

## 8. Queer Cultures

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Since identity is the product of a relation of power, queer identity and queer culture must necessarily change as the unacceptable becomes acceptable, however transitory that acceptability might be.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Peele, an American literary and cultural studies scholar, cuts to the essential chase of queer cultures with this remark in his introduction to a twenty-first century anthology on the subject. When identities and their subcultures are created, shaped, favored, or hindered by powerful discourses, building on Peele's view, then new understanding of queer culture must be based on critiquing these very discourses. In this fashion, queer and non-queer understandings of culture by no means unfold to become unconnected antitheses, but should rather become critical juxtapositions of established scenes and performances. These cultural interactions rely on each other, and are in a constant and productive exchange. Nothing has a more disinhibiting effect than queer cultural transgression and exaggeration of normative boundaries. That said, there are few activities that create such general applause as the imitation and interpretation of queer identities. Whether these are popular or intellectually imposed cultural creations, the analogies to the world of others can only function by playing with creative assumptions and clichés:

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1 Thomas Peele, "Introduction: Popular Culture, Queer Culture," in: *Queer Popular Culture, Literature, Media, Film, and Television*, ed. Thomas Peele, (New York: Springer, 2007), 7.

*Will & Grace*<sup>2</sup> makes homosexuality safe for broadcast television audiences by framing its characters within the familiar popular culture convention that equates gayness with a lack of masculinity and through the familiar situation comedy genre conventions of romantic comedy and delayed consummation, infantilization, and an emphasis on characters' interpersonal relationships rather than the characters' connections to the larger social world. Taken together, these conventions work to confine homosexuality within its paradoxical position in dominant heteronormative discourses; homosexuality can only be represented through heterosexist categories and language, while at the same time it is marked as a deviation from the norm.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, queer cultural forms are not merely multifarious in their subcultural self-image, but are also multidimensional in the interpretations of social majorities deployed. Over and above media manifestations, it is foremost behaviors, oral language habits, and cultural codes—ranging across popular idols, geographical locations, fashionable analogies, bar and theater cultures, and visible lifestyles—that can undergo interpretative exegesis. These expressive forms bring same-gender desire and gender diversity into the public sphere, so they can be thought about together—in queer or non-queer circles—as ideas. Gender and sex play immanent roles in these processes—for example in language codes or symbols—both as points of departure for what is held in common, and in the experience of desire and competition. Such ambiguities are particularly remarkable in queer jokes, in which quickly going on the verbal offense, combined with being able to give as good as you get, is what can secure dominance in group dynamic terms. People enjoy demanding this ability of drag queens, whereby the targets of attacks can be anyone either inside or out with their own community. The popular drag

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2 See: *Will & Grace*, TV series produced in the USA, 1998–2020), <https://www.imdb.com/title/tto157246/>.

3 Kathleen Battles and Wendy Hilton-Morrow, "Gay Characters in Conventional Spaces: Will and Grace and the Situation Comedy Genre," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 1 (2002), 101n., <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393180216553>.

queen Alaska Thunderfuck<sup>4</sup> understands herself especially concerning the scathing humor expected of her, as a reflective shaman:

Well, because ultimately drag queens are truth-tellers. My best friend Jeremy's philosophy is that drag queens are modern-day shamans. ... They go through a transformation. There's a lot of tradition and culture that goes into that. Then, on stage, they have an ability to reflect back at you your truth and truths about society we don't want to think about. So ultimately, everything is fake: the hair, the body, the fingernails—but in that fakeness something real is able to be exposed. That isn't why I got into drag. I got into drag because it was cool. But learning about why drag was cool is something that I love that came later.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, when a cultural form is trivialized, participants also gain the freedom to deliberately irritate and provoke. The ridicule thrown at drag queens doesn't only come from people who follow heteronormative norms, but also, at least occasionally, by participants in queer communities. The provocation inherent in drag art, namely transgressing gender attributions, is only the most visible level of irritation, although there's no doubt that this, in itself, irritates both inside and out with the queer community. The provocation is often intensified when ideals of beauty, behavior and several other major issues become the target of attack. Even though, through queer history, most drag artists couldn't gain access to the biggest stages, a virtue was made out of this necessity, with almost any space up for grabs as a potential stage for an amusing performance. And during all these interventions and altercations, queer perspectives on sexuality and gender always remained the starting point for interpreting the existing world: with all its shady and sunny sides. It is precisely out of this understanding that drag can be seen as an essen-

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4 See: Alaska Thunderfuck, <https://alaskathunderfuck.com/>.

5 David Reddish, "Are drag queens modern-day shamans? Alaska takes us to the church of drag comedy" in: *Queerty* on April 24, 2021, <https://www.queerty.com/drag-queens-modern-day-shamans-alaska-takes-us-church-drag-comedy-20210414>.

tial, queer community art form, in which oppression and persecution, as well as laughing at oneself, are commemorated and celebrated.

Moreover, interested observers have diagnosed three parameters in queer cultures that have been and continue to be profoundly influential in postmodern, virtually interconnected societies. These cultural characteristics include *physical vitality, a perpetual party-mood, and essential in-destructibility*:

Last month the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report concluding that gay, lesbian and bisexual people in the United States had higher rates of self-reported underlying conditions like cancer, heart disease and obesity than heterosexual people and are also more likely to be smokers. These conditions put adults at increased risk for severe illness from Covid-19, the report said.<sup>6</sup>

*Physical vitality* can be understood as both in-your-face advertising for sexual desire, and as a social vehicle, whose fundamental function is participation in queer social and cultural life. This vitality is a principle and foundational moment, which many enjoy drawing on as a precondition for being able to take part completely. It forms the basis on which elements of subcultural socialization are built upon:

Our study found that alcohol played a key role in identity construction for LGBT people in Scotland. Respondents described the necessity of consuming alcohol to gain courage to first access the gay scene, the expectation that heavy drinking would continue to form an integral part of “nights out” on the gay scene, and persistent peer pressure to drink across the life-course. The conventional binary opposition (pints of beer signify “masculinity,” sweet colourful cocktails and alcopops signify “femininity”) was reversed to signify non-heteronormativity (i.e. lesbians drink pinks of beer while gay men drink cocktails and

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6 Christina Caron, “L.G.B.T.Q. People Face Increased Risks From Covid, but Many Don’t Want the Vaccine” in: *New York Times*, May 5, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/05/well/lgbtq-covid-19-vaccine.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

alcopops). Even when respondents rejected these stereotypes, there was a sense that these powerful associations still influenced people's drinking practices.<sup>7</sup>

The primary purposes served by the queer cultural understanding of physical vitality are acting as a social entity, and carrying out queer collective performances—or to be able to attend them without almost any physical restrictions. This includes a physical framework for action offering participative opportunities. On top of this, specific physical actions are involved—which we could call rituals—that make it possible to be there in the first place. Visible cracks in these supposedly shared ideals generate a collective sense of unease, when an individual's physical condition imposes limits on standardized participations for example, or when ubiquitous actions, such as alcohol consumption, become genuine problems for certain participants. Physical and mental limitations are often swept under the carpet and declared a private matter: not only do they seem to cause collective anxiety, there's also no sense that they fit into the party culture of queer social life. Likewise, alcohol as a (sub)cultural lubricant in the queer community is only reluctantly admitted, as in society as a whole, to be a problematic addictive substance when consumed in large quantities. Cultural participation demands physical vitality, or at the very least the ability to take part without causing great annoyance to those around you. Having fun with alcohol, but decoupled from addiction; chronic illness without pain; the person in a wheelchair with an inspirational smile: these stereotypical images are allowed to represent only those challenges that can be overcome—and only then is participation welcome:

Invisibility within both communities. LGBT people with disabilities often report that it is challenging to have their identities fully recognized. In spaces focused on disability, their unique experiences as

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7 Carol Emslie, Jemma Lennox, and Lana Ireland, "The role of alcohol in identity construction among LGBT people: a qualitative study," in: *Sociology of Health & Illness* 39, no. 8 (2017), 1475, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28833252/>.

LGBT people may not be recognized. And in LGBT spaces, services and facilities may not be inclusive or accessible, including having accessible buildings or restrooms, ASL interpretation and/or CART captioning for deaf or hard of hearing people, and more.<sup>8</sup>

This ceaseless and merciless utilization of one's own vitality takes its toll, which also strengthens the ambiguous connection between a vital participative capability, and queer-cultural creativity:

Research on disability has identified both nonmodifiable risk factors such as age, gender, and genetics, and modifiable risk factors such as age-related diseases, impairments, functional limitations, poor coping strategies, sedentary lifestyles, and other risk behaviors in addition to social and environmental obstacles. It is important to recognize that some of the covariates of disability in these communities are related to modifiable health behaviors, including smoking among all the groups as well as weight control among lesbians. Understanding the mechanisms through which LGB adults have an increased risk of disability is important in developing and targeting prevention efforts tailored to the specific risks they face.<sup>9</sup>

This deep-seated anchoring of the consumption of harmful substances, the merciless subjugation of the body, and the strong outward focus on visible vitality promote a body-hostile culture that allows little queer scope for alternatives, or chooses to push the same into organizational frameworks. In queer community groups and centers, meet-ups based on solving problems regularly constitute a fixed program component: abstinence strategies, exchange formats for so-called marginalized groups, social interactions for people with disabilities and much more.

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8 MAP, *Movement Advancement Project: LGBT People with Disabilities*, <https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/LGBT-People-With-Disabilities.pdf>, 3.

9 Karen I. Fredriksen-Goldsen, Hyun-Jun Kim, and Susan E. Barkan, "Disability Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults: Disparities in Prevalence and Risk," in: *American Journal of Public Health* 102, no. 1 (2012), E19, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3490559/>.

The need for such provision, specifically for queer audiences, is often presented as the preserve of self-advocacy groups, and is rarely experienced visibly in queer nightlife culture. Bridging the gap between vitality and a healthy lifestyle seems necessary: if the obsessive association of vitality with eternal youth and idealized body shapes can be got rid of, this has a chance to succeed.

Notions of a *perpetual party-mood* not only affect external perceptions of the queer community, but is also often based on queer subcultural self-images. Christopher Street Days and other formats have evolved in post-modern, virtually interconnected societies, steadily transforming themselves from being public protest rallies to celebratory events, whereby the contents that matter seem to have gotten lost—at least for some participants:

Going to Gay Pride, he said, has become a “cool thing” to attend rather than a place to uplift marginalized voices and to acknowledge the community’s struggle to achieve progress. He said Pride, like St. Patrick’s Day or Cinco de Mayo, has been taken over by people who want an excuse to drink and party, displacing the LGBTQ community from a festival meant to celebrate it.<sup>10</sup>

Riotous partying certainly has been an inherent part of queer protest since shortly after the Stonewall Riots at the latest. The sheer fact that it was only possible to gain lived experience of queer partying under difficult or illegal circumstances turned putting together entertaining evenings into an important form of self-advocacy during the post-Stonewall movement:<sup>11</sup>

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10 Alia Wong, “Gay Pride parades used to mean protests. Now they’re an excuse for straight kids to party” in: *USA Today* on June 4, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/LGBT-issues/2018/06/22/pride-parades-excuse-straight-kids-party/712068002/>.

11 See: Martin J. Gössl, *Als die erste Münze flog und die Revolution begann. Die Homosexuellen-Bewegung in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika* (Graz: Rosalila PantherInnen, 2009).

One of the greatest strengths of the gay rights movement has been its ability to combine activism with fun. However, as my research shows, unless there's an intent to prioritize political agendas, group solidarity can easily be eroded. Sanker has noted that as his events have become more profitable, they've faced less opposition from public officials and conservative groups. But this profitability has meant scrubbing controversial political messages from the events to make them as palatable to as many customers as possible. Something, clearly, has been lost. Sociologists are keen to note how cultures—along with subcultures—often emerge as a way to alleviate feelings of isolation and suffering. However, cultural events often become co-opted by profit motives. When this happens, they become less about caring for one another, building a sense of community or celebrating the positive aspects of humanity.<sup>12</sup>

Alongside nostalgia for the good old days, the revolutionary celebratory mood of queer culture has evidently transformed itself over time, both in terms of settings and audiences. Popular events in the queer scene are becoming increasingly attractive for major sponsors, and are often attended by non-queer people. The images conveyed to the outside world are—as is necessarily the case with images—abridgements of reality: content and contexts are lost, or can only be partially depicted. In consequence, media representations, and personal memories, are relentlessly reduced to the ongoing party atmosphere of the queer scene. No matter how strongly a post-Stonewall tradition may claim the element of celebratory escape from oppressive regimes, achieving a balance, or at least some kind of working compromise, between partying and politics remains a vexed question. This is why the arguments referred to in the above by sociologist Christopher T. Connor are all too apt: particularly when his queer-historical analysis of protest and celebration is linked to the subcultural tradition of a recent past, and especially given the fact

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12 Christopher T. Connor, "How the gay party scene short-circuited and became a moneymaking bonanza," in: *The Conversation* on February 12, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/how-the-gay-party-scene-short-circuited-and-became-a-moneymaking-bonanza-153424>.

that this element has been readily and intensively promoted for decades. But the successes of key or center queer demands in recent decades have been pushing other political, controversial, and necessary articulations into the margins. This trade-off has been done for profit, or to achieve broad-based—and perhaps spurious—solidarity in the background. In real and worse-case scenarios, some of these most controversial articulations have been softened by this societal negotiating process, or allowed to disappear altogether.

Yet it's evidently too early to wallow in the nostalgia of a brotherly, 1970s variety of queerness: the tried and trusted concept of political partying has always had its limits for some groups. In a written riposte to that period, the activist Sylvia Rivera penned the following critique:

This was at pride. It was the year Bette Midler came to sing “Happy Birthday” [1973, Washington Square Park, New York City] for us. It was happy for the mainstream community, but it was not happy for us. They tried to stop drag queen entertainers from performing. It was angry because I had been scheduled for many months to speak at that rally. So I'm stubborn, and I wasn't going to have it. Because for four years we were the vanguard of the gay movement, and all of a sudden it was being taken away. We were being pushed out of something we helped create. I remember this man telling me, a straight man who was my boss at the time, when I was working in Jersey—he said, “Ray, the oppressed becomes the oppressor. Be careful. Watch it.” And I saw it. And I still see it. I literally had to fight my way up onto that stage. I was beat. I got to speak. I said my piece. And I basically left the movement for many years. I didn't come back into view until the 20th anniversary.<sup>13</sup>

The unceasing celebratory mood is not merely put under pressure by perpetually current commercializing threats, but is also impacted long-term by queer subculture's far-reaching diversity, in which many people want to meet and exchange ideas, while others want to dedicate

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13 Ehn Nothing, *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*, 53.

the center of the movement entirely to political demands. A demand's heartfelt articulation, and lively protests against social injustices are counterbalanced by the longings many have to experience at least illusory normality in the queer community, if only for brief periods. A party evening, a protest march, or an action day continues to be encumbered by the baggage of many needs, and only a few of these can be given sufficient queer recognition. But here, too, the movement's often criticized ambivalence turns out to be, in fact, something more like a fruitful symbiosis. Ultimately the most counterproductive form that one's own disempowerment can take is disinterest and a lack of participation. This absence of participation has caused at least a few of the forms taken previously by the perpetual party mood to disappear:

In the run-up to the press conference, however, the board of the charitable association "Life+" released a statement about the charity event stopping for good. "Everyone thought the Life Ball was a ship that couldn't sink"—as members commented regarding the difficult financial situation. "This wasn't a [one-off] decision, but rather a development. A development that began in 2016, the year in which the Life Ball took a break," explained the association, before describing the debilitating period, in terms of energies, that then followed. "Financial reserves [got lost], because we spent lots of project, ring-fenced funding none the less, using up a large amount of our savings in the process, and personnel reserves [evaporated], because important and experienced staff left the association." Moreover, in the intervening period, some of our sponsors gone looking for new areas to be active in. "Resultingly, the Life Balls in 2017 and 2018 were strenuous efforts," according to the association.<sup>14</sup>

The Life Ball, one of the best-known event formats worldwide informed by queer philosophy, is only one event from many, which were not granted the wherewithal to survive financially. It also shows that the

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14 APA/Red. "Ende des Life Balls: Das sind die wahren Gründe für das Aus," on May 20, 2019: <https://www.vienna.at/ende-des-life-balls-das-sind-die-wahren-gruende-fuer-das-aus/6214286>.

margin between broad financial support and queer recognition is a thin one.

The purported fact of *essential indestructibility* is grounded in a long, queer history of suffering. Disparate forms of queer interactions had to be discovered over the course of centuries, and still must be discovered in many localities on this earth, to facilitate lives and experiences that were alternative existences to heteronormativity. In the throes of these discoveries, localities, spaces, and niches were queered, both socially and culturally. Most of this happened in the shadow of sexual and gender-based *normality*. In this, same-gender desire represented just a single fact among many possibilities, which is why retelling the history of these subcultural realities using definitions from today is a thoroughly difficult undertaking. We can see the crystallization of divergent queer cultural forms as bound to real or virtual localities; but we can also see this formation as dependent on a particular community, which has dedicated itself to this specific cultural performance. Both routes are subject to permanent transformations, as are the real spaces in question:

[C]ulture clashes are playing out across the nation in historically gay districts, nicknamed gayborhoods. Places like Greenwich Village in Manhattan and the Castro district in San Francisco, once incubators for the gay rights movement, have “straightened” in recent decades, leading to incidents of resistance and some angst about the effects on the L.G.B.T.Q. community.<sup>15</sup>

It’s especially the loss of spaces that is often connected with queer people’s anxiety about losing parts of their own culture. Queer culture is attributed as being immanent and essential to particular localities, and the communities living there. Many see the so-called gayborhood, i.e. queer neighborhoods, as threatened cultural spaces of urban life.

But as if this wasn’t enough, the dangers circling around a queer culture clinging to the idea of indestructibility also impact each invested

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15 Scott James, “There Goes the Gayborhood” in: *New York Times* on June 21, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/21/us/gay-pride-lgbtq-gayborhood.html>.

individual, as the theater studies scholar Sky Gilbert concludes in his answer to the provocative and rhetorical question: “Depression, suicide and epidemic drug use? How can this be? Aren’t gay men happy hedonists and rich as hell to boot?”<sup>16</sup>

If the plight of gay men is so dire, why are gay magazines obsessed with pets who travel—and RuPaul? Why is the message of this year’s Pride that gay men are just the same as anyone else—including, tragically, the victims of serial killers? Why are gay men dedicated to perpetrating a false image of themselves as not being victims of oppression? I believe gay men are presently passing through a kind of Stockholm Syndrome in which the captured begin to identify with their captors to such an extent that they wish to become them. In this case, it is the oppressed identifying with their oppressors.<sup>17</sup>

Can it be possible that queer communities are losing not only their local strongholds, but also a realistic perspective on the lively culture of oppression? Indeed, on a number of essential points, queer life does appear to be indestructible. Regardless of whether it’s through laws, reforms, persecutions or escalations that a homogeneous norm wishes to establish itself, a queer culture remains standing, in a similar way that there’s no way to effectively forbid desire. The expressive forms of queer culture remain equally constant, its spaces and codes, its trends and idealizations. The indestructible moment can be stopped by neither historical relicts or moralistic borders. Revolutionary theses suddenly come up face to face against the anti-theses that have long been fought for, to establish, ultimately, a new synthesis in subcultural everyday life; we should also consider the concept of marriage in these deliberations:

The multiple, queer-theoretical strands in the debate on same-sex marriage can be systematized as follows. What’s foregrounded is a

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16 Sky Gilbert, “Is queer culture losing its radical roots?” *The Conversation*, June 19, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/is-queer-culture-losing-its-radical-roots-97837>.

17 Gilbert, “Is queer culture.”

critique of the normative utilization and historical continued application of [the concepts] of sex, sexuality, and identity, in the support for same-sex marriage, and the draft law [accompanying it]. One such discrepancy identified in the same-sex draft law is the substantial silence concerning the significance of traditional marriage for the state's regulation of societal and sex / gender relations. This means that the demands for same-sex marriage are characterized by a decoupling of the critique of existing sexual relations in society from the feminist critique of hegemonic gender relations. Same-sex marriage is pilloried fundamentally, as being less about creating equality for homosexuality, and more about a particular form of life.<sup>18</sup>

Even the culture of queer relation forms, and the ideals deduced from that, changed for good in recent decades. The individual, the concepts of relations, spaces, localities, and much more all exhibit constant transformations. This shows that indestructibility certainly should not be confused with immutability. Moreover: whatever queer essence is cannot be attributed to a single expressive form, but rather invents itself, again and again, in the fact of change. Essential indestructibility is due to queer immanence, consisting of gender-based and sexual diversity, which is capable of escaping from a heteronormative framework. The inherent quality of indestructibility lies in its flexibility, a result of the pressure its experienced through any number of changes.

Queer cultures continue to develop: this was always the case and will remain so. Some ideas are carried on into the future while others fall forgotten by the wayside. The visible debates pertaining to a queer subculture reflect these natural processes—and provide theses and antitheses, before a synthesis appear—when generations begin to define themselves as such, and begin to prefer that which they long since have possessed as opposed to what is merely disdainfully present, or prefer present possessions against what has already been rejected. Vice versa, while what is old may ignite a widespread feeling of disinterest, this could lead to important lessons of a collective past—strategies in societal politics, foun-

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18 Heike Raab, "Sexual Politics, juristische Emanzipationsdiskurse und Staat," (PhD. diss., University of Vienna, 2009), 198.

dational arguments, and more—getting lost. Thus what remains is the essential indestructibility of queer subcultures in their steadfast further development, in which new spaces and new forms of community can be experienced, despite the fact that none of this can claim the status of eternal validity.

Queer culture that is constituted out of *physical vitality, a perpetual party mood, and essential indestructibility* mold a communities collective bodies. These function as the best possible fits, which can't be applied everywhere in a surefire way, but are nonetheless popular ideas, which can be applied in a queer construction plan for a community corpus.

The culture of same-gender desire, of sexual *disorder*, of multifari-ousness in sex and gender, and of relationship forms with different concepts behind them, has always been a culture of the everyday, which can be found both at the level of the individual, but also at the level of the collective. Whether we're talking about hotel rooms that can be booked by the hour, which celebrate a culture of silence, or the one-off bar in Park Slope, where lesbian women have met to politicize for decades,<sup>19</sup> queer culture is many-sided, and changing. Some traditions can be traced back to the period of heteronormative repression, or to the proud era of Gay Liberation. Other cultural expressions can be accounted for in terms of instincts, and can thus be attributed to what is secret and hidden. Regardless how, queer culture is also always an expression of community occurrences, which follows on in the wake of creativity. It's thus hardly surprising that both invisible and visible forms of creative encounter determine queer subcultures—and occasionally even extend on into societal majorities.

It's a given that there's no accounting for taste, and it's equally true that an attempt to hierarchize all the different facets of queer everyday culture: each fragment is special in itself. The many decades since the Stonewall Revolution have not only made queer culture legally experienceable, in all its rich diversity, but have also created the possibility of

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19 Ginger's, 363 5th Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11215, USA: <https://www.lesbianbarproject.com/gingers>.

nurturing and encouraging all kinds of encounter, and even of argument. This determines not only a conventional further development, which would have been foreseeable even centuries before, but also opens up other dimensions, including, for example, an open, queer youth culture, or a queer business culture. LGBTIQ people now have legal freedom in many societies in this world, in some cases a freedom that's protected from discrimination, but also the freedom to discover themselves, as both individuals and groups, and to nurture social-cultural interactions. It is possible to go forth with the unifying bond, of living alternative ideas of gender and sexuality. This move outwards into a more general public includes harnessing the perspectives thus connected with one's own cultural power to create. Out of this result, ultimately, idols, forms of humor, codes for being with one another, and much more, which can finally facilitate what we shall call queer normality.

Queer-cultural recognition is what determines the duty to assume this inheritance of one's own, community past, the care for current forms of expression attached to it, and the demands for further development. This is not merely a commission for a single community, but just as much a necessary political demand to the whole of society. Being mindful in relation to the subcultural past lends that which is queer not only forms and faces, but also perspectives for the present and the future. In so doing, one neither has to perform for a pink temple, nor revere any lilac-colored relics. Rather, this is about appreciating a multitude of queer cultural forms and their recognition as equally valuable elements of a collective identity. Beyond this, the issue is the conservation and reflective working through of these fragments—the totality of queer subcultures cannot be housed entirely in any one place—by institutions, e.g. archives, and academic professions, including chairs for research and teaching at universities. The recognition of a culture can be reconstructed precisely through its theoretical confrontations: the discursive ability, pertaining to a community of education, to articulate queer questions, and to augment the same with grounded revisions. This makes Queer Studies an immanent component of a queer culture and a queer community. Not only do they bring up facts that are defined as relevant, generating new knowledge in this field, but also conserve

and interpret these facts for potential use in fact-based debates. Such structuring frameworks are determined by decisions in societal politics, which also determine what should be considered relevant, and which artefacts should be ignored—for the time being, at least. While this kind of cultural evaluation may seem reasonable within the realm of dominant heteronormativity, it's quite possible that the same will be viewed as insufficient when seen from queer perspectives, or even seen as colonialist. The queer standpoint for cultural consciousness demands visible protest. Non-existent but necessary budgets, the intentional trivialization of cultural questions, and social marginalization are all strategies regularly deployed to push queer culture into the periphery of public visibility. To accept this would simply be a further concession, an agreeing to take our seat in the “antechamber of power,”<sup>20</sup> without being able to co-shape relevant structures. Queer culture is the expression of a past consisting of persecution, repression, revolution, and emancipation; the same culture provides a home for everyday practices, and provides freedoms for the building of identities. It gifts us space for protests, for inclinations and for sexualities, and unchains the genders and the sexes for a plurality of potential chances for alternative normalities. All this contains merit and should be recognized for that which it is: cultural abundance.

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20 See: Martin J. Gössl, *Schöne, queer Zeiten?*, 22.