written for an older judge. All of the available pool of actors of the right age had been considered but with Dirk under consideration they changed the part to that of a young barrister and it seemed to work brilliantly.

Shooting began in February and was finished by April.

7th April 1961, Basil Dearden to Janet Green:

I think we have a film of tremendous stature and importance. The film abounds in a lot of really remarkable performances, including an outstanding one by Dirk Bogarde.

7th April 1961, Janet Green to freelance publicist hired by the Rank Organisation, Malcolm Faurstein:

John and I felt impelled to write an original screenplay which would reflect the plight and life of the homosexual in London. We feel strongly that this is a matter upon which the public are ill-informed and know only one point of view. In the main, the bigoted one. In this advancing world, we felt that it was time they had placed before them through film, which we consider the most effective medium, this social problem of the homosexual and the small protection the present law allows him.

...The best answer to the plight of homosexuals in England today is that the public should develop tolerance, understanding and a clear acceptance of what exists and is. Then give help and above all remove these human beings from the fear of blackmail under which they live, and the stigma of oddity.”

There was still a great deal of nervousness around publicity. Press books are provided for journalists and cinema promoters and often contain lots of promotional ideas, competitions and so on. It is extraordinary that the press book manages not to mention the word homosexual once. The main publicity image used in posters and advertising was a stark portrait of Dirk Bogarde with his face screwed up in pain.

The ideas for promoting *Victim* rely on suspense, having a countdown calendar in the foyer, “4 days to go until VICTIM!” “Discuss with your staff and get people talking. Make sure there are plenty of people at your first night, particularly good talkers. Invite members of your local drama group.”

It opened at the Odeon, Leicester Square (one of London’s larger cinemas which then contained around 2,000 seats and is still the flagship cinema of the Odeon chain) on August 31st 1961. A private screening was also held for members of Parliament at the House of Commons.

Victim was chosen as the official British entry to the Venice Film Festival and screened in late August where it was deemed a success.

The press reaction was almost uniformly excellent with only the occasional homophobic reaction. The film broke records at the Odeon cinema (at

the time only *The Guns of Navarone* had had a higher box office) and it continued to run for several months after its initial release.

In the early 1990s British author Stephen Bourne issued a call for letters from men who had seen the film on its first release. He received literally hundreds of letters from gay men for whom the film was a revelation, and even almost 30 years later the experience of seeing the film for many remained a vivid and important memory.

At the heart of the film is a powerful scene when Dirk Bogarde’s character Melville Farr has to face his wife and confess that he has been the victim of blackmail and been tempted by Boy Barrett. Bogarde’s biographer John Coldstream has described it as the single most important scene of his entire career.

In Dirk Bogarde’s personal copy of the script (dated 23rd January 1961) in the BFI National Archive there is a diagram showing the rise and fall of his character’s emotions in key moments. But scene 112 is singled out as the climax and Dirk actually rewrote his own dialogue lines for this scene, which he delivers with a rare and subtle intensity: “Alright, alright you wanted to know – I’ll tell you. You won’t be content until I tell you will you – until you’ve ripped it out of me – I stopped seeing him because I wanted him. Can you understand – because I wanted him (pause) Now what good has that done you?”

Throughout the film there's a repetition of the message that homosexuals are vulnerable to the threat of blackmail.

Inspector Harris, the investigating policeman: "You know sir that over ninety per cent of all blackmail cases have a homosexual origin...Of course there's no doubt that a law which sends homosexuals to prison offers unlimited opportunities for blackmail."

Henry, a hairdresser, when confronted by Melville Farr:
"I can't help the way I am, but the law says I'm a criminal."

Fulbrook, friend of Calloway: "Our calm acceptance of this continuous blackmail must seem very extraordinary to you. But do you ever wonder about the law that makes us all victim of any cheap thug who gets wind of our natural instincts?"

Farr: "Paying blackmail won't alter the law."

Calloway: (a successful actor): "I'm a born odd man out, Farr. But I've never corrupted the normal. Why should I be forced to live outside the law because I find love in the only way I can."

Geoffrey Heal, Rank Organisation: 9th January 1963 writing to Janet Green:

“Wanted to let you know about a photo in the Trade Papers covering award given to VICTIM by the Jesuits in Panama...News of the award will be very welcome in the territories where we are experiencing difficulty in getting the film passed by the censor. There has, as you know, been a certain amount of opposition (particularly from the Catholic Church).”

The film was sold in many territories Throughout the world and made a great deal of money particularly in the UK and the USA.

John Trevelyan undoubtedly contributed significantly to the final shape of Victim and ensured that it was passed as an X certificate film suitable for adults only at a time when large members of the public did not agree with his liberal views. Janet Green's cosy lunches and regular exchanges of letters with the censor paid off. In fact, the production team got away with changing only a very few details of the final film. In 1986 the film was reclassified at '15' as a video release. By 2003 when submitted for classification as a DVD re-

lease it was passed as a '12'. In 2005 Victim was released in cinemas with a 'PG' classification [parental guidance], accompanied by the Consumer Advice 'contains mild language and sex references'.

Over half a century after it was made it is still a powerful and effective thriller with a strong message and great performances, with an overwhelming case to be included in any serious consideration of the history of gay cinema.



In Transition:

An Indian director, who lived in real-life,
the characters he portrayed in reel-life.



Sridhar Rangayan — is an Indian filmmaker and gay activist whose films have been at the forefront of India's emerging queer film movement. Also he is the festival director of KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival.

Revolution often starts with an individual.... an individual who dares to swim against the tide and

challenge set notions. Rituparno Ghosh was one such individual who revolutionized Indian cinema

with his iconic films as well as by his own personality.

His films from 1992 to 2010 included numerous national award winning films which were also box office successes — *Unishe April*, *Dahan*, *Bariwali*, *Utsab*, *Tilti*, *Shubo Mahurat*, *Chokher bali*, *Rain Coat*, *Dosar*, *Antarmahal*, *Last Lear*, *Shob Charitro Kalponik*, *Abohoman* – each one of them set a new benchmark for Bengali and Hindi cinema with its narrative strength and complexity of its cinematic canvas.

He is said to have ‘mixed the literary traditions of Bengal with modern-day sensibility, thereby transcending the confines of region’, ‘His films, with their sensitive portrayal of human relationships, anguish, trauma and love in a fast-changing, post-liberalisation India charmed audiences. His brilliant story-telling reflected contemporary society like never before’ and ‘Rituparno’s work blazed a trail that has paved the way for an entire generation of filmmakers who have dared to be different. It was Rituparno who gave them the courage’.

And then in 2010 Rituparno took a sharp turn in his career when he ventured into a totally different terrain – of exploring alternative sexuality. Interestingly he chose to navigate this terrain more as a writer and actor instead of as a director.

The trilogy of films — *Arekti Premer Golpo* (Just Another Love Story), *Memories in March* and *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* – mark a momentous

triad of films that question set notions of gender, sex and sexuality with the sensitivity and incisiveness which only Rituparno Ghosh was capable of.

Arekti Premer Golpo (Just Another Love Story) made in 2010, written and directed by Kaushik Ganguly offers a fictional portrait of a cross-dressing performer, based on the real life of famous jatra (folk theater) actor Chapal Bhaduri. Rituparno Ghosh plays the lead role of Abhiroop, a documentary filmmaker, who is in love with his cinematographer Basu, a married man. During the course of the shoot, Abhiroop sees himself as Chapal Bhaduri.

The film within the film, of the life of Chapal Bhaduri gets intertwined and reflected with the life of Abhiroop. The film focuses on the mental trauma faced by a transgender person and the rejection by men, after using them sexually. In fact, Bhaduri served his bisexual lover and his wife, doing all the menial tasks, as a penance for breaking her house. This is reflected again in Abhiroop’s extreme caring for Basu and his wife.

To make matters even more complicated, Abhiroop falls in love with a young actor Uday, just as Chapal Bhaduri fell in love with Thushar. This relationship is passionate and lustful; and of course infuriates the bisexual lover who finally turns away to go back to his wife.

While the film portrays the love of transgender persons to put on make-up, to dress up, and dance; it is also a telling comment on the stigma, dis-



crimination and isolation faced by transgender persons. Because of lack of social recognition and denial of right to basic needs, most transgender persons feel disempowered; and strangely in the role of a woman, they take on the more disempowered aspects of an uneducated Indian woman – like being subservient to their lover/husband, serving him by cooking, cleaning, dressing-up all for him. This in the end leads to exploitation and violence.

Rituparno Ghosh in the dual role of Abhiroop and Chapal Bhaduri carried off a range of complex emotions. While Abhiroop's character is of a contemporary educated sophisticated filmmaker who feels burdened by his transgender identity, Chapal Bhaduri's character is of a middle-class cross-dresser living in the 1950-60s eking out a modest living as a folk performer, given to outbursts of melodrama and colorful flamboyance. Rituparno Ghosh manages to carry off both these characters with grace and honesty.

The next film in the trilogy *Memories in March* focuses on a very different subject than the first, but is closely

inter-related.

Memories in March (2010) is directed by Sunjoy Nag, and screenplay, dialogues and lyrics is by Rituparno Ghosh. He also acts as one of the lead character Ornob.

Arati, a middle-aged woman, is shocked to receive news of the accidental death of her 28 year old son. She travels to Kolkata to carry out her son Siddharth's last rituals, pack and carry his belongings back to Delhi. But her short stay in Kolkata in her dead son's office-apartment, laden with memories and her constant interaction with his office colleagues, makes her realize that the ownership of her son's belongings, tangible or otherwise, which she claimed to be exclusively personal, is actually distributed among all his friends and acquaintances. And one person who seems to be clinging on to these belongings and memories is her son's boss Ornob.

During her interactions with Ornob, Arati come to know of the shocking truth – that Siddharth was gay and

shared an intense relationship with Ornob. As a middle-class mother she finds it difficult to come to terms with this news and even blames Ornob for turning Siddharth gay. But in the end she realizes how much Ornob

frightening, because she is educated. However, as she herself admits, she is a very conservative woman.”

The film is slow paced and very realistic, almost to the point of being painful. Deepti Naval, a brilliant seasoned actress

who plays Arati, imbues this complicated role with dignity and restraint. You can empathize with her lack of comprehension at this truth which was hidden from her, and an entire world of her son that she nev-



Rituparno Ghosh said in an interview after the film's release and success, "Whenever I act, I will try to create a gender space for myself in a film. I think it will give the community a very respectable position. Not too many people have either the desire or courage to do so. I have seen many actors who shy away from playing gay roles. Are they scared of their latent homosexuality? I think so."

loved Siddharth and that their love is no different than any other love, except that it does not have social sanction and hence is hidden and underground.

As one of the reviewer writes, "Like all mothers who assume that their sons (and daughters) are straight until they come out as gay, she too wishes that she had known about her son's sexual preferences before — so she could have had him treated. It is even more

er knew. Rituparno Ghosh as Ornob is earnest and restrained. He comes across as the mature gay man who, though still questioning himself, has come to a quiet understanding of his sexuality. Rituparno the writer does imbue his own character with some of the most touching scenes in the film.

When Ornob asks Arati what is more unacceptable — that Siddharth is no more, or that he was gay, Arati is un-

able to answer that. She is just not able to come to terms with her son being gay, and that though they were so close he didn't share this secret with her.

The film makes a strong point about how families in India grapple with the issue of homosexuality, how it is still a taboo subject and how difficult it is for gay men to come out to even those they are so close to. Through a very sensitive telling of an emotional story, the film takes the viewer on a journey, from "initial shock and grief of knowing that someone you love is 'different', of learning that what you thought of as an aberration that can be cured, is in fact, natural, and as valid as any relationship that 'normal' people have, of accepting that homosexuality is just another form of sexual orientation — not 'different', not 'a choice', certainly not a 'lifestyle'." (from a review)

The film won the National Award for Best English Film in 2010, but was not commercially well received in India, perhaps due to the ponderous pace of the film and the unusual subject matter.

The third and befitting completion of the trilogy is *Chitrangadha – The Crowning Wish* (2012).

Chitrangadha – The Crowning Wish, written and directed by Rituparno Ghosh, where he also plays the lead role of Rudra Chatterjee. This film by the auteur director is a consummate piece of cinematic brilliance that at-

tempts to unravel the complexities of gender non-conformity.

Rudra Chatterjee, a man who has spent his life going against social convention, is a choreographer and he is now preparing to stage Rabin-dranath Tagore's iconic dance drama 'Chitrangadha'. In Tagore's *Chitrangada*, the King of Manipur raises his daughter Chitrangada as a son since he wanted an heir to his throne. But when Chitrangadha falls in love with Arjuna, the warrior king, and reverts to being a woman, the father doesn't like it and commands Chitrangadha to continue being a man.

Once again, like in 'Just Another Love Story', the story in the dance drama is mirrored in Rudra's own personal life, when he falls in love with one of the lead actor Partho. Rudra develops a chemistry with Partho and they are deep into a passionate love affair. During the course of their relationship, they decide to adopt a child.

But there is one problem: same-sex couples in India are not permitted to adopt children. So Rudra decides to go through a gender change treatment to embrace womanhood that he also longs for. But neither his lover or Rudra's parents are convinced by this life-changing decision. And Rudra has his own doubts, fears and identity-related dilemmas that are brought out in a series of conversations with his counselor / voice of conscience.

One of the audience reviews puts it succinctly, *"To put your life at stake for the sake of love, to experience*



rejection and ridicule all through life, to try and convince parents and yet not succeed... its a myriad of feelings. Leave alone the loneliness, the want to be trusted and loved, to be able to depend... gays have their own lives and own stories. Chitragada vents many such stories, masterfully presented."

The movie won the Special Jury Award at the 60th National Film Awards in 2012, and was a huge success at the box office. It also became an inspiration to many hundreds of people who were questioning their gender identity and sexual orientation, to be able to find some answers that were vocalized by Rudra's character.

In transition — Even as Rituparno Ghosh was writing and acting in these three films of the trilogy, he was in process of transforming himself. As one of the articles mention, "(he was) not

just a filmmaker and writer, but someone who embraced his sexual minority. Not with an activist zeal but an almost matter-of-fact brazenness by just being who he was, with his Sunset Boulevard turbans, his flowing outfits, the herbal kajal-rimmed eyes, the dangling ear rings. It was not a fantastic drag queen performance which would have been just an act. It was Rituparno being Rituparno — erudite and articulate, just in a gender-bending salwar-achkan."

He also started speaking about it vocally.

More than make-up, Rituparno Ghosh also started changing physically. He had had abdominoplasty done before a role and also underwent hormone replacement therapy.

But he refused to be boxed into labels. In an interview he said, "It is assumed that feminine gay men desire to be

women. It is an inability to see beyond the binaries of male-female, hetero-homo. It is for me to decide whether I will stand in the queue for men or for women or neither of the two".

But the most interesting and important statement came from Chapal Bhaduri, whom Rituparno Ghosh portrayed in Just Another Love Story, "I have acted in female roles for decades. But it has always been on stage.

I would never have dared to go around dressed as a woman in public like Ritu did. I admire him for his courage to defy the world and be himself. Our society is extremely vindictive and unforgiving."

Rituparno Ghosh not only revolutionized Indian queer cinema, but also became an example of living upto one's ideal and beliefs. Living one's life the way one wants to fearlessly is perhaps the biggest revolution one can begin. Unfortunately Rituparno Ghosh's life and career ended abruptly when he passed away on 30 May 2013, just

49 years old. He died of a massive heart attack. While his death was a huge blow, there was a wave of people who came to pay tributes to the director who won 11 National Awards and

numerous international awards. The entire film industry across India mourned his death. Across the country transgender groups held vigil, gay men spoke up, and there was an outburst of media coverage about LGBT issues as well as gender identity in all mainstream press and TV.

In Kolkata, at a cultural center where people came to pay their last respects to Rituparno Ghosh, red roses were laid and multi-coloured candles were lit. Also fluttering was a rainbow flag.

"For the sexually marginalized people, death of Ghosh is a great loss. At a

time when we are described largely as worthless and perverts by the society, we found a person who revealed her (Ghosh) sexual orientation and got iconised," said one of the community member at the gathering. Such was the significance of Rituparno Ghosh's life and works which is hart of the

When one of the well known talk-show hosts mimicked Rituparno Ghosh, he asked the mimic, *"Have you ever thought that whenever you mimic me, so many effeminate men in Kolkata, in Bengal feel ashamed and humiliated?. I can carry off my jewellery with flamboyance, it doesn't matter to me. But there are many people who feel tremendous shame and stigma about this, who don't have the courage to wear jewellery, or the guts to wear kajal. I can live life on my terms, but they cannot."*

Indian mainstream cultural heritage. Rituparno Ghosh's films and life continue to inspire an entire generation of youth across India. His life was as ambiguous and open to multitude of interpretations as his films were.

Yet there was so much of subtlety and nuances that imbued his films and persona. He and his films are still a mystery in transition.





Germanica is Love.

The Representation of Women in Valeriya Gai Germanica's Films



Ksenia Reutova is a film critic, journalist, consultant for the Goethe Institute's German Film Festival in Saint Petersburg, and curator of KinoHafen, a Russian-German film forum held in Hamburg.

In Germanica's films These women usually visit on Saturdays. They have long hair and almost always

wear dresses that show off their figures. They smile a lot. They converse as if it were still the nine-

teenth century. They have grouchy mothers, caring girlfriends, and, sometimes, children from previous marriages. Basically, they have it all except one thing, the main thing. Around ten minutes into the movie, the man of their dreams comes on screen, and near the ninety-minute mark, having overcome the nagging of their mums, their overly solicitous friends, and the machinations of insidious female rivals, they melt into a kiss with their beloved as the screen fades to black and the magical phrase “The End” appears.

This is what the television melodramas, broadcast during Saturday prime time for many years running on TV channel Russia One, are like. In the collective unconscious, this is how the life of a happy Russian woman should unfold. At first glance, these films are easy to classify. They are immediately identifiable as fairy tales, although in fact they have only an oblique connection with the perennial story of Cinderella. But there is nothing epic or truly fairy-tale-like about them. They are, rather, televised group hypnosis sessions in which the “traditional family values” so much in vogue recently are instilled in viewers, the majority of whom are likely to be women.

Why do I begin an essay about Valeriya Gai Germanica by discussing TV soap operas? Because, in the public's mind, her characters (and Germanica herself) are located at the opposite end of the spectrum. Germanica embodies the true art of cine-

ma, as opposed to TV's mass production. She rebels against the slavish conventions of screenwriting, and has a tenacious grip on reality, as opposed to the artificial and thoroughly false “life stories” produced by the television conveyor belt. Besides, Germanica is also a television director, and she has fewer feature films to her credit than projects for television.

The premieres of most of her films and TV series have generated scandals. *Everybody Dies but Me* (2008) was labeled a slander on modern teenagers. *School* (2010) was blamed for “denigrating” reality. *Brief Guide to a Happy Life* (2012) was accused of misogyny, and *Yes and Yes* (2013) was not released until all the obscene language had been cut out.

“Is that us or not?” is the key question audiences have asked themselves time and again. People have crossed swords over this question, and it has been the subject of innumerable angry and laudatory articles. But the question “Is that us or not?” applies not only to the work of Valeriya Gai Germanica. It is the overarching dilemma of Russian cinema, which until now has failed to come to grips with post-Soviet reality. The controversy surrounding *Leviathan* (2014, Andrey Zvyagintsev, dir.), the scorn for *Burnt by the Sun 2* (2010, Nikita Mikhalkov, dir.), and the frame-by-frame analyses of other patriotic blockbusters all hark back to this same unresolved doubt.

In Germanica's films, however, the accursed question was raised for the

first time not only in the sociocultural sense but also in terms of gender.

Despite the presence of striking male characters, women are the focus of nearly all her pictures. And that part of the audience that was used to see-

cause even if the camera is guided by a woman's hand, it is still not an indifferent outside observer but yet another assessing eye, a keen and ever-vigilant Big Brother whom the woman, in keeping with long-held notions, must also charm.



ing themselves on screen as auxiliaries, as optional accessories to adventures and metaphysical questions for power and truth, was suddenly handed a mirror in which they could look without fear.

Of course, there are two reflections in that mirror, just as there are two possible answers to the question "Is that us or not?" This condition is the hardest to achieve in cinema, be-

them the necessity of being something-clever, pretty, loose, anything-for males. They are finally able to simply be.

Without Germanica's films, Russian cinema would have never experienced the current new wave of filmmakers, more than half of whom are talented women directors. In *Name Me* (2014), Nigina Saifullayeva replaces the dilemma of fathers and

sons with the no less painful but completely unarticulated issue of fathers and daughters, while in Natalya Meshchaninova's *Hope Factory* (2014), it is a young woman who is searching for answers and a place in life. Germanica's awkward girls blazed the trail for all these films and characters.

It is "us," because the women in Germanica's films suddenly find themselves alone, without the masculine gaze perpetually pursuing them, the gaze that endlessly appraises, reprimands, attempts to classify, and bundle them into its phallogocentric discourse.

The recognition we experience is also bound with up the fluidity of the female characters. Thoroughly ideologized, Soviet cinema often rolled out onto the screen women who were finished products that had already passed the necessary certification. There were no transitional states, only stasis. Rare exceptions like the pictures of Dinara Asanova (1942–1985) only confirmed the general rule.



Germanica's heroines are utterly different. They are in the process of perpetual emergence; they are endlessly going through various kinds of initiations.

These rituals are sometimes metaphorical. In *Girls*, the characters do piercings at home and ask for a knife to pick open their wrists and see their own blood. The rituals are sometimes literal: the solemn burial of a cat, the burning of a straw doll or the shamanistic repetition of the phrase "May the disco go on, and let me have a boyfriend" while naked in *Everybody*

Dies but Me. The series *School* was entirely based on rituals. In Germanica's rendering, going off to school is akin to the chick's ejection from the parental nest or the cub's exile from its familiar environment. It is the first stage of maturation.

There are hundreds of films about boys becoming men. Things have always been more complicated with girls. Filmmakers have rarely imagined anything more than the loss of virginity, which for some reason has automatically conferred a different (adult) status on the heroines. Germanica has once and for all stripped the world of young women of this one-dimensionality by granting it levels, shades, and nuances that the masculine world had never dreamed of.

Those who say "that is not us" have more often than not had problems not with the form and content of Germanica's films, but with the trajectory taken by Germanica as a filmmaker and her characters. Having gone through all the rites of initiation, transgressed boundaries considered sacrosanct, and violated numerous taboos, Germanica's girls, young women, and women have again found themselves in the male orbit. The most telling example is the series *Brief Guide to a Happy Life*, an antithesis of *Sex in the City*. In the series, the female employees of a personnel agency do not recruit personnel but men, thus trying, with varying degrees of success, to plug the gaping voids in their souls.

Sex in the City deals wholly with female independence. Brief Guide, on the contrary, is a declaration of women's powerlessness. If there is no man around, you cannot be happy, whatever you do. The melodramatic plot twists and turns, as shown on Channel One, differed little from what Russian One broadcasts on Saturdays. It was just that Germanica, as befits a

main character to commit suicide, and does not burn her in the all-consuming bonfire of hormones. Instead, she gives her paints and turns her into an independent creator, into someone like herself. This means nothing is lost. If someone ever does give Russian cinema a real fairy tale, it will be Germanica.

Translated by Thomas Campbell



talented filmmaker, was subtler, more truthful, and more persuasive.

Cinema is not obliged to find solutions. Most filmmakers merely reveal a problem; how to deal with it is a matter for each specific viewer. But even in this sense Germanica has gone a little further than her predecessors. In Yes and Yes, the story of a romance between a female schoolteacher and a mad artist, she does not stop at the painful breakup, does not force her





“Do whatever it takes to make your life worth living, just don’t be mean”



Paul ter Veld aka Plette de Paulette is one of the founders and a programmer at TranScreen Transgender Film Festival Amsterdam. Plette is dividing her time between sculpting, programming, activism and an office job.

It was a nice spring sunny day. The cinema was more than half full. TranScreen 2015, Amsterdam. We just screened a shorts program. A fierce woman, Gani Met, stepped in front of the screen, takes a stool and a microphone: “I am a woman, a trans woman, a sex worker and I am in my forties. And I have been raped many times in Turkey. I have not been raped here in

Amsterdam yet.” With a big laugh, she continued: “and I have not been fed either here in Amsterdam, nobody gave me food (...) There are only a few older trans*sex workers, we don’t get old in Turkey. To survive in Turkey, as trans*, you are very likely to earn your money as a sex worker. I survived life as a sex worker. I am a rare woman; many of my friends have died already.”

Do whatever it takes to make your life worth living, just don’t be mean

Gani Met from Pembe Hayat, Ankara was one of our guests at TranScreen 2015. She is one of the founders of Pembe Hayat, Pink Life Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Solidarity Association in Ankara. Gani Met also writes columns in online-magazines from Turkey. And we, the crew, being Dutch, at least most of us, and the Dutch are not really famous for being the best hosts, we were silenced for a while...

But at least we had another answer why we are organizing trans* film festivals. What makes us tick? Stories of people we care about, stories that will make you jump out of your seat, maybe straight into the streets. A call to action. Ideally. But just a cute story about a young transboy, whose caring parents guiding him through their transition is also very nice for our festival. But it is great when a movie changes you. Or challenges your ideas.

We have been screening loads of trans* movies at TranScreen in the last three editions. For the last edition, we had to select from just under 200 “trans*” movies made since 2013. So, we are not alone in our lust for trans* movies, filmmakers are joining us.

For me, at this moment, the last movie we screened, was the best ever. Life changing and revolutionary: Kate Bornstein is a Queer and Pleasant Danger. I will explain why.

In the short history of history of Trans* movies there were some other life changers, although for me it was not the big US features like Tootsie (USA

1982) or Transamerica (USA 2005), nor the very cute Tomboy (France 2011) or the hilarious Hedwig and the Angry Inch (USA 2001), although the last two are both very worthwhile watching, they didn't change me, nor challenged me to go onto the streets. Take for instance some movies we screened at TranScreen...

Come on Scumbags (Kazakhstan, 2013), this Jim Jarmush like short I love because I could relate and identify with these young characters, whose lives are also about hanging out, going to clubs. The main character, a trans*girl is teaching girls how to kiss like a pro. Watching this short, my ideas were challenged: identifying as gay or not, is a (wo)men who has a trans*partner gay or straight? And does that change if a person is going through transition? Are labels important anyway?

Or Hala (Turkey, 2012), this gem about “Aunt” a trans* person, living their life as a woman among fellow villagers, who seem to have fully accepted fully it. The fact they are villagers as well and not from a big city, made people accept them. This begs the question of popular opinion – is living in a city really better for trans*people?

Or Facing Mirrors (Aynehaye Roobero, Iran 2011), about a transman in Iran, desperately trying to get a passport. This movie could be my all time favorite, ever. Images from this film, from the characters, their objectives and the landscape portrayed are still running in my mind today.



It taught me about overcoming religious differences and changed my ignorant idea that no great road movies can be made in Iran.

Or take this over the top feature from Indonesia: *Madame X* (Indonesia, 2010), where superheroes, science fiction characters and hairdressers from tiny barbershops become heroes and heroines, life threatening shouting: I will tag you on Facebook! Changed my view on heritage of fighting skills and revenge and the idea that the Indonesian film industry would not spend loads of money into a production with many gay and trans characters is proven wrong.

And what about *Paris is Burning* (USA, 1990)? We didn't screen it at TranScreen, this movie from the early nineties, but we all have seen it and it is still a touchstone. That movie made me jump out of my chair to put on some woman's robes again. Though I knew that my own performance was very poor in comparison

to these voguing queens and their drag balls in New York in the eighties. It is such an intimate portrait but also filled with desire, and yearning. It made me change from a vain individualistic activist into a queer, craving for a community.

When I was much younger than today, I was convinced that I should wear women clothes in the streets, not at parties, not with friends, not at home, sure these are safe spaces, but I should go out, onto the streets. Wearing women's clothing was politics. Obvious I also tried to flee from a privileged white middleclass background into some life worth living. But being queer is not a choice or lifestyle, being queer is an inevitable internal core and it is challenging hetero normativity, but not by choice.

The pride in 1982 in Amersfoort, a small city in the Netherlands, was disrupted by dozens of youth, throwing eggs and other kinds of filthy stuff. People were seriously beaten up.

Do whatever it takes to make your life worth living, just don't be mean

Grim looking people stood in the streets, watching the scared pride participants walking by and the police had no how idea to handle the situation. Meanwhile in my hometown, my heart bounced in my throat when I was dressed up walking in the streets, back in the eighties, wearing punky skirts, fishnet stockings with army

faggots, sex workers, nurses, physicians, family... Since that time, the division between men, women, gay lesbian, trans*, non trans* (cis) became less strict in my community. A new era, where the word queer started to act as an umbrella for all of us, who are not straight! Today the word queer is maybe not so bound to activism any more,

but it is still a label I like a lot. Later on in life, I lost my testicles due to cancer and as a fellow user of testosterone, I made some new friends in the transman community,



boots or neon sneakers. I was waiting for the shouting, which did occur once in a while, or the abuse and I feared the threat of violence. I learned not to walk, but cycle through the streets, cycle fast. Not to walk alone with all my makeup on. In drag, I felt very much like the real me. But the constant threats changed me.

Then the aids era started. Now there are movies like *We Were Here* (USA 2011), which reports on the era and *United in Anger* (USA 2012) even comes with an activists tool guide with all the tools necessary for activists founded on the lessons learned by ACT UP! Not all was sad; we also learned new skills and found new allies, like lesbian women, dykes, trans* feminists, gay men, straight friends,

sharing the habit of injecting testosterone. I changed.

Since I was already meeting a lot of trans* in the newly queer identifying communities around Europe, I realised at that time that my sexual identity was less important to me than my gender identity. That I was stranger, or weirder then anyone I knew. Not because I was attracted to men, but I was not so sure how to be a man, I didn't want to be a man, nor a woman. I liked being somewhere in between. I am an expert on the use of testosterone. I know what is does and doesn't do.

And that is why I would loved to have seen a movie like Sam Feder's film *Kate is a Queer and Pleasant Danger*

[illegible]

time, but I understand
tmodern, deconstruc-
challenging human: “I
born male and now
I’ve got medical
and government
documents that
say I’m female
– but I don’t call
myself a woman,
and I know I’m not
a man.... I call my-
self trans, or tran-
ny – and the lat-
ter angers a small
but vocal group of
transsexual wom-
en who see tran-
ny as the equiv-
alent of kike to a
Jew. Right, I’m a
Jew, and everyone
knows someone
who’s got a thing
about Jews. I’m also
a tattooed lady.... I’m
a dyke on top of all

that
there are so many possibilities for
every one who wants to however
to change. I get lost in queer the-

Kate also kicks against lot of sensible knees in the trans community. Well Kate also caters for people

who are in their darkest moments and giving you this great advice: “Do whatever it takes to make your life worth living, just don’t be mean.”

I don’t think any filmmaker could have made such a thrilling documentary with Kate Bornstein, but Sam Feder made a life changer. Made me do my maquillage, and I got up, onto the streets.

Thank you Kate, thank you Sam. Speaking of, just don’t be mean, as I am writing this article, we take care in the Netherlands of only a few thousand new refugees from Syria and other countries. I just received a mail. A cry for help from LGBTQ refugees, who are beaten up and abused in the asylum centres by their fellow refugees. They need alternative housing. I hope we can take care of them. I hope that we are better hosts than ever.

I am putting an “*” after the trans word to indicate that you can read transgender, transperson, transman, transwomen, transgenderqueer etc. Sometimes I use the plural they or their to avoid gender for a person.



Cinematic Anthems to Newfound Feminism



Masha Godovannaya is a film and video artist, curator, and teacher. Her interests include experimental cinema, contemporary art, gender theories, (post)feminism, and visual sociology.



Natasha Schastneva is a photographer and journalist (Örebro University, Sweden). Her interests include representations of sexuality in contemporary photography, feminist criticism, and documentary photography.

Portals, cyborgs, spies, boxers, ghosts, prison riots, roller derby, music numbers, and sex: all these

things are on screen in the 2014 feature film *Dyke Hard*.

The film was presented as Krepkaiia oreshina at the 37th Moscow International Film Festival, thus echoing the Russian translation (Krepkii oreshek) of the US movie franchise *Die Hard*. This translation is not entirely historically and semantically accurate, however. Dyke Hard was the name of a real lesbian punk band in which director Bitte Andersson played. The film's title could be translated, into Russian, as Krutaia lesba (Tough Lesbian) or Lesbi zhostche (Lesbie Harder; that is, as a verb in the imperative); it would be better not to translate it as a proper name. Dyke Hard was originally conceived as a trailer to a nonexistent film. Shot in Super 8, it was supposed to round out a collection of short films and come out on a DVD released by Lloyd Kaufman's independent film company Troma Entertainment. Troma specializes in producing provocative, low-budget pictures, many of which have gone on to become cult films.

Work on the trailer, which is not directly related to the film's final version, was a collective effort and laid down the basic parameters for production of the full-length film. It involved not only the project's driving forces (writer and director Bitte Andersson, and writers Martin Borell, Alexi Carpentieri, and Josephine Krieg) but also other members of Stockholm's LGBTQI community.

This unity and community activism was facilitated by the fact that Bitte Andersson, an active member of Stockholm's LGBTQI and underground communities, had long been

the owner of the queer feminist bookstore Hallongrottan and had held various events there. And since 2008 she had been the inspiration for the independent public access TV channel Hallon TV. Many actors from the channel migrated from the channel to the set of *Dyke Hard*.

The graduate of a master's program at Konstfack, the largest universi-



ty college of arts, crafts and design in Sweden, Andersson has repeatedly noted the impact made on her by the films of John Waters and Bruce LaBruce, as well as the films of Troma Entertainment, where she worked as a special effects artist. It was the condition set down by Troma co-founder Lloyd Kaufman that the trailer and, later, the film, be made in English that guaranteed Dyke Hard's production team support. Initially, the film was shot in both English and Swedish. The scenes shot in Swedish sometimes sounded funnier and wittier since the actors felt more comfortable speaking their native tongue and could improvise more boldly in terms of wordplay.

But since making two versions of the film stretched out the shooting process and doubled the budget, the

idea had to be abandoned, and the feature film was shot solely in English.

Dyke Hard follows the adventures of three friends, Peggy, Scotty, and Bandito (musicians in the eponymous punk group), as they make their way to a battle of the bands. They meet new friends, part with old ones, find support, and face adversities. The film takes us back to the mid 1980s with its bright acidic colors and different musical trends

This temporal jump and escape from reality is partly justified by Dyke Hard's multigenericity. The film is a hodgepodge of the musical, road movie, trash, horror, sci-fi, drama,



ground) filmmakers, artists, and activists. To quote one of the characters in Waters' *Cecil B. Demented* (2000), we might say that for *Dyke Hard* "there are no rules, only edges," since "outlawed cinema has no limits."

Despite its visual multigenericity, *Dyke Hard*'s makers identify it in the film's opening credits as a "lesbian rock'n'roll



comedy, and so forth, not to mention its direct references and allusions to the films of John Waters, Bruce LaBruce, Annie Sprinkle, and other underground (and not so under-

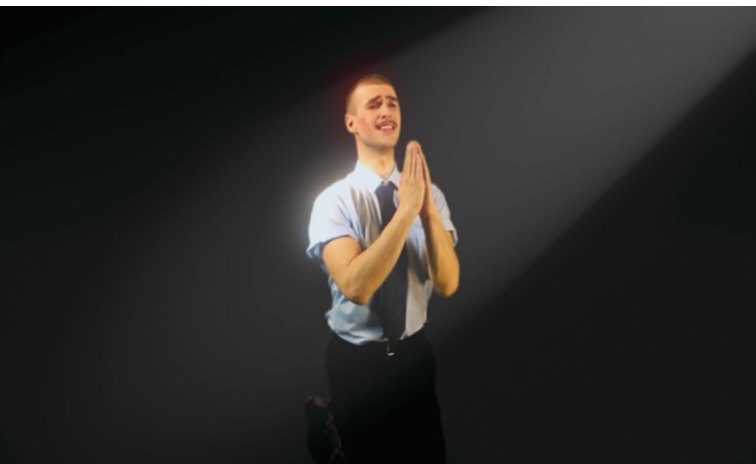
adventure." This sets the frame for interpreting the film. Throughout the film, it forces viewers to rethink the lesbian identity by blurring its usual characteristics and constitutive elements.

A distinctive feature of *Dyke Hard* is the involvement of trans people (and not just actors playing trans people), as well as the ethnic and age diversity of the people involved, including people with disabilities. This distinguishes *Dyke Hard* from other Swedish LGBTQI-themed films.

Another important aspect of the

tal relations, the emergence of solidarity and commitment to a common goal, the simultaneous penetration of these by the power vertical, which is also represented by members of the LGBTQI community (the most vivid example is the way the “tough” dyke Riff relates to the other members of the rock band), exclusion and neglect, re-

sentments and permanent injuries (as in the heroine’s alter ego, Moira), fears both real (e.g., Peggy’s fear of working nine to five) and imaginary (fear of the haunted house), closeted and liberated sexuality, various romantic and sexual practices not limited to generally accepted standards of receiving and giving pleasure, and their inclusion in the power game.



film is power relations. From the outset, power is defined independently of gender and sex. Physical violence, moral and emotional coercion, and humiliation are not only characteristics of “male” interaction, but are transferred to bearers of other identities. Power and class characteristics manifest themselves in the language and social interactions of the film’s characters, and are influenced by the post-feminist tradition, while the 1980s are designated as the film’s spatial and temporal frames.

A list of some of the topics and stances through which power relations are examined in the film would include attempts to establish equal, horizon-

The quintessence of power is the ambivalent image of the prison, as figured by the warden and her guards. The prison in *Dyke Hard* is a disciplinary institution where sex and gender, age and ethnicity do not matter.

What matters is social status and the clearly defined hierarchy of power, the relationship between master and slave. The prison suppresses and subjugates the sexuality of the prisoners, who are obliged to take part in the sadistic games of the tops (“not inmates but playmates”) while denying themselves sexual pleasure. Only the warden can enjoy subtly sadistic satisfaction, which she does



by monitoring and controlling others. But in situations where she cannot do this, sexuality (as in the case of the Beast) is isolated and imprisoned. In case the inmates stage a sexual mutiny, the warden has a plan B, to douse the prisoners with a sleeping gas.

It is this gas that the sexual guerrilla and liberator Buck Blossom, who gets a job as a guard at the prison in order to find his love, replaces with an aphrodisiac gas. Only by releasing one's own sexuality and desire from the yoke of the Other does the individual gain freedom and the established totalitarian order can be destroyed. The bearers of power also gain sexual freedom, which had been repressed and subjugated to the meta- and external power regime. (Althusser argues that prison is one of the state's ideological appa-

ratues.) Sexual liberation unites the inmates, who had been atomized and opposed to each other. Affected by Buck's love gas and the overall mood



of arousal, they unite with their jailers in a sexual outburst. And in a telltale joint effort they smash through the walls of the prison, thus finding real freedom from captivity.

Power manifests itself not only in the ways the film's characters relate to one another, in their commitments and goals, in how they legitimize their

aspirations to power, and the means they use to repress and subjugate others. Power and the questioning of power are likewise revealed in Dyke Hard's cinematic form, in its problematization of the canons of narrative and genre, formal and stylistic rules, and customary regimes and modes of cinematic production.

Film as a Community Initiative

Around three hundred people from Stockholm's LGBTQI community were involved in making the film. Some of them acted in it, others supplied costumes, and still others let the crew film in their spaces and donated money. As we have already mentioned, the film grew out of a trailer for Troma Entertainment, which helped finance the release of the film. On June 12, 2012, a crowdfunding campaign was launched on Kickstarter. The campaign raised \$6,213, exceeding the goal of \$5,000. The production team then managed to get several grants to continue shooting. When photography was completed and the film was in the process of being on the editing table, the major Swedish film company Filmance International AB took an interest in the project and proposed collaboration.

Thus, an initially DIY collective punk project was ultimately swallowed by a big company and finished on its turf. Perhaps that is the reason for the clear delineation of roles in the film's production: director, writers, cinematographer, special effects, costume and wardrobe department, etc. The terms of big-time moviemaking do not tolerate acceptance of collectivism

and solidarity. This is likewise manifested on the symbolic level of the credits, where a particular power hierarchy with the director at the top must be constructed.

Despite the fact that film takes place in the past, *Dyke Hard* is a document of the vanishing present. Viewers in the know will recognize many spots that had cult status within Stockholm's LGBTQI community. Anderson, for example, sold her bookstore, a place where several scenes in the movie were shot and which had been an important venue for meetings and discussions; the new owners soon closed the store altogether. The first male striptease, performed brilliantly by Alexi Carpentieri in his role as Buck Blossom, was shot in the popular LGBTQI bar Headquarters, which has also gone out of business.

The film features many important figures from the older generation of the Swedish LGBTQI movement. In one scene, we see Birgitta Stenberg with her wife Kerstin Bjärksted. Stenberg was a writer, translator, illustrator, screenwriter, and actress who devoted her work to LGBTQI topics. She has only one line in the film: "In our day, we ran faster." Stenberg died in 2014, and so the title "Dedicated to our mothers," at the end of film, has a particular poignancy. The film is dedicated to the feminists and activists of the older generation whose work paved the way for the "innate" rights and freedoms enjoyed by younger generations. The memory of the recent struggle of elder activists and the lives they led makes it impossible



to see the current order of things as a matter of course.

Another important figure in the film is Ylva Maria Thompson, an artist, sculptor, actress, sex educator, and host of a sex education program on Swedish TV. She considers the goal of her work the liberation of sexuality from such cultural stereotypes as shame and guilt. Her character in the film is the ghost of a drowned woman who seduces one of the main characters, achieving the ultimate pleasure in the process (thus reversing a well-worn cinematic cliché, seen, for example, in Paul Verhoeven's 2000 film *Hollow Man*). Thompson's character is a flagrant representation of a body tabooed in modern visual culture, a middle-aged and unattractive body as understood by the mainstream. The apotheosis is the song sung by



the ghost, a feminist anthem in which she recounts how she found her own sexuality by overcoming social and religious norms and reflecting on these things in the afterlife.

Despite its sexual and generic provocations, *Dyke Hard* can be described as an apolitical film. Many have criticized it for the ease with which it represents the power discourse, its sexualization of the police and prison, and its comic trivialization of their actions and roles. This ostentatious and mocking hodgepodge, however, could

have contained a critical stance rethinking the sociopolitical system and identifying painful topics in current Swedish society, which had just voted a government with distinctively right-wing views out of office.

There is none of this in *Dyke Hard*, and its political conformity underwrites the film's success at film fes-



tivals and wide distribution. And with that comes fame, thus securing the film's unconditional and well-deserved right to be included in the history of LGBTQI cinema, just like its contribution to the representation of the multiplicity of genders, age groups, bodies, and skin colors. Paraphrasing the words of Dawn as she addresses the crowd at the battle of the bands to which the lesbian rock group has been traveling throughout the film, *Dyke Hard* is a film about acceptance, friendship, betrayal, and forgiveness.

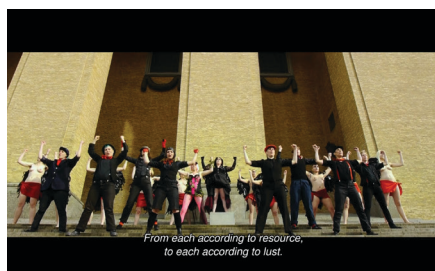
Postscript: The Alternative

At the same time, another LGBTQI film, *Folkbildningsterror* (Popular Education Terror), filmed in the Swedish city of Gothenburg, significantly outplays *Dyke Hard* in terms of its

political message. The film is a guide to waging an anarcho-feminist campaign against a discredited state. It combines real practices such as assemblies, consensus decision-making, and armed struggle with musical numbers, breathtaking chase scenes and shootouts, and dramatic and comic scenes. Generic polyphony is something the two films have in common, as well as the initial production methods, involving DIY, collectivism, and local community support (in, respectively, Stockholm and Gothenburg).

But whereas the action in *Dyke Hard* is focused on the past, with its imaginary wars for the right to be yourself, be with the person you love, and do what you like doing, *Folkbildningsterror* takes place in the present, with its real social, political, and cultural issues.

The film's serious political agenda and the way it grapples with real social issues (its harsh criticism of the government and government agencies for monitoring and control, such



as the police and the civil service; its insistence on retaining the concept of the welfare state and abolishing capitalism and private property; its portrayal of the struggle for the rights of the queer proletariat and terrorism



against hetero- and homonormativity, and the defense of animal rights; its promotion of veganism and healthy lifestyles; its depiction of attempts to liberate the queer body and find a queer spirit outside of gender categories, and continue the collective struggle in the post-feminist/queer era), as well as the way the film was made (involving affinity group principles, the lack of a single director, collective decision-making about the film's plot, design, and editing, shooting the film in Swedish, and refusing the services of distributors) largely de-

termined Folkbildningsterror's lack of media success, leaving it ignored by the major festivals.

Perhaps the film's neo-Marxist rhetoric, refracted and adapted by anarcho-feminism, is a dangerous ideological mouthpiece. After all, sexual liberation is achieved much more easily than liberation from (post)capitalist enslavement.

The authors would like to thank Zafire Vrba for helping in writing this article. Translated by Thomas Campbell.

5x1מט1א
Guttmanx5

Amos Gutmann – Queer, not Gay



Yair Hochner — is the artistic director of the TLVFest, the Tel Aviv International LGBT Film Festival, since co-founding it in 2006.

It wasn't until 1979 that mainstream Israeli audiences were first exposed to a local gay movie. That year, the film *Hide and Seek*, directed by Dan Wolman, portrayed a secret love story between a young Jewish teacher and young Palestinian in Jerusalem before the 1948 War of Independence. The story is shown through the eyes of an innocent child

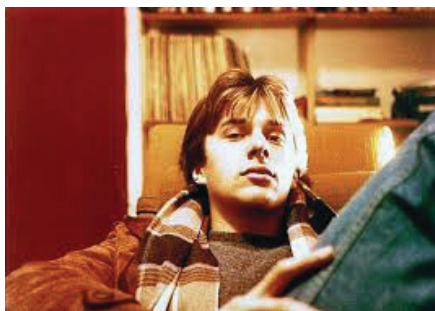
who suspects that his teacher is a spy and does not understand that they are becoming lovers. Wolman dealt with these taboos at a time when being gay in Israel was illegal and a love story between two males – an Israeli Jew and a Palestinian – wasn't a possibility that anyone would even conceive of mentioning in public, although such relationships did exist in those years.

Decades later, Eytan Fox's movie *The Bubble* (2006) and the directorial debut of Michael Mayer's *Out in the Dark* (2012) represented a tremendous change in attitudes. Then, neither needed to resort to the perspective of an outsider, but readily made young gay Jews and Palestinians the heroes of their movies. The timeline of their films no longer occurred in the distant past, but in the present – their stories happened right here and now. Today's Israeli filmmakers are not ashamed or afraid to delve into LGBT themes, but they want to be very accessible to Israeli audiences and even more to the international film markets, in order to obtain deals with big distribution companies and premieres at major international film festivals

Indeed, most Israelis and most LGBT cinema lovers around the world likely believe that Eytan Fox was the first Israeli gay filmmaker and that the first Israeli gay feature film was *Yossi & Jagger* in 2000. While Eytan Fox may in fact be the most successful and famous Israeli gay filmmaker, the first out-of-the-closet gay film maker was actually the pioneering Amos Gutmann. Mr. Gutmann made several short films between 1975-79 and four feature films between 1983-1992, before dying of HIV/AIDS in 1993 at the age of 38.

There are several reasons why most people don't know about Gutmann's very important legacy. One reason is that he made "QueerCinema" – a very personal, bold and flamboyant style of cinema, in which his heroes were outsiders, quite apart from the main-

stream gay community. In fact, most gay people in Tel Aviv during these years found it difficult to peer into the immensely sad, tragic and gloomy mirror that Amos Gutmann held in front of them. They told him this was not how they wanted to be represented to the wider society. But Amos wanted to tell his stories, what happened to him and his friends – young boys who arrived in Tel Aviv after running away from home, or elderly transgendered prostitutes who owned "dirty" cabaret clubs.



Amos Gutmann was the voice of individualism; he didn't want to be part of Zionist society. He didn't want to give up his independence as a filmmaker or lose his distinctive voice. The one time he did so, in his film "Himmo king of Jerusalem" (1987), the film received bad reviews and it seemed that he didn't care about the movie's characters. This film was the only one he made that didn't deal with gay themes.

Gutmann was part of a group of young Israeli directors from the end of the '70s to the early '80s which called for quality films outside commercial cinema. But unlike his colleagues in the movement, Gutmann created a rich and stylistic cinematic language with



a unique sound. His films were notable for their attention to visual elements and his distinct content – what we love to call “Queer” sensibility. Why haven’t people heard of Amos Gutmann? One reason is that he died from HIV/AIDS and the Israeli Cinema Industry was largely controlled by straight men who didn’t like the extremely out filmmaker, and yes, maybe because they didn’t like that he was a better film maker than most of them. Gutmann refused to normalize his art or to make straight movies that would have been easy for wider audiences to swallow. Maybe this is one reason why there is no longer any Israeli Queer Cinema. Perhaps the gay community in Israel just wants to be part of the mainstream, and has lost the individualism and the unique voice we once had.

Gutmann’s first feature film *Drifted* (1983) tells his own personal story

and is considered to be the first Israeli film to deal seriously with gay life in Israel. The hero of the film is Rubi, a young filmmaker like Gutmann himself who channeled all his sexual experiences to fulfill his dream: to become a film director. There is very famous dialogue in the film about his frustration about not being able to find any financial support to make his movies and his disappointment with the LGBT association which refused to help him.

Amos Gutmann’s second feature film *Bar 51* (1985) tells the story of two straight heroes, while at the same time being one of the queerest, most edgy films to come out of Israel. It tells the story of a brother and sister who desert their village home after their mother’s death to try their luck in Tel-Aviv. There they meet Apollonia, the owner of the sleazy Bar 51, who gives them work, mainly because she is sexually attracted to the brother,

who is actually secretly in love with his sister. Apollonia Goldstein was played by Eda Valery Tal, Israel's first transgender actress. This stylish melodrama reminds one of the early works of Fassbinder or Almodovar. The movie is full of gay characters, homoerotic dances and it is clear by the way that

grandmother who live in Jonathan's building. Thomas is hiding a secret from Jonathan – he has a terminal disease and is afraid to hurt the young man who is so in love with him. Amazing Grace was filmed at the beginning of the 1990s, before the age of political correctness with regard to HIV/



Gutmann filmed Juliano Mer-Khamis – the actor who plays the brother – that he was very attracted to him.

In his last and most personal feature film, *Amazing Grace* (1992), Gutmann tells his own very intimate story. The story centers on the relationship between Jonathan, a young man in his early 20s and older man at the end of his 30s. Jonathan moves to Tel-Aviv to be with Miki, a young soldier who constantly cheats on him. However, Jonathan's routine is broken when he establishes a relationship with Thomas, a mysterious man who returned from New York to visit his mother and

AIDS, and yet the film is still able to excite due to Gutmann's sensitive direction and great acting. One year later, in 1993, Amos Gutmann died from AIDS-related complications.

Amazing Grace was Gutmann's most powerful and touching film in which he continued to tell his own stories in real time, not holding back any secrets. Presenting his own truth on the big screen during the AIDS plague was very rare and very brave, especially in Israel where people didn't really talk about it in public. In contrast, just a few years later in 2000, the most famous Israeli singer of that time, Ofra

Haza, died from HIV/AIDS. While she knew that she was sick, she was unable to tell anyone about it for fear of the stigma and shame. At that time, some people in Israel even refused to get treatment because they feared being stigmatized. Amos Gutmann, however, never feared to be different and unique or challenge stereotypes and did not give up even when he was sick. This is what makes him so important and different.

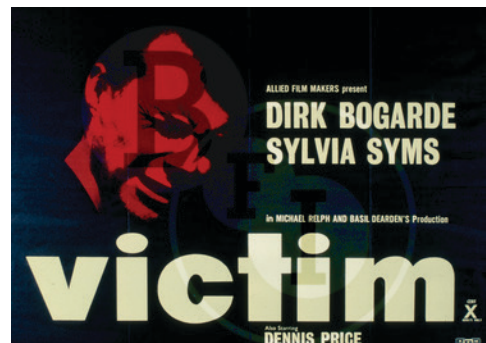
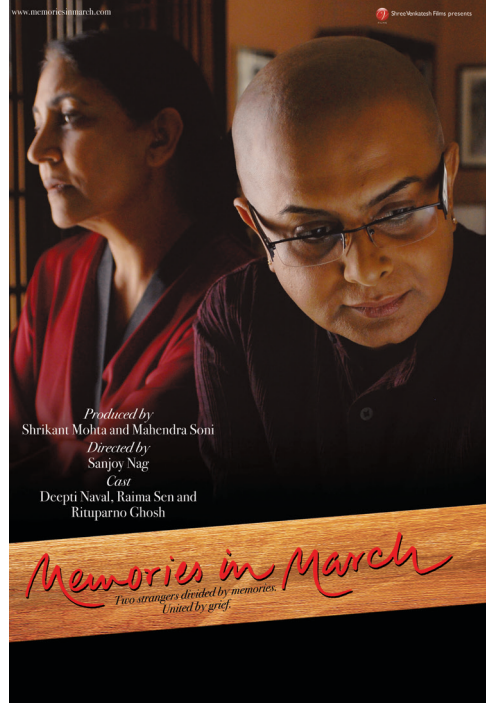
In honor of his body of work, and to celebrate his life, we decided to make a film. As there was already a 1997 documentary about him, we decided instead to create a new Israeli film that would be composed of five different episodes inspired by his life story and his films. From dozens of submissions, we selected five projects that provide very different perspectives on his work and life. Every episode displays very unique cinematic expressions and artistic points of view about Amos Gutmann and his films.

This movie, entitled Gutmann x 5, shows our appreciation and provides a long-deserved cinematic tombstone for his life and work. Gutmann's artistic spirit is very much with us and in the movie itself. Through the animations that connect the five episodes you can see Amos' spirit traveling to the Tel Aviv of today and experience what it means to be a social outcast in the 21st century.

In many ways Gutmann is still the most radical Israeli filmmaker ever to have existed. His movies still undermine the foundations of the soci-

ety in which he sought to survive. He put outsiders at the center, and gave them a voice, ethos and a place in the Israeli history. He presented different sexual identities on the big screen as part of current reality.

Just this year TLVFest presented over 30 Israeli short films, but few of them had a queer cinematic point of view. The question remains as to whether the young artists of today will choose to retain their unique voices like Amos Gutmann, or whether they will become part of the mainstream gay collective and lose their unique perspective. So far, I am still waiting for the next powerful new Israeli Queer Filmmaker who has the guts to kick our society in the ass.





General Editorial: Side by Side LGBT Film Festival
© Side by Side International Film Festival Ltd

www.bok-o-bok.ru info@bok-o-bok.ru