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**Queering Archives and
Archiving Queers in
Contemporary Art**

J C Bell

PhD

2021

**Queering Archives and
Archiving Queers in
Contemporary Art**

James Crawford Bell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of
the University of Northumbria at Newcastle
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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& Social Sciences

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Abstract

This thesis investigates why LGBTQ* archives and histories have become so prevalent in contemporary art within the past decade. To answer this question, I look to three contemporary artworks, made amongst a flurry of anniversaries and increased visibility for the LGBTQ* community, which mediate gay and lesbian pasts: Sharon Hayes' *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016); P. Staff's *The Foundation* (2015); and Conal McStravick's *Learning in a Public Medium* (2015—17). The artworks are composed from archival materials including correspondence, magazines and other ephemera of their subject's lives. The artworks knowingly foreground archives as sites productive of queer politics and subjectivities through their engagement in the present. This is queering the archive. Equally, the artworks provide a means through which to figure queer and trans* subjectivities in the historical archive. In other words, the artworks establish links between gay and lesbian pasts and contemporary queer and trans* subjects now. I term this historical constitution *archiving queers*. To unpack this, I consider the artworks use of moving image, performance, and education with their associated art historical discourses. This thesis brings together the theoretical writings of Ann Cvetkovich, Jacques Derrida, Elizabeth Freeman, José Esteban Muñoz, and Diana Taylor, to propose *queering archives* and *archiving queers* as a mode of artistic historiographic practice that embraces the archival and the nonarchival, reconceives the past and present, and challenges the certitudes of history and memory tied to a material trace.

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the University Ethics Committee on 26 June 2018.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is 69,284

Name: James Bell

Signature:

Date: 30 April 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 Queering archives and archiving queers: overview and contribution of the research

The activity of 'archiving' is thus always a critical one, always a historically located one, always a contestatory one, since archives are in part constituted within the lines of force of cultural power and authority; always one open to the futurity and contingency – the relative autonomy – of artistic practice; always [...] an engagement, an interruption in a settled field, which is to enter critically into existing configurations to re-open the closed structures into which they have ossified.¹

In recent years there has been a proliferation of contemporary artworks which engage with LGBTQ* archives and history.² This thesis asks why. To answer this question, I look to three contemporary artworks made in a Euro-American context which mediate gay and lesbian archives: P. Staff's *The Foundation* (2015); Sharon Hayes' *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016); and Conal McStravick's *Learning in a Public Medium* (2015—17). The artworks are made using archival materials including correspondence, magazines, and other ephemera. Each artwork draws on the trace remains of gay and lesbian lives and politics found in archives and activates them in the present. In a process of *queering archives*, the artworks are a creative and novel mediation of archival materials that challenge given ways of recording, remembering, and writing history. Equally, the artworks make connections

¹ Stuart Hall, 'Constituting an Archive', *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (March 2001): 92.

² I am careful with my terms, and from the outset it is worth clarifying the various acronyms used by the LGBTQ* community. There are various acronyms of various lengths to denote a constellation of sexual minorities and gender identities. The shortest version of the acronym is LGBT or LGBT+. In this thesis I am using LGBTQ* which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. The asterisk at the end denotes this is not exhaustive – a long acronym would be LGBTQPIAK. I include the Q and '*', as both indicate gender and sexual identifications, and orientations not covered by the first four letters. Other variations of the acronym include QTPOC, which stands for Queer and Trans People of Colour, used by activists to represent racial minorities and trans* identities in the LGBTQ* movement, and also to note the inherent racisms that are pervasive even within social justice movements. I also use trans*, which stands for Transgender. The asterisks is included to denote the range of gender expressions and identities beyond male and female. Non-binary, gender nonconforming and gender fluid are also used. In the realms of the theory and discourse, there are important distinctions drawn between queer theory and trans* theory, similarly queer indigenous and people of colour offer alternative narratives to the often white cisgendered scholarship of Western-orientated queer theory. For a glossary of terms used by the LGBTQ* community, see: 'Glossary of Terms', Stonewall, 8 August 2015, <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms>.

between gay and lesbian pasts, and queer and trans* lives and politics now. These links help figure queer and trans* subjects within the archival record. I term this, *archiving queers*. To unpack this complex interplay between past and present, I ask: how do contemporary artworks mediate the archive? To address the present-day activations of archival material, I also ask: what are the political efficacies of such archival engagements?

In a musing on the archive, Stuart Hall in his paper “Constituting an archive” (2001), argues that processes of archiving are rich for intervention by artists. Delivered on the occasion of The Living Archive conference organised by the African and Asian Visual Artists' Archive (AAVAA), the paper thinks through the role archives and their constitution play in the visibility and representation of British-based African and Asian artists. Hall’s proposition of artistic engagement with archives – framed as ‘archiving’ – encapsulates the idea that each of the three artwork case studies I go on to consider affect the archives they engage with but also in turn are inculcated in the archival institution and its logics. Instead of imagining an archive as static repository, Hall conjures the image of something processual, a movement, like a becoming, and I do the same in the use of *queering* and *archiving*.³ The title intends to describe an activism within the field of the archive and contemporary art, that plays with and rethinks what an archive and the act of archiving can be now.⁴ The artwork case studies can be regarded, to use the words of Hall, as ‘interruptions in a settled field’. In Hall’s paper, he refers to an interruption in the colonial archiving tradition by British Black and Asian artists and researchers; in this thesis I propose a similar interruption within the distinct space of LGBTQ* archives by queer and trans* artists. They unsettle that which has

³ Giles Deleuze in dialogue with Claire Parnet describes ‘becomings’, in the following terms: ‘There are lines which do not amount to the path of a point, which break free from structure – lines of flight, *becomings*, without future or past, without memory, which resist the binary machine – woman-becoming which is neither man nor woman...’ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, Rev. ed, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 26 [My emphasis].

⁴ Kate Eichhorn argues the archive should be considered a field, like art and literature, within Bourdieu’s theories of cultural and social reproduction, explaining: ‘Bourdieu’s theorizing aptly draws attention to the extent to which literature and art are symbolic objects constituted by the institutions through which cultural products are endowed with value. While he lists many of the most obvious institutions engaged in such work, including museums, galleries, and the academy, he does not list the archive. Because there is no doubt that the archive does belong in this list, the oversight is especially notable, but the archive is also uniquely situated in the field of cultural production. Unlike either the gallery or art museum, which usually endows a literary or artistic work with value in the present, the archive’s work is more often than not retroactive. In other words, the archive is uniquely located to the extent that it permits works to migrate across the field of cultural production at different points in history’. Eichhorn suggests the temporal dimension to the archive distinguishes it to other institutions, but it none the less performs the function of ‘endowing’ a cultural object with value. See: Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 89.

perhaps begun to ossify in the process of archiving. Hall's idea of archiving as a post-colonial critical practice is taken to be analogous with queering. That is, the artworks unsettle any presupposed identities and politics produced by the archive in their complex retellings of the past. In both form and content each of the artworks stage and document an encounter with archives and archival material. The artists, actors, performers, participants, handle archival material, they annotate it, or use it in a performance. This is a process of archiving, a performative engagement with the past that does not let the material settle, or in Hall's words 'ossify'. I lead with Hall's definition of archiving as it reflects a mode of practice for minority subjects' engagement with the institution of the archive that is artistic, creative, and critical.

In this thesis, by archive I mean what Jacques Derrida describes as place of 'consignation', that is a place of 'the gathering together signs'.⁵ In Derrida, this is a material practice bound up in a psychic will to know ones origin, and in a Freudian model of the psychic this a return to a site of trauma. Archives, or the act of making an archive, is therefore also the working through of trauma. From 'the archive', we make meaning, or 'the law'. I build on Hall's proposition and post-colonial thinking on the archive and archiving with the help of critical race scholarship, including Saidiya Hartman, and queer perspectives on archives from Ann Cvetkovich, Kate Eichhorn, Elizabeth Freeman, Catherine Lord, and José Esteban Muñoz. The thesis oscillates and inflects Jacques Derrida's postmodern theory of the archive as it describes a psychic relationship to the past built on trauma, one carried through in Cvetkovich's work on lesbian archives and trauma. Archives, following Derrida, are inexorably bound to processes of institutionalisation, and interpretation, and can be sites of governmentality and biopolitical control (Foucault, 1969). The archive and its logics is given modern form in nineteenth century British Imperialism (Richards, 1993) and the violence of the archival record in its capture, representation, and reproduction of slavery (Hartman, 2010) and queers (Foucault, 1976). Such violence stalks the meaning of archive, and in particular the trauma found in queer archives (Cvetkovich, 2003), is latent within the meaning of archive as I use it here. The archive has also been a place reclaimed and re-imagined by feminist and queer activists, artists, and scholars (Eichhorn, 2013; Halberstam, 2003; Cantrell, Stone, et al, 2015) in the last half-century. Archives by and for LGBTQ* communities have flourished, and the meaning of the word archive

⁵ Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 8. I unpack this concept more fully in the next chapter, 'Archives' Matter'.

expanded along horizons to include the ephemeral (Cvetkovich, 2003) and crucially to this thesis, performance and performativity (Muñoz, 1996; Taylor 2002). Indeed Diana Taylor's formulation of the archive and 'the repertoire', that is the series of embodied and performed knowledges that traverse and transcend the 'written' record of colonial archives in Latin American, articulates an expanded materiality to the archive also put forth by Muñoz in "Ephemera as Evidence" (1996). That is an archive that may exist within a more orthodox view of an institution, box files and such, or an archive that may exist or come into being through more informal and performative acts of recording, remembering, and recalling that past.

The meaning of 'archive' in this thesis – informed by postmodern and queer thought – oscillates between actually existing physical archives and more diasporic, ephemeral and queer formulations of archives as embodied, performed, and made through a network of relations between minoritarian subjects. Put another way, when I use the term 'archive' in this thesis, I mean at once the material archives (places and groupings of materials) that are mediated by the artworks which form this thesis; and, also, 'the archive' as representative of an individual's or society's relationship to history, memory, and in the abstract, the past. The former is the image one conjures when thinking of archives; a collection of things, collected, ordered, stored in boxes, meticulously catalogued, and housed in an institution also referred to as the archive. Archives as institutions, have historically been sites of naming, categorising, and control, particularly of minoritarian subjects, and it is only in the past half a century or so that archives by and for LGBTQ* communities have formed. In each of the case studies I use both meanings of archive to explore at once the importance of archives in the formation and shaping of LGBTQ* histories, and equally to acknowledge the archive as a site of control, knowledge, and power. The unique contribution this research makes is towards an understanding of the important role contemporary artworks can play in mediating queer pasts. *Queering archives and archiving queers* is an approach to working with archives and the past, one that works with the materiality of archives in all its performative guises, from a letter found in a box file in that place we call an 'archive', to the tacit encounter with the past felt between a trans body and a queer elder.

1.2 Overview of case studies and research methodology

This thesis is formed of four chapters. The first chapter, ‘Archives’ Matter’, explores theoretically and philosophically the question of ‘why do we archive?’ to unravel the relationship between archives, history, memory, and the past. Departing from Walter Benjamin’s and Pierre Nora’s writing on history, memory, and the archive, I outline the dangers of a history-memory tied to material trace, and a need to archive that is specific to minoritarian subjects. I also consider the archive as a place of meaning making and system of biopolitical control via Derrida and Michel Foucault. This chapter introduces Diana Taylor’s idea of the archive and the repertoire, central to my understandings of the ways in which minoritarian and queer subjects record and remember through embodied practice and performance. I flesh out queer approaches and understandings to archival and historical research that underpin the proposition of queering archives and archiving queers. Namely Muñoz’s ‘queer acts’ and Elizabeth Freeman’s ‘erotohistoriography’ which are guiding lights in my articulation of a queer historiographic approach in each of the three case studies.⁶ The aim of this chapter is to establish the broader context of this research and the implications of the artistic archival mediations on discourses and practices related to archiving and historiography, and specifically to indicate the political efficacies of queer subjects engaging in archival and historical research.

The ‘theory’ chapter lays the groundwork for the three case study chapters in which I consider artistic mediations of the archive. Although the artworks are multifaceted installations and projects, I focus on three primary mediations: moving image, performance, and education. They feature in each of the three case studies to varying degrees, and all have their own discrete art historical discourses allowing for a comparative review of pre-existing texts. The thesis contributes to these discourses by providing a queer perspective which sadly often lacks in art history. The first is moving image and its connection to queer time, reflecting Hayes’ and Staff’s artworks being predominantly moving image, and McStravick’s engagement with histories of gay moving image practice. Moving image as a technological mediation allows each of the artworks to play with narrative time and storytelling in their re-presentation of archival

⁶ Muñoz’s and Freeman’s formulations inflect the centrality of performance and performativity within queer theory and practice, understood as the ways in which queer subjects embody and enact their own world-making against heterosexist norms. Performance theory is central to post-colonial, queer and new materialist formulations of systems of representation and visibility, and I unpack this further on pages 33 and 34.

material. Queer time describes the differing ways queer subjects relate (in time) to one another, the past, and dominant modes of temporality – the time of capitalist production, the family, of work, etc.⁷ The second mediation is performance as it implicates the body with the archive and allows for understandings of what is not there – the immaterial, thoughts and feelings described as the affective qualities of the archive. In queer scholarship performance relates to performativity, a crucial theoretical conception in understanding how certain gendered roles are ‘performed’ socially and relationally. Archive materials can also be performative, they elicit feelings and politics in queer subjects then and now. Third, education describes the learning from archives which takes place. This captures the potential experience of artists, audiences, and other cultural workers, to re-learn about LGBTQ* histories from a contemporary vantage point. Each of these terms are explicated within the case study chapters in brief literature reviews of associated discourses in both contemporary art and queer theory. Whilst I argue these mediating frameworks are woven throughout all three artworks, to more carefully consider them, I have paired them in relation to one case study, and outline them briefly below:

The first case study is Sharon Hayes’ *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016), and thinks specifically about moving image and queer time as it mediates the archive. Hayes’ artwork includes a five-channel video installation depicting various rooms in a house. Feminist, queer, people of colour, and trans* individuals from local activist communities in Philadelphia, which Hayes is part of, read from scripts derived from various effeminist, feminist, and lesbian archives from across the United States and United Kingdom. Separated by decades and thousands of miles, Hayes seeks out in the archived correspondence of lesbians living between 1955—77, affinities, complexities, and difference with present day queer communities. I consider moving image as it creates bonds and linkages across time and space between LGBTQ* subjects – between audience, performers, and archival material. Specifically, this chapter looks to moving image as a means of queering time and representations of the archive on film.

The second case study is P. Staff’s *The Foundation* (2015) and looks at the artist’s use of performance as it mediates the archive. The 30-minute film documents Staff’s

⁷ Queer time, as defined by J. Halberstam is an appositional temporality that correspond to the lived-experiences of queer subjects within dominant modes of temporality. See: J. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, Sexual Cultures (New York: New York University Press, 2005). I explore this term further in Hayes’ chapter on page 50.

interactions with the Tom of Finland Foundation in Los Angeles. The artwork is a performance in two halves, the first 10 minutes capturing TOM House, the home of the Foundation and its archive, and Staff's time spent with the gay men who live and work there. In the second half, the house is re-staged in a *mise-en-scène* in which Staff performs their relationship to the archive and the leather gay subcultures associated with Tom of Finland's highly masculine homoerotic illustrations. Staff's trans* and effeminate body interact with material and another more masculine 'daddy' performer. Performance and the body become complex mediations of the archive of Tom of Finland, reclaiming in part these masculine gay subcultures as part of Staff's trans* identity. The chapter reviews feminist scholarship on the body and performance, including Amelia Jones, and Rebecca Schneider, with particular attention to Schneider's work on performance as a mediation of the archive. These art historical perspectives are considered alongside more recent scholarship on trans* cultural production. The aim of this case study is to explore ways in which the queer body and performance in contemporary art mediate the archive, specifically as they reveal the more affective and relational qualities of the archive.

The third case study is Conal McStravick's *Learning in a Public Medium* (2015—17) and considers how the artist constructs a public education programme to mediate the archive. This complex artist research project, comprising a series of public events around the art and life of artist Stuart Marshall, is a unique example of how an artist and artwork engages broader publics in archival research. McStravick's educational project is one that addresses Marshall's relative obscurity in art histories of the British avant-garde of the 1970s by revisiting his life and work through various educational formats, to reconsider the artist's legacy and relevance in contemporary art now. *Learning in a Public Medium* enacts a collaborative approach in its mediation of Marshall's archive, which I connect with emancipatory pedagogies and queer relational practice. The aim of this case study is to consider a novel approach to archival mediation through education which privileges collaboration and process.

I chose these case studies because each of them uses archives and archival materials and are exemplary in demonstrating the importance of artistic intervention within archives in making the material relevant now. Each of the case studies elucidate the performativity of archives and archival material, and the ways these materials and queer subjects engaging with them now impress upon on another. The case studies were also made within the past decade, clustered around 2015 to 2017, which coincided with a

whole host of activity and historical reflection on the occasion of important anniversaries for the LGBTQ* community. I also chose each of these artworks as they take a view on LGBTQ* history that is decisively complex and queer, indeed they trouble the very notion of historicising the queer past cum LGBTQ* history through the constitution of queer archives. I will unpack this further in the next chapter, but as Hall warns, archives tend to fix and ossify, arguably even the most radical of histories, and we need performative interventions which excise the queerness of the past from the homonormalisation of LGBTQ* history.

The research was conducted using a variety of methods, namely archival research, artist interviews, literature reviews, and visual analysis. I undertook extensive literature reviews of intersecting philosophy and theory on the archive, drawing on work from art history, cultural studies, Black and critical race studies, contemporary art, feminist art history, performance studies, trans* studies, and queer theory. The thesis is deeply influenced by Derrida's "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" (1995), alongside Muñoz's essay "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts" (1996), and Freeman's book *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010). Thinking and theory from these three texts weave in and out of each of the case studies. The thesis and its referent literature, philosophy and texts, also reflects a nomadic-ness to queer study. Thinking inside and out of art historical discourse and canons provides for fruitful reflection on the dissonances and affinities between queer cultures and the ways in which they serve as an active mode of critique of disciplinary bounds. As J. Halberstam argues in "Reflections on Queer Studies and Queer Pedagogy" (2002), 'queer studies, because it is without a disciplinary home, offers a potent critique of disciplinarity itself'.⁸ The interceding 19 years since the article was published has seen the increased institutionalisation of queer studies, including, as this thesis tracks, in the field contemporary art. I understand the term 'queer' as indicative of a non-normative set of practices – be that in life, politics, or work – and therefore hold close its deviant and subversive potential.⁹

The research and writing contours around the specificities of each of the case studies and was dependent on access to archives and relevant literature, availability of artists for interviews, and towards the end of the thesis, restrictions due to the ongoing Covid-

⁸ J. Halberstam, 'Reflections on Queer Studies and Queer Pedagogy', *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2–4 (23 September 2003): 362.

⁹ It of course must be acknowledged queer studies being an overwhelming cisgender and white discourse, which I will discuss briefly in the next chapter "Archives' Matter".

19 pandemic. Each case study includes a more focused literature review relevant to the mediation under discussion, for example in the chapter on Sharon Hayes I review literature on queer and trans* moving image and queer temporalities. I also include citation of relevant writing on each of the artists and artworks. To better understand the archival material, early in the research of Hayes' chapter, I spent time at the Lesbian Archive and interviewed staff at Glasgow Women's Library. These tacit encounters with archival materials, alongside rich and fruitful conversations, whilst relatively minor in the thesis (in terms of direct citation), have been hugely influential to my understanding of archival interpretation and mediation. In particular it has shaped a nuanced understanding of artistic archival mediations as complementary to, and, in instances, an extension of the invaluable work of archivists, librarians, and other cultural workers in LGBTQ* archives. Staff's case study included email exchanges with the artist, alongside extensive research on the subject archive, the Tom of Finland Foundation. The final case study on McStravick's *Learning in a Public Medium*, involved two lengthy artist interviews, in part because unlike Hayes and Staff there is no critical writing on the project (aside from McStravick's own) and, due to the project's form, documentation is scarce.

My approach to research and writing is grounded in my background as an artist, curator, and producer in contemporary art, and ongoing commitment to collaborative and public forms of knowledge co-production. For example, whilst researching Staff's case study, I also developed and delivered a workshop for BA Fine Art students at Northumbria University around *The Foundation* (2015), which involved performance and readings around power – drawing on Augusto Boal's radical pedagogy and Michel Foucault's writing on gay friendship. This practical exercise done collaboratively with students greatly informed my thinking on the ways we come to knowledge in proximity to other bodies and engagement with cultural documents. McStravick's chapter, which focuses on emancipatory education, was informed by my participation in a reading group on education run by Professor Andrea Phillips. I also spent a considerable time watching the artworks and films of the focus of the project, the artist Stuart Marshall. To borrow from the title of McStravick's project, I too have been learning 'in a public medium', having presented papers on Hayes' artwork, Glasgow Women's Library approach to commissioning artists, and screening works by Stuart Marshall as part of a queer film club and for a World AIDS Day screening at Northumbria. I acknowledge these activities, not as they would be deemed ancillary and cynically categorised as

‘Engagement, influence and impact’ under the Researcher Development Framework, but as central to the ways in which I learned and conducted this research.

I also wish to acknowledge my own identifications and dissonances with queerness.¹⁰ I have located this in the thesis through a series of indented and italicised ‘memories’ of my own encounter with the artworks.¹¹

Like this.

Written in a style closer to my prose as an artist, the intention of these memories is to locate myself in relation to the artworks and this research. I think of the annotation in Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* (2015) or the ritual shaving and dildo fucking in the opening of Paul B. Preciado’s *Testo Junkie* (2008). Both locate a body in relation to the act of writing and knowledge – Preciado calls their book ‘a body-essay’ – and I attempt through these memories to locate myself in proximity, intimately, to the objects of study. In feminist art-historical writing, Amelia Jones suggests that for the researcher to embrace her own desires in interpretation, is to go against the ‘disinterestedness’ of art historical critique. In the chapter “Art History/Art Criticism – Performing meaning” (2005), Jones argues that ‘[w]hilst most art historians would prefer not to admit it, the practice of art historical analysis most often assumes certain values determined via an art critical model of a “disinterested” judgement practiced by a learned interpreter who veils his investment in the service of objectivity’.¹² Jones argues – in a case study re-reading 1960s and 1970s minimalist art objects – for ‘*performing meaning*’ to ‘evince a deep respect for – the psychic/corporeal specificities that, on the one hand, position each

¹⁰ I often think to myself that I knew I was working-class before I was gay or queer, and this thought is inflected in my relationship to and understandings of queerness. In the academy or in contemporary art, exclusions and elisions abound along lines of ability, class, gender, and race. Queerness, at least as it circulates and is performed discursively within spaces like the university and gallery, is still propped up by a select few voices. I, of course, as a white cisgender gay, form part of and sustain these exclusionary systems, but what I am trying to articulate here (closeted and hidden in a footnote) is my unease within these spaces and how I play with this unease in research and practice. I am drawn in part to these artworks because they make me think about my relationship to institutionally sanctioned modes of culture and knowledge production, and a personal history of being a working-class queer that is denied, hidden, or indeed closeted.

¹¹ These memories stand-in for images of artworks, of which there are a minimal selection throughout the thesis. There is one installation shot of Hayes’ exhibition at the Common Guild; one scanned image of Staff’s film; the image of a poster from a lecture given by McStravick; and a side-by-side of film stills from work by Stuart Marshall and Charlotte Prodder. This minimal selection is purposeful, and the choice of images is itself performative – for example the image of the installation of Hayes’ is the vantage point from which the preceding memory describes my encounter with the artwork. The intention is to playfully highlight my mediation of these artworks, and moreover entangle myself in their queerness. This is most apparent in the image chosen of Staff’s work, which is partially obscured by my fingerprints captured by the scanner.

¹² Amelia Jones, ‘Art History/Art Criticism – Performing Meaning’, in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text.*, ed. Andrew Stephenson and Amelia Jones, 2005, 36.

of us differently in the matrices of culture and, on the other hand, are themselves continually open to reinterpretation'.¹³ This is a phenomenological approach to art historical work later akin to Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology that recognises the specific position (and negation) of queer subjects in relation to heterogeneous and normative modernist and post-modernist subject positions. However minor (a choice word for an enquiry that focuses on 'minoritarian' artworks) my reflections, they intend to, borrowing from Jones, 'perform' the interpretative process in art historical research and writing, and to unsettle conventions of an art historical PhD thesis.

Taking a queer approach to research, also extends to the selection of case studies and the twists and turns this thesis takes. Whilst I have subsequently focused the research, and edited the writing, my choice of case studies is in part due to an encounter with or a desire towards each of these artworks. Remembering a visit to Hayes in 2016, I recall a relationship that was falling apart and running through my mind whilst I sat in the installation, and I speak of being turned on by Staff's performance with a Daddy (but don't talk about giving Staff eyes a few years later when we briefly worked together in Edinburgh). McStravick's is a little more complex, I did not take part in any of *Learning in a Public Medium*, although we crossed paths, and I was working as a producer in a gallery in which McStravick's delivered one of the workshops included in the case study. I therefore do not have any 'memories', but I feel much closer to this project, perhaps due to an overidentification with the artists McStravick and Marshall, both gay men working in the arts who have helped me in my own navigation (as a gay and queer) in the arts. This is an entangled queer methodological approach to research and writing that is routed in complex desires and erotics, and moreover reclaims the personal in academic research. Hal Foster suggests a driving force of the archival impulse in contemporary artworks is a 'will to connect' and propose 'new affective association' to combat the 'anomic fragmentation' of postmodernity. He remarks that such a desire to connect 'can betray a hint of paranoia – for what is paranoia if not a practice of forced connections and bad combinations, of my own private archive, of my own notes from the underground, put on display?'¹⁴ I embrace such paranoia, forced and bad combinations as a reclamation of the pathologised character of the homosexual, as it accounts for the ways in which queer subjects navigate research (and the world). As I unpack throughout the thesis in relation to the artworks and I apply here, a queer

¹³ Ibid., 49.

¹⁴ Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', *October* 110 (October 2004): 21.

methodological approach to historical enquiry is often driven by a glimmer (Muñoz, 1996), an erotics (Freeman, 2003), and a feeling (Cvetkovich, 2003). I am drawn to these artworks and this subject area as an academic researcher, but also as an activist, a fan (Grant, 2011), and a queer.

1.3 Queering turns, or turning queer: the context of the research

In a “turn”, we shift *away* from something or *towards* or *around* something, and it is *we* who are in movement, rather than *it*. Something is activated in us, perhaps even actualized, as we move.¹⁵

The prevalence of LGBTQ* archives and histories in contemporary art now is arguably part of a broader shift culturally, economically, socially, and politically, towards greater inclusion and visibility. In contemporary art, we might call this a queer turn. It is a turn, or to borrow Irit Rogoff’s terms, a ‘shift’, in discourse and practice to account for LGBTQ* art, lives, and social histories. It is a movement *away* from dominant straight discourses, *towards* and *around* queer and trans* epistemologies. The totality of such a shift and turn reminds of Lars Bang Larson’s humorous treatise on the many and multiple so-called turns which are said to be ‘a handle on art—yes, on the entire package of visual art as it plays out right now, all over the place, in its total totality and most self-present contemporaneity!’¹⁶ That is not my intention here, instead I would propose a queering of turns which discursively service some homogenised postmodern subject and field; and a turning queer pre-existing art historical discourses to account for discounted queer lives, communities, histories, practices, and politics. As Rogoff does, I wish to regard a ‘turn’, not as the totality of a field, but as a movement which describes a bodily disposition, what Sara Ahmed calls an ‘orientation’. In “Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology” (2006), Ahmed argues for ‘an orientation toward queer, a way to inhabit the world that gives “support” to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place’.¹⁷ To give a brief context to this research which orientates toward queer, which Ahmed calls ‘starting-points’, in this section I provide: first, a brief overview of a recent ‘turn’ to LGBTQ* voices in contemporary

¹⁵ Irit Rogoff, ‘Turning’, *E-Flux* 00, no. 2010 (2010) [My emphasis].

¹⁶ Lars Bang Larson, ‘Turn! Turn! Turn!’, *Mousse Magazine*, November 2012, <http://moussomagazine.it/lars-bang-larsen-turn-turn-turn-2012/>.

¹⁷ Sara Ahmed, ‘Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 4 (1 January 2006): 570.

art; second, outline the turn to archives in queer theory; and third, establish pre-existing discourses on the archive in contemporary art.

The past decade or so has seen increasing visibility of LGBTQ* art, culture, and histories in contemporary art. In the United Kingdom, a flurry of activity celebrating LGBTQ* social and political histories coincided and was clustered around several significant anniversaries. As historian Jeffrey Weeks reflected, '[t]he summer of 2017 saw an unexpected, and certainly unprecedented festival of queer Britain'.¹⁸ In 2017, during the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexual acts between men in England and Wales, Tate Britain staged their expansive survey exhibition *Queer British Art 1861—1967*. The same year, the journal *Visual Culture in Britain* produced a complementary special issue on queer visual culture in Britain, coming out of a conference held at the London College of Fashion in 2016.¹⁹ The *Queer British Art* exhibition and concurrent scholarship sought to centre and re-evaluate the significance of gender and sexuality in art and art history. The exhibition also coincided with a series of commissions of new works by queer artists, such as a series of films for Channel 4's *Random Acts*, and the documentary *Queerama* (2017), a kaleidoscopic moving image history of LGBTQ* Britain made using archival material from the British Film Institute, co-commissioned and broadcast on the BBC.²⁰ A younger generation of trans* and queer artists have risen to critical acclaim, including Wu-Tsang, who presented her first major UK solo exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary, also in 2017. More recently, artist Jamie Crewe was awarded the Margaret Tait Award for filmmakers based in Scotland, in 2019.²¹ Queer art and activism has also made its way into more explicitly commercial contexts, with Frieze Projects in 2017 commissioning *SPIT!*, a series of 'performances manifestos, speech acts and gestures of the past' taking place during the Fair.²² This constellation of examples from just the past five years points to an ongoing reconciliation and arguably institutionalisation of LGBTQ* art and cultures within the relatively conservative field of contemporary art.

¹⁸ Jeffrey Weeks 'Queer British Art, 1861–1967', *History Workshop Journal* 85 (1 April 2018): 309–13.

¹⁹ Reina Lewis and Andrew Stephenson, 'Introduction: Queer Visual Historiographies', *Visual Culture in Britain* 18, no. 1 (2 January 2017): 1–17.

²⁰ 'Queer Lives: Channel 4 Random Acts – Talking Point | Tate', accessed 30 August 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/talking-point/queer-lives-channel-4-random-acts>.

²¹ With increased visibility of LGBTQ* art, culture, and histories in contemporary art brings to the fore questions of exclusion and erasure of certain voices within art history. I will return to this in Sharon Hayes' chapter, drawing on recent trans* scholarship which sharply tackles the tensions between visibility and violence.

²² See: 'Frieze Projects 2017: SPIT! | Frieze', accessed 7 April 2020, <https://frieze.com/media/frieze-projects-2017-spit>; 'The SPIT! Manifesto', carlos maria romero, accessed 7 April 2020, <http://www.carlosmariaromero.com/spit-manifesto>.

The turn to LGBTQ* pasts has been driven in large part by a younger generation of queer cultural producers. Examples include Ed Webb-Ingall's research and film exploring the history and legacies of Section 28, *We Have Rather Been Invaded*, (2016—2018).²³ Webb-Ingall's project culminated in an exhibition at Focal Point Gallery, Southend in 2018, the 30th anniversary year of the enacting of Section 28 in 1988, a piece of legislation which prohibited local authorities 'promoting' homosexuality (repealed in 2000 in Scotland, and 2003 in England and Wales). In Newcastle upon Tyne, the remarkable exhibition *On Our Backs: An Archive* at NewBridge Bookshop (2017), co-curated by Jade Sweeting and Janina Sabaliauskaite, explored the archive and works of photographer Phyllis Christopher. The exhibition and associated programme of events explored Gateshead-based Christopher's legacy and involvement in the lesbian erotica magazine, *On Our Backs* (1984—2006). The resurgence of interest in Christopher's work arguably sparked by Sweeting and Sabaliauskaite has led to a large retrospective at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art (2021). At a flat in the south side of Glasgow in 2018, Laura Guy (who is also the editor of a forthcoming Bookwork's publication on Christopher) and Mason Lever-Yapp, under the pseudonym Radclyffe Hall (author of *The Well of Loneliness*), co-curated *Deep Down Body Thirst*, an exhibition on lesbian art and activism, included as part of Glasgow International. The second iteration of the exhibition, *Hot Moment* at Auto Italia South East, London, in 2020, focussed on the 1980s photographic works of Tessa Boffin, Ingrid Pollard, and Jill Posener. Also in 2018, Auto Italia presented *Read My Lips*, the first retrospective exhibition in the UK of AIDS art activist collective Gran Fury. Each of these examples share a driving force of artists, curators, and cultural workers deeply invested in queer historical enquiry. Rather than simply commemorate or celebrate LGBTQ* history, these projects give new life and relevance to the politics and practices of a previous generation. And, central to these new engagements with the past, is the use of archives.

The queer archival turn in contemporary art focuses on earlier moments of queer art, activism, and social histories. It looks to material practices, which we might describe along the lines of Ahmed's 'queer phenomenology', as a way of approaching historical enquiry that 'emphasises the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of

²³ Webb-Ingall is a collaborator of Conal McStravick, whom I go on to discuss in the final chapter. McStravick has spoken on Webb-Ingall's work, having taken part in panel discussion related to *We Have Rather Been Invaded* at BFI Flare. See: 'We Have Rather Been Invaded', BFI, 2016, <https://whatson.bfi.org.uk/flare/Online/default.asp?BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::permalink=wehaverratherbeeninvaded>.

consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready to hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds'.²⁴ The significance of 'what is ready to hand', and the role that objects play in revealing 'the direction we have taken in life', marks a new historiographic and materialist approach to queer theory. The queer theory of the 1990s emerged in the context of a broader cultural turn away from the materialist concerns of 1970s and 1980s feminism and radical gay politics towards more discursive practices.²⁵ The turn to the archive in queer studies can be understood as addressing both discursive and material practices.²⁶ The new materialism of Ahmed, alongside Karen Barad, and the interventions from critical race scholars including Saidiya Hartman, are notable examples of moves which complicate our relationship to matter and archival material. Archives, as a locus for negotiating a relationship to history, memory, and the past, have been re-conceived by queer artists and scholars as more than simply bricks and mortar, but also made of feelings and relations (Cvetkovich, 2003); comprising the immaterial and performative (Muñoz, 1996); and as a means of forging connections across time (Freeman, 2010). The 'queer archive', as Ann Cvetkovich describes in *An Archive of Feelings* (2003) is 'the material instantiation of Derrida's deconstructed archive; they are composed of material practices that challenge traditional conceptions of history and understand the quest for history as

²⁴ Ahmed, 'ORIENTATIONS', 544.

²⁵ Material feminist scholar Claire Hemmings has described the cultural turn as 'a turn to representation and abstraction over social meaning'. In: *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*, Next Wave (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 86.

²⁶ Arguably, queer theory has always been concerned with material practice, as Eve Sedgwick's 1994 work *Tendencies*, proclaims: '[a] word so fraught as "queer" – fraught with so many social and personal histories of exclusion, violence, defiance, excitement – never can only denote; nor even can it only connote; a part of its experimental force as a speech act is the way in which it dramatizes locutionary position itself'. Queer is therefore a slippery word. It can denote an identity entangled in histories of gay liberation and struggle; whilst equally it can connote a diffuse set of political and relational practices. Its meaning shifts and changes depending on who uses it, when and where. As Judith Butler explains in her 1993 essay, "Critically Queer", queer is 'a site of collective contestation', and 'never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes'. Whilst queerness might evade us, or change, what Butler and Sedgwick both point to is its connection with 'social and personal histories' and 'political purposes', i.e. 'queer' is grounded in material concerns. We can trace this understanding of queerness to its routes in the social constructivist work on gender and sexuality in the 1970s and 1980s, which, as Gayle Rubin puts it: 'now form[s] the familiar ground on which most queer scholarship takes place'. This model understood gender and sexuality, that Weeks describes 'as a complex set of *social* practices that change over time'. Weeks, like Butler, articulates the spatial dimension of sexuality, again highlighting the importance of context and this sense of 'groundedness', or a materiality to the diffuse character of queerness. Muñoz, who I use at length in this thesis, is equally concerned with a material practices that exist in the ephemeral and performative. See: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 8; Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, Routledge Classics (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 173; G. Rubin, 'BLOOD UNDER THE BRIDGE: REFLECTIONS ON "THINKING SEX"', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 1 (1 January 2011): 18; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society the Regulations of Sexuality since 1800*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2015), 2 [Original emphasis].

psychic need rather than a science'.²⁷ Derrida's 'deconstructed archive', is perhaps best surmised in the opening lines of "Archive Fever" as: '[n]othing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word "archive"'.²⁸ That is because archives are not simply places filled with material, but deeply entangled in a psychic relationship to origins and remembering both individually and societally. The loss of meaning in the word 'archive', is in part a symptom of a troubled psychic relationship to the past Derrida diagnoses as 'mal d'archive', or archive fever.²⁹ Queer archives describe a relationship to materials that may or may not be a conventional archive, that is a place where material is collected like a library, museum, or special collection.

In contemporary art practice, the queer archival turn is commonly associated with moving image, film, and video practice (Boaden, 2020; Freeman, 2010). Lens-based media have a long and complex history with the archive, technologies such as photography can be understood historically as part of disciplinary archival systems (Sekula, 1986); as an 'archiving machine' (Enwezor, 2008); and as an important activist tool historically used by communities during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s (Juhasz, 2006). Artist moving image, film, and video were the chosen medium for a generation of artists working at the turn of 1990s moment of New Queer Cinema, also noted for their historiographic approach to queer histories (Rich, 2013). By historiographic, I mean the ways in which queer artists critically reflect on processes of archiving, historicising, and memorising, and the role technologies play in representing past moments. This can be seen for example in the works of Campbell X, Isaac Julien, Stuart Marshall, and Pratibha Parmar. This previous generation of artists and artworks have deeply informed both the theory and practice of a new generation of artists, including the artists who feature in this thesis.

The 'archival turn' in contemporary art of the early 2000s is useful in understanding a generalised 'impulse' of artists towards archives. Here, I briefly consider the connections and tensions between this earlier moment of theory and practice, and the queer archival artworks which form this thesis. The 'archival turn' draws on postmodern theory on 'the archive' from Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969,

²⁷ Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, Series Q (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 268.

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 57.

²⁹ We might also say a loss in meaning is in part due to Derrida's disambiguation of the word in his own poststructuralist theory. Professional archivists for example would disagree, as the term is specifically defined in archival science and studies.

trans. 1972) and Derrida's "Archive Fever" (1995). Hal Foster's cornerstone essay "An Archival Impulse" (2004), sets the discursive tone that resonates to this day by describing archival art 'as an idiosyncratic probing into particular figures, objects, and events in modern art, philosophy, and history'.³⁰ Foster's turn sought to delineate a particular mode of postmodern artistic practice that was specific but still within a lineage of 'the documentary turn', which he describes as 'the return of the real' in his 1996 book of the same name.³¹ The return of the real, 'a turn to the real as evoked through the violated body and/or the traumatic subject, and a turn to the referent as grounded in a given identity and/or a sited community', is a redress to the discombobulated present.³² It describes artists' desire towards engagement with present day politics and social justice whilst acknowledging the fragmentation of history, time, and subjectivity under postmodernity. The return of the real applied to a queer archival turn, reflects the 'referent' of these artworks (including the case studies which form this thesis) being 'grounded' in LGBTQ* 'identity and/or [...] community'. The 'archival impulse' extends this desire towards 'the real' whilst questioning a psychic connection to the past which Foster describes, borrowing from Freud, as 'scatological'.

This impulse in contemporary art resonates with a reasoning we might ascribe to a decidedly queer turn to archives. Foster's essay is formed of three 'idiosyncratic' case studies of installations and sculptures by Thomas Hirschhorn, Sam Durant and Tacita Dean, which use pre-existing archival and nonarchival material in the constitution of new archives. They blur what may or may not be archival material – often interweaving personal narrative – and therefore blurring understandings of what constitutes the archival record. The impulse of artists towards the archive Foster explains is the 'will "to connect that what cannot be connected" – to probe a misplaced past, to collate its different signs (sometimes pragmatically, sometimes parodistically) to ascertain what might remain in the present'.³³ Elaborating in the associated footnote, these are

³⁰ Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', 3.

³¹ It is interesting to note that Foster's investment in 'turns' is due in part to a rejection of 'posthistorical' doctrine in the field, and his belief that 'specific genealogies of innovative art and theory exist over this time'. I would say a desire to trace genealogy exists in what I ascribe to each of the artists in this thesis. The difference? These are queer genealogies, and shaky continuities across time that require one to look across scholarly bounds to spaces in which queer art, life and work has been done, which all too often is out with the purview of art history. The avant-garde does not totally break free of the vestiges of art history, despite Foster making a persuasive case for more horizontal readings of the avant-garde as 'a coarticulation of artistic and political forms'. See: Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996), x, 5.

³² Ibid., xviii.

³³ Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', 21.

connections that are ‘tendentious [...] tentative [...] and so on’.³⁴ These artists are taken to be examples of a generalised postmodern artist subject who ‘assumes anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new orders of affective association, however partial and provisional, to this end, even as it also registers the difficulty, at times the absurdity, of doing so’.³⁵ The essay also reflects on similar ideas in Craig Owens’ “The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism” (1980) and Benjamin Buchloh’s “Gerhard Richter’s *Atlas: The Anomic Archive**” (1999), both published in the highly influential art journal *October*.³⁶ The archival impulse confronts an effect of late capital, this ‘anomic fragmentation’, that is the breakdown of individual and societal norms and values. The archival impulse can only ever be ‘partial and provisional’ because that will to connect, or what we might more generally describe as a will to know (the beginning, the origin, the truth), is an interminable and impossible feat that ultimately leads to sickness and death. The compelling argument which Foster makes that is relevant to this thesis, is the ability of queer archival artworks to forge connections – in part due to the privileged position granted the ‘idiosyncratic’ artist – between fragments of the ‘misplaced’ past.

The archival impulse as it relies on Derrida’s poststructuralist ‘archive fever’, and a postmodern subject, finds its limits when applied to the specificities of queer archival intervention. As Valeria Rohy bluntly notes in “In The Queer Archive: Fun Home” (2010) ‘[t]here is nothing essentially queer about the death drive or archive fever’. The psychic will and need to archive called archive fever leans on Freudian understandings of psychological breakdown and is conceived as a neurosis and sickness. Neurosis, in Freud, is linked to the figure of ‘the homosexual’, and ‘homosexuality’ is associated with the death drive. Lee Edelman’s writing on the death drive in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004) is instructive here, as he explains: ‘... the death drive names what the queer, in the order of the social, is called forth to figure: the negativity opposed to every form of social viability’.³⁷ The homosexual cum figurative queer haunts the psychoanalytic tropes of Freud and stalks an archival impulse, but is only ever that, a ghost, a spectre, a metaphor that does not speak to the lived experiences of queer subjects. There is ‘nothing essentially queer’ about archive fever because the death drive is something which inheres within all individuals, it is just

³⁴ Ibid., 21, footnote 56.

³⁵ Ibid., 21.

³⁶ I will return to Owens’s work in Sharon Hayes case study.

³⁷ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 9.

homosexuals (as deviant subjects) according to Freud, are more wired towards self-destruction. The self-destructive slant (the death drive) of archive fever is where we find what Leo Bersani would describe as the ‘self-shattering’ potentialities of queerness. However, as seductive as Bersani’s brand of post-identity queerness is (which I return to in Staff’s case study), it does not help address the material practices of LGBTQ* archiving and archives. The gap in knowledge this thesis attempts to address is between an earlier discursive moment in contemporary art on archives predicated on a general ‘will’ (impulse) towards archives with a more discrete set of queer ontologies and material practices.

The shift between an earlier discursive moment on archives and a specifically queer turn is perhaps best described as a shift from an impulse to action. This thesis looks at what these artworks *do* to archives, how they activate the material, contribute to existing LGBTQ* archival practices, and critique the archive’s tendency to ossify and fix. Whilst learning from Derrida and Foster, this thesis does not seek to reconcile a queer subject’s ‘will’ towards the archive, instead it looks to the effects of such archival interventions. I argue that artworks as mediations are processual; they are queering and archiving. They reconsider seemingly forgotten complex moments of queer history, and caution against the very systems of historicisation which characterised them this way. Rather than setting themselves against the institution of the archive, they are part of a process of cultural activism within the archive. The artworks encapsulate a reimagined process of archiving, drawing energies from the past to imagine different ways of producing knowledge and culture in the present. Rather than saying the artworks constitute an archive, returning us to the noun, a stasis, an ossification, I argue, following Hall, the artworks are the constituting of an archive, one that continually shifts and changes with our politic present. This movement towards something, but never quite reaching it and only gleaming it in the present is why Muñoz refers to queerness as a horizon, like a utopia, something we search for in common in the present using traces of the past. The archive, in these artworks, is that horizon, one brimming with all the potentialities of queer futures, latent, and always already existing in queer pasts.

2. Archives' matter: the politics of the past, the importance of matter and its mediation

2.1 Introduction

There is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory.

Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.¹

With these words, quietly buried in a lengthy footnote of “Archive Fever”, Jacques Derrida states unequivocally the real-world effects of archives. Beyond a complex conceptual rendering of ‘the archive’, archives – the places and groupings of materials we commonly associate with the word – have a politics. Archives are tools in the making of histories and political imaginaries. Inversely, they can also be said to be made *from* historical and political imaginings. Archives are both a product and productive of history, memory and in the abstract, an idea of the past. There is a politics to the past, and the archive is a vital part of the politics of the present as it is shaped by a ‘past’, or indeed an interpretation of it. Queer individuals and communities since the turn of the twentieth century have been quietly producing their own archives, countering the criminal records, medical reports, and psychological profiles of ‘official’ archives of the state. LGBTQ* archives as they have become more public and institutionalised, play a vital role in the re-writing of queer histories and narratives. The participation in, access to and constitution of LGBTQ* archives – in a Western Anglo-American context – by and for the LGBTQ* community is crucial to a contemporary queer politic. I say it is crucial because in a world that does not follow a progressive and teleological narrative – where in the United Kingdom in a hop-skip-and-a-No-Deal-Brexit we lurch further to the alt-right with each backbench existential crisis of the Conservative Party – we must resist the neofascism of the present with alternative forms of collective politics found in the archive.

In this chapter I outline the theoretical and philosophical basis which informs this thesis, and specifically explore the question ‘why do we archive?’ As Derrida suggests in the epigraph, archives are bound up in forms of political control and power, therefore I

¹ Derrida, ‘Archive Fever’, 11.

begin with the politics of the past. I look to theories on history, memory and archives in the writing of Walter Benjamin, Pierre Nora, Derrida, and Michel Foucault. Benjamin and Derrida share a common view of history and the archive which comes into relief through the lens of genocide and the ‘archival trauma’ of the Jewish community.² Whilst this thesis does not focus on the close association between trauma and the archive, I do reflect briefly on artist Stuart Marshall’s writing and artwork *Bright Eyes* (1983) as it makes complex the relationship between homosexuality, the Holocaust and their historicisation. Whilst Derrida reflects a postmodern conception of the archive that is as much a psychic process as it is a physical place, Nora and Foucault locate archives as imbricated with the nation, the state, and power. Nora’s archive is a ‘lieu de mémoire’, a place of memory, where history is bound to memory in service of establishing a French national identity. Foucault’s archive is a system, it provides an order to things, very much in the vein of the nineteenth-century archive which gives us the modern-day figure of the homosexual. I end the section by touching on the nonarchival, what Diana Taylor calls the ‘repertoire’, as a way of describing the more embodied ways of remembering and recording history undertaken by minoritarian groups. In contrast to a totemic view of the archive, which thinks of History with a capital ‘H’, and psychical archives as hopelessly entangled in the opacities of control and power, I turn to the importance of minority archives, smaller histories, and the ways queer subjects record their pasts. In this section, I ask: what are the politics of the

² Derrida suggests the contemporary logics of the archive are built on trauma or more specifically the trauma that defines Western imaginaries of the violent precision of a state exercising all its administrative and bureaucratic apparatus in service of the extermination of an entire minority. I speak of course of the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. This trauma is the subject and focus via Derrida’s reading of Freud’s own study *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), and a response to an essay by historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. This tripartite reading is one of the most complex parts of “Archive Fever”, which Herman Rapaport writing in his review, “Archive Trauma”, explains: ‘Derrida returns to repeatedly [...] the interminable instantiation of a death drive coupled with the desire to inherit a terminal unitary trait from Freud that will bind one to a community that is, in essence, Jewish’. Rapaport understands Freud’s work on Moses and Jews as concerned with ‘why it is that a community of people known as the Jews still exists in name and substance, given all the misfortunes and ill treatment it has had to sustain’. Freud argues that as the chosen people of God, created by Moses, Jews are dedicated to reading their own history and as Rapaport puts it ‘their essence as a people were defined by this election’. Rapaport argues that what Freud sets out to do in *Moses and Monotheism* is to demonstrate the possibility ‘that Jewish community is founded on the basis of a trauma that relates to the murder of the father’. Rapaport and Freud are referring to the murder of Moses, which can be found in ‘their’ (the Jews’) archive, again as Rapaport puts it: ‘a trauma in the archive that records the slaying of Moses and repression of the crime’. Derrida’s mal d’archive (archive fever) is evident in this archival erasure, ‘a trauma in the archive that has annihilated itself, a trauma that has obliterated its own tracks, though its resonance can still be felt by means of its absence’. To archive, that is to succumb to archive fever and ‘return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement’, is the enacting of a desire, the will to death, as the return invariably leads to the scene of a crime, the death of the father. The secret at the heart of the Jewish archive, is a trauma which reveals an essence of being that predicates a loss of identity. See: Herman Rapaport, ‘Archive Trauma’, ed. Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 28, no. 4 (1998): 69, 71 [Original emphasis].

archive? How are archives connected to history and memory? How else might we archive? How does the archive relate to minoritarian, LGBTQ*, and queer subjects?

After establishing a philosophical foundation, the second half of this chapter shifts focus to consider specifically queer perspectives on archives and – significantly – archival material. It does so in an echo of what each of the case studies do. That is, they pay attention to the *material* histories of queer lives and communities. I focus on the importance of ephemera and its relationship to LGBTQ* archives, and ask: why does matter, matter? As a counter to the monumentality of the historical archive and artefact, I start with ephemera, and in the poetic words of José Esteban Muñoz ‘[t]hink of ephemera as trace, the remains, the things that are left, hanging in the air like a rumour’.³ I look to Muñoz’s notion of ephemera, queerness and importantly ‘queer acts’, as guiding lights to explain: first, a materiality that brings together the archival and nonarchival; second, queerness as glimpsed in ephemera; and third, as an act which accounts for the ephemeral. I draw predominantly on Muñoz’s influential text “Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts” (1996) as it provides a rich schema for the ways in which academics, artists, and activists alike might engage with archival and historical material. I also draw on Ann Cvetkovich’s incredibly important book *An Archives of Feelings* (2003), as it specifically explores archives that exist in and beyond physical archives. This parallels Muñoz’s notion of ephemera, which is as much concerned with the performativity of the queer every day, as it is with archival material. To re-orientate the discussion towards objects and things, I draw on Catherine Lord’s writing on the making of lesbian archives through the exchange of books. Lord’s essay articulates the importance of objects, like a book, as they are imbued with and circulate within what Muñoz calls ‘structures of feelings’, and can form part of what Cvetkovich refers to as an ‘archive of feelings’. The agency of the object and its entanglements with queer subjects, I align with recent new materialist theory and philosophy of the past decade, specifically the work of Karen Barad. The second half of the section further grounds queer understandings of ‘queer archives’ as they have emerged from the development of LGBTQ* archives. In the realm of the discursive and cultural, we might forget that there are things, objects, archival materials, and places where they are kept and stored, which form part of how we come to know queer subjects past and present. With the help of Cvetkovich, Agatha Beins and Simon

³ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Sexual Cultures (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 65.

Watney, I think about queer subjects as they come into visibility through the institution of LGBTQ* archives. This is an incredibly important and arguably under-considered area of scholarship on queer archives. Kate Eichhorn's *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (2013), and specifically Jaime Cantrell and Amy L. Stone's edited collection *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories* (2015) are two excellent examples in which the performativity of queer archives are explored in relation to LGBTQ* archiving practice and institution. I build on these works as crucial to understanding LGBTQ* archives as they challenge and perhaps come to resemble hegemonic processes of archiving and historicisation.

In the final section, I return to Muñoz's 'queer acts' as a means of framing a mode of artistic historiographic enquiry. I propose queer acts bridge the monumental 'archive' and the fugitive 'repertoire'. Queer acts propose artistic, creative, and critical approaches to engaging with the past. They sit at the interstices of the production of queer cultures and knowledges in and beyond institutional frames. To unpack this interplay, I explore queer acts as performative, institutive, and historiographic, as each traverses the archival and the nonarchival – orthodox and transgressive ways of producing knowledge, making history, and recoding memories. To address specifically artistic engagement with LGBTQ* archives we need to acknowledge the role of archival matter and institutional practices. I therefore use queer acts closely to the way Muñoz proposed it some twenty-four years ago within the context of an emergent critical discourse in performance studies in academia. Whilst queer acts can be described as the ways in which queer subjects instantiate a queer worldmaking project in the quotidian, in a look, a glance, a fuck; Muñoz proposes them as also present in the ways in which queer scholars approach the writing of queer histories within the institutional bounds of the academy. I take this as applicable to the disciplinary bounds of the field of art as well as the archive.

I conclude by further elaborating on queering archives and archiving queers as it describes an approach to archives that is performative, institutive, and historiographic. I draw comparison with Elizabeth Freeman's incredibly influential 'erotohistoriography' which outlines a performative relationship to the past, and a way beyond a memory bound to physical archives. Erotohistoriography accounts for the circuits of feelings and relations that, as Freeman terms it, 'pulls' a queer subject towards 'outmoded' versions of the past. Temporal drag is one such strategy, which I use as an example of a 'queer act' in artistic practice, of making present the efficacies of a lost queer political project.

Queer acts offer a counter to the dangers of a history tied to memory resigned to a place whilst they equally do not negate the need for LGBTQ* archives, and moments of ossification and institutionalisation of queer pasts. Queering archives and archiving queers is an approach informed by queer approaches to archives, history, memory, and the past. Using Muñoz's queer acts and Freeman's erotohistoriography, I am seeking critically self-reflexive approaches to working with the physical traces of queer pasts. In a time in which 'fake news' proliferates, and a virulent anti-trans right mobilises itself under the false dichotomies of 'culture wars', we need new materialist approaches to history and historiography that at once rely on the traditional ways in the West we 'evidence' and might legitimate queer subjects, namely using archives; whilst we seek to trouble them, make them active, embodied and part of the political present.

2.2 The politics of the past: history, memory, and archive

History is dangerous. Walter Benjamin argues for a historical materialism that is suspect of the certitudes of history. In "On the Concept of History" (1940) Benjamin writes a reprisal to a Marxist historical materialist embrace of progress by the Social Democratic party prior to their demise in 1940s Germany. His critique is directed toward historicism, which 'offers the "eternal" image of the past'.⁴ To historicise, is to treat a specific moment or event as irrevocable fact, indeed, to make it history. Such a practice creates a 'universal history', which precludes or indeed places the oppressed class within a narrative directed by the powers that be. The dangers of history, and historicising, in the attribution of meaning to moments in time, is that it creates a fixed understanding and narrative. Benjamin, writing against the backdrop of the horrors of Nazi-occupied Europe, warned that '[o]ne reason fascism has a chance is that, in the name of progress, its opponents treat it as a historical norm'.⁵ The progress he speaks of is one put forth by Marxist historical materialists and the Social Democratic party of the time. Theirs is a historical materialism and historicising that orientates towards the future, 'appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger'. Memory is weaponised and historicised in service of inciting revolution. Instead, we must be attentive to these memories, and how they have come to be historicised. For Benjamin, '[t]he only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is

⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings 1938—1940*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1940), 396.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 392.

firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious'.⁶ The will to revolution must not supersede a critical reflection of past revolutionary moments, as such complacencies afford the rise of fascism.⁷ Returning to history, which Benjamin defines as 'the subject of a construction whose site is not a homogenous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time [*Jetztzeit*]'.⁸ In other words, history is always made in the present. This is true also of the historical materialist with revolutionary aims. What Benjamin warns against are the dangers of narrative and teleology which emerge from history (even understood as a construct). The revolutionary knows that history, as a construct of those in power, wishes to break or 'explode' such a continuum (within which they are oppressed). "On the Concept of History" reminds us that even a materialist approach to history may still be subject to narrative, as it supplants one teleology (that of the dominant class) with another one (that of the soon to emancipated oppressed class).

A history of LGBTQ* subjects must equally be attentive to the lures of certain kinds of collective political identities which emerge from processes of historicisation, narrative, and teleology. The artist Stuart Marshall, whose own archive is the focus of my final case study, reflects on histories of fascism, homosexual oppression, and gay liberation in "The Contemporary Political Use of Gay History: The Third Reich" (1991). The paper is a critical re-interrogation of some his earlier film, the docudrama *Bright Eyes* (1984), and the persecution of homosexuals under Nazism. Specifically, Marshall considers the symbology of the pink triangle, used to demarcate homosexuals in concentration camps, and in the contemporary, reclaimed as a symbol of queer activism used by the likes of ACT-UP. Marshall argues the pink triangle is a symbol derived from 'the *mistaken* belief that homosexuals had been massively exterminated as a group by the Third Reich'. He elaborates that the triangle has come to represent the 'mythical genocide of homosexuals' and 'provided us with a group identity similar to that of the Jews'. To be clear, Marshall is not contending that homosexuals were not persecuted by the Nazis (they were), but he is questioning a mode of identification in which 'we could recognise our community through the eyes of our Nazi persecutors'.⁹ The historicisation of this particular moment of trauma, and its distillation and representation in the pink

⁶ Ibid., 391.

⁷ As Benjamin continues in a later section: 'A critique of the concept of such a progression [that is the progression of humankind embraced by the Social Democrats] must underlie any criticism of the concept of progress itself'. Ibid., 395.

⁸ Ibid. [Original emphasis].

⁹ Stuart Marshall, 'The Contemporary Political Use of Gay History: The Third Reich', in *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video*, ed. Bad Object-Choices (Organization) (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 85.

triangle could be surmised as having two effects: first, the (potentially antisemitic) flattening of experiences of two distinct minoritarian groups, the Jewish community and homosexuals; and second, the perpetuation of an identity as always shaped by the oppressor. The mobilisation of such a symbol of oppression in the context of AIDS activism of the 1980s and 1990s, as Marshall explains, is intended ‘to unite gay people around the idea of a group experience of persecution’, but he also warns that ‘lost in the analogy [of the AIDS crisis and homosexual persecution by the Nazis] are all those aspects of difference and subjectivity that identity politics subordinates and suppresses precisely to ensure political solidarity and action’.¹⁰ As history seeks continuity in narrative, and political struggle benefits from analogous retellings of history, what emerges is a homogenous identity and subject, that lacks ‘difference’. This is an early example of a push back on the identity politics of the 1980s that resulted in the fracturing and splintering of LGBTQ* social justice issues. Central to Marshall’s essay is a concern for the ways in which identity politics reproduces the logics and narratives of the oppressor via the archive. The pink triangle is symbolic of such a reproduction, with a meaning that shifts from a symbol of activism and resistance to victimisation. The ‘mythology’ which surrounds the pink triangle Marshall contests has ‘been used to construct a commonality solely around an ideological history of persecution’ and is symbolic of an internalisation of a dominant narrative of persecution. In this incredibly powerful treatise against such an important symbol of queer activism, Marshall is at once reflecting a frustration with a victimisation narrative in AIDS activism of the 1990s (similar to that which Douglas Crimp unpacks in his essay “How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic” of 1987) whilst also emphasising the importance of difference in collective political struggle, thus gesturing towards what might later be called a queer subject (whom I return to shortly). “The Contemporary Political Use of Gay History: The Third Reich” is illustrative of the ways in which visual cultures – in this case the pink triangle, and moreover Marshall’s mediation of gay history in his films – can become inculcated in processes of historicisation.

Those who have long been marginalized in traditional history are not the only ones haunted by the need to recover their buried pasts. Following the example of ethnic groups and social minorities, every established group, intellectual or not, learned or not, has felt the need to go in search of its own origins and identity.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., 87.

¹¹ Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *Representations*, no. 26 (April 1989): 15.

Memory has fallen foul of history and become captive to the archive. Pierre Nora argues in “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*” (1989) ‘[w]e speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left’.¹² Memory has been supplanted by history, the predominant means through which societies remember.¹³ This is not to say that memory has disappeared, but rather, as Nora argues, has been reconfigured by the ‘science’ of history and the establishment of a ‘critically [...] “true” memory’.¹⁴ Memory, specifically collective memory, or national memory, are inexorably linked to ‘lieux de mémoire’ meaning ‘places of memory’. For Nora, lieux de mémoire are the ‘embodiments of a memorial consciousness’ in ‘museums, *archives*, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders’.¹⁵ Put another way, collective memory is built on the archive, and the archive has established a version of memory that ‘relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image’.¹⁶ To return to Derrida who says that ‘there is no political power without control of the archive, *if not memory*’ is also to say the archive is *productive* of memory. The political power that archival memory holds – memory as it remains in things, objects, monuments – is evidenced in the Black Lives Matters protests of 2020. In the United Kingdom, and Scotland, where this researcher is based, discussions on Black histories and colonial violence often distractingly settle on debates around public monuments as historical document. The tearing down and disposal in the river of the statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol is a potent example of the value and entanglement of lieux de mémoire, history and memory.¹⁷ Nancy Wood reflecting on Nora’s work, describes lieux de mémoire as: ‘a product of human or temporal agency, and comprising the bedrock of a community’s symbolic repertoire’.¹⁸ The symbolic value of a statue of a racist white man, and particularly calls for retaining and reinterpreting such statues, illuminates the idea that memory – at least social – needs a historical marker of some-kind. For those who seek control over memory, like the state or perhaps in the current contemporary moment, the burgeoning alt-right, lieux de mémoire – ‘anything pertaining to the cult of the dead,

¹² Ibid., 7.

¹³ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁵ Ibid., 12–13 [My emphasis].

¹⁶ Whilst not the focus of this thesis, we might note here the displacement of the archive to the realm of the digital, which is a different kind of material trace. Ibid., 13.

¹⁷ Martin Farrer, ‘Who Was Edward Colston and Why Was His Bristol Statue Toppled?’, *The Guardian*, 8 June 2020, sec. UK news, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/08/who-was-edward-colston-and-why-was-his-bristol-statue-toppled-slave-trader-black-lives-matter-protests>.

¹⁸ Nancy Wood, ‘Memory’s Remains: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *History and Memory* 6, no. 1 (1994): 124.

anything relating to the patrimony, anything administering the presence of the past within the present' – are tools in the fashioning of collective memory-history.¹⁹

The archive is a system of control. It is important to remember that Nora's *lieux de mémoire* is the name he gives to objects and places which help construct a national memory and ultimately national identity in France. The forging of a collective identity through archives can be understood along the lines of early formulations of Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault specifically addresses the archive, describing it as 'the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events'.²⁰ This complex formulation is perhaps more easily understood via Derrida's description of the archive as the house of the magistrate from where the *law* is made. The etymology of the word archive, from the ancient Greek, 'arkheion', Derrida explains, is 'that *place* which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed'. The arkeion is home to the archon, the magistrate 'who thus held and signified political power' and who was 'considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. [...] They have the power to interpret the archives'.²¹ The archon has the 'acrotic power', and fulfils the 'acrotic principle' in 'gather[ing] the functions of unification, of identification, of classification'.²² This act of filing documents, Derrida calls 'consignation', which 'aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration'.²³ The ability to bring together and interpret documents, 'the acrotic power', into one body (corpus), makes the archive a system, and specifically, as Okwui Enwezor concisely explains, renders 'the archive as an active, regulatory discursive system'.²⁴ Returning to Foucault, the archive, as it controls 'what can be said', emphasises the importance in Western societies of knowledge bound to power (governmentality). The archive in Foucault, is specifically dependent on what he terms '*a historical a priori*'. An '*a priori*', simply put, is a given, an assumed knowledge of something prior to interpretation. Foucault explains, 'what I mean by the term is an *a priori* that is not a

¹⁹ Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 20.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, 'The Historical A Priori and The Archive', in *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 145.

²¹ Derrida, 'Archive Fever', 9—10 [Original emphasis].

²² *Ibid.*, 10.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Okwui Enwezor, ed., *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, 1. ed (Göttingen: Steidl, 2008), 11.

condition of validity for judgements, but a condition of reality for statements'.²⁵ David Webb in his book *Foucault's Archaeology* (2013) helpfully elaborates, that for Foucault, '[i]f the historical a priori is the formal designation of the conditions of discourse, the archive is the specific set of conditions for a given discourse'.²⁶ Statements form part of discourse, and discourse is what helps us make meaning. Central to Foucault's, and arguably Derrida's conception of the archive, is that it is built on a presupposition, that as a system of control in almost one and the same movement it instantiates and is productive of a history, a memory, and in some instances an identity.

The late nineteenth century figure of the homosexual is a product of the archive. As Foucault famously reminds readers in *The History of Sexuality* (1976): '...the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized'.²⁷ And archives have been central to this characterisation, by setting the conditions for the discourses of psychology, psychiatry, and medicine. From the late nineteenth through the turn of the twentieth century, the accumulation of documents and materials on the homosexual, the criminal proceedings, medical studies, and sensationalist reporting in the popular press, defined beyond a series of sexual deviances and perversions, a 'character'. The archive provides the specific conditions, or *a priori* evidence, to a discourse on homosexuality which comes from the long held moral and social beliefs that 'deviant' non-heterosexual sex and lifestyles are an aberration.²⁸ The nineteenth century archive gives us 'archival science', borne of a Victorian incessant need to collect, categorise and control the so-called natural world. The homosexual is just one figure given shape in this new science, which is deeply rooted in Imperialist efforts to control and regulate populations.²⁹ In Britain, it is not just the homosexual who becomes subject of new regulatory control, but other subordinate or oppressed groups, including colonial subjects, ethnic minorities, sex workers, women, and the working-class. The work of gay Marxist historian Jeffrey Weeks is notable here, in *Sex, Politics and Society The Regulation of Sexuality Since*

²⁵ Foucault, 'The Historical A Priori and The Archive', 143 [Original emphasis].

²⁶ David Webb, 'The Statement and the Archive', in *Foucault's Archaeology, Science and Transformation* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 117, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt3fgr4g.9.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: An Introduction*, Reprint (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

²⁸ Of course, it is not just the archives of the nineteenth century which characterise the modern figure of the homosexual, it is as Foucault discusses more widely in the book, the discourse on sex and sexuality *itself*, and the cultural phenomena personified in the likes of Oscar Wilde, that conditioned public understandings of homosexuality.

²⁹ For the link between British Imperialism and the archive, see: Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London ; New York: Verso, 1993).

1800 (1981) he provides an account of the legal and regulatory frameworks which emerged from a Victorian middle-class moralism.³⁰ The irony is not lost that what Weeks observes in the nineteenth century is still firmly a feature of our political present, that is the capitulation of the state to a morally conservative middle-class, which ‘drew [and arguably stills draws] a clear ideological boundary between rational members of society and the feckless’.³¹ Archives are only one part of this complex picture of the ways in which societies were reorganised during the emergence of industrial capitalism but returning to Foucault, they served to firmly embed systems of governmentality. One only need to think of the colonial-era laws that still exist in statute in Commonwealth countries which ‘characterise’ and regulate homosexual acts, making them illegal. Returning to the central question framing this chapter: why do we archive? Where the archive is understood as an armature of state control, it functions as part of a suite of tools, a system, which defines a population (a corpus, a body), both socially and individually. History, and memory, as Benjamin and Nora lucidly illustrate, are implicated in such a system or systems, as it is from the archives we make memory-history, or indeed the archives are made in the image of a historical imaginary.

Embodied memory plays an important role in minority communities, often exceeding the bounds of a memory-history made in and of material traces found in archives. Performance scholars Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider, whom I return to in greater depth in P. Staff’s case study, both argue for a confluence between archival memory, embodied memory, and performance. Taylor, in *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), disputes Nora’s conception of memory as it relies on a memory that is before history, ‘a rift between past (traditional, authentic, now lost) and present (generalized as modern, global, and “mass” culture)’.³² Taylor considers indigenous Latin American cultures and the ways in which their traditions and memories live on against and in parallel to the supplanting of Christian values during colonial conquest. White Western Eurocentric knowledges heavily rely on the written as opposed to more embodied practices like dance, or oral storytelling. The argument Taylor puts forward is not of embodied knowledge as being prior to Western knowledges – to what she surmises as ‘writing’ – as Nora suggests, but that indigenous Latin American societies did not grant

³⁰ Weeks explains: ‘Victorian morality was premised on a series of ideological separations: between family and society, between the restraint of the domestic circle and the temptations of promiscuity; between the privacy, leisure and comforts of the home and the tensions and competitiveness of work’. Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society the Regulations of Sexuality since 1800*, 100.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

³² Diana Taylor, ‘Chapter 1 – Acts of Transfer’, in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 22.

it *greater* importance in the transfer of knowledge. Nora's suggestion of a prior more 'natural' memory leads us towards problematic essentialisms and primitivisms that reinforce the dominance of Western knowledge. It is in fact the case that minorities – be that people of colour, indigenous communities, or queers – have always had to negotiate archival memory differently because it has only been within the past half century that they have seized control of 'official' archives as a tool for the making of their own collective memory-history. I will now look to the ways in which queer subjects have reconceived the materiality of archives, by bringing together the material and immaterial under the rubric of 'the ephemeral'.

2.3 What's the matter with matter? Queer ephemera and LGBTQ* archives

The ephemeral, partial and coded characteristics of archives requires artists, archivists and other cultural workers handling the material now to engage in novel forms of interpretation. As Muñoz beautifully explains in "Ephemera as Evidence": '[b]ecause the archives of queerness are makeshift and randomly organized, due to the restraints historically shackled upon minoritarian cultural workers, the right is able to question the evidentiary authority of queer inquiry'.³³ The minoritarian workers are what J. Halberstam in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) calls 'queer subjects', defined as such by 'the ways they live (deliberately, accidentally, or of necessity) during the hours when others sleep and in the spaces (physical, metaphysical, and economic) that others have abandoned'.³⁴ Queer subjects, are minoritarian subjects, who, given the 'restraints' of social, economic, and as Muñoz argues, intellectual exclusions, have fashioned archives in odd places and of esoteric materials. To understand these archives, Muñoz argues one must account for their 'queerness', as indicative of Raymond William's 'structure of feelings', which is 'a *process* of relating the continuity of social formations within a work of art'.³⁵ Queerness is relational, and describes the bonds and communities formed in spaces 'others have abandoned'. To account for queerness, one must account for the ephemeral nature of queer life, and to do this artists and scholars must engage in what Muñoz calls 'queer acts', which are creative and inventive ways in art and writing of filling in the gaps, when interpreting archival materials.

³³ José Esteban Muñoz, 'Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts', *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (January 1996): 7.

³⁴ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 10.

³⁵ Muñoz, 'Ephemera as Evidence', 10.

In this thesis, each case study engages the trace remains of queer lives found in archives. Each of the three artworks I discuss re-stages an encounter with materials found during visits to archives. To make *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016), Sharon Hayes and researchers Rose Gibbs, Tara Gibbs, and Heather Holmes, spent time in various archives across the United Kingdom and United States. As I go on to discuss in the chapter, Hayes used the specialist women's and LGBTQ* archives at Glasgow Women's Library, an organisation that grew from a grassroots arts initiative in the early 1990s to a larger institution 'dedicated to women's lives, histories and achievements'.³⁶ The predominant archival material Hayes drew on were print letters and correspondence found in lesbian and feminist magazines, dating from 1955 to 1977. The main film element of P. Staff's *The Foundation* (2015) is set in the archive and former home of Tom of Finland, and consequently records the objects of Finland's everyday life from artworks to military uniforms and sex toys. The third case study, Conal McStravick's *Learning in a Public Medium* (2015—17) is novel amongst my case studies as the project can be understood as the constitution an archive of gay artist and activist Stuart Marshall. McStravick drew on various repositories and collections that hold Marshall's artworks, papers and other materials, dating from the late 1960s until the early 1990s, and brought them together in varying configurations over two-years of public and semi-public events. Material matters in each of these case studies, and here I outline the ephemeral, partial, and encoded characteristics of the artworks' archival material.

The material one finds in an archive only tells part of a story. This is especially significant of the archives of queer subjects. As Ann Cvetkovich succinctly puts it in *An Archive of Feelings* (2003) '[t]he stock-in-trade of the gay and lesbian archive is ephemera'. Ephemera, according to Cvetkovich is the 'occasional publications and paper documents, material objects, and items that fall into the miscellaneous category when being catalogued'.³⁷ Ephemera is important to queer subjects as it speaks to a moment in time, a set of relations, and this elusive notion of 'queerness'. Ephemera describes a relationship to the archive which is structurally similar to that of the queer subject, both are elusive and fall between the cracks of traditional categories. Ephemera is always partial and incomplete; it is a trace of someone or something from a different time and place. As Walter Benjamin eloquently puts it in *The Arcades Project*, a trace is

³⁶ 'Glasgow Women's Library | Celebrating Scotland's Women', accessed 8 January 2020, <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/>.

³⁷ Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 243.

the ‘appearance of nearness, however far removed the thing that left it behind may be’.³⁸ Ephemera extends beyond literal archives, and points to a more diffuse and scattered set of practices engaged in by queer communities, including ‘innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments’.³⁹ Muñoz proposes ephemera as both material and immaterial; ‘linked to alternate modes of textuality and narrativity like memory and performance’ found in ‘traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things’.⁴⁰ In his later hugely influential work *Cruising Utopia* (2009), Muñoz describes queerness as only ever a horizon, encountered in ‘objects and moments that burn with anticipation and promise’.⁴¹ Each of the artworks summon the ephemeral, they mediate the material trace and capture the ‘fleeting’ through their use of moving image, performance, and education. The ephemeral material found in archives offers a connection to the ephemera of everyday queer life. Key to Muñoz’s ephemera, which is ostensibly about a materiality of the performative, is a relationship to objects, and of interest here, is the archival object as it relates to and is part of queer lives.

Archives are ‘the repository of objects that have a sensuous liveliness’.⁴² Cvetkovich suggests lesbian archives are loaded with feelings and can elicit similar feelings in a lesbian subject who encounters the material. The encounter with archival material is about the feelings and psychic connections an individual makes with an object. Like Muñoz’s queer horizon gleamed in an object, the ‘sensuous liveliness’ of material describes an entangled relationship between object and its ability to affect a queer subject. The new materialism of Karen Barad is useful here. Writing in “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter” (2003), Barad argues for ‘[t]he move toward performative alternatives to representationalism [...] from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/doings/actions’.⁴³ Barad wholesale rejects ‘representationalism’, which is predicated on the ‘ontological distinction between representations and that which they purport to represent’.⁴⁴ This is an important precept in the theory of new materialism which seeks to account for the agency of

³⁸ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 1st paperback ed (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 422.

³⁹ Muñoz, ‘Ephemera as Evidence’, 6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴¹ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.

⁴² Ann Cvetkovich, ‘Foreword’, in *Out of the Closet, into the Archives.*, ed. Amy L Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), xvi.

⁴³ Karen Barad, ‘Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (March 2003): 802.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 804.

things, and how they exist within circuits of relation (between non-human and human).⁴⁵ Central to this is the movement Barad describes from how, say, an archival object is representative of a queer life lived many years ago, to how that object elicits that queer life, a sense of being, or as Muñoz calls it, a structure of feeling. In a new materialist rendering, archival material is more than simply a representation that points to an earlier moment, it is, as Cvetkovich suggests ‘lively’, imbued and indeed *is* the feelings from an earlier moment.⁴⁶

Paper is an excellent example of an ephemeral object with ‘a sensuous liveliness’. Letters, newsletters, postcards, magazines, tickets stubs and zines, feature prominently in archives and in each of the case study artworks. Hayes trawls the letters pages of lesbian magazines; Staff stages a performative encounter with paper as a stand-in prop for archival material; and McStravick annotates a reproduced copy of an unfinished screenplay by Marshall. Particular attention to the importance of paper can be seen in lesbian and queer scholarship, which argues both for a new materialist notion of paper as a thing in itself imbued with a past, and as a relational bridge between different queer subjects. Maryanne Dever, in the chapter “Paper Over, or Some Observations on Materiality and Archival Method”, describes ‘the archive as a storage site for what are essentially pieces of paper, or perhaps “papery remains”’.⁴⁷ Dever is interested in paper ‘as a thing-in-itself’, and argues against ‘problematic splits between materiality and meaning’.⁴⁸ There is meaning in the material itself, not simply what is derived from the words on a page. Dever writes from the perspective of a researcher’s encounter with paper in the archive and whether or not paper can ‘reveal’ something either presupposed

⁴⁵ For a key text of new materialist theory, see: Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁴⁶ Barad’s new materialism delves into the physics of matter inhering or being imbued with ‘the past’. Indeed, time becomes more complex at the subatomic level, and therefore past, present, and future somewhat blur which allows for the suggestion that the discursive, the cultural, and the social (all precepts of queer and performance theory) do exist materially, or are *performed* materially. For example, Barad describes electrons along the lines of gender nonconformity, explaining, ‘[e]lectrons are queer particles, *mita’ y mita’* [half and half, neither male nor female]. They are particles. They are waves. Neither one nor the other. A strange doubling. A queer experimental finding. A theoretical impossibility’. Barad’s thesis is that quantum physics already queers psychics, and by extension we might say unsettles scientific certitudes and essentialisms so often used to underwrite the presuppositions of the dominant towards the oppressed. Again, not to continually invoke my trans kin, but given it is perhaps one of the most pressing issues in contemporary LGBTQ* politics in the UK, one only need to think of the continual references to ‘sex-based’ rights as a route by some transphobes to deny trans rights. The caustic irony of the use of a skewed reading of science is that it is simply another form of biopolitical control that seeks to control women’s bodies. For a philosophy of queering physics see: Karen Barad, ‘Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart’, *Parallax* 20, no. 3 (3 July 2014): 173.

⁴⁷ Maryanne Dever, ‘Papered Over, or Some Observations on Materiality and Archival Method’, in *Out of the Closet, into the Archives.*, ed. Amy L Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 66.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 67, 86.

or as yet unknown about a subject. The collections of papers, their types, and the order in which they were personally archived are indicative of ‘how meaning can also be produced through the basic material supports to letter writing’.⁴⁹ The basic material supports to letter writing are the basic material supports to a friendship, a love, a queer familial bond. In other words, the paper enables an act, like the writing of a letter, perhaps a love letter, returning us again to the notion that the materiality of archives also comprise structures of feeling.

To think of this inversely, and central to Cvetkovich’s and Muñoz’s arguments, feelings produce archives. The archival object, following Barad, is not a representation of a feeling, it is made of and is that feeling.⁵⁰ Cvetkovich argues that queer archives form around feelings and relations. Catherine Lord’s short essay “Medium: Ink on Paper” (2011) beautifully explicates such a notion in the example of the exchange of signed books between lesbian friends and lovers. Reflecting on Lewis Hyde’s book *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (1983), Lord articulates the ways in which lesbian individuals and communities build archives, playfully posing the question: ‘[i]f, as Jacques Derrida proposes, the archive is a structure that exists because it is under house arrest, where did lesbians domicile their culture?’ A few lines later, she answers: ‘We find our archive between the lines. We sample. We stare. We make lists...’. The list continues and emphasises processes of archiving that extend beyond such rigid ideas of what an archive is, ending: ‘[w]e fashion lesbian culture from whatever we find, and we insinuate it wherever we can, whenever it is needed’.⁵¹ Lord riles against Derrida’s archive, which is knowledge and indeed culture, domesticated, and institutionalised. Lesbian cultures and in turn their archives exist precisely out with the institution of the archive because this is historically a site of subjugation and control. The archival institution, following Derrida and moreover Foucault, performs a function in producing ‘legitimate’ forms of knowledge. To ‘insinuate it wherever we can’, and returning to Muñoz, to embrace, innuendo, gossip, and other seemingly fleeting gestures, is to challenge the rigors of institutionalised forms of knowledge production, like the archive. Lesbian and queer cultures, and the artefacts they produce, elide forms of governmentality which might seek to regulate or control so-called ‘deviant’ desires. To

⁴⁹ Ibid., 74.

⁵⁰ I return to the idea of something *as* something, which is also to say something *is* something in reality when I discuss Diana Taylor’s performance theory in greater depth in P. Staff’s chapter. Suffice to say, a central idea in performance and performative theory, is the use of ‘as’ to break from the binaries of representationalism.

⁵¹ C. Lord, ‘Medium: Ink on Paper’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 4 (1 January 2011): 639.

elide the archival institution, Lord, alongside Cvetkovich and Muñoz, are suggesting that queers are also engaged in their own mode of archiving, made in and of emotional attachments.

To archive means to bring together, what Derrida calls ‘consignation’. Cvetkovich, Muñoz, and Lord all propose that as queer subjects produce their own cultures they are simultaneously producing archives. Indeed, this is central to what Derrida says the postmodern subject does in their search for origins and beginnings; that we are always making archives in our minds because archiving is a process of ‘unification, of identification, of classification’. The difference for queer subjects, and minoritarian subjects, which is why Cvetkovich calls queer archives ‘the material instantiation of Derrida’s poststructuralist archive’, is for so long we have been denied access to and negatively constituted by archives. Queer archives then, as Lord suggests, are not ‘domicile’ in a house (read: archival institution) but must be searched for in the gaps, the relations, and the structures of feeling. Queer theoretical understandings on archives rely on the ephemeral, the immaterial, and the cultural, because queer lives and communities have for so-long existed out with institutions that shore up an identity – like the archive, or the law (which Derrida and Foucault suggests are irrevocably entangled, the archive is ‘the law of what can be said’). As queer subjects and their lives become increasingly visible in mainstream histories, what – borrowing from Lord – does it mean when queer cultures become domicile in the archive?

2.3.1 Accessing and interpreting LGBTQ* pasts

I’d like to draw a somewhat arbitrary distinction between ‘queer archives’, and LGBTQ* archives. Queer archives are built from the ephemeral, often fleeting and fugitive materials saturated with emotions, feelings, and the traces of unorthodox social relations. Not a representation of these lives and relations but an instantiation of desires, emotions, feelings, and relations. Then there are LGBTQ* archives, which as the acronym suggests is more representative of a series of institutionally legible identities and archival practices. By ‘institutionally legible’, I simply mean the varying legal, social, and political ways queer subjects become ‘legitimate’ within dominant heterosexual cultures, think for example of the legalisation of gay marriage.⁵² The

⁵² It is of course not lost on me that this acronym does not ensure recognition or rights for all the letters it contains, for example the trans* community are still subject to the most base denial of their right to exist, and where an individual can seek legal acknowledgement of their gender, they must engage in an overtly

archive, as an institution, and a ‘place of memory’, is of crucial importance to the forging of a collective memory-history. And in spite of a fraught relationship to such an archive, queer subjects for the past half century have been making their own archives. LGBTQ* archives pose novel and interesting challenges to archiving as an institution and profession. I’d like to briefly outline the novelty of LGBTQ* archives before returning to the question of why, *specifically*, we need artistic engagements with the materials they hold. Archives are often built from the ephemeral and unexpected traces of lived experience, but queer archival practice emphasises the transient and peripheral, while LGBTQ* archives represent the experiences of queer individuals whose lives exceed the bounds of heteronormative family life.

In the United Kingdom and United States from the mid-twentieth century onwards, particularly in the post-Stonewall moment of gay liberation of the late 1960s, archives by and for gays and lesbians began to be formed. Personal archives, housed in apartments and other private dwellings, moved and took on more open and community-facing missions. Although some archives, like the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) retain a fierce autonomy even to this day, many other archives over the intervening decades crystallised into larger institutions, such as the ONE Archive in the United States. Some were accessioned into academic and state institutional archives, like the Hall-Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics, which started as the grassroots archiving project, the Gay Monitoring and Archiving Project of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. After this archive was split in two in 1982, and split again in 1986, one third was taken by the LSE Library.⁵³ Kate Eichhorn attributes the institutionalisation of certain archives as concurrent with and an effect of neoliberalism.⁵⁴ That is, in the dominant mode of economic, social, and political organisation of the late twentieth century, smaller community-based initiatives, particularly in the 1980s and early 1990s, saw their resources dwindle. In *The Archival Turn in Feminism* (2013), Eichhorn traces a much longer history in the twentieth century of women’s archives and their varying moments of institutionalisation in moments of ‘crisis’. Fragmentation caused by de-funding and withdrawal of support for community-led initiatives led to consolidation. Existing in often varying states of

medicalised and invasive process. In this instance however, I am using the acronym as it is used institutionally by pro-LGBTQ* organisations, including archives, libraries, and special collections.

⁵³ February 1st et al., ‘Glad to Be Gay – the Hall-Carpenter Archives at LSE Library’, *LSE History* (blog), 1 February 2017, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2017/02/01/glad-to-be-gay-the-hall-carpenter-archives-at-lse-library/>.

⁵⁴ Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 7.

precarity, personal and do-it-yourself (DIY) archives of women and sexual minorities may seek larger institutional homes, like university special collections, to avoid their loss or erasure. The histories of gay and lesbian archives as they are intimately connected to histories of gay liberation are equally a story of the ways in which neoliberal capital has reshaped institutions.

The advent of LGBTQ* archives has challenged and changed archiving conventions. LHA offers a valuable case study of a community-based archive which re-imagines the role the archive plays for the constituent community it serves, in this case the lesbian community. It does so, firstly through an access policy which explicitly prioritises the lesbian community; and secondly by creating an informal and welcoming environment, in part due to its location in a Brownstone in Brooklyn, New York City. Eichhorn describes LHA in the following terms: ‘[o]ver the course of its long history, it has continued to combine private and public space. It is an archive with more than one sofa, a kitchen open to volunteers and visitors, and to this day a member of the collective lives in the house’.⁵⁵ Further, Cvetkovich, in the article “In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings” (2002), adds: ‘[o]rganised as a domestic space in which all lesbians feel welcome to see and touch a lesbian legacy, the LHA aims for an emotional rather than a narrowly intellectual experience’.⁵⁶ Agatha Beins’ chapter “Marking a Place for Lesbian Life at the Lesbian Herstory Archives” is a comparative study between LHA and the Sophia Smith Collection (SSC) at Smith College and the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute, both in the United States. LHA is foremost a space by and for the lesbian community, with the first of its nine founding principles explicitly stating that: ‘[a]ll Lesbian women must have access to the Archives: no academic, political, or sexual credentials will be required for use of the collection; race and class must be no barrier for use or inclusion’.⁵⁷ I think here of Derrida’s words, and the importance of control of archives, something LHA enshrines in the ways it operates. Beins argues that LHA is implicitly and explicitly a place for lesbians, and this is embodied spatially, and in organisational policy and structure. The LHA is quite literally a home, from ‘the comfortable couch in the main room of the first floor, to the third-floor apartment in

⁵⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁵⁶ Ann Cvetkovich, ‘In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings: Documentary and Popular Culture’, *Camera Obscura* 17, no. 1 (1 February 2002): 109.

⁵⁷ ‘The Lesbian Herstory Archives: History’, The Lesbian Herstory Archives, accessed 17 September 2019, <http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/history.html>.

which the archive's caretaker lives'.⁵⁸ Beins describes materials that 'fill the walls, shelves, and almost every other space available, including the bathrooms', which present 'the richness of lesbians' lives'.⁵⁹ More than just the archival objects, LHA creates a 'space for the lives of lesbians being lived right now'.⁶⁰ Lesbian cultures, somewhat contrary to Lord, also dwell, in archives like LHA, but equally challenge Derrida's figure of the magistrate by de-centring who controls and maintains the archive. Archives, such as LHA, which take a holistic approach to their institution and particularly who it is for, challenge presumed hierarchies of access and knowledge typically assumed of formal and institutional archives.

LGBTQ* archives such as LHA made by and for lesbian subjects also re-define understandings of who archives are for and, in the abstract, the very notion of what constitutes a public. Derrida describes one of the functions of archives as to mark 'the institutional passage from private to the public'.⁶¹ The increased visibility of queer subjects during the height of the civil rights and gay liberation movements of the twentieth century is also evidenced in part by the development and institutionalisation of LGBTQ* archives. These archives now exist in varying degrees of publicness, from the grassroots archives run by and for queer communities to the larger academic and civic archives, libraries, and special collections. However, such a notion of 'publicness' is complicated by the fact that queer subjects and their so-called private lives have been the focus of intense 'public' scrutiny and persecution in the modern era. The state, and other institutions of power have always taken an interest in the supposedly 'private' and intimate acts of the homosexual. Think for example of the trial of Oscar Wilde, which many queer scholars cite as the birth of the modern male homosexual.⁶² Conversely, queer communities for much of the twentieth century have lived ostensibly 'in private', resulting in community building, organising, and partying taking place behind closed

⁵⁸ Agatha Beins, 'Making a Place for Lesbian Life at the Lesbian Herstory Archives', in *Out of the Closet, into the Archives.*, ed. Amy L Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 28.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶¹ Derrida, 'Archive Fever', 10.

⁶² As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explained in her seminal work of queer theory: 'Across the turn of the century, as we know, through a process that become most visible in, but antedated and extended far beyond, the trials of Oscar Wilde, the discourse related to male homosexuality itself became for the first time extremely public and highly ramified through medical psychiatric, penal, literary, and other social institutions. With a new public discourse concerning male homosexuality that was at the same time increasingly discriminant, increasingly punitive, and increasingly trivializing or marginalizing, the recuperative rhetoric that emerged had an oddly oblique shape. I would describe it as the occluded intersection between a minority rhetoric of the "open secret" or glass closet and subsumptive public rhetoric of the "empty secret".' In: *Epistemology of the Closet* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 164.

doors and often in domestic spaces. LGBTQ* archives are no exception and mark an omission in Derrida's seemingly linear assertion. The public/private distinction is a privilege of a heterosexual majority, perhaps most forcefully argued by cultural theorist Simon Watney in relation to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s. Until the AIDS crisis, dating from the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales in 1967, same-sex relations in private were legal. AIDS incited a centuries old moral panic around homosexuality and the threat it posed to the family. Underlying such a panic, dressed up as a question of morality by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States, was ultimately the threat non-reproductive sexualities posed to the capacities of reproductive capital. The result was AIDS being used as justification for the state to encroach on the 'privacy' of homosexuals. Watney describes this as AIDS 'being used to underwrite a widespread ambition to erase the distinction between "the public" and "the private", and to establish in their place a monolithic and legally binding category – "the family" – understood as the central term through which the world and the self are henceforth to be rendered intelligible'.⁶³ This of course also maps onto the idea that neoliberalism has eroded the very idea of the civic, or public – 'there is no such thing as society' or so it goes. Watney's argument continues the well-established understanding in sexuality and queer studies that the private lives of queer subjects or in their medico-legal formulations like the homosexual, play a role in defining what is public, that is, the minority defines the heterosexual majority. Becoming public and coming out, are invariably tied to forces of power, the former can seek to control and subjugate (giving us the homosexual), and the latter can be emancipatory (the liberated queer subject). Institutional passage from private to public for LGBTQ* and particularly trans* folk is still often a violent experience, and therefore the terms upon which 'public/private' are defined must be closely calibrated to who has access to the archives which make a subject 'public'. Watney draws on what we can describe as a popular or mainstream cultural archive used to devastating effects during the AIDS crisis; whereas returning to Cvektovich, Lord, and LHA, theirs is a more discreet lesbian cultural archive that produces and sustains lesbian countercultures. Even in more formalised and institutionalised settings, LGBTQ* archives challenge heteronormative assumptions of how archives are instituted. Becoming public is very different in the nineteenth century and contrasts sharply to the mid to late twentieth century. What differs is the agency of a subject in

⁶³ Simon Watney, 'The Spectacle of AIDS', in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp and Leo Bersani, 1st MIT Press ed (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988), 86.

this process of becoming public. To return to the image of the arkeon – the magistrate – this is a person in power who gathers together (consigns) a corpus (body) of material in order to instantiate the law. The nineteenth century archive as site of regulatory control of deviant bodies like the homosexual is a similar device. LGBTQ* archives mark such a passage but serve to ‘make public’ an anti-homophobic queer subject. The acts of consignment and interpretation are crucial here, alongside the materials voluntarily submitted to the archives by and for queer subjects.

In this institutional passage there is inevitably a tension, or indeed the potential for omission. Archives serve to ‘make visible’, so to speak, a coherent and legible LGBTQ* subject. I am referring to the politics of the archive as outlined by Derrida and expanded on by Nora in his notion that archives are ‘places of memory’, and are used to inculcate a collective memory-history. LGBTQ* archives as I have illustrated have at once challenged a presumed public as heterosexual and made space for lesbian and queer subjects with access to and control over their own archives. With the institution of LGBTQ* archives come the dangers of a memory tied to a material trace which shores up a particular identity. Queer histories made in the archive are not immune to the historicisation warned by Benjamin, and directly addressed by Marshall. Even so-called ‘queer archives’ might reproduce an imaginary that is white, Western, and male. As Halberstam reflects on the limited cultural archives which have informed much of queer theory: ‘[o]n the one hand the gay male archive coincides with the canonical archive, and on the other hand it narrows that archive down to a select group of antisocial queer aesthetes and camp icons and texts’.⁶⁴ Halberstam argues that there is a correlation between (expanded) gay male cultural archives and the canon, which in turn becomes the touchstone from which queerness emerges. Culturally, we might recognise this in the prevalence of white able bodied cisgendered male or female gays in music, television, and film. For example, the whitewashing of the Stonewall riots in Ronald Emerich’s Hollywood dramatisation, *Stonewall* (2015).⁶⁵

Queer studies’ turn to the archive over the past decade has paid particular attention to the complexities of queer histories. Heather Love in *Feeling Backwards* (2009) astutely observes: ‘[e]arly gay and lesbian criticism tended to ignore the difficulties of the past in order [to] construct a positive history; queer criticism by contrast has focused on

⁶⁴ J. Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 109.

⁶⁵ Nigel M. Smith, ‘Gay Rights Activists Give Their Verdict on Stonewall: “This Film Is No Credit to the History It Purports to Portray”’, *The Guardian*, 25 September 2015, sec. Film, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/sep/25/stonewall-film-gay-rights-activists-give-their-verdict>.

negative aspects of the past in order to use them for positive political purposes'.⁶⁶ With a burgeoning of LGBTQ* histories over the past half-century alongside their pre-requisite archives as referent and source, narratives and teleologies emerge of the past, some more troubling than others. The incredibly important early scholarship of the 1960s, through 1970s and 1980s bore a whole new discipline of sexuality studies, including new constructivist and Historical Materialist approaches to the histories of gender and sexuality. Historians, philosophers, and sociologists including Gayle Rubin, Ken Plummer, and Weeks presented colourfully queer subjects throughout time. These scholars rendered complex the relationship between gender and sexual identity and the forces of power, like capital, and created a progressive narrative of gay history and liberation.⁶⁷ It is important to note that early gay and lesbian scholarship was writing against institutionalised homophobia, which Sedgwick reminds of when introducing her germinal work of queer theory as part of an 'antihomophobic' project.⁶⁸ Sedgwick's poststructuralist view of the histories of sexuality, despite being sceptical of 'the canon', still very much works within a white Anglo-American literary canon. Even in queer scholarship that professes a transcendence of an identitarian politic, I think specifically of work on queer negativity of which Love, alongside Leo Bersani and Lee Edelman are proponents, still relies on a particular view of history and philosophy to fashion its argumentation. Halberstam succinctly summarises this tension in queer studies, by stating 'while I am sympathetic to this project of not tidying up sex, I am less than enthusiastic about the archives upon which these authors draw and the resolutely masculinist and white utopias they imagine through the magic portals of tricking'.⁶⁹

Halberstam, alongside Muñoz, are scholars who attempt to account for the messy differences in queerness, including from Black and brown perspectives. Writing in a 2005 special issue of *Social Text*, entitled "What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?" Halberstam, Muñoz and David L. Eng, call for '[a]n ethical attachment to others', and 'we [perhaps presumed to be American queer scholars] must sometimes relinquish not

⁶⁶ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), 18—19.

⁶⁷ I would add Foucault here also in relation to his writing on the radical potential of male homosexual friendship, but his theory of power and knowledge as something diffuse does not negate the possibility of a queer subject, or say a white gay man, becoming powerful. See: Michel Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life', in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. John Johnson (New York: New Press, 1997), 135—140.

⁶⁸ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, I.

⁶⁹ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 150.

only our epistemological but also our political certitude'.⁷⁰ This article marks a re-orientation in queer scholarship and cultural production over the past 10 years as attendant to queer history and where we source it. In archive studies, in an echo of Halberstam, Stone and Cantrell state: '[a]rchives often privilege the experiences of white, middle-class or upper-class gay men, and visible queer life that is organized into activism, bars, or social clubs. Thus, LGBT archives often underrepresent the lives of non-white and economically marginalized LGBT individuals'.⁷¹ Archives, are just as susceptible to the production and reproduction of dominant narratives, and it is only through critical and self-reflexive archival practices – including artistic engagements – these pasts are re-considered, and histories unsettled. The artworks studied in this thesis navigate varying levels of public and private – a house-museum, old magazine pages, a sex toy, an unfinished script – and explore the voices less visible or missing from LGBTQ* archives.

2.4 Queer acts, or a queer archival impulse

Here, I elaborate on the notion that each of the artwork case studies are *queering archives* and *archiving queers*. I use Muñoz idea of 'queer acts' as it applies to artistic mediations of archives. I use 'queer acts', originally applied in performance and queer scholarship and research, as it accounts for each of the artwork's engagements with the archival (which I loosely correlate to the institutional), and the nonarchival (correlating to the non-institutional). I mean this broadly, to reflect a type of historiographic practice that at once seeks to move beyond such binaries but all the same works 'inside' and 'outside' conventions of archival and historical research. Queer acts address the archival and the nonarchival, and here I explore three key precepts: queer acts as performative (nonarchival); queer acts as institutive (archival); and queer acts as historiographic (bridging the archival and the nonarchival).

Queer acts are performative. Muñoz proposes performative actions 'as an intellectual and discursive occasion for a queer worldmaking project'.⁷² At the heart of this lies the idea that traditional scholarship and institutions, like archives, what Nora calls the 'science of history', are unable to fully account for or in fact actively negate the

⁷⁰ David L. Eng, J. Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, 'Introduction – What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?', *Social Text* 23, no. 3–4 (2005): 15.

⁷¹ Amy L Stone and Jaime Cantrell, 'Something Queer at the Archive', in *Out of the Closet, into the Archives*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 8.

⁷² Muñoz, 'Ephemera as Evidence', 6.

possibilities of queer lives and communities. Queer acts are a political necessity against institutional erasures which ‘stand as evidence of queer lives, powers, and possibilities’.⁷³ To enact performative engagements with the past is to insist on the nonarchival and the repertoire. Both queer acts and ephemera derive from the ways in which queer subjects relate or find one another. ‘Ephemera are the remains that are often embedded in queer acts’, Muñoz explains, ‘in both stories we tell one another and communicative psychical gestures such as the cool look of a street cruise, a lingering handshake between recent acquaintances, or the mannish strut of a particularly confident woman’.⁷⁴ This scenario of ephemera existing within the ways in which queers communicate and relate also describes how queerness might be ‘embedded’ in such gestures. In academia, Muñoz describes queer acts as the ways in which writing *does* something, that is the ways in which queer acts ‘contest and rewrite protocols of critical writing’ and are the ‘*making* [of] queer worlds’.⁷⁵ And so too in art, queer acts can be said to ‘do’ something more than merely represent the past. A reminder that the performative is the antithesis of representationalism, it embodies forms of new materialism that provide for an ontology of things and feelings. To identify the artworks as composed of queer acts, and therefore as performative, is to acknowledge the ways in which art might also be involved in ‘a queer worldmaking project’. The artworks in this thesis are not representative of a past moment, they are performative instantiations of these moments. To gesture towards queerness is, for Muñoz, a utopic endeavour – moments of joyful existence that indicate how things could be without those systems of oppression and persecution. And it is more than imagining, as queer acts also describe the things queer subjects *do* to make and form communities, like cruising in parks, or covertly signing a book gifted to a lover. In other words, queer acts are an *enacting* of queerness. The artworks in this thesis, rather than describing them as *representing* queer acts – which returns us to a representational regime that divides the world along the lines of meaning and matter – are in of themselves equally ‘lively’ with all the potentialities of queerness.

Queer acts are institutive. Muñoz describes queer acts as part of a ‘queer impulse’ to evidence queerness within the academic discipline of performance studies. This impulse ‘intends to discuss an object whose ontology, in its inability to “count” as a proper

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 65.

⁷⁵ Muñoz, ‘Ephemera as Evidence’, 7, 12 [Original emphasis].

“proof”, is profoundly queer’.⁷⁶ To describe queer acts, and indeed the artwork case studies, as institutive is to invoke a central idea in Derrida, that the will to archive, he calls ‘archive fever’, and Foster calls an ‘impulse’ in artistic archival artworks, leads to the creation of archives, be that physical or psychic. A reminder, that to archive, is to yield ‘[t]he archontic principle’, which ‘is also a principle of consignation, that is, of *gathering together*’. To institute, and the word institution, in Derrida, should not be mistaken as a place per se, but rather from the meaning of the verb in Latin, ‘instituire’, meaning to set up.⁷⁷ Queer acts as institutive, are processual, they ‘set up’, or establish archives. Hall Foster (discussed in the introduction) describes archival art as institutive because as much as it might find ‘esoteric’ means of mediating a relationship to history and the past, it ultimately is still inculcated in a Derridean formulation of archives as psychic drive, or impulse towards beginnings and origins, that results in the making of archives.⁷⁸ Put another way, to describe queer acts as institutive is to account for the ways in which these artistic practices traverse the archival and nonarchival, as they performatively seek to ‘evidence’ queerness within formal archival institutions. Indeed, this mode of artistic enquiry I propose here sits in close proximity to the important role academics and archivists play in the institution of queer epistemologies within seemingly rigid institutional structures, like archives. Queer acts as Muñoz intended it, describes novel and radical forms of institutional working. LGBTQ* archives as I have demonstrated are one such space. Kate Eichhorn argues that ‘activist’ archivists and librarians are a key constituent of a long history of feminists working inter- and intra- institutionally, from LHA to larger institutional archives.⁷⁹ Halberstam

⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁷ As Derrida explains further, ‘[a] science of the archive must include the theory of this institutionalisation, that is to say, at once of the law which begins by inscribing itself there and of the right which authorises it’. In: Derrida, ‘Archive Fever’, 10 [My emphasis].

⁷⁸ Foster states: ‘... the orientation of archival art is often more “institutive” than “destructive”, more “legislative” than “transgressive”.’ In the associated footnote (8), Foster draws a link directly with Derrida’s use of the terms ‘institutive’ and ‘legislative’ in “Archive Fever”. To archive is to return, repeatedly, bringing together bits of a life, or the trace remains of an event. In “Archive Fever”, Derrida links repetition to futurity, archive and death. Repetition links the future with the past, it makes history. In psychology, the (straight) future requires repetition, or what Freud calls ‘compulsive repetition’. Derrida links this compulsion to the compulsion that is ‘archive fever’, that incessant need to go back, to go over, to gather together. The archive here is as much a psychological construction as it is a structuring force of the world around us. The ‘spectre of oedipal violence’ is the quintessential structure of (heterosexual) relations, that is inscribed in ‘the institution of the archive’. In: Foster, ‘An Archival Impulse’, 5; Derrida, ‘Archive Fever’, 54. On Freud’s writing on compulsion as linked to ‘perversion’, a term often ascribed to queer subjects, see for example: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, Repr (London: Hogarth Press, 1999), 278.

⁷⁹ For example, Eichhorn reflects on the work of ‘activist librarian’ Jenna Freedman and her work at the Bernard Zine Library, she explains: ‘Bringing an “anarcho-punk-influenced” philosophy to traditional practices of librarianship, including collecting and cataloguing, then, is not about disregarding the necessity of order in either the library or the archive; rather, it is an attempt to alter the hierarchies that

in “What’s That Smell?: Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives” (2003) goes further, and argues for an interdisciplinary approach to queer archival work, explaining: ‘[t]he queer archivist or theorist and the cultural workers may also coexist in the same friendship networks and may function as co-conspirators’.⁸⁰ The artists that feature in this thesis are co-conspirators with all the archivists and other cultural workers who engage in acts which make queer archives. Queer acts are institutive, not in a capitulation to some abstract notion of an all-powerful institutional archive, but as a critically self-reflexive engagement with processes of institution, that in of themselves can be seen as the instituting, or returning to Hall, constituting of an archive.

Two excellent examples of a queer archival impulse that embraces forms of instituting, are Chris E. Vargas’ *The Museum of Transgender History and Art (MOTHA)* (2013—present) and Karol Radziszewski’s *Queer Archives Institute* (2016—present). Both echo in name the authority of institutional archives but exist and are sustained through ongoing affiliation and collaborations with contemporary arts and other cultural institutions. *MOTHA* is a museum forever ‘under construction’, intended to bring ‘a cohesive visual history of transgender culture into existence’.⁸¹ The archive is transient and ever-changing dependent on available resources and host institutions. *MOTHA* is an institution staged within an institution, bringing together materials that relate to transgender history and visual cultures. The parasitic nature of the Museum reflects, as the artist describes in an interview with *Out* magazine in 2019, a desire to exploit the infrastructure of the artworld to ‘point to other work that I really think should get out there’.⁸² Radziszewski’s *Queer Archives Institute* is a project developed part in response to the lack of LGBTQ* archives and visibility of queer histories in the artist’s and activist’s native Poland. The archive comprises objects collected by the artist, including photographs, films and other ephemera relating to LGBTQ* history in the former Soviet east. Radziszewski also makes new artworks, including collage, drawing, photographs, and films, which respond to these histories. *QAI*, like much of the artist’s practice, fills in the gaps between historical material and a queer cultural imaginary in Poland. The archive travels, most recently being presented at the The Schwules Museum, dedicated to LGBTQ* art, in Berlin, with collaborating and host institutions sustaining its

these spaces reify through their established practice of collecting and categorization’. In: Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 126.

⁸⁰ J. Halberstam, ‘What’s That Smell?: Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives’, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (September 2003): 321.

⁸¹ ‘MOTHA’, Chris E Vargas, accessed 27 January 2020, <http://www.chrisevargas.com/motha>.

⁸² ‘MOTHA Is Preserving Transgender Hirstory One City at a Time’, 29 April 2019, <https://www.out.com/art/2019/4/29/motha-preserving-transgender-hirstory-one-city-time>.

development.⁸³ *QAI* and *MOTHA*, are hybrids of LGBTQ* archives, borrowing the legitimising function of the archival institution, and the gallery, which allow them to retain a degree of autonomy as artist-led projects. These projects differ from Foster's idea of the 'institutive' archival art of the archival impulse – which ultimately relies on a postmodern artist subject who is straight and white – in their desire to legitimate, whilst carefully critiquing, archives for and by queer and trans* subjects.

Queer acts are historiographic. *MOTHA* questions processes of archiving and historicisation as they are bound up in formal structures and systems which might 'legitimate' trans* cultures and community. As I have outlined, queer subjects have a complex relationship to their past found in archives. To re-consider the past, and unsettle history, one must at first question the very systems that, as Hall refers to them, 'ossify' the past. Halberstam advocates a 'queering of archives' that is undertaken by not just by archivists, or historians, but also artists. Halberstam proposes that the archive, 'is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity'.⁸⁴ Echoing Muñoz's notion of queerness residing in ephemera and Lord's lesbian cultural archives existing 'wherever we can', Halberstam furthers the idea that 'queer archives' are formed of structures of relations not clearly legible within institutional formations. Halberstam conflates – like other postmodern concepts of 'the archive' extending from Derrida – what I distinguished earlier as queer and LGBTQ* archives. The former is the more commonly theorised performative ways in which queer subjects record their own histories and LGBTQ* archives are the places filled with materials related to queer lives and communities. LGBTQ* archives, which have enabled queer subjects to 'construct' their own 'places of memory', are incredibly important in yoking a queer subject from a virulently homophobic nineteenth-century archival institution. Both LGBTQ* archives and their more diffuse counterpart, queer archives, require 'users, interpreters, and cultural historians to wade through the material and piece together the jigsaw puzzle of queer history in the making'. Any engagement with archives related to queer subjects must be historiographic, it must work, to borrow a term from Marxist sociologist John Holloway, 'in, against and beyond' a logic of the archive and history which seeks to

⁸³ Tomasz Basiuk, 'Karol Radziszewski: Queer Archives Institute at Berlin's Gay Museum', ARTMargins, 27 September 2019, <https://artmargins.com/karol-radziszewski-queer-archives-institute-at-berlins-gay-museum/>.

⁸⁴ Halberstam, 'What's That Smell?', 326.

exclude minoritarian perspectives.⁸⁵ This requires alternate connections and links made between the past and the present. I propose ‘queer acts’ – which describes the actions undertaken by academics and cultural producers alike – ‘piece together the jigsaw puzzle’ that is queer history, and construct ‘queer genealogies and memories’.⁸⁶

Queer acts as historiographic describes the ways in which queer subjects relate differently across time through historical enquiry, including encounters with archival objects and artworks. A queer historiography traverses circuits of desires, feelings, and relations. This is a shift from the historiography of Benjamin and Nora, which thinks about the ways in which the state, the nation or the dominant power mould archival institutions and other armatures of the state – what Louis Althusser would call Ideological State Apparatus – towards a historiography which articulates the ways queer subjects make their own histories, both in, against and beyond the constitution and institution of LGBTQ* archives.⁸⁷ Put another way, a queer historiography accounts for the archive *and* the nonarchival, or as Taylor calls it, the repertoire. The repertoire is embodied, performative, and ephemeral. The repertoire, like Muñoz’s notion of ‘queerness’ exists in the realm of the cultural and social. Cultural and performative interpretations of archival material are crucial in any historical enquiry of queer pasts, because, to paraphrase Lord, it is in the realm of culture, and the social ‘where queer cultures are domicile’.

‘Erotohistoriography’ is an incredibly useful framework through which one might understand each of the artistic mediations that form this thesis. Elizabeth Freeman develops the idea in “Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography” (2005), as ‘a mode of reparative criticism’ and expands at book length in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2011), ‘as a genealogy of sorts’.⁸⁸ An erotohistoriography queers time, ‘treating the present itself as hybrid’. Queer temporalities are, as Halberstam explains, ‘those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one

⁸⁵ Holloway uses this term in relation to capitalism, but could arguably apply to archives as they might serve the logic of a dominant power i.e. capital. See: ‘In, against and beyond Labour - Interview with John Holloway’, libcom.org, accessed 8 January 2021, <http://libcom.org/library/against-beyond-labour-interview-john-holloway>.

⁸⁶ Halberstam, ‘What’s That Smell?’, 326.

⁸⁷ I do not expand it at length here, but Althusser provides an excellent understanding of the ways in which non-governmental institutions produce and reproduce relations under capital, like the family, the education system, and so on. See: Louis Althusser, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)’, in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, Modern Reader, PB-213 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 85–126.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Freeman, ‘Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography’, *Social Text* 23, no. 3–4 (2005): 59; Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 23.

leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance'.⁸⁹ Queer time is distinct or sits in opposition to 'temporal frames', like archives, which serve an ordering function. Freeman conceives such dominant temporalities as a form of biopolitical control called 'chrononormativity', that is the 'naked flesh [...] bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation'. Or, put more simply: 'the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity'. Chrononormativity operates as a given, or a priori, it is 'a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts'.⁹⁰ Past, present and future exist within such as an ordering of things, and therefore to treat 'time' as a constant within a historiographic account of queer pasts precludes the fact that queer subjects inhabit temporalities that exist out with the confines of heteronormative temporal orderings. An alternate to a time bound by relations under capital, is a queer time that is expressed in the body. Freeman proposes that erotohistoriography 'uses the body as a tool to effect, figure, or perform that encounter [with the past in the present, or the present as hybrid]'.⁹¹ Queer time, and erotohistoriography thinks in terms of bodies, because in lieu of archives – I mean here Nora's 'places of memory' – the body is the archive. An erotohistoriography, 'admits that contact with historical materials can be precipitated by particular bodily dispositions, and that these connections may elicit bodily responses, even pleasurable ones, that are themselves a form of understanding'.⁹² Queer subjects relate to and connect to one another through a more tacit and ephemeral set of encounters including with 'historical material'. An alternative historiography takes the 'body as method', and by this Freeman simply means it is a mode, returning to Halberstam, of 'queer history making' not institutionally bound. Instead of the temporal regulation of the archive, or capital, Freeman proposes queer 'binding', through more bodily 'dispositions'. Dispositions in the work of Pierre Bourdieu describes an attitude, in part shaped by an individual's 'social origin', and inflected in the habitus of a group.⁹³ Habitus, as

⁸⁹ Queer time emerges from the ways queer subjects have lived under capital in the mid to late twentieth century. Halberstam's book examines cultural production that 'emerge[s] in sync with and running counter to' postmodern theory. Time is understood by the likes of David Harvey and Frederic Jameson as inculcated in the logics of late-capitalism. Halberstam provides a schema for alternative temporalities and critiques temporalities that exclude gender, race, and sexuality. Directly addressing Harvey, Halberstam explains 'his [Harvey's] is an avowedly materialist analysis of time/space dedicated understandably to uncovering the processes of capitalism, but it lacks a simultaneous desire to uncover the processes of heteronormativity, racism, and sexism'. In: Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 6.

⁹⁰ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 3.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Bourdieu explains dispositions in relation to 'field', as follows: '... it is within each state of the field that – as a function of the structure of the possible which are manifested through the different positions

Freeman explains in a reading of Bourdieu is a matter of timing, and is ‘institutionally and culturally enforced rhythms, or timings, [that] shape flesh into legible, acceptable embodiment’.⁹⁴ A ‘queer bodily disposition’ and ‘collective modes of belonging sedimented by rituals of timing that accrete over time, not only consolidates but potentially disrupts dominant class positions’.⁹⁵ To account for a bodily disposition, which is also to say the performativity of embodiment that plays out in ‘rituals of timing’, not necessarily in a solitary archival object, we need performative interventions in archives. Put another way, akin to Muñoz’s queer acts as evidencing queerness as structures of feelings, Freeman’s erotohistoriography is an embodiment of history made in and through bodily connections, desires, emotions, feelings and pleasures.

It may be crucial, then, to complicate the idea of horizontal political generations or waves succeeding each other in progressive time with a notion of ‘temporal drag’ thought less in the psychic time of the individual than in the movement time of collective political fantasy. Exteriorized as a mode of bodily adornment or even habitus, temporal drag may offer a way of connecting queer performativity to disavowed political histories.⁹⁶

How do queer acts, as institutive, as performative, and as historiographic, manifest in artistic mediations of archives? Freeman’s now touchstone notion of ‘temporal drag’ describes the ways in which contemporary artists and cultural producers work with the remnants and trace remains of queer pasts. They make the past present, to borrow from Freeman, ‘as hybrid’, in cultural productions that are performative and stitch together collective political projects across time through ‘bodily dispositions’. Sharon Hayes, who I move on to discuss in the next chapter, uses moving image and performance to connect with seemingly ‘disavowed political histories’ of second wave feminism and specifically lesbian feminism. Freeman describes Hayes’ performances and citation of slogans from earlier moments of protest in the oft cited artwork (Bryon-Wilson, 2015, Cohen, 2015), *In the Near Future* (2005) as exemplary of ‘temporal drag’. This drag is

and the properties of the occupants (particularly with respect to social origin and the corresponding dispositions), and also as a function of the positions actually and potentially occupied with the field (experienced as success or failure) – the dispositions associated with a certain social origin are specified by being enacted in structurally marked practices; and the same dispositions lead to opposite aesthetic or political positions, depending on the state of the field in relation to which they have to express themselves’. In: ‘The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed’, in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson, Reprinted (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 70–71.

⁹⁴ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 4.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

a radical historiographic practice that disavows standard ‘horizontal’ and ‘progressive’ conceptions of history and time, in favour of something cut through by sets of queer affects, desires and feelings. The ‘psychic time’ of the individual is what Freeman conceives as the biopolitical control that is chrononormativity. To engage in forms of temporal drag, is to engage with different forms of temporality, it is to break the waves as these rely on modes of time and history which only serve a chronopolitical order of things.

Temporal drag is a mode of embodying seemingly ‘outmoded’ knowledge, which Freeman has likened to Taylor’s notion of repertoire.⁹⁷ It is a pull towards a past seemingly outmoded or outdated in the search of ‘collective political fantasy’. In the supposed march of gay liberation through contemporary mainstream LGBTQ* politics, Freeman suggests there is a certain ‘drag’, exemplified by ‘lesbians committed to feminism’. This is present in the work of Hayes, and is seen as a means of working through the tensions between contemporary queer activism and a lesbian feminism associated with ‘essentialised bodies, normative visions of women’s sexuality, and single-issue identity politics that exclude people of colour, the working class, and the transgendered’.⁹⁸ Feminism, as it has been historicised and bundled into ‘generations’ and ‘waves’, ultimately serves to shore up a particular narrative or teleology that jettisons the complexity and nuance of earlier moments of lesbian feminism. I will return to this specifically in the chapter on Hayes, but as I use it here, ‘temporal drag’ can be understood as a mode of historiographic enquiry which breaks the waves. Freeman describes it as a ‘bind’ which ‘suggest[s] both a problem and an attachment’ to a moment in time, that is ‘less about group identity than about time’.

I propose ‘queer acts’ as a frame for each of the artist case studies to move away from the notion that queer history must correlate to or be reductive to identity categories. LGBTQ* archives, and more conventional historical enquiries, perform a legitimating function for LGBTQ* subjects within dominant society, much like the law. Queer acts, and erotohistoriography, propose a movement away from the importance and emphasis of stable and fixed identities across time, to something more fluid and queer. Instead of thinking, ‘this archival object tells us about that lesbian living then’, queer acts unsettle the certitudes of such historicisation. They maintain the complexity of the ‘queer

⁹⁷ Freeman states ‘[t]hough I developed my argument before encountering her book, I think temporal drag is, indeed, a repertoire for the passing down or handing over of fading gendered and sexualized lifeways and scenarios’. *Ibid.*, 184, fn 22.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

record', and performatively link past and present. Hayes does this by articulating a proto-trans subject in the letters from butch and trans identifying lesbians, Staff performs femme and trans identities into the archive of the macho archive of Tom of Finland, and McStravick brings to the fore an intersectional-feminist politics present in the archive and artworks of a gay-identifying man, Marshall. Each of the artworks do not attempt to historicise a certain moment in time or shore up a rigid identity politics, instead they complicate it, asking questions of who is/was present, and who is not, and what this means now.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I began with an outline of history and memory as it is entangled with the archive. This is history with a capital 'H', and a collective memory that serves the ideological aims of those in power. In particular, as I drew on Benjamin and Nora, I drew out the ways in which historical materialism, archival objects and the places which hold them (like state archives), serve (or can serve) an ideological narrative of those in power, or who aspire to be. Marshall provides a context for this in gay activism and struggle, and points towards the need to move away from an identity made in history and memory tied to an archival record. Derrida and Foucault advance how such a record itself is inculcated in both flows of power and governmentality. Derrida's postmodern archive explains a will to archive, that is connected to a desire to go in search of origins and beginnings. This includes queer subjects in terms of a psychic will to archive, who in the last half century, created archives by and for the LGBTQ* community. Even having seized control of their archives, Taylor's repertoire advances the idea (specifically in indigenous Latin American cultures but as I apply here to queer cultures) that there are certain knowledges within minoritarian cultures that exceed the archival institution (a by-word for a nineteenth century system of control and order).

To locate a specifically queer relationship to archives, and their materiality, I looked to the important scholarship of Muñoz, Cvetkovich, and recent LGBTQ* archival studies. Central to the so-called 'queer archive' is an embrace of the nonarchival, or what Muñoz calls the ephemeral. These are the more gestural, fleeting, and transient practices or exchanges in which queerness can be glimpsed below the radar of heteronormative orthodoxy. Indeed, the nonarchival as it is *not* predicated on Western systems of academic knowledge, that privilege the 'rigor' of evidence and science, is performative

and exists within the realm of the cultural. Cvetkovich, alongside Lord, specifically looks to the ways in which objects carry within them traces of material relations. I elaborated via the new materialism of Karen Barad how to shift from a system of representationalism to objects as performative of queer pasts. By this, I mean what Muñoz describes as structures of feelings, that traces the contours of queerness, that quintessential part of ephemerality which ‘evaporat[es]’ at the touch of those who would eliminate queer possibility’.⁹⁹

Queerness is accounted for in queer acts, or queer acts attempt to ‘evidence’ queerness. To bridge the archival and the nonarchival, I propose queer acts as central to what each of these three artwork mediations *do*. A queer act in this thesis is an artistic historiographic enquiry rooted in a new historical materialist mode of practice. Rather than seeking out a legible LGBTQ* subject, queer acts challenge and complicate the ways in which LGBTQ* archives may shore up certain identities over others. Queer acts do this through performative interventions. Queer acts also re-imagine how we might constitute and institute queer archives. The processual nature of the term *archiving* or *queering* is useful here, as queer acts are institutive, meaning the artworks are continually engaged in a process of *instituting*. Rather than seeking a set or finished moment, the moment where the archive becomes static and history starts to seem fixed, the artworks and their making form part of a self-reflexive historiographic practice. There is certainly a question of the nature of the artwork, as document, and potentially as archival object, which I return to throughout the thesis, and suggest the final case study of McStravick moves away from this tension by enacting an archival mediation over a series of workshops. I use queer acts throughout as they help describe the ways in which these historiographic artworks traverse both the archival and the nonarchival, formal and embodied knowledges. I also looked to Freeman’s ‘erotohistoriography’ as it builds on a concept that a queer subject’s relationship to the past is similar to a queer subject’s object of desire. That is, what oscillates between and forms queer lives, loves and communities are sets of relations not easily archived, or historicised, or monumentalised. Queer acts ultimately describe *material practices*, comprised of the archival and the nonarchival, made in and of queer relations. Queer acts describe the actions of a series of co-conspirators – artists, academics, and archivists among others – to account for all the complexity of queer lives lived, and forge new connections between different moments in time. The historical materialist in Benjamin seeks to

⁹⁹ Muñoz, ‘Ephemera as Evidence’, 6.

‘explode’ the continuum of history in a revolutionary break. The approach I suggest is one that, as I go on to discuss in relation to Hayes, seeks not a ‘break’ but a discontinuity in the continuum of history, proposing a more complex narrative and interplay between past, present, and future. The artworks in this thesis serve as a bridge between the unfilled potentialities of queerness, and queer political horizons latent within archives. The artworks, as queer acts, are performative of these politics, they make them present in the encounter. The artworks are the past in drag, they are made ‘lively’ like the archival objects they mediate, they put the objects into action, objects imbued with emotions, feelings, and memories.

3. Dear readers, your then is my now: artist moving image and the archive in Sharon Hayes' *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016)

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore the mediation of the archive in Sharon Hayes' *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016). I argue Hayes uses both moving image and installation to make the past present. The five-channel video installation depicts feminist, queer and trans* activists and non-professional actors reading scripts derived from correspondence found in lesbian magazines alongside newsletters, personals, and other print ephemera from feminist, lesbian, and effeminate political collectives dating from 1955—77.¹ The videos are projected onto hoarding in the gallery space with reproduced archival material pasted onto the reverse. The artwork's use of print and paper ephemera from the archive is evocative of earlier moments and media cultures of lesbian and feminist activism in the 1970s. These earlier moments, as they are staged in the installation and film set, and specifically as they are performed in the reading of the script, make the past present. More specifically, this is what Elizabeth Freeman calls the present 'as hybrid' in erotohistoriographic practices which embody and perform queer pasts. The evocation of these earlier moments, and specifically a sense of discord and discontinuity in lesbian-feminist communities, suggests a politics that is incomplete and unresolved. The following discussion will show how these moments and their politics resonate across time and create affinities with contemporary queer and trans* political struggles. To unpack the artwork's queer sense of time, I ask: how does artist moving image mediate the archive? How does Hayes engage with the archive? And, what are the affects and political efficacies of such deliberate temporal strategies in art?

I begin by considering the specific role moving image plays in mediating archival material. I locate Hayes' artwork – alongside other works associated with the archival

¹ I focus on correspondence found in lesbian magazines, in part, as the chapter continues, it draws out the discussion, discourse, and power dynamics within lesbian communities. I have also spent time in archives reviewing correspondence found in British lesbian magazine *Arena 3*, using it as a primary referent to explore some of these dynamics the figure in the script of Hayes' artwork.

turn in queer studies and cultural production – within a lineage of lesbian moving image associated with the 1990s moment of New Queer Cinema. I then look to the more contemporary notion of ‘the return’ in recent feminist and trans* artworks and scholarship. Returns, or an action prefixed with ‘re-’ captures the novel ways in which feminist, queer, and trans* historiographic artistic practice knowingly engages with archival and historical material. A return is not simply a going over again to remake something the same, it acknowledges that an encounter with an archival trace changes it and us. As an example, I outline Hayes’ notion of ‘re-speaking’ as crucial to understanding how the past is made present within her artworks. I also track other scholars’ articulations of a past made active and present, including Giovanni Zapperi’s broader concept of ‘feminist time’. Returns rely on a queer sense of time, one that challenges a normative temporal order to historical time and opens up the possibility that multiple temporalities can exist in the present. I will provide a brief overview of recent feminist, lesbian, and trans* artistic practice, which more forcefully asserts the idea that the past can be embodied and performed in the present, not as facsimile or faithful re-creation, but as amalgam, as drag and returning us to Freeman, ‘as hybrid’. In this brief literature review, I ask: what is the relationship between lens-based media and archives? How do queer and trans* producers use moving image, film, and video? Where might we locate Hayes’ practice within recent histories of lesbian and trans* moving image? How might we describe recent historical returns within queer and trans* contemporary artworks?

The first section of the chapter considers the use of archival material in *In My Little Corner of the World*. The use of archival material, the aesthetics of analogue and paper-based protest, cited and re-cited by queer and trans* communities within the context of the gallery, is central to the creation of an anachronistic and queer sense of time. To explore the use of the material, I first provide an overview of the archival material and specifically one of the source archives; second, I outline how Hayes sets the stage and scene using the archival material; and third, I look to how the archival material is performed. To make the work, and specifically the script, Hayes used materials found in various lesbian, feminist, and LGBTQ* archives across the United States and United Kingdom. I consider one of Hayes’ referent archives, the Lesbian Archive at Glasgow Women’s Library, as instructive of the importance of interpretation in archival practice. The intention here is to draw parallels between Hayes’ mediation and the novel approaches to archiving undertaken by feminist and LGBTQ* archives. I contend both

interpret and mediate archival materials in a way that makes them active and relevant to contemporary queer discourse and politics. The archival material featured in the artwork is both staged and performed by the readers. In the five-channel film there is an abundance of paper and other older communication technologies, including typewriters and old computer equipment. The work is presented in an installation that includes reproduced archival materials evocative of activism and protest. The collage aesthetic alludes to earlier moments of activism, community-building, and organising. The readers comprise a cross-section of the feminist, queer, and trans* community in Philadelphia where the film was made and Hayes lives. Here I ask: what archives and materials did Hayes use? How do they feature in the artwork? How does Hayes stage and perform the archive?

The second section considers ‘the return’ in the artwork; that is the way a supposedly outmoded lesbian-feminist past is made present and politically viable. I examine the function of anachronism, allegory, and melancholia within the artwork as it warns against processes of historicisation and narrativisation within feminism and proposes new connections and affiliations with contemporary queer and trans* subjects. I look specifically to the recurring characters of the Black and butch lesbians who feature prominently within the dialogue. In the artwork, they are figurative of the historical erasures and tensions within lesbian feminism; articulating an intersectional understanding of gender, race, and sexuality, and what Hayes describes as a ‘proto-trans’ subjectivity. I consider these figures, and the artwork as a whole, as anachronistic, building on the pre-existing understandings of the importance of anachronism within Hayes’ practice more generally. Anachronism, taken to mean something out of place and time, describes a central effect of the artwork. Anachronism is an important relational tool for queer and trans* subjects who exist out of time and place to a heteronormative order of time, and history-memory. Claire Hemmings describes the ‘anachronistic lesbian’ within feminism, and Hayes’ uses this caricature as a means of breaking with given lineages, genealogies, and narratives in feminism.² I expand on this by proposing the anachronistic Black and butch lesbian characters as allegorical. In art history, Craig Owens provides a schema for understanding the allegorical in postmodern contemporary art as it seeks to challenge totalities – which in this thesis we

² Hemmings explains: ‘... lesbianism itself is marked as anachronistic, unless combined with a palatable mainstream femininity, since there is simply no need to be hostile to men in contemporary Western culture (any more)’. In: Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 8.

might say is the ossification of queer pasts as LGBTQ* memory-history, and in this chapter, the resignation of Black and butch epistemologies to the footnotes of feminist herstory – by appropriating the unresolved, and the fragmentary. I bring Owens’ ‘allegorical impulse’ into dialogue with Freeman’s articulation of the allegorical as a way of creating shared meaning and connections between queer and trans* subjects, then and now. Owens’ allegory dwells within an art historical discourse of representationalism, whereas Freeman’s allegory is on the body, and it is performative. The former is relational, driven by desires, emotions, and feelings, toward objects/subjects. As discussed in the previous chapter, Freeman’s erotohistoriography involves the reclamation and reappropriation of negative feelings, such as trauma. In the artwork, I look at Hayes’ reclamation and reappropriation of the song *In My Little Corner of the World* by notorious homophobe Anita Bryant as the title of the artwork, and as I suggest, the work’s soundtrack. This is exemplary of Freeman’s notion of ‘collective melancholia’, a strategy for reclaiming a ‘lost’ object/subject as part of a contemporary queer and trans* political project and way of being. In this section, I demonstrate the anachronistic, allegorical, and melancholic as central to Hayes’ queer historiographic practice.

In the conclusion, I briefly speculate on some of the pitfalls of the allegorical, or a speaking in ‘general’ about lesbian-feminist pasts. Retuning to Hemmings’ work on the function of narrative and repetition within the glosses of feminist journals, I consider how *In My Little Corner of the World* reproduces a different ‘grammar’, but a grammar all the same. As Benjamin warns us in our desire to ‘explode’ the continuum of history through a revolutionary project, I remind that queer artworks, as cultural documents made in and of the present, might reproduce similar elisions and erasures of specific historical subjects.

3.1.1 Returns in lesbian, feminist, and trans* contemporary art

This thesis is haunted by returns. I use the term here as it frames queer, and specifically lesbian, feminist, and trans* archival engagements of the past decade or so that bridge a Derridean archival return – as compulsive repetition and a fever – with a return in queer studies and cultural production that re-imagines time and our relationship to the past. In contemporary art, the ‘return’ captures the sense through which artists and scholars are re-considering queer pasts, and moreover making them present. I take this idea from recent feminist art historical writing which proposes archival returns in contemporary

art as a making of the past present. To make the past present is to reveal the omissions both from the archive and art history of gendered subjects. This is more than simply reparative or restorative, as the artworks also serve as a critique of the institutions of the archive and art history. Here, I locate Hayes' artwork in relation to discourses on 'returns', and its designation with the use of terminology prefixed 're-' in art history – for example Hayes own notion of 're-speaking' – as it describes a means of engaging with archival material in contemporary queer cultural production and performance.

In My Little Corner of the World might sit within what Sara Ahmed calls a 'wonky' genealogy of lesbian, feminist, queer, and trans* moving image practices which are historiographic. The work shares political affinities with 1970s feminist filmmaking, specifically Lizzie Borden's *Regrouping* (1976), a mesmerising early example of the playful use of narrative and time to explore desire and discontinuity within feminist communities and politics.³ There are glimmers of the 'alchemy' of the lesbian filmmaking practices from the 1980s and 1990s which Ruby B. Rich dubbed the 'Great Dyke Rewrite'.⁴ Hayes shares affinities with more recent queer and trans* artworks made in the past decade, including collaborative duo Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, and Tourmaline. Earlier moments of feminist and lesbian film share in common with more recent contemporary artworks that address archives, history, and the past, a distinct set of strategies for troubling the process of making history. James Boaden in his book chapter "Queer Paper History: P. Staff's *The Foundation* and Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston*" (2020) argues there are 'productive anachronisms' between the earlier moments of Rich's New Queer Cinema, and recent contemporary artworks associated with a queer archival turn. These artworks, both then and now, question the

³ The focus of many of Hayes' artworks is second wave feminist politics. There has also been particular focus on second wave artistic practice and discourse in the past decade or so in curatorial practice and exhibition making. Borden's more well-known anarcho feminist science fiction *Born in Flames* (1983) has enjoyed screenings as part of associated public programmes and events for exhibitions that explore feminism, queerness and/or science fiction. For example, most recently, Dundee Contemporary Arts screened the film as part of their events programme for the Ursula Le Guin inspired sci-fi group exhibition *Seized by the Left Hand* (2019–20). *Regrouping*, as Borden describes it, is more 'self-reflexive' in comparison to the agit-prop *Born in Flames*, but has equally enjoyed renewed interest, notably a screening of a restored version of the film to mark its 40th anniversary at Edinburgh International Film Festival in 2016. The renewed interest in earlier moments of second wave feminist film making practice also gives weight to a specific feminist and queer archival turn of the past decade or so, one that explicitly cites itself *within* histories of feminist and queer cultural production.

⁴ Rich observed, in the artworks of Cecilia Barriga, Anne Baxter, Kaucyilia Brooke and Jane Cottis, and Cecilia Dougherty, a 'historical revisionism' that could be called a 'lesbian camp'. These works share in common the use of playful appropriation, invention and narrative fiction to reimagine historical events and past moments. In: B. Ruby Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*, (Durham: Duke University Press) 2013.

certitudes of time thought as linear, moving from beginning to end, in the telling of queer histories. Boaden advocates for an art historical scholarship that addresses these artworks, and thinks not from one art historical moment leading to another but suggests we ‘look both forward and back simultaneously’.⁵ To conceptualise such a movement, I will briefly outline various ‘returns’ undertaken in feminist, lesbian, queer, and trans* moving image practices. *In My Little Corner of the World* enacts a return to the archive to perform, embody, and reflect on the past as confluent to a present-day set of desires, politics, and community. Here, I draw out the manner in which returns *do* this, that is how the return – understood as queer-feminist historiographic practice – makes the past, present. I focus on three key components: first, the challenging of dominant linear histories and modes of temporality; second, the revealing of erasures in the archival record; and third, an embodiment and performing of the archive.

Returns make the past present by challenging linear histories and dominant modes of temporality. Giovanni Zapperi in “Woman’s reappearance: rethinking the archive art – feminist perspectives” (2013), a study of artworks by Zoe Leonard and Cheryl Dunye, Renée Green, and Andrea Geyer, suggests the ‘return’ as a key strategy in feminist artistic practice. The artists return to the archive in a struggle ‘to find one’s own voice’ that is absent, erased, or marginal, in turn revealing the discontinuities of historical time as it applies to gendered subjects. Zapperi’s case studies focus on artworks that are ‘archival reconstruction[s] of a woman’s life through a combination of historical investigation and fictional narratives’.⁶ Central to Zapperi’s thesis is ‘feminist time’, which is ‘a notion of temporality that comprises returns, accelerations and discontinuities, where the subjective and collective dimensions are related to a number of historical, social and cultural conditions’.⁷ Each of the artworks employ ‘feminist time’ in their ‘archival reconstruction’ of the lives of women. Describing the artworks, Zapperi explains: ‘[i]n mixing fact and fiction, representation and desire, these artists experiment with the possibility of an elliptical temporality that engages sexual difference and a present-feminist desire for different writings of history’.⁸ On the

⁵ Boaden is advocating for a move away from a linear art history from past to present that implies patrimony, legacy and lineage, all of which re-produces the very historical continuities and narratives these artists desire to break from. James Boaden, ‘Queer Paper History: P. Staff’s “The Foundation” and Isaac Julien’s “Looking for Langston”’, in *Artists’ Moving Image in Britain since 1989*, ed. Sarah Perks, Lucy Reynolds, and Erika Balsom (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 175.

⁶ Giovanna Zapperi, ‘Woman’s Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art—Feminist Perspectives’, *Feminist Review*, no. 105 (2013): 23.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

formulation of ‘feminist time’, Zapperi draws on Julia Kristeva and also Walter Benjamin’s concept of *Jetztzeit* ‘now-moment’ or ‘now-time’ (as it is translated in the essay “On the Concept of History”).⁹ This describes how history is ‘fixed’ in the present. For Zapperi the ‘now-moment’ of a history’s making ‘might be able to reveal meaningful aspects that include culture, subjectivity, history and struggles through aesthetic practices’.¹⁰ In other words, Zapperi argues that the artworks reflect as much the socio-political moment of their making (and their maker, the artist), as they represent a past moment or event. Present and past are inexorably bound to one another, history is the present action and name we give to past moments, and time is that which secures history backwards – gives it order, shape and logic. The archive is part of this system. To conceptualise such a conflation of past and present, feminist time is conceived as anachronistic. Or, as Victoria Browne would call it, non-linear.¹¹ Feminist time – which shares affinities to ‘queer time’ discussed in the previous chapter – is a disruption of normative time (family time, work time, etc.) and processes of historicisation, which Benjamin warns against. It is specific, discrete, and located in relation to gendered subjectivities, and riles against the archive’s tendency to cast something as pre-determined and fixed.

Returns reveal elisions and erasures in archives. The works of Black lesbian filmmakers are of particular note as they confront the often violent erasure of Black voices from the archive. The return to the archive for Black subjects, can be, a return to a site of violent erasure and death, that can repeat itself in the act of the return. Saidiya Hartman’s important article “Venus in Two Acts” (2008) reflects on archives of slavery, and the impossibility of knowing ‘Venus’ – a ‘dead girl’. Hartman explains that ‘[t]he archive is, in this case, a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhoea, a few lines about a whore’s life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history’.¹² These potent words of Hartman reminds of the violent erasures and ‘death’ the archival record perpetuates, and ‘the pain experienced in [Hartman’s] encounter with the scraps of the archive’.¹³ The ‘death sentence’ Hartman describes, is handed down in the archival record, written by the oppressor, and does not tell us who Venus was, instead, creates what Allan Sekula calls a ‘type’ in

⁹ Benjamin, ‘On the Concept of History’, 395.

¹⁰ Zapperi, ‘Woman’s Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art—Feminist Perspectives’, 25.

¹¹ Victoria Browne, *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History*, Breaking Feminist Waves (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

¹² Saidiya Hartman, ‘Venus in Two Acts’, *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (17 July 2008): 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

relation to criminal archives, or, what Foucault, referring to the nineteenth-century homosexual, calls a ‘character’.¹⁴ “Venus in Two Acts” is a reflection on Hartman’s own creative writing practice and archival mediations; it charts the difficulties for Black artists and scholars in navigating the archival record, and the need to ‘imagine what cannot be verified’, by writing a history ‘with and against the archive’.¹⁵ If the archival record of slavery is that which counts as ‘legitimate’ knowledge of a past, and ‘[t]he archive is inseparable from the play of power that murdered Venus’, we must look to alternate – non-scientific – ways of addressing the past. Returning to our archival returns in contemporary art, and learning from Hartman, what do you do when the archival record is either not there, or the image it presents is one that perpetuates what Hartman describes as ‘two’ deaths – literal and figurative – of ‘precious lives which are visible only in the moment of their disappearance’?¹⁶

When the return to the archive yields only violent erasure, artists use the occasion to joyfully re-imagine Black queer pasts. Campbell X’s *B.D. Women* (1994) is a short that tells a love story between a jazz singer and her butch lover, set in the 1920s and cut with contemporary talking head interviews with lesbians. *B.D. Women* is a complex work that generates multiple and layered notions of time. There is the alternate time of a Black lesbian herstory, the time of cinema which perpetuates an erasure, and the time of

¹⁴ Allan Sekula’s important essay “The Body and the Archive” (1986) gives a history of the lens as complicit in the persecution of ‘social deviants’ within nineteenth century systems of social control and eugenics. The effects of such a system, are, as Sekula puts it, to ‘establish and delimit the terrain of the *other*, to define both the *generalised look* – the typology – and the *contingent instance* of deviance and social pathology’. The body *as* archive, that is the body as depicted in a photograph was instructive (in of itself) of the history of a subject – the archive was *on* the body so to speak, all one had to do was create a system of capture, measurement and order which we call the archive. In the nineteenth century this had profound implications on criminals, people of colour, homosexuals, the working-class, and sex workers. Sekula examines the use of photography by Alphonse Bertillon and one of the founders of the eugenics, Francis Galton. Bertillon worked for the French police in the 1880s and invented a criminal identification system comprising an extensive photographic catalogue of criminals, with odd anatomical attention to things like ears. Sekula describes Bertillon’s work as one of ‘*inscription*, a transformation of the body’s signs into a *text*’. The photography or image was ‘subordinated’, it came to support the presupposition that the criminal, who had been arrested and documented as such, was indeed, a criminal. The ‘[p]hotographs and technical illustrations were deployed, not only against the body of the representative criminal, but also against that body as a bearer and producer of its own, inferior representations’. Galton created the photographic composite, the layering of multiple portraits at varying exposures to create, a ‘legitimate average’. The racist ideological underpinning of Galton’s project was ‘an essentialist physical anthropology of race’. And perhaps somewhat unsurprisingly, he perceived his most successful composite as that of “the Jewish type”. Galton’s photographic technique for Sekula represents a ‘collapsed version of the archive’, with a ‘potent’ single image made of multiple layered and blurred images attempting ‘to achieve the authority of the archive, of the general, abstract proposition’. Bertillon and Galton are a reminder that to work with the lens, is to work with a tool that from its inception has been more concerned – like the archive – with *capturing* a diffracted queer subject, a criminal, a deviant, an object of study and surveillance. See: Allan Sekula, ‘The Body and the Archive’, *October* 39 (1986): 3–64 [Original emphasis].

¹⁵ Hartman, ‘Venus in Two Acts’, 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

Black lesbianism captured in both the historical reconstructions and interviews. Sepia tones invoke a melancholic vision of the golden age of Hollywood that is queered, and re-directed towards a joyful depiction of Black gay lives. The work is in dialogue with the more widely cited Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* (1989), a similarly lush portrait of Black gay lives and histories. Both films speak to one another, but Campbell X's more minor position within the now canonical histories of queer film highlight the still gendered and racialised lines of art historical writing. Whereas Rich describes the 'Great Dyke Rewrite' as a campy appropriation and figuring queer of white pop cultural icons from Hollywood, Campbell X's work is a reminder that the idea of queer appropriation of an already existing 'icon' are also a privilege of whiteness. Similarly, Leonard's and Dunye's *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* uses a series of eighty-two photographs to document the life of a fictional black lesbian actress and singer named Fae Richards.¹⁷ The artwork is about the impossibility of such an archival subject. Zapperi attributes the motivations of the artists in making such works to 'the desire for a history that could have – should have – happened'.¹⁸ Dunye's later feature length work, *The Watermelon Women* (1996) features *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* and further explores in a docudrama-style the marginal status of Black lesbians within feminist archives. In one scene of the film, Dunye (who plays herself as the main protagonist), searches for Fae Richards in the Centre for Lesbian Information and Technology (CLIT, a fictional version of the Lesbian Herstory Archives which I discuss in the previous chapter). The work is a mix of fiction and non-fiction, it is part romcom and part documentary. Dunye has a romantic relationship with the film director which echoes the inter-racial lesbian love life of Fae Richards. In Dunye's *The Fae Richards Photo Archive*, time connects the artists, audience, and archival traces of the three women subjects in an elliptical relationship.¹⁹ The artwork creates a 'distorted historical view', and 'both past and present are thus held in suspension'. The resulting combination of archival traces, fictive narrative and the often-visible hand of the artist, results in '[f]ractures and discontinuities [...] com[ing] to the fore, and new meanings becom[ing] visible'.²⁰ Key to these fictive archival returns is the play with the 'time' of the archive,

¹⁷ 'The Fae Richards Photo Archive', accessed 18 December 2019, <https://whitney.org/collection/works/11353>.

¹⁸ Zapperi, 'Woman's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art—Feminist Perspectives', 34.

¹⁹ Zapperi develops her understanding from Griselda Pollock's writing on elliptical time in: Griselda Pollock, 'The Grace of Time: Narrativity, Sexuality and a Visual Encounter in the Virtual Feminist Museum', *Art History* 26, no. 2 (April 2003): 174–213.

²⁰ Zapperi, 'Woman's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art—Feminist Perspectives', 25–26.

history, and the past. Artistic interventions and mediations, with their anachronistic configuration of archival traces, and fictional narrative, layered atop one another, reveal a contingency to time – which is to say a contingency to the dominant time of the archive which seeks forms of biopolitical control and order – and often alternate temporalities, ones that are Black, queer and trans*.

Trans* artists have been at the fore of recent historiographic practice which addresses the inadequacies of the archive in remembering queer and trans* pasts. A notable example is Tourmaline, an artist, social historian and trans* activist whose films enliven and enrich the limited visibility of trans* women of colour within archival records. Jeannine Tang in “Contemporary Art and Critical Transgender Infrastructures” (2017), describes Tourmaline’s practice as driven by a ‘*transformative impulse*’. Tourmaline privileges collective modes of knowledge and cultural production, and her films are often co-produced and made with gender nonconforming, queer, and trans* communities. The film *Happy Birthday, Marsha!* (2018), extends the legacies of Black lesbian filmmakers, in its embrace of an oftentimes joyful fictional recounting of the life of Marsha P. Johnson, a central figure in the Stonewall Inn riots and prominent Black sex-work and trans* activist in New York in the 1970s. Tang describes the film aesthetic as ‘glamorous’, and its use of glamour as a ‘site of historical quotation and experimentation’, usually dismissed in high art for its connections to pop culture and fashion. In embracing and depicting glamorous Black trans* woman, the film for Tang is a form of ‘aesthetic resistance to the way in which trans bodies are so frequently featured on camera as mangled and murdered’.²¹ Tourmaline uses such ‘glamorous’ aesthetics to confront the very institutions and spaces that for so long have erased trans voices. *Atlantic is a Sea of Bones* (2017), opens on the balcony of the \$422 million Renzo Piano designed new Whitney in the Meatpacking district of New York. On this monument to speculative property development, wealth and philanthropic contemporary art, Egypt LaBeija, the activist, performer and drag mother of the legendary House of LaBeija, looks out onto the former piers of the Hudson River, synonymous with queer communities and sex. LaBeija in a red shimmering gown dances on the rooftop, the film dissolves with the slow pulsing club beat into a dreamlike sequence, somewhere between a dream and memory. LaBeija is a Black trans femme history embodied, the dream sequence is haunted by a ghost-like trans performer, someone lost, but not

²¹ Jeannine Tang, ‘Contemporary Art and Critical Transgender Infrastructures’, in *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, ed. Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton, Critical Anthologies in Art and Culture (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017), 381–2.

forgotten. The film is a form of remembrance, its namesake a poem by Lucile Clifton about bodies in the Atlantic and Hudson river. *Happy Birthday, Marsha!* and *Atlantic is a Sea of Bones* see off the archive's elisions, erasures and violence with glamour, joy, and dancing.

Queer archival engagements re-order and layer the past and present, and creative returns knowingly foreground and narrate that re-imagining. Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz are two contemporaries of Hayes who take traces of history and the past – both archival and nonarchival – and layer them using moving image and performance. Greg Bordowitz describes as 'palimpsest' a strategy of layering and sedimenting of figurations, identities, and histories on the body of performers that feature in Boudry and Lorenz moving image works. In the article, "Repetitions and Change: The Film Installations of Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz" (2012), Bordowitz describes the work as '[c]omposite and jumbled, the characters appearing in Boudry/Lorenz productions represents modes of existence rather than particular persons'.²² For example, one of the works Bordowitz reflects on is *Salomania* (2009) featuring trans contemporary artist Wu Tsang, who plays a composite of three characters – Oscar Wilde, Alla Nazimova and Salome. Tsang's body stands in for these historical and fictional characters; the 'performers as palimpsestic surfaces revealing layers of history – a dense overlay of texts images and stories drawn from many generations'.²³ The body and its capture on film are the mechanisms which reveals such a layering of history, drawing comparison with screeds of documents and pages piled atop one another found in box files and on shelving in archives. The body performs the re-orderings of the past, similar to the ways in which the historian configures and 'reads' the past from objects in the archive. Creative returns knowingly reveal these mechanisms, and moreover make them part of archival re-imaginings. The practice of Boudry and Lorenz shares affinities with Hayes' artwork for the complex ways in which they challenge and disrupt the logics of the archive. Artke Engel describes Boudry and Lorenz as being more antagonistic towards the archive, explaining 'their aim [is] neither in extending the archive by collecting or creating objects, nor in archiving feelings and exhibiting the politics of emotions that go along with this...' This novel argument, suggests that

²² Gregg Bordowitz, 'Repetition and Change: The Film Installations of Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz', *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 31 (September 2012): 16.

²³ *Ibid.*, 19.

Boudry's and Lorenz's engagements and mediation of the past, push back on the archive's centrality in making history, and remembering the past.²⁴

Artistic and creative returns, as I have outlined them here, are modes of historiographic practice that reclaim and reconfigure a relationship to archival material and archives. The act of returning is not a faithful re-enactment of an earlier moment, the artworks discussed do not intend to 'represent' a series of past moments. Returns are performative acts, using both traces from the archive and other forms of embodied knowledge to create, in Bordowitz's words, a 'palimpsestic' figuration of the queerness of queer pasts. This is, going back to Freeman, the past appearing in the present as 'hybrid'; artistic and creative returns map alternate temporalities that emerge from both archives and queer ways of being. Black and feminist artists and filmmakers are particularly deft at such returns, understanding the temporal exclusions and violence of history on gendered and racialised bodies. Zapperi's 'feminist time' is a temporality which describes gendered experiences of history, memory, and the past, and their figuration in works of art. Hartman's writing on the archives of slavery articulate the complexities of engaging with archival material, specifically the violence of colonial archives. The archive historically and institutionally is often a site of abjection for minoritarian subjects. Creative and artistic returns as historiographic – self-reflexively engaging with history and the mechanisms of its making – challenge and indeed de-centre the archive's prominent role in making visible minoritarian pasts.²⁵ The return, as I use it here, is a queer act, a means of figuring the past in the present, performed and on the body within contemporary queer and trans* artworks. The archive, either as a troubled and violent place that perpetuates death (Hartman's archives of slavery), or as

²⁴ Engels argument goes further, and suggests that Boudry and Lorenz negate or exceed the logics of the archive. Their works *neither* constitute an 'extended' archive, of which we might regard the artwork, as cultural document and mediation of archival traces, an archival 'object', or, of particular note, a form of 'queer archive', popularised by Ann Cvetkovich. Instead they embrace queer and trans* temporal strategies for embodying, figuring and performing the past in the present, emergent from Freeman's 'temporal drag'.

²⁵ Artistic and creative archival interventions can be understood as a reclaiming of the abjection of archives. As Engel describes Boudry's and Lorenz's practice an embrace of 'biographical references that celebrate the singularity of individual lives that have been denied respect and recognition, or have experienced abjection'. Abjection is that which has been 'cast off', and describes the challenge posed by minoritarian subjects to systems and order. As Judith Butler argues in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1995), 'abjection of homosexuality can only take place through an identification with that abjection'. In other words, abjection is part of a process of queer identification, a being 'cast out' from a dominant heterosexual order gives us the homosexual. Butler argues abjection has subsequently been politicised by queers through 'resignifying the abjection of homosexuality into defiance and legitimacy'. To embrace abjection, allows for an understanding of archival returns as part of a re-signifying practice akin to what Butler argues is a 'defiant' strategy used by queers. In: Antke Engel, 'Queer Temporalities and the Chronopolitics of Transtemporal Drag', *E-Flux* 28, no. October 2011 (2011); Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, xxviii, 74.

re-claimed but incomplete, like a predominantly cis and white LGBTQ* archive (Dunye's humorous critique of the LHA), forms part of this performative engagement with the past. Returns queer time, using fiction, invention, and performativity. As I have outlined here, returns to the archive found in Black, feminist, lesbian, queer, and trans* artistic practices of the past half century use these strategies to varying degrees. These returns are queer acts, and I will not consider Hayes' artwork as equally part of this wonky genealogy of returns, a palimpsest of the archival and nonarchival, of queer pasts found in archives, culture, and on the body.

3.2 Mediating feminist and LGBTQ* archives

In My Little Corner of the World returns to correspondence printed in magazines and other printed ephemera produced by feminist, lesbian, and effeminate communities, that have made their way into feminist and LGBTQ* archives. The film performs an engagement with these materials, in effect foregrounding its research, through re-scripting, re-speaking and re-printing historical scraps. In this section I first locate the artwork in relation to its archival referents, both the places and materials which shaped the research and final artwork. Specifically, I look to one of the source archives, the Glasgow Women's Library, as exemplary of a feminist archive which works with artists to provide creative and novel interpretations of their materials. Second, I move on to consider how the archive is staged within the gallery, using the analogy of the Derridean 'house as/is archive' to describe the ways in which Hayes disrupts the time of the archive, the gallery, and the house. I do so to highlight the importance of these materials in the artwork, to situate the artwork within broader LGBTQ* archiving practices, and to propose ways in which archival material can be made active and disruptive in and of the present.

The script and reproduced archival material in the installation came from predominantly lesbian, feminist, and LGBTQ* collections in academic and institutional archives, including: the Hall Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics, the Gay News Photo Archive at Bishopsgate Library, The George Padmore Institute in London, The William Way Archives in Philadelphia, The Daughters of Bilitis Archives in the Gale Cengage Learning Databases, and the Herstory X newsletter archives at the

University of Pennsylvania Library.²⁶ *In My Little Corner of the World* provides a novel artistic mediation of these archives, extending, and re-imagining how we access and engage with archival material. The work sits within a lineage of feminist and queer archival practices that questions traditional archiving conventions of access and interpretation. As I outlined in the previous chapter, artistic and creative interpretations of archives are deeply entangled within histories of queer cultural production, including the making and maintenance of LGBTQ* archives. An example of such an entanglement is the archival practice of Glasgow Women's Library (GWL). *In My Little Corner of the World* was co-commissioned by the Common Guild, a small Glasgow-based contemporary art organisation who often encourage artists to research locally when making new work.²⁷ The Common Guild made the connection with GWL, home to the Lesbian Archive, which includes the Lesbian Archive and Information Centre (LAIC) collection, one of the most significant LGBTQ* archives and collections in the United Kingdom. Hayes' research was facilitated by GWL, in particular by Alice Andrews, a former archivist, and Adele Patrick, Lifelong Learning Manager and Creative Director. After an initial visit in 2015, Hayes' researcher Rose Gibbs spent time at GWL and through correspondence with Andrews selected the material that would come to feature in the artwork.

GWL is intrinsically connected to the arts in its founding but also in the people who continue to run it. For example, both Andrews and Patrick come from arts backgrounds – Andrews working in the arts and graduating from an art history degree at Glasgow University and Patrick training as an artist at Glasgow School of Art. GWL emerged from a grassroots arts organisation, Women in Profile, founded in 1987, that organised events, workshops and exhibitions during Glasgow's year as European Capital of Culture in 1990. The European Capital of Culture is often considered the locus and genesis of 'the Glasgow Miracle', a cultural rejuvenation for the city that continues to this day.²⁸ The organisation exists quietly within the history of the Glasgow Miracle, which, as the narrative goes, chronicles a generation of artists graduating from Glasgow

²⁶ 'Sharon Hayes: In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You', Studio Voltaire, accessed 10 February 2021, <https://sv-staging.atomicsmash.co.uk/whats-on/sharon-hayes-in-my-little-corner-of-the-world-anyone-would-love-you/>.

²⁷ In an interview with the Director of the Common Guild, Katrina Brown explained of the commissioning process for new works, that it is 'not obligatory to have to make work about Scotland, but if appropriate and useful getting [artists] to test it out at least'. Katrina Brown (Director, Common Guild), interviewed by James Bell at the Common Guild, 2 July 2018.

²⁸ For a history of the contemporary arts in Scotland and the 'Glasgow Miracle' see: Sarah Lowndes, *Social Sculpture: The Rise of the Glasgow Art Scene*, (Edinburgh: Luath, 2010).

School of Art in the early 1990s who would go on to accolades such as winning the Turner Prize. This is perhaps in part due to both the male-dominated narrative of the so-called ‘Miracle’ and GWL’s working beyond the field of art, focusing more on women’s cultural engagement, education, and support. From *Women in Profile*, after consultation with the local community and women’s groups from across the city, GWL was established in September 1991 – a volunteer run ‘central general information resource about and for women in Glasgow’.²⁹ The organisation has grown over the years, from a nomadic grassroots arts project to an accredited museum in a recently refurbished Carnegie library in the east end of Glasgow.³⁰ GWL has a well-established practice and history of commissioning artists to respond to its archives, collections and present-day experiences of women. An early example of such an approach, exemplary of social practice learning from feminist art history, is *Castlemilk Womanhouse* (1990). Set in four flats in an empty tenement block in Glasgow’s Castlemilk housing estate, the project brought together artists, local women, and children, to collaboratively explore ‘historical and contemporary notions of women’s creativity, within and outside the home’.³¹ The project was inspired by Judy Chicago and Mariam Shapiro’s *Womanhouse* (1972), a touchstone in feminist artistic and pedagogical practice for its consciousness-raising, collective and political approach to art making. *Castlemilk Womanhouse* similarly sought to critically reflect on the experiences of a group of women in the 1990s by learning from earlier moments of feminist artistic and political practice.³² The project is a precursor to later artistic mediations of GWL’s archives and collections and exemplifies the artist-led approach to addressing women’s history through a present-day frame.

Artists are commissioned to work with GWL’s archives and collections to expand the ways archival materials are interpreted and form part of the organisations’ self-reflexive historiographic practice. A more recent example is *21 Revolutions*, an exhibition that marked GWL’s 21st Anniversary in 2011 with the commissioning of 21 artists and 21

²⁹ “Our History”, <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/about-us/our-history/>, (23/08/18).

³⁰ ‘Collective Architecture Completes Glasgow Women’s Library’, *Dezeen*, 9 April 2016, <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/04/09/collective-architecture-glasgow-womens-library-steel-lift-extension-renovation-scotland/>.

³¹ ‘About Castlemilk Womanhouse | Glasgow Women’s Library’, accessed 7 September 2020, <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/discover-our-projects/house-work-castle-milk-woman-house/about-castlemilk-womanhouse/>.

³² See: Hamblin Hamblin, ‘Los Angeles, 1972/Glasgow, 1990: A Report on Castlemilk Womanhouse’, in *Feminism and Art History Now: Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice*, ed. Victoria Horne and Lara Perry, International Library of Modern and Contemporary Art 34 (London New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 164–182.

writers, each asked to respond to the archives and collections and culminating in an exhibition and publication.³³ The artworks created ranged from prints, by artists such as Claire Barclay, Kate Davis, and Corin Sworn, to an edition scarf by Ruth Barker and social practice work by Ellie Harrison.³⁴ Of note to the complex mediations that take place between GWL and its collection, is Nicky Bird's collaboration with Andrews, which produced a series of postcards titled *Raging Dyke Network* (2012). Andrews was asked by Bird to select material from the collections that were perhaps less visible, or less likely to be engaged with than the more commonly asserted feminist histories linked to the Women's Suffrage movement.³⁵ The focus of the work was on the ephemera of the Raging Dyke Network, a closed collection at GWL not open to the public, comprising the personal correspondence between members of an international group of radical separatist lesbians active in the late 1990s. The work traces and restages semi-private correspondence from a pre-digital era, and addresses questions of access and visibility in archives and collections practices. Importantly, *Raging Dyke Network* illustrates an example of the interplay in the roles that artists and archivists play at GWL, with Bird co-crediting Andrews in the final work of 21 postcards.³⁶ The archival return in *In My Little Corner of the World* shares affinities with GWL's approach to its archives and collections, in that both seek artistic and creative ways of activating and engaging archival material that is less visible.

GWL's archives and collections have grown and expanded over the organisation's almost 30 years, invariably the result of the consolidation and closure of feminist and LGBTQ* archives and spaces; burgeoning of women's and queer studies; and historicisation of the feminist and gay liberation movements. As discussed in the previous chapter, Eichhorn links the demise of autonomous feminist spaces and the movement of their archives into institutional archives as a consequence of neoliberalism. Equally, Eichhorn argues in moments of crisis, 'the archive was adopted as a viable and even necessary means to legitimise forms of knowledge and cultural production in the present'.³⁷ Whilst LAIC (which forms the bulk of GWL's Lesbian

³³ "21 Revolutions", <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/discover-our-projects/21-revolutions/>, (23/08/18).

³⁴ *21 Revolutions*, exhibition catalogue, (Glasgow Women's Library: Glasgow, 2012).

³⁵ Alice Andrews, interview with James Bell, 12 July 2018.

³⁶ I interviewed Nicky Bird, and re-interviewed Alice Andrews, in preparation for a conference paper on the artwork *Raging Dyke Network*. Nicky Bird, Interview on Skype, interview by James Bell, audio, 9 May 2019; Nicky Bird and Alice Andrews, *Raging Dyke Network*, 2012, colour postcards, variable edition of 20, 15cm x 10cm, 2012.

³⁷ Eichhorn argues: '... the archival turn and neoliberalism runs along two lines. First, I maintain that neoliberal restructuring profoundly eroded our sense of political agency, which compelled us to look for new ways of manipulating that present through a turn to the past. Second, I argue that, as neoliberal

Archive) closed in the early 1990s, succumbing to a lack of financial support as a consequence of central government Thatcher-era policies, including the dismantling of the powerful Labour-run Greater London Council and Section 28, its archive survived and moved to Glasgow in 1995.³⁸ Commenting on the nature of accessions of feminist and lesbian archives, Andrews explains ‘[w]hen it came to LAIC it had very many lives that mapped alongside the lives of GWL itself which is one of like moving around the place, and each time it moved around the place it got stored in slightly different ways or moved into slightly different boxes’.³⁹ The LAIC collection ranges from organisational records of the Black Lesbian Group, through entire print runs of journals such as *Arena 3* and *Sappho*, to other ephemera including badges, leaflets, tapes, and videos.⁴⁰ LAIC’s collection is an amalgam of the ephemera of individuals and organisations, in various stages of being catalogued. GWL attests to the importance of retaining and preserving these marginal traces of the past as a ‘viable’ mode of feminist and queer activism.⁴¹ GWL is emblematic of the wider infrastructures that are enabling new artistic and creative engagements with queer pasts, including *In My Little Corner of the World*.

In My Little Corner of the World, as installed and exhibited at the Common Guild, stages the archival material and confronts the entangled histories of a lesbian archive lost (LAIC), a feminist library gained (GWL), and a contemporary art gallery in Glasgow (the Common Guild). There is a confluence between neoliberal forces of fragmentation, consolidation, and cultural regeneration. In Glasgow, as observed by Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, culture and its associated infrastructures (galleries, festivals, etc.) and economics (tourism), have become the de-facto marker of the post-industrial city’s ‘successful’ regeneration and is used to paper over the vast health and wellbeing inequalities within Glasgow’s working-class communities.⁴² The Common Guild is

restructuring rendered anti-economic endeavours increasingly untenable, the archive was adopted as a viable and even necessary means to legitimise forms of knowledge and cultural production in the present’. Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 7.

³⁸ LAIC was funded by the (Labour controlled) Greater London Council, which was disbanded in 1986. The second, was Section 28, a law enacted in 1988 which prohibited local authorities funding activities that promoted homosexuality. LAIC was a local authority funded lesbian organisation.

³⁹ Andrews, interview with James Bell, 12 July 2018.

⁴⁰ “The Lesbian Archive”, <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/explore-the-library-and-archive/the-archive-collection/the-lesbian-archive/>, (23/08/18).

⁴¹ Their viability is also connected to ideas of ‘legitimacy’, or the archives role in legitimating or indeed instantiating viable pasts and identities. The politics in the archive as Derrida says, and I have reflected, is its importance to history-memory, which Nora argued is the quintessential form of state-sanctioned collective memory in postmodernity. In other words, marginal groups need archives, as archival evidence is taken to be legitimating by the powers that be of a memory, a history, and ultimately a subjectivity.

⁴² The link between culture and sport, is exemplified by the siphoning off of the city’s museums, galleries and sports into the non-profit quango, Glasgow Life, and is most spectacularly seen with Culture and Festival 2014, the £13.2 million arts and cultural strand of Glasgow’s hosting of the Commonwealth

symbolic of Glasgow's cultural regeneration, and GWL and LAIC are stand-in for the changing shape of institutions which serve lesbian and other minoritarian communities.⁴³ Hayes uses the archival material to stage an intervention within the bourgeois gallery, part of the increasing 'inclusivity' of LGBTQ* voices within mainstream arts and culture.

In 2016 I visit Sharon Hayes In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You, at the Common Guild, a gallery atop a hill overlooking a park in the affluent west end of Glasgow. It's a clear October morning, the glaring autumnal light overwhelms the blackout vinyl on the windows of the grand townhouse the gallery occupies – owned by Douglas Gordon, who sometimes uses the flat on the upper floor; the entangled histories of the so-called 'Glasgow Miracle', a post-1990 cultural renaissance for the city, manifest in bricks and mortar on Woodlands Terrace. I've come with someone I love, a tumultuous relationship, one that was bearing heavily on my health; countless conversations about art and politics, a continual coming apart and reassembling myself in the various queer discourses I had become submerged in. In the high-ceiling rooms I watch queer and trans folk read extracts of letters from lesbians from a different time and place. We sit on stools, engrossed in the speaking*

Games. 'A Brief History of Cultural Policy in Glasgow', *Shifty Paradigms* (blog), 18 December 2016, <https://shiftyparadigms.wordpress.com/policy/a-brief-history-of-cultural-policy-in-glasgow/>.

⁴³ GWL, arguably, to borrow from Irit Rogoff, 'smuggled' its feminist politics on the back of the creative and cultural rejuvenation (and funding) available to Glasgow in the early 1990s, and in recent years has become more formalised as an institution, with the employment of an archivist, moving into a permanent home, and becoming museum accredited.

bodies as they melt onto the rough wooden boards by the light streaming in through the windows. I think about the proximity of me and him, not touching, but still evocative of the warmth of the closest embrace. We sit in a former home. The films are shot in a home. The gallery, the archive, the home, spaces that structure and order bodies in normative social arrangements, playing host to an emergent radical feminist and queer politics. A movement, not quite forwards and backwards, perhaps between queer archives, the artwork, me and him; an intimacy between bodies, their proximity to one another, a non-normative set of relations, a politics enacted.

Figure 1. Sharon Hayes, *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016), installation view, The Common Guild, Glasgow, 2016. Photographs by Ruth Clark. Courtesy of the artist.



The installation of *In My Little Corner of the World* stages an encounter with feminist and lesbian archival traces. It does so through architectural intervention and archival reproductions which overlays the temporalities of the gallery, home, and archive. The artwork was shown at the Common Guild, Glasgow, and Studio Voltaire, London. I focus on the former as I visited it in 2016 and recall that encounter above. The Glasgow iteration was split across two floors of the Common Guild's former gallery in a townhouse in the city's affluent west end. Entering on the ground floor, a former sitting room with high ceiling, intricate cornicing, and other original detailing still intact, the room was dissected by a wooden structure made of sterling board panels and CLS wooden struts. Obstructing an ornate cast iron fireplace, the bulky structure resembled the hoarding seen wrapping around empty plots of land branded with 'coming soon' tins can supermarkets under construction.⁴⁴ The structure is a stage to alternate futures already past; an alternate to the promises of futures made in the present by smiling white faces against 3D renders of buildings common on such hoarding.⁴⁵ In the gallery, instead, crisp high definition videos – three downstairs and two upstairs – are projected onto landscape and portrait rectangles of (presumably) matt grey projection paint. On the reverse of the upstairs hoarding, between the wooden supports that join and hold up the sterling board panels, paper ephemera from archives is pasted in a mock flyposting style. The materials range from price lists for lesbian magazines and a diary of events including a boat trip to Hampton Court, to an image of women protesting outside a British Home Stores. The typewriter font, poster reproduction in the DIY-aesthetic of Risograph, and haphazard placement eliciting the hastiness of illegal flyposting, suggest

⁴⁴ I'm from a large post-industrial town, Paisley, on the west coast of Scotland. When I visit home, I walk the mile or so to the estate where I grew up and my mum still lives. I weave from the train station, through a Halfords carpark, onto one of the main artery roads, Renfrew Road, that leads from the town centre. For a number of years, a large plot of land lay empty, surrounded by hoarding painted navy, and a sign that gleefully declared the hoarding was donated by Tesco (the *hoarding* not the empty land behind it). On the hoarding, to coincide with its failed UK City of Culture 2020 bid, the town showcased all the various cultural activities taking place. Before the hoarding, there was a tenpin bowling with a Wimpy inside I used to go to as a child. Now, there is a Lidl supermarket and drive-through of the Canadian coffee chain Tim Horton's. The steel sheds match the large Pure Gym and B&M Home Store across the road, that used to be a Great Mills DIY superstore, which closed after a larger B&Q DIY superstore steel shed was completed around one mile along Renfrew Road. I'm drawn to these out-of-town retail parks, particularly this new one which is less than 5 minutes walk from Paisley's historic town centre. Creeping movements towards the 12th century abbey as cars drive-by or drive-through, with their Tim Horton's coffee. I've never known any different. Urban renewal is driven by Tesco, who sit on land, see out the post-2008 recession, and sell it to another supermarket for development. Culture concealing the cracks and being a promise to more of the same stalled developments just behind the hoarding.

⁴⁵ For an example of arts practice which critiques's speculative property development, see Eastern Surf.

a time before, a time when print was a primary form of communication, and activism was analogue and material.

The installation of *In My Little Corner of the World* is a structure of display that disrupts the gallery and how archival material is commonly presented. Instead of neatly ordered vitrines, with name tags and short pieces of explanatory text, reproduced archival material is pasted haphazardly onto the back of hoarding. The films are not documentary, but a complex layering of archival sources within staged and scripted performances. Hal Foster asserts that installation is the preferred mode of archival artworks, but whilst one might draw parallels with the use of wooden structures by Thomas Hirschorn (Foster's go-to example of the 'archival impulse'), Hayes' installation explicitly references histories of feminism and lesbianism. The work is more explicitly connected to contemporary artworks which engage with feminist and LGBTQ* archives, histories and pasts. The use of novel forms of archival and museological display, exhibition design, and installation can also be seen in the works of Evan Ifekoya, Alex Martinis Roe, and Petra Bauer. Ifekoya's immersive *A Net Made of Individual Nots* (2017), was an exhibition and installation about Black queer archives that created a club atmosphere in the gallery, with low and multicolour lighting, partitions and vitrines containing paper clippings and other ephemera.⁴⁶ Roe's exhibition *To Become Two* at CasCo (2016), included a series of films, material, and other ephemera about histories of Euro-Australian feminist organising, presented on an elaborate purple metal frame. Bauer's installation *A Morning Breeze* at the Venice Biennale (2015), included research desks with projections of archival material alongside a larger wall rotary slide projection relating to women's suffrage in Sweden. The aims of such installations at once present and make visible minoritarian pasts, whilst critiquing and playing with modes of display that contributed to their erasure. *In My Little Corner of the World* plays with the visual languages of the archive, the gallery and specifically of activism and protest to foreground research processes by using modes of display which make this research and labour visible.

The disruption of the gallery through architectural intervention and staging is carried through in the five-channel videos. The poetic coincidence of the Common Guild as gallery cum home is made explicit within the videos, as Hayes explains: 'I knew I wanted to stage these readings in a domestic space that spoke to the home as a site of

⁴⁶ 'EMBASSY | A Net Made Of Individual Knots', accessed 22 March 2019, <http://www.embassygallery.org/a-net-made-of-individual-knots/>.

the production of political activity and resistance'.⁴⁷ Each of the five films which comprise the multi-channel work frame a room in a house. Each room, a kitchen, a bathroom, a bedroom, a hall, a living room, has been given over to organising. It reminds of the importance of private dwellings in earlier moments of gay liberation, when 'private' was one of the few legally permissible spaces one could be a homosexual. The period of some of the archival sources used by Hayes, which date back to the 1960s, such as *Arena 3*, correlates to a moment when the home was central to the early formation of community and political activity. The house being home to a group of queers organising also nods to the politicisation of the home and domestic by Silvia Federici and the Wages for Housework campaign of the 1970s. The politics of social reproduction is the demand that certain roles, the domestic worker, the sex worker, the housewife, be properly accounted for within capitalist relations, required the reclamation of places like the home, as places that were both political and sites of work.⁴⁸ *In My Little Corner of the World* as it stages an encounter with both feminist and queer organising in domestic space, can be read along the lines of a Marxist feminist reclamation of the house, home, and domestic as sites of political activism. The exhibition and installation put on display the labour of building and making a community, alongside collecting and recording a particular history. The infrastructures of the archive, the gallery, and the home, become a palimpsest of paper ephemera on hoarding, and lesbian correspondence embodied and performed in the present, projected, and layered onto a structure which intersects the gallery. The architectural intervention brings to fore an alternate history and a 'wonky' genealogy of queer-feminist organising that continues to this day.

⁴⁷ Julia Bryan-Wilson and Sharon Hayes, 'Interview: Julia Bryan-Wilson in Conversation with Sharon Hayes', in *Sharon Hayes*, ed. Julia Bryan-Wilson, Jeannine Tang, and Lanka Tattersall, Contemporary Artists (London: Phaidon, 2018), 20.

⁴⁸ There has been a return to these politics within recent feminist art history and practice in the past five or so years which connects with present day issues including the gendered forms of un- and under-waged labour in the arts. Of note are the connections or indeed further work that needs to be done in relating the politics of social reproduction with queer struggles. In a sidenote of Marina Vishmidt's contribution to a special issue of *Third Text* on social reproduction, Vishmidt suggests that social reproduction, as it attends to a more materialist analysis of familial relations under capital addresses queer theory's reliance on discourse over materialism, describing queer theories radical critique of the institution of the family (from the like of Lee Edelman), as 'an aestheticised conception of anti-family politics without a materialist analysis'. See: Marina Vishmidt, 'The Two Reproductions in (Feminist) Art and Theory since the 1970s', *Third Text* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2017): 17, Footnote 52.

3.3 Making the past, present: anachronism, allegory, and collective melancholia

I am not interested in the transhistoric as an operation without foundation, as a means through which any bodies that did not coexist in the same time and place can be gathered together to fictionally appear. Rather, I mine these transhistoric relations to uncover, in the present moment, a given historic genealogy that was wilfully obscured or erased, or to unspool a historic trajectory so that another present or future moment might have been, or might be possible.⁴⁹

The ‘transhistoric’ as Hayes discusses above, is found in the archival material and staged in the performance, but as the meaning of the word suggests, a trans-history is not bound by the strictures of a particular archival text or its fictional retelling in the present. Instead, Hayes seeks ‘obscured or erased’ connections to the past. The ‘transhistoric relations’ of *In My Little Corner of the World* are between earlier moments of discord, discussion, and debate in lesbian feminism and contemporaneous feminist, queer, and trans* politics.⁵⁰ I argue that *In My Little Corner of the World* creates a bridge between past and present through the material and immaterial, in the installation with reproduced archival material and in the films as paper and props; and in the performances of the readers. The artwork enacts a ‘strategy of historical return’ to germinal moments of second wave feminist activism. It makes these past moments present, not through a faithful re-enactment of an earlier moment, but a composite that blurs past and present. Hayes creates a queer sense of time for the audience by referencing different moments in time, visible in the installation and films which comprise the artwork. Here I consider the performing of paper pasts, the emergence of two anachronistic figures from lesbian-feminist pasts, and their allegorical function in building transhistorical relations with supposedly outmoded identities and politics.

⁴⁹ Sharon Hayes, ‘Temporal Relations’, in *Not Now! Now! Chronopolitics, Art & Research*, ed. Renate Lorenz, Publication Series of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna 15 (International conference, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 71.

⁵⁰ By politics I mean the activism around Black and trans* rights in the United Kingdom and United States. In the UK, this includes the continued failed implementation or reform of the Gender Recognition Act (in its various legislative guises across the devolved governments of the UK). GRA reform is largely an administrative change that would allow trans folk to more easily change gender on their official documents, but the issue has been hijacked by a small powerful minority who often espouse transphobic biologically essentialist views on gender and sex assigned at birth. In the USA, trans* activism is orientated towards highlighting the ongoing violence and murder of Black trans women, and campaigning for police and prison abolition. See: Sophie Lewis, ‘How British Feminism Became Anti-Trans’, *The New York Times*, 7 February 2019, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/07/opinion/terf-trans-women-britain.html>.

3.3.1 Performing paper pasts

One of the primary mediations of *In My Little Corner of the World* is lesbian print cultures. The film's script was developed predominantly from the 'letters' pages of lesbian magazines *The Ladder* (1956—72), *Arena 3* (1963—72) and *Sappho* (1972—81). These magazines are often found in personal archives and are a prominent feature within institutional archives and special collections.⁵¹ The film highlights the immense importance of correspondence and letter-based communication in lesbian communities and as tools for consciousness raising, debate, and organising. Melanie Waters in the article "'Yours in Struggle': Bad Feelings and Revolutionary Politics in *Spare Rib*" (2016), explores the 'high premium' placed on personal correspondence in the feminist periodical *Spare Rib*. Waters emphasises the importance of affect and suggests feminism is 'deeply felt' in *Spare Rib*, specifically the correspondence pages become a place where 'the politics of feminism can be negotiated and critiqued'.⁵² In the films, these paper pasts, the archival material, is represented by an abundance of paper, and used as props. The performers hold paper, in the background you see stacks, when a performer is not reading from paper, they sort it, fold it, and put it in envelopes. Alongside the paper are various other props including typewriters, old laptops and computer equipment, devices which speak to ways of communicating from previous decades. I imagine the home as a queer publishing house. The prominence of the paper and other related props emphasises how these communities communicated and the centrality of a multiplicity of voices within feminist and queer organising.

Communication, specifically the ways in which lesbians have explored their identities and built community with other lesbians across time, is central to *In My Little Corner of the World*. And much of this communication involves what Julia Bryan-Wilson characterises as 'the tangible messiness of social movements'.⁵³ Hayes focuses on early moments of so-called assimilationist lesbian politics to present a much more complex picture of the 'deep, hard, radical work those people did to wrench the narrative and the discourse about queer people's lives'.⁵⁴ That communication and messiness is manifest

⁵¹ By 'personal archives', I mean the archive of an individual, that can be as simple as a box of various material, magazines, pins, ticket stubs, and letters, which is then gifted to an institutional archive. The Lesbian Archive does not 'sort' these personal archives, as their order is as much a reflection of the person who collected them as is the content.

⁵² Melanie Waters, "'Yours in Struggle": Bad Feelings and Revolutionary Politics in *Spare Rib*', *Women: A Cultural Review* 27, no. 4 (1 October 2016): 447.

⁵³ Bryan-Wilson and Hayes, 'Interview: Julia Bryan-Wilson in Conversation with Sharon Hayes', 22.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

in the films through the abundance of paper that becomes performative of the complexity of histories of lesbian organising and politics. The significance of paper in feminist and lesbian archives is observed by Maryanne Dever, who argues that the materiality of paper archives, the ways in which they are collected, ordered, and stored is as important as its content.⁵⁵ In other words, the paper which represents the letters and other archival ephemera in the films and installation, is itself revealing of the complexity of an individual's life and politics. This perhaps seems a given, that people are complicated, but as I move on to address, when we look back at an early moment in time, that is when one reads or writes a history of a pre-Stonewall assimilationist lesbian feminism, complexity can be lost for the sake of narrative continuity. Hayes' use of an abundance of paper, a multitude of communications, serves to remind that histories of feminism and queerness are messy and complex.

The performances by a group of readers, are the primary means of citation of specific archival material. The readers were drawn from an open call that explicitly sought feminist, trans*, and queer non-professional actors based in Philadelphia. The readers appear in the frame dressed in contemporary garb reading from the script, move in and out the rooms, and mull about in the background.⁵⁶ If *In My Little Corner of the World* begins, it begins with various states of address, 'Dear new friends...'; 'Dear gay sisters...'; 'Dear readers...' These are the opening lines of the thirteen readers, who appear on screen, sitting on chairs, perching on the edge of a bath or sitting on a bed.⁵⁷ The scripts they begin to read tell stories of discrimination and isolation, alongside moments of joy and love. Readers from across the United Kingdom and United States proclaim their excitement at having found like-minded individuals and community. 'It is a relief to write openly knowing one can be accepted' reads one performer sitting at the table in the hall, another performer listens attentively whilst sorting and folding paper. Other scripts check their legitimacy in contributing to a lesbian publication,

⁵⁵ See previous chapter "Archives Matter" page 10, and Dever, 'Papered Over, or Some Observations on Materiality and Archival Method'.

⁵⁶ The film was shot in Philadelphia where the Hayes had just relocated, and she remarks in an extensive and excellent interview on the artwork with Julia Bryan-Wilson on the use of 'readers' instead of performers: 'For me there is a distinction between a performer and an actor, or between a reader and an activist, and those differences are drawn out of the elicited or sometimes concretized through the protocols we use as artists or as cultural producers to draw people into participation, and what structure we use to maintain that participation'. Bryan-Wilson and Hayes, 'Interview: Julia Bryan-Wilson in Conversation with Sharon Hayes', 14.

⁵⁷ The thirteen readers that appear are: Pangia, Tiny, Mal Cherifi, Sharron Cooks, Kristen Dieffenbacher, TS Hawkins, Jeannine Betu Kayembe, Jennifer Angelina Petro, Swift Shuker, Karl Surkan, Madeline Rafter, Mahogany Rose and Tatyana Yassukovich. "In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You – Sharon Hayes", <http://www.studiovoltaire.org/exhibitions/archive/sharon-hayes/> (23/08/18).

‘Don’t know if I qualify, as I’m not sure I’m a lesbian’ reads another.⁵⁸ A back and forth begins to develop, moving from one room to the next, from one channel of the video to the next, kitchen to bathroom, bathroom to hallway. There are ‘editors’ who address a readership, providing information on the publication, including delays in printing in the United Kingdom, and express desires to find out more about members’ hobbies. There is a sense of address to both the other performers in the film and beyond the frame, to a viewer in the gallery.

... *In My Little Corner*, the five screens become a visualization not only of the multitude of gender presentations but also of a diversity of raced bodies and a range of stylistic differences. The screens help create spaces, in this case, rooms in a home, that hold the different positions from which these people are coming to the term ‘lesbian’.⁵⁹

The performers on screen represent diversity and difference in the LGBTQ* community. The words they read from the paper scripts echo similar diversity and difference from an earlier moment. The frames of the video, as Bryan-Wilson argues in the above quotation, ‘create spaces’, spaces for building and organising and importantly spaces for debate and discord around the meaning of lesbian-identity. The readers give contemporary meaning and relevance to the words they read from the archive; a strategy Hayes refers to as ‘re-speaking’. Hayes explains that re-speaking is the performative instantiation of a text’s ‘political urgencies, demands, violences and impotencies [...] into a present moment’. The archival citation of texts belonging to previous more private moments of intimate exchange, and their re-speaking ‘forces consideration of it as a text not of the past, but as a text in and of the present moment’.⁶⁰ Hayes’ artworks often use performative strategies like ‘re-speaking’, as a means of articulating and capturing difference, between a historical text and now, between the archival trace and the reader that ‘re-speaks’ it. The act of re-speaking ‘is *not* about a seamless or authentic transmission’. *In My Little Corner of the World*, perhaps somewhat inversely, seeks connection and relations across time through strategies of discord, discontinuity, and fragmentation.⁶¹ The readers embody discontinuity in feminist, lesbian, and trans*

⁵⁸ Sharon Hayes, *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You*, extracts of script from five-channel video installation, 2016.

⁵⁹ Bryan-Wilson and Hayes, ‘Interview: Julia Bryan-Wilson in Conversation with Sharon Hayes’, 17.

⁶⁰ Hayes, ‘Temporal Relations’, 64.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

histories. Discontinuity functions as the opposite to a historical continuity within dominant histories of feminism that have elided or erased certain voices.

3.3.2 The anachronistic lesbian

Two key figures who emerge from the film-script are the Black lesbian and ‘proto-trans’ butch. They embody Hayes’ archival return and desire towards a trans-historiography of the ‘wilfully obscured and erased’. These characters emerge from the scripts as two identities who strike a note of discord in the correspondence. I purposefully say ‘figure’ as whilst the scripts derive from the written correspondence of Black- and butch-identifying lesbians living sometime between 1955—77, they are also a figuration of historical and ongoing struggles within Anglo-American lesbian feminism. The Black and butch lesbian are figurative of the ruptures and rifts which often characterised second wave feminism, culminating in the so-called ‘Sex Wars’ of the 1980s.⁶² These past moments of fractious debate and complex identification, read in the mid-2010’s present of the film, chime uncomfortably with the present-day activism of Black trans* communities. Terminology and conditions have changed, but similar narratives emerge of marginalisation within already marginalised groups. Historically, and in our contemporary political moment, Black trans* women play a central role in holding a cisgender and white mainstream LGBTQ* movement to account for their continued racism and transphobia. The Black lesbian and in particular the butch were, and are, beautifully complex identities within the LGBTQ* community, but they also serve a particular anachronistic and allegorical function in defining ‘queerness’.⁶³

The return of these identities in Hayes’ work serves to connect contemporary queer and trans* subjects with those speaking from the past. ‘The subject’ who re-speaks, as she is not identified as a particular person, performs more of a narrative function, which is allegorical of the discontinuity of histories of lesbian identity within Anglo-American feminisms. To move from the archive’s tendency towards capturing and characterising a homogenised and pathologised subject/object (the deviant, the homosexual, the woman) toward an allegorical figure opens up the possibility of a trans- historical subject who can be ‘read’ in archival traces. This move and shift is created through Hayes’ use of

⁶² For a reflection and analysis on the ‘Sex Wars’, and their impact on various feminisms, see: Rubin, ‘BLOOD UNDER THE BRIDGE’.

⁶³ A reminder that I use Muñoz notion of ‘queerness’ as structures of feeling that resists ‘queer’ as a specific identity but instead as a set of relational practices.

anachronism, central to many of the artist's performance, films and installations. *In My Little Corner of the World* is full of anachronisms, that is things which belong to different time periods, from the DIY-aesthetic of the flyposter installation through the typewriters, to the appearance of two figures from extracts of magazines some forty or so years old.⁶⁴ The anachronistic lesbian is a trope within feminism that Hayes plays with purposefully to illuminate connections across genealogical lines, between assimilationist feminisms and transfeminisms, anarcho-queer activisms and Black revolutionary politics.

The Black lesbian appears in *In My Little Corner of the World* through a voice from the archive that recounts experiences of racism within lesbian communities. A reader asserts: 'We are black. We are gay. We are women', continuing, 'I can't call you my sister until you stop in my oppression'. The monologue cuts across the general discussion and debate and forcefully asserts such dissenting voices as being of crucial importance to feminist community and organising. It is a poignant moment of discord, as the reader expresses frustration with the ways in which white lesbians racially stereotype and fail to account for other oppressions experienced within the gay liberation movement. In this moment, *In My Little Corner of the World* foregrounds a lived experience of being Black as central to the importance of debate within lesbian and feminist communities. Specifically, it reminds of the centrality of Black thought in advancing intersectional understandings of oppression along lines of class, gender, sexuality, and race. The Black lesbian represents the complexity of identification, oppressions, and how these form the basis of activism and political movements. The voices from the archive are women writing between 1955—77, traversing pre-liberation era through the peak of women's organising. From the correspondence emerges articulations of the complex interplay of identity, oppression and power. The discourse in the letters from Black identifying lesbians echoes intersectional Black feminist scholarship of the 1970s through 1980s. The forceful assertions from the archival scripts, chime with a later treatise made by Audre Lorde who wrote in the cornerstone essay "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" (1984): 'Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world'. The essay pushes back against the oversimplistic binaries that often describe minority/majority, and Lorde lucidly outlines an intersectional feminist

⁶⁴ Anachronism comes from the Greek, 'ana' meaning against, and 'khronos' meaning time.

approach to women's oppression. Importantly the essay argues acknowledging *difference* as central to finding new ways of identifying and relating in common struggles.⁶⁵ As in *In My Little Corner of the World*, the reader is at once calling out the inert racisms within white feminisms and seeking acknowledgement of difference to build a stronger movement. The reader makes a final plea across time: 'we must work on all three oppressions or not at all [...] we should be sheltered from the oppression by our own people'. The voices are of their time, and out of time, dissonant with some generalised discourse of feminism and resonate with the intersectional feminist politic of later Black feminisms.

The appearance of the Black lesbian in the artwork tells us there is still work to do within contemporary feminist and queer activism to tackle racism. The words from the archive, spoken by contemporary Black and brown performers, continue to resonate. The words, spoken without reference to a time or date, are left ringing in the ears of the viewer, who can only ask: 'are they talking about then or now?' Then, is the 1970s and Black feminists educating on the basic idea of intersectionality. Now, is a moment of supposedly post-identity politics, in which 'queer' offers an intersectional answer to identities which do not conform to normative ways of being. But, as Cathy J. Cohen's brilliant 1997 article "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" argued, 'queer' as postulated in some activism and theory, ultimately re-establishes simplistic binaries between queer and heterosexual.⁶⁶ Cohen outlines that whilst queer studies often derives ideas found in intersectional Black feminisms, it fails to account for 'the roles that race, class, and gender play in defining people's differing relations to dominant and normalizing power'.⁶⁷ Queer activism and political organising are not incapable of difference, but as Cohen argues the centrality of sexuality as part of queer identification precludes, for example, the classed and gendered experience of a working-class mother. For argument sake, we might say that there are two lines of flight within feminist and gay liberation that emerge from the

⁶⁵ Lorde states: 'The future of our earth may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across *difference*'. In: Audre Lorde, *Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference*, 1992 [My emphasis].

⁶⁶ Routed in an intersectional approach to what Cohen calls a 'Left framework of politics', she traces the work of queers of colour and their influence on the wider LGBTQ* movement. Cohen explains that, 'while the politics of lesbian, gay and bisexual, and transgendered activists of colour might recognize heteronormativity as a primary system of power structuring our lives, it understands that heteronormativity interacts with institutional racism, patriarchy, and class exploitation to define us in numerous ways as marginal and oppressed'. C. J. Cohen, 'Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 4 (1 January 1997): 448.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 457.

script. The first, is what our reader warns against, a narrowing along arbitrary lines of identification and oppression. The second, is what our reader advocates for, and Cohen reinforces, that is, an intersectional ‘queer’ approach that acknowledges difference and seeks commonality across marginalised positions. *In My Little Corner of the World* presents an uneasy relationship between race and feminism, but rallies around a desire to find commonality in difference.

The need to continually and critically re-imagine feminist and queer activisms and discourses as anti-racist, is brought to the fore by recent Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in the United States and United Kingdom in 2020. Of note is the Black Trans Lives Matter movement. Trans* activists and allies have reclaimed Pride marches during a time of global pandemic, bringing into stark relief the death, violence, and pressures still experienced within a community already disproportionately affected by Covid-19.⁶⁸ Black Trans Lives Matter is rooted in a Black intersectional feminist approach to oppression, taking aim at macro institutions of power like capital, and the nation state, as well as holding to account the BLM and LGBTQ* movements. The activism of Black Trans Lives Matter prefigures the push back against the white queer political posturing that Cohen discursively held to account some 25 years ago. There is a nuance here, that seeks to untangle that homogeneity of queer as ‘non-normative’, and goes further than simply a critique of homonormativity, by looking to disparities of class and race.⁶⁹ In part, as Cohen, and more recently David L. Eng, J. Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz address in the special issue of *Social Text*, “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?” (2015), have argued, it is an issue with the ‘whiteness’ of the discipline and discourse. Other scholars, such as Matt Brim, whose article “Poor Queer Studies: Class, Race and the Field” (2020) examines queer studies in Higher Education

⁶⁸ Whilst this thesis was written within the grips of the pandemic, early studies in the United Kingdom and United States have suggested Covid-19 has a proportionally higher death rate amongst BAME communities. See: ‘COVID-19: Understanding the Impact on BAME Communities’, GOV.UK, accessed 22 September 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-understanding-the-impact-on-bame-communities>; Haroon Siddique and Jamie Grierson, ‘Historical Racism May Be behind England’s Higher BAME Covid-19 Rate’, *The Guardian*, 16 June 2020, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/16/historical-racism-may-be-behind-englands-higher-bame-covid-19-rate>; Ed Pilkington, ‘Black Americans Dying of Covid-19 at Three Times the Rate of White People’, *The Guardian*, 20 May 2020, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/20/black-americans-death-rate-covid-19-coronavirus>.

⁶⁹ We might say this is a return to the social constructivist routes of queer theory, in the sexuality and sociological studies by the likes of Ken Plummer and Jeffrey Weeks, who I discussed in the previous chapter. Whilst Weeks, drawing on the Marxists tradition of the Gay Left in the United Kingdom accounts for and intermingles class in gendered and sexual emancipation and struggle, race is somewhat of a blind spot. It is in the field of cultural and postcolonial studies in the United Kingdom one must turn to for more intersectional approaches in scholarship that account for race – perhaps why Stuart Hall is always of great influence to queer theory, particularly in the work of Muñoz and Halberstam.

and proposes a shift from elite universities where queer scholarship historically has been produced, to ‘define the field of queer studies by its material, structural conditions as a way of contextualizing its ideational problems, its so-called troubles’.⁷⁰ I would describe the return of such materialist approaches to queer activism and scholarship, as congruent to similar returns to the archive made in artworks like *In My Little Corner of the World*. The artwork reflexively enacts research and scripting that goes beyond the ‘whiteness’ of the canon identified by these scholars, by looking to the marginalia of the archive, to a multiplicity of voices found in the correspondence pages.

In My Little Corner of the World brings to the fore archival sources that relate to Black and Queer People of Colour (QPOC). This is significant because Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) are marginal within archives, both in terms of content and visibility. Queer pasts as they become increasingly institutionalised in formal archives and special collections, can equally fall foul of under-representing BIPOC communities within their collections. This applies both to the number of items that relate to BIPOC individuals, through the collection policies and efforts, including commissioning artistic responses, to interpreting their archival materials. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Halberstam, Stone and Cantrell have all commented on the privileging of white cisgender gay males in LGBTQ* archives that seeps into the ways in which queer history and theory is formulated. Certain ways of living, access to public space, and privileges often ascribed to being white and a man, underpin even some of the more radical interpretations of what it means to be queer. The result is a very limited and often predominantly white middle to upper class group of queers to whom we continually turn to inform and shape queer art, culture, and discourse. The work of Black artists, academics, and activists has been crucial in exploring such archival elisions and erasures. Such archival erasures and playful invention is the subject of Cheryl Dunye’s film *The Watermelon Women* (1996) I mentioned earlier, which directly confronts the problems of lesbian archives. *In My Little Corner of the World* brings Black voices to the fore, to evidence their crucial role historically in shaping lesbian communities, and to expand their archival visibility. It of course must be acknowledged that the artist, Sharon Hayes, is white, and therefore the artwork cannot escape the fact it too is a beneficiary of an artworld that privileges white cisgender artists. There is an irreconcilable tension between the value of the artistic identity within

⁷⁰ Matt Brim, ‘Poor Queer Studies: Class, Race, and the Field’, *Journal of Homosexuality* 67, no. 3 (23 February 2020): 408.

the field of contemporary art, and a desire towards a de-centred queer relational practice and politics, which is beyond the resolve of this thesis.⁷¹ The artwork confronts this, at least in part, by de-centring the voice of the artist within the gallery, and re-directing the narrative using a multitude of voices re-spoken from the archive. Hayes becomes the editor, mirroring such desires towards a de-centred editorial position within the periodicals which feature in the artwork. *In My Little Corner of the World* traces a shaky continuity between an earlier articulation of a Black lesbian politics re-spoken within the context of contemporary discourses and activism around Black trans* lives.

Dear Ed. Take heart, RMC Gloucester, because there are plenty of feminine ladies, who prefer their butch partners to be as masculine as possible. [...] Please dear butches, stay as you are, as I, for one, am all in favour.⁷²

– R.M.

The other important character who appears in the film is the butch lesbian. If the Black lesbian is before her time in articulating an intersectional feminist politic; the butch is out of time in her complex gender identifications. The film features a heated exchange on ‘exhibitionism’ and ‘transvestism’ within the lesbian community. These moments in the script come mainly from the letters pages of *Arena 3*. First published in 1963, the editor, Esme Langley, describes the magazine as homophile, characterised in both the editorial content and letters from readers as one of an assimilationist politics.⁷³ An editorial note from the April 1964 issue states: ‘By a degree of self-discipline, by avoiding blatancy and *exhibitionism*, they [assimilationist lesbians] appear to find it possible to move between two worlds, individually and together, without trailing stinking fish’.⁷⁴ Later in the August 1964 issue, a letter reads: ‘I may be wrong, but it seems to me that it is the lesbian-for-kicks rather than the true lesbian who would be more inclined to go in for “full drag” in public; it suggests to me that they are trying to prove something, to themselves as well as to the public at large’.⁷⁵ There is a characterisation of butch lesbians as exhibitionists and the editorial line, alongside the views of some readers, are what we might ‘expect’ from this moment in time. This is a pre-second wave feminist discourse, a moment caricatured – with historical hindsight –

⁷¹ I will return to this in the chapter on P. Staff’s *The Foundation*.

⁷² Extract of dialogue from the film.

⁷³ Esme Langley, ‘Editorial Note’, *Arena 3*, February 1964, 2.

⁷⁴ Esme Langley, ‘Editorial Note’, *Arena 3*, April 1964, 3 [My emphasis].

⁷⁵ G H, *Arena 3*, August 1964, 12.

as one of essentialist views and rejection of complex articulations of gender and sexuality.

The butches fight back and articulate a nuance in their understanding of the performativity of gender and its connection with sexuality. Anne Whyte, in a letter published in the July 1964 issue of *Arena 3*, recited in the artwork, asserts: ‘I disagree that the majority of women homosexuals are not “transvestites”. At least fifty per cent are or would like to be’.⁷⁶ This is an instance where the ‘anachronistic lesbian’ appears where she is not welcome. The editorial line embodies a view of lesbianism from this moment as assimilationist and ascribing to a liberal politics. The butch occupies a queer time, their life, the ‘exhibitionism’ and ‘transvestitism’, is out of step with a ‘mainstream’ lesbian position, gatekept by Langley, the editor. Listening to these words now, one is struck by the similarities with similar gatekeeping within feminist communities around how ‘women’ is defined. The film performs the discord found within the letters, and arguably still central to contemporary feminist debate. The direct comparison Hayes seems to draw is between the butch and trans exclusion by a vocal minority of feminists, particularly in the United Kingdom.

The butch expresses what Hayes calls a ‘proto-trans’ identity that reverberates in the present re-cited and re-spoken by contemporary feminist, trans*, and queer readers. This figuration is a more complex mediation of the archive, that does not seek to copy or transpose a precise past moment to the present. Freeman argues ‘[...] to reduce all embodied performances to the status of copies without originals may be to ignore the interesting threat that the genuine *past*-ness of the past – its opacity and illegibility, its stonewalling in the face of our most cherished theoretical paradigm – sometimes makes to the political present’.⁷⁷ In other words, the unknowability of the past, means embodied performances of the past exceed the partial trace and archival referent and make it something else in and of the present. This is perhaps why Hayes rejects terms like ‘return’ and ‘re-enact’, taken to mean somewhat didactically going back to a moment in time that one faithfully tries to re-create.⁷⁸ The reader who performs *In My Little*

⁷⁶ Anne Whyte, *Arena 3*, July 1964, 12.

⁷⁷ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 63.

⁷⁸ There is some contention around the term ‘return’, and ‘re-enactment’, within queer-feminist art historical discourses. Return is a term that I use regularly in this thesis to describe the various kinds of archival engagements and mediations of each of the artwork case studies. The historical return most simply means to go back and revisit an earlier moment. The returns of the artworks in this thesis, specifically their queer archival activations, are a Derridean repetition undertaken in the present that seeks to ‘work through’ a past event or trauma. My interest in returns is what they make present, what they bring back from the dead so to speak, less so a desire to go back but to continue a politics from the past.

Corner of the World, to borrow from Bordowitz, becomes palimpsest. The artwork, quite literally performs and accentuates what Freeman argues is a condition of queer performativity. That is – building on Butler’s performativity of gender – time as something embodied, and performed on the body. This relates to the earlier discussion on ‘chrononormativity’, which Freeman outlines as central to understanding temporal relations under late capitalism; and Halberstam’s articulation of a ‘queer time and place’ that tracks the ways queer subjects exist in differently within capitalism. To explain a queer relationship to the past that leaves the vestiges of a historical time bound to dominant and pervasive narratives, Freeman poses the following questions: ‘[m]ight some bodies, by registering on their very surface the co-presence of several historically contingent events, social movements, and/or collective pleasures, complicate or displace the centrality of *gender-transitivity* drag to queer performativity theory? Might they articulate instead a kind of *temporal* transitivity that does not leave feminism, femininity, or other so-called anachronisms behind?’⁷⁹ Put more simply, Freeman argues that queer and trans* subjectivities ‘register’ on their body different temporalities that correspond to a multitude of lineages, epistemologies, and genealogies. This is ‘temporal drag’, a means of accounting for and acknowledging the ways queer and trans* subjects bring bits of different histories with them, even if that moment on first glance may seem incompatible with a contemporary queer politic. The butch who emerges from the script is a figuration of a feminism and anachronism in which a proto-trans subject can be found within the most unlikely of places.

Every conflict that evidenced itself in the magazines – for instance, about what it meant for a lesbian to show up to a *Ladder* social wearing men’s clothes – reminded me of debates right now about what gender can mean and what gender expressions people have access to, and also the continuing violent regulation of

Nevertheless, ‘return’ is a contested term within artistic practices engaged with archives, history and the past, and Hayes is one artist who is resistant in describing her artworks as ‘returns’. During an in-conversation with Alice Andrews at Glasgow Women’s Library on the occasion of the exhibition at the Common Guild, Hayes explicitly stated ‘I disavow re-enact’. I understand Hayes’ disavowal of re-enactment as it describes an attempt to transmit a past moment in the present, but I question, based on the poststructuralist notion that no repetition is ever the same, that even in re-enactment something ‘happens’ to the past as it is embodied and performed in the present. Indeed, as I go on to discuss in relation to Grant’s notion of re-enactment as a process by which one learns in the present; and further, as I explore in the next chapter, Rebecca Schneider’s powerful assertion that re-enactment is a means of instantiating performance as a viable mode of archiving and performing the archive. See: Sharon Hayes, In conversation, interview by Alice Andrews, 8 October 2016, <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/event/sharon-hayes-in-conversation/>.

⁷⁹ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 63 [Original emphasis].

those expressions and the continuing debates inside of queer, trans, lesbian communities around gender.⁸⁰

The butch is anachronistic to a 1960s assimilationist lesbianism, and they are equally anachronistic to a present moment as a seemingly outmoded identity from an earlier moment. As Hayes reflects, the words spoken in the 1960s in defence of differing gender expressions within lesbian spaces, resonates within contemporary debates on gender. To be clear, Hayes and the artwork captures debate and discord, not as it might legitimate a contemporary trans exclusionary radical feminist position, but as it illustrates the possibility of a trans- historical subject, whilst simultaneously demonstrating the impossibility of certain historical subjects. The very certitude of the archival ‘evidence’, that is the magazines which form the scripts, is brought into question. Instead of allowing us to neatly trace a specific historical lesbian identity, the archival traces are themselves anachronistic. Catherine Grant in a 2017 paper reflects on anachronism as method in *In My Little Corner of the World*, describing the use of archival materials as being ‘made to resonate with the present through both their synchronicity and anachronism’.⁸¹ Grant proposes that the simultaneity of synchronicity and anachronism, or being both in and out of time is due to the ambiguity of the time of the film, which stages past and present together.

Anachronism is a strategy designed to create a queer sense of time in the encounter with the artwork. It is a return and mediation of the archive, not as fixed historical referent, but loaded political object. Freeman reflecting on Hayes’ performance piece *In the Near Future* (2009), explains anachronism as ‘the power [...] to unsituate viewers from the present tense they think they know, and to illuminate or even prophetically ignite the possible future in light of powerful historical moments’.⁸² An effect of anachronism in Hayes’ artwork is to blur the sense of the present tense. *In My Little Corner of the World* challenges the audience’s assumptions about earlier moments of feminist and lesbian history. Anachronism is everywhere in the artwork, from the installation to the non-linear order of the films, to the performances in the film. In the films, for example, the non-linear order of the frames, and the staging and lighting of the scenes all add to a feeling of unknown time. Of note is the lighting of the house, which is diffuse. The sets, the domestic rooms, further a sense of temporal ambiguity. In the hall, there is a desk

⁸⁰ Bryan-Wilson and Hayes, ‘Interview: Julia Bryan-Wilson in Conversation with Sharon Hayes’, 13.

⁸¹ Catherine Grant, “‘Living in the Earth-Deposits of Our History’, or Anachronism as Method’ (The Contemporary Contemporary, Aarhus University, 2017).

⁸² Freeman, *Time Binds*, 61.

with chairs, lamps and various piles of paper. There's a typewriter, but also what looks like a mid-2000s laptop, chunkier, with its various ports at the back, not a slimline MacBook Air. The spaces and the material in them give little away in terms of when the film is set. The presumption, based on the laptop alone, is that this is set sometime in the past 10 or so years. The windows are also an interesting feature, in both the gallery and in the films. In the *Common Guild*, a thin UV film was applied to the windows to block the daylight, taking down the brightness and making it more diffuse. In the films, 'natural' lighting is created through the daylight from the windows which is grey, diffuse and hazy, outside, only shadows of trees and faint details of houses across the street. In the gallery, and more so in the films, this further confuses not just a sense of time in terms of date or year, but time of day.⁸³ In the domestic setting of Hayes' films, inhabited with queer bodies, who lounge around whilst participating in some form of lesbian-feminist organising, there is a pace, almost lethargy, suggesting there is 'no rush'. Or put another way, 'here', in the fictional setting of Hayes' film, and gallery space, there *is* time to reconsider these past moments.

Anachronism serves a narrative function. Elena Gorfinkel's article "The Future of Anachronism: Todd Hayne and the Magnificent Andersons" (2005), reflects on the use of anachronism in cinema. Discussing Hayne's gay cult classic *Far From Heaven* (2002) and the kitsch of Paul and Wes Anderson's films, Gorfinkel makes some useful observations around what anachronism *does* within narrative film. Discussing *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), Gorfinkel argues '[w]ith narratives built around flawed characters and tropes of failure and loss, the obsolete and the anachronistic become tools for recognising meaningful gaps between past and present'.⁸⁴ This helpfully describes what an encounter with Hayes' archival mediation might do, that the feeling of anachronism both in the staging, that is the installation, the setting and props within the film, and the performing of archival material, creates contrasts and allows us to see 'meaningful gaps', or perhaps meaningful connections 'between past and present'. Anachronism sets the stage, it creates a melancholic sense of time suspended, a place for a feminist, queer and trans* politic re-imagined; and anachronism becomes a narrative device, performed by our anarcho-Black butch lesbians who appear to remind us of affinities and affiliations that may exist across time.

⁸³ It reminds me in this recounting of the fictional city of Bellona in Samuel R. Delany's 1975 science-fiction *Dahlgren*. In this novel, a queer-anarchic dystopic exists under a haze of smoke in which time is 'confused', and there is a disorienting sense of the 'present'.

⁸⁴ Elena Gorfinkel, 'The Future of Anachronism', in *Cinephilia*, ed. Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener, Movies, Love and Memory (Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 166.

3.3.3 Anachronism as allegory as collective melancholia

The performances of the readers, and the anachronisms they embody, can be thought, to borrow from Freeman, as ‘complexly allegorical’. If *In My Little Corner of the World* has a story to tell, it is a cautionary tale which warns of the dangers of denying difference, the pitfalls of identity politics, and the limits of processes of historicisation within lesbian-feminism. Anachronism is used as device, or as Gorfinkel calls it a ‘tool’, and as I advance here, also serves an allegorical function within the artwork. There are two distinct and intersecting understandings of allegory within contemporary art, and specifically within queer and trans* cultural production. Both concern time, specifically how one addresses and confronts the discombobulated neoliberal time of the present with alternate, queer and trans* temporalities. The first is Craig Owens, ‘allegorical impulse’ – a forerunner to Foster’s ‘archival impulse’ – as a phenomenon within postmodern artworks ‘attracted to the fragmentary, the imperfect, the incomplete’.⁸⁵ In the “The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism” (1980), Owens considers artworks which appropriate and reproduce imagery, including Troy Brauntuch, Sherrie Levine, and Robert Long, to describe allegory as ‘an attitude as well as a technique, a perception as well as a procedure’. This is a distinct refashioning of allegory within art history that was regarded (at the time of writing) as an ‘outmoded, exhausted’ means of understanding a work of art. If we re-cite Owens’ writing on allegory in relation to *In My Little Corner of the World*, it resonates with the way I wish to frame the ‘allegorical impulse’ of the artwork. As Owens’ explain, he is interested ‘in what occurs when this relationship [allegory as a model of commentary] takes place *within* works of art, when it describes their structure’.⁸⁶ Owens’ 1980s postmodern appropriation in art history as ‘allegory’ is a way of reflexively commenting on images from the art historical canon; Hayes’ queer archival works, as I think through here, are similarly allegorising moments from queer history found in print archives, to reflect and comment on historicisation of these moments. I am reading *In My Little Corner of the World* in spite of its non-linear and fragmented structure, as having a narrative and a structure. Allegory describes the artworks’ narrative of ‘discontinuous’ histories of lesbian feminisms, and its anachronistic structure.

⁸⁵ Craig Owens, ‘The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism’, *October* 12 (1980): 70.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

The allegorical impulse is distinct from the archival impulse. The allegorical impulse trades in totalities, whereas the archival, as Foster explains, is ‘*not* a will to totalise so much as a will to relate – to probe a misplaced past, to collate its different signs (sometimes pragmatically, sometimes parodistically), to ascertain what might remain for the present’.⁸⁷ He continues by explaining that so-called ‘archival art’, is distinct from Owens’ ‘subversive allegorical fragmentation [which] can no longer be confidently posed against an authoritative symbolic totality (whether associated with aesthetic autonomy, formalist hegemony, modernist canonicity, or masculinist domination)’.⁸⁸ It is important to draw out the nuance between these two positions and understand where we might locate queer and trans* ‘archival artworks’, of which I would include *In My Little Corner of the World*. Foster departs from the historical specificity of Owens’ use of allegory and its redress to a supposed ‘authoritative symbolic totality’. The archival impulse understands the loss of a coherent modern subject, and the breakdown of a ‘symbolic totality’ in the very institution of the archive. This is Derrida’s ‘archive fever’, which he diagnoses as an Oedipal death drive that brings forth both the will to archive, that is the institution of the archive, and the archives’ destruction.⁸⁹ Put another way, there cannot be an ‘authoritative symbolic totality’ of the archive if we follow the deconstructive logic of Derrida, and understand the archive as equally predisposed to fragmentation and a loss of meaning. Whilst I would align my own thesis in part with Foster’s understanding of the impulse which seeks ‘a misplaced past’, I prefer a more nuanced understanding of a ‘queer artist’ subject, as distinct from a cisgender and white postmodern artist subject. To shift slightly from the psychoanalytical tropes which underpin much of Foster’s writing, archives (the places and groupings of materials), do still possess an ‘authoritative totality’ within Western societies. And specifically queer and trans* subjects addressing the constitution and institution of LGBTQ* archives do confront various guises of totalities that emerges from process of archiving and historicisation. In other words, it is the privilege of a white cisgender artist subject to create ‘esoteric’ artworks that

⁸⁷ Foster, ‘An Archival Impulse’, 21 [My emphasis].

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Derrida explains: ‘It [archive fever] destroys in advance its own archive, as if that were in truth the very motivation of its most proper movement. It works *to destroy the archive: on the condition of effacing* but also *with a view to effacing* its own “proper” traces – which consequently cannot properly be called “proper”. It devours it even before producing it on the outside. This drive, from then on seems not only to be anarchic, anarchotic (we must not forget that the death drive, ordinary though it may be, is not a principle, as are the pleasure and reality principles): the death drive is above all *anarchivic*, one could say, or *archiviolithic*. It will always have been archive-destroying, by silent vocation’. In: ‘Archive Fever’, 14 [Original emphasis].

unravel poststructuralist understandings of ‘the archive’, versus a queer or trans* artist subject who must confront the very real and felt conditions of archives that deny – in their institution of forms of biopolitical control and identity management – the very right of these subjects to exist. Returning to Owens, I propose allegory as a useful way to challenge and confront narratives and stories which emerge from these processes; it provides a counter-narrative, or can be said to be *against* narrative.⁹⁰ The ‘subversive allegorical fragmentation’ of *In My Little Corner of the World* challenges the ways in which feminist and LGBTQ* archives might inadvertently (through their very constitution) sustain processes of narrativization and historicisation.

In My Little Corner of the World as allegory moves away from a simplistic notion of historical reconstruction or re-enactment of an earlier moment. To borrow again from Owen:

[a]llegorical imagery is appropriated imagery; the allegorist does not invent images but confiscates them [...] the image becomes something other (*allos* = other + *agoreuei* = to speak). [The artist] does not restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured; allegory is not hermeneutics. Rather, he adds another meaning to the image. If he adds, however, he does so only to replace: the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one; it is a supplement. This is why allegory is condemned, but it is also the source of its theoretical signification.⁹¹

Such a notion of the allegorical as appropriation, is compatible with Freeman’s idea of ‘temporal drag’, that in Hayes’ work we might say that the archival trace is appropriated, and in the queer act of ‘re-speaking’, ‘becomes something other’. Again, equally, we might say that the intention of the readers’ acts of ‘re-speaking’, is not to ‘restore an original meaning’, or as Hayes explains ‘is *not* about a seamless or authentic transmission’. Writing some twenty years before the advent of performance and queer theory, and caught within a regime of representationalism, Owens’ writing gestures towards what we would now call performativity.⁹² The allegorical in postmodern art, for

⁹⁰ The prefix ‘ana-’ is Ancient Greek, and can mean ‘against’, for example *anachronism*, which could be described as being ‘against’ or ‘backward’ time.

⁹¹ Owens, ‘The Allegorical Impulse’, 69.

⁹² Owens’ ‘allegory’ still relies on representationalism and signification, which leads towards the idea of an original or ‘true’ meaning, or as he says ‘antecedent’ meaning (a reason why allegory is often considered an outmoded idea in art historical discourse). What I am trying to advance here is that allegory might be understood as a way of mapping a complex set of embodied and performed relations that moves beyond

Owens, is ‘not hermeneutics’, meaning it is not *simply* interpretation, it is additive, it ‘supplants’, and ‘is a supplement’. To describe *In My Little Corner of the World* as allegory, is to use the notion in performance theory that when we say something ‘as’ something – the trans* actor in Philadelphia reading the script in the artwork *as* lesbian who lived sometime between the 1950s and late 70s *as* a lesbian print cultures *as* an archival object – is also to say, something *is* something.⁹³ Allegory, as structure ‘within an artwork’, helps map these relations, between people and things, subjects and objects in and out of the archive.

The allegory of the anarcho-Black butch helps us map a set of relations between contemporary queer and trans* lives and politics, and of those found in the archive. Freeman persuasively argues that ‘allegory might be seen as a form of *collective melancholia*’. This is a central tenant of Freeman’s ‘erotohistoriography’, outlined in the previous chapter, and which deeply informs my understanding of each of these case studies as novel forms of queer historiographic practice – that is, a mode of historical enquiry that accounts for the archival *and* the nonarchival; a shift from objects, things, and representationalism, to affects, feelings, relations, and performativity. Within such a performative schema, allegory and melancholia represent two means of recalling and encountering the past. Allegory, as Freeman explains ‘traffics in collectively held meanings and experiences’; and melancholia ‘connotes inward movement, for it preserves the lost object as an aspect of one grieving person’s subjectivity, interior, unconscious’.⁹⁴ Melancholia is particularly important for queer subjects as a mode of identification. As Judith Butler explains in *Gender Trouble* (1990) ‘[t]he identifications consequent to melancholia are modes of preserving unresolved object relations, and in the case of same-sexed gender identification, the unresolved object relations are invariably homosexual’.⁹⁵ Melancholia is a sadness that at once leads towards such ‘unresolved object relations’, in this instance we might say the archival trace, and also, as Freeman proposes, novel forms of affiliation, connection, and relation to these objects.

And if you care to stay

In our little corner of the world

what I described in the previous chapter with the help of Karen Barad as the tripartite relations between sign, signifier and signified.

⁹³ I return to this extensively in the next chapter on the archive and performance in P. Staff’s artwork, *The Foundation*.

⁹⁴ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 70.

⁹⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2014, 81, <http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=180211>.

We could hide away
In our little corner of the world
We always knew that we'd find someone like you
So hop o'er to our little corner of the world
– Anita Bryant

Melancholia saturates *In My Little Corner of the World*; it elucidates a desire towards a collective reclamation of outdated and indeed outright homophobic pasts, made most directly explicit in both the title and what I would describe as the artwork's soundtrack. *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* are the titles of the A and B side of a 1960s record by Anita Bryant. Bryant is perhaps more synonymous as an ardent late 1970s activist in the United States who ran the Save Our Children campaign, opposed to gay rights.⁹⁶ The song is reclaimed as a soundtrack and can often be heard in the background of scenes where readers pause and refrain from their activities of organising and reading the letters. The kitsch melody and lyrics become a rallying call to queer and trans* subjects across time to organise in the 'privacy' of the home. The music is exemplary of the ways in which a queer subject, returning to Owens, 'appropriates' and 'supplants' heterosexual culture, often making it kitsch and camp. The music is performative of what Freeman calls 'camp as a mode of archiving', an act that 'lovingly, sadistically, even masochistically brings back dominant culture's junk'.⁹⁷ Put another way, as the artwork's soundtrack, it befittingly sets the scene of the artwork as a mode of archiving, one that seeks to capture and embody this act as a structure of feeling. The music as it fades in and out of the five-channel frames, as it spills out into the rooms of the gallery space, becomes what, to borrow from Freeman, is a bind between these various temporalities layered within the artwork. 'Collective melancholia' is what emerges when we explicitly regard the affects of queerness, those feelings of melancholia, or experiences of trauma, as feelings which can be put to productive use in a project of queer worldmaking.

... the primary work of queer performativity rethought as complexly allegorical, might be to construct and circulate something like an embodied temporal map, a

⁹⁶ See: Robert Whirry, "Understanding Anita Bryant, the Woman Who Declared War on Gays", Advocate 18/08/16, <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2016/8/18/understanding-anita-bryant-woman-who-declared-war-gays> (23/08/18).

⁹⁷ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 68.

fleshly warehouse for contingent forms of being and belonging, a closet full of gendered possibilities.⁹⁸

The primary work of *In My Little Corner of the World* thought as ‘complexly allegorical’, is in its mapping and *performing* of a structure of relations. This, returning us to Muñoz who I discussed at length in the previous chapter, is the primary work of queer acts, which I conceive in this thesis as the ways in which artists *do* a historiographic practice. The allegorical, figured in the anarcho-Black butch is summoned to challenge their place within herstories of lesbian feminism, and to propose alternate genealogies and epistemologies. The map is on the body, which Freeman describes as a ‘fleshly warehouse for contingent forms of being and belonging’, which is also to say, a trans-historical subject may be legible not simply in archives, but on the body, embodied, and performed.

The allegory of the anarcho-Butch confronts the narrative continuity of histories of lesbian feminism, and the artwork can be understood as an attempt to ‘break’ the waves of feminism which emerge from processes of historicisation. Claire Hemmings’ insightful work on the citation and repetitions of generalised histories of feminism within feminist discourse, is useful here. In the article “Telling Feminist Stories” (2005), Hemmings explains: ‘[w]estern feminist theory tells its own story as a developmental narrative, where we move from a preoccupation with unity and sameness, through identity and diversity, and on to difference and fragmentation’.⁹⁹ The narrative archs in feminist theory are found in ‘the waves’, delineated in time by the first wave as pre-1970s, second wave from the 1970s through 1980s, and third wave emerging at the being 1990s. Hemmings describes each respective decade as ‘a move from liberal, socialist and radical feminist thought to postmodern gender theory’.¹⁰⁰ This ascribes a time to particular occurrences of discourse in feminism and the aforementioned ‘appearance’ of certain subjects, like the butch. In Hayes’ work this narrative is fragmented. The performers continually ‘begin’, and read scripts that recite voices of discord from their moment in history. The narrative of feminist theory that allows us to interpolate these speaking voices and understand them within a linear movement of time, is disrupted. What Hayes offers us is a different narrative, one of debate and conflict, one that breaks from a teleological feminist history. The

⁹⁸ Ibid., 70—71.

⁹⁹ Clare Hemmings, “Telling Feminist Stories”, *Feminist Theory* 6, no. 2 (August 2005): 118.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

anachronist lesbian plays on the idea that the lesbian is always ‘anachronistic’ within herstories of feminism; and moreover our Black and butch lesbian feminists are particularly troubling to these herstories. Hemmings explains these figures have been ‘assigned to the 1980s’, due to their supposed problematic identity politics, but as a result, their ‘epistemologies and ontologies [...] haunt the theoretical present’.¹⁰¹ The Black and butch lesbian characters, rather than haunt Hayes’ artwork, are summoned and re-spoken, their words re-considered as a viable enunciation of a contemporary queer and trans* political position.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the mediation of the archival traces of lesbian and feminist pasts in Sharon Hayes’ five-channel video installation *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016). I began by situating Hayes’ work in relation to a rubric of returns in feminist, lesbian, queer and trans* artworks. The return is a historiographic movement, a means of making the past, present, that reflects and reconfigures the machinations of time in the archive and of history. I considered Zapperi’s ‘feminist time’ as a schema which seeks out the ‘discontinuous’ and ‘fragmentary’ of feminist and queer pasts which appear as anachronistic to dominant modes of linear time. I looked specifically to the importance of Black lesbian, queer and trans* filmmakers, like Campbell X and Tourmaline, who use fiction, invention, and performance to account for the gaps in the archival record. I considered more recent writing on the archival negations and abjections of collaborative duo Boudry and Lorenz as a means to understand the importance of performative strategies in re-signifying archives. As this thesis seeks to address material archives – instead of a wholly discursive understanding of Derrida’s poststructuralist archive – I looked to one of the referent archives used by Hayes, the Glasgow Women’s Library. I traced the significance and importance of feminist and LGBTQ* archives in prompting novel forms of performative mediation of queer pasts. Indeed, rather than stoically holding on to some antiquated notion of ‘the archival institution’, organisations such as GWL founded and run by artists, have been at the fore of artistic and creative approaches to re-imagining the act of ‘archiving’ as processual and in and of the present. *In My Little Corner of the World* forms part of these novel mediations, using archival materials to

¹⁰¹ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 57.

stage an intervention in the gallery which asks an audience to re-consider supposedly outmoded and outdated lesbian-feminist pasts.

In My Little Corner of the World presents a ‘discontinuous’ view of the past, one that breaks with given narrative continuities, lineages, and genealogies within lesbian-feminisms. It does so by anachronistically, allegorically, and melancholically, returning to paper pasts and modes of communication that speak of discord and dissonance within these communities. The letters pages dating from the mid-1950s to late 1970s, alongside other printed ephemera, shine a light on the complex ways in which identifying-lesbians understood their own gender, sexuality, and importantly how to form communities around different desires and politics. As these magazines now ‘dwell’ in feminist and LGBTQ* archives across the United Kingdom and United States, novel artistic and creative mediations of this material gives it new life in the present. *In My Little Corner of the World* stages this archival material in an installation and as props within the films. The material is performatively activated by a group of queer, feminist and trans* readers through the act of reading the scripts (formed of extracts from the letters), or as Hayes would term it ‘re-speaking’. The performances propose new affinities and affiliations across time, blurring a sense of a then, and a now. The readers embody the archive, they testify to the ways in which queer and trans* subjects carry histories ‘on the body’, like a ‘fleshy’ map of relations that transcends the disciplinary and normative bounds of what constitutes a ‘feminist’ or a ‘queer’ politics and way of being.

4. Loving Daddy: performance and the archive in P. Staff's *The Foundation* (2015)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the use of performance and its document in mediating the archive. I consider the performances in P. Staff's film *The Foundation* (2015), which depicts the affinities and tensions of a trans* body negotiating the hyper-masculine gay male archives of the homoerotic artist Tom of Finland. Performance, as I began to outline in the previous chapter on Sharon Hayes, should be considered central to the ways in which queer and trans* subjects relate to the past. Performance foregrounds those bodily practices and knowledges that Diana Taylor calls *repertoire*. The role performance plays in transmitting cultural and social memories is central to this chapter and my reading of Staff's artwork. The mode of transmission I go on to elaborate, with reference to Paul Connerton's concept of 'acts of transfer', is predicated on relations not things. This complements Muñoz's queer archive as a structure of feeling. To think in terms of relations, not solely things, is a central concern within this thesis that seeks to shift from a centring of archives and archival objects towards a dialogic relation between object/subject and archival/nonarchival. Staff's artwork is exemplary of such a shift and is indicative of a new materialism that considers both the archive and the queer body as performative of the past. To unpack this entangled set of relations, I ask: how does performance mediate the archive? What is the relationship between body, document, performance, and archive? And, how might performance generate new kinds of intergenerational relations and community?

The Foundation is a 30-minute film and installation that documents and reflects on the artist's time spent at the Tom of Finland Foundation in Los Angeles. I will use *The Foundation* (italicised), 'the artwork' or 'the film' to avoid confusion with the Tom of Finland Foundation which refers to the archive, place and organisation. Tom of Finland (Touko Valio Laaksonen, 1920—91) was a Finnish artist famed for his hyper-masculine homoerotic illustrations that depicted classed bodies, like lumberjacks, policemen, and sailors, exposing exaggerated erect penises and engaging in sexual acts. The Tom of Finland Foundation is the charitable organisation which preserves the artist's vast catalogue dating from the 1950s until 1991, and which continues to collect homoerotic art to this day. The archive and collection of Tom's work is held at the colloquially

known TOM House, where the artist also lived and worked. The house is the subject of Staff's film which brings to the fore this space's complex amalgam of archival papers and material, social and sexual relations. The film comprises three distinct kinds of footage: the first are shots of the interiors and exterior of the house, depicting archival material, objects, sometimes with or without people; the second is a *mise-en-scène* of the house in which Staff performs with an actor; third is archival footage of the gay leather communities associated with Tom of Finland. Staff (they/them) is a queer and trans identifying artist, and the film ultimately documents their fraught negotiation with such an archive. When I say, 'the archive', I of course mean the archive of Tom of Finland, but I also imply all this archive represents in terms of a gay identity, community, and set of desires. Staff uses performance to negotiate this archive, to learn from it, and to implicate queer and trans* epistemologies within a space in which we might not expect to find them. *The Foundation* depicts a queer, trans*, and femme subject as they think through their subjectivity and politics in relation to a gay male past.

To unpack performance's mediation of the archive, the chapter is structured around two central themes: *the house as archive* and *performing with daddy*. These themes loosely correlate to Taylor's concept of the archive and repertoire and describe the performativity of place, objects, genders, and identities. Punctuating the whole chapter are italicised descriptions of scenes in the film, included to at once locate the current discussion point in relation to a particular scene, and also to account for my mediation of the material based on multiple viewings. I begin with the *house as archive*, which outlines in more detail the significance of Tom of Finland's legacies, and how this is represented by TOM House, a house cum archive and home to a community of gay men. I consider the artwork's initial focus on the house and the lingering shots of rooms and materials. My intention is to establish the importance and 'weight' given to material archives. The house as archive is representative of the ways in which communities secure knowledge and value through things. I also focus on Staff's time spent at the house researching and making *The Foundation*. In the film, the roving camera and footage shot on a smartphone emulates Staff's exploration of the house. I describe it as a cruising gaze, and a looking for something or someone driven by desire. In this first section, I ask: what is the Tom of Finland Foundation? What is the importance of this house to the LGBTQ* community? What is the significance of the house to the archive? And, what is Staff looking for in the archive?

Performing with daddy considers what Staff is investigating through the central performance between Staff and the actor Francis Lee, who plays a gay ‘Daddy’. The two characters are representative of distinctive queer identities and positions in relation to authority, knowledge, and power. The Daddy is a role in bondage, discipline, dominance and submission, and sadomasochism (BDSM), which are associated with Tom of Finland. Daddy represents a patriarchal figure of authority, knowledge, and power. In the film, the Daddy also represents a gay elder who imparts knowledge as a ‘living archive’. I discuss this specifically in relation to Durk Dehner, a former lover of Tom and co-founder of the Foundation, who shows Staff the archival materials and at one point in the film, orates a history of Tom. The Daddy is the subject/object of Staff’s desire; the Daddy *is* the archive. Here, I suggest the performance and performative intervention is indicative of a confluence and negotiation between the archive and the repertoire. The performance represents the fraught negotiation of intergenerational desires and identities, embodied in the Daddy and found in the archive. The performance offers radical potentials for relating queerly to one another and to the archive. I use the psychoanalytic and structuralist theory of Leo Bersani and Michel Foucault on supposed ‘deviant’ sexual practices giving way to alternative ways of conceiving the self and others. This section more directly addresses the question: What is the relationship between the body and the archive? This framing question, leads me to also ask: what is the relationship between Staff and the other performer? What does Daddy do? What is the relationship between Daddy, Staff and the archive? What does this performance tell us about queer desire, knowledge, and the archive?

The chapter concludes by addressing the performativity of the artwork, that is what *The Foundation* does to the archive of Tom of Finland. *The Foundation* in one respect is a contribution to a growing body of queer and trans* cultural production that seeks more complex articulations of community, memory, and history. It therefore can be regarded, as the thesis argues as a whole, as *archiving*, and moreover, a *trans-ing* of the archive, a process by which the artwork unsettles the archive, and makes new connections between the past and present that transcend given genealogies, epistemologies, and lineages of ‘gay’ history.¹ On the other hand, *The Foundation* can be understood as a conceit, representing a mode of practice concerned with the ephemeral, performance, and embodied knowledge, all deeply important to queer and trans* identities, but

¹ The term gay here is used as it refers to a predominantly cisgender white male history that forecloses, or at the very least makes less visible, the richness of desires and identifications that shaped the sexual subcultures that formed around and grew from Tom of Finland’s artworks and leather communities.

ultimately packaged as an object made to circulate within the discrete networks of the contemporary art world, or, end up in the archive.

4.1.1 Body, document, performance, and archive

I watch him position their body. Blackened and greased fingers clasping soft squidgy flesh. A gentle preamble to some rough quick fuck perhaps. They are learning from him; he teaches them. I am turned on. His muscled arms handling their more effeminate and youthful body. Desire dissolves the boundaries between him, them and me. We are split across different places and times. We are inflected in the material histories of the gay subculture they perform. We are brought together in desiring bodies. Him and them together on screen, me sitting in a gallery in Edinburgh sometime in 2016. I'm with a friend. I hold my breath at the illustrations of hard cocks, dildos idle on dusty shelves in rooms, the soft skin and finely toned arms of a man in a tank top life drawing some unseen naked Adonis off-camera. I feel embarrassed and uncomfortable, like the person sitting next to me in the gallery is going to catch me in this state of arousal. It's a sense that runs deep in queers, that illegitimacy of one's desire that keeps us wanting for more. This desire, just beneath the surface, presently unwelcome in the 19th century gallery where I sit. This desire, harnessed in leather, beads of sweat, mascara on eyes,

*red lips, curled bleached blonde hair,
staring at me.*

Before continuing it is important to define and explore the relationship between the body, document, performance, and archive. I recall an encounter with the artwork at Inverleith House in Edinburgh in 2016 to illustrate the layers of mediation within the artwork – me sitting in the installation watching the film, the film documenting the archive and Staff’s performance in the archive – and the ability of desire – in this instance my desire – to establish a set of queer relations that transcend these spatial and temporal bounds. In *The Foundation*, the layers are constituted by a series of performances in which Staff uses their body to negotiate the archive of Tom of Finland. The performing of the body and archival documents (as I will go on to discuss) bring one another into sharp relief – which I unpack in the *the house as archive* and *performing with daddy*. Here, I wish to briefly consider the relationship between the film as a document of the performance of a body which navigates the archive and locate this art historically. The film as document, is instructive of the always already mediated body of the performer. This is crucially important, particularly for gender nonconforming and trans* bodies, as the always already mediated body suggests there is no prior, or more ‘natural’ state to culture, to representation, and to the historical archive.

The mediated body, or the body which mediates a set of cultural, social, and political relations, is well established in feminist scholarship on the gendered body in performance art. Feminist art historians and performance scholars including Amelia Jones, Peggy Phelan, and Rebecca Schneider, provide helpful grounding in understanding gendered bodies being made intelligible through various institutional frames, and the role artists play in deconstructing such systems of representation. The purpose of performance, or specifically feminist performance dating from the 1960s by the likes of Carolee Schneemann, Ana Mendieta, Yvonne Rainer and Hannah Wilke, as Amelia Jones and Tracey Warr put it in their introduction to *The Artist’s Body* (2003), is often ‘to show the constructed identity of femininity’.² In *The Foundation*, Staff’s performance, to borrow from Schneider, explicates their body in social relation to the gay male archives of Tom of Finland and the ‘men’ who made it, maintain it, and use

² Tracey Warr and Amelia Jones, eds., *The Artist’s Body*, Reprinted, Themes and Movements (London: Phaidon Press, 2003), 13.

it.³ Staff's intervention – their femme and trans body in the archive – interferes with the archival record of predominantly masculine and muscled white bodies. Schneider's germinal book *The Explicit Body in Performance* (1997), is particularly useful in understanding Staff's performative intervention. Schneider describes the feminist artists' body in performance as a '[p]eeeling at signification [which] brings ghosts to visibility [...] to expose not an originary, true or redemptive body, but the sedimented layers of signification themselves'. Schneider describes the performance artist using their body to create a '*mise-en-scène*' on the body within which they unravel various social and historical meanings, because 'the explicit body in representation is foremost a site of social markings'.⁴ In *The Foundation*, Staff's body and performance seeks to 'peel' at both the signification of their body *and* the archive, both sites of social and historical markings. I situate Staff's practice within these feminist art histories, as feminist artists and scholars provide a useful schema for the ways in which the body is coded, and that a performing of the body can 'bring ghosts to visibility'. In *The Foundation*, the ghosts are the trans* and femme subjects which haunt the archives of Tom of Finland as a presence in absentia from the archival objects.

The Foundation mediates Staff's body through performance which in turn mediates the archive. The ghosts which haunt the archive, also visit the viewer in the gallery. As my desiring encounter intends to illustrate, I align with what Amelia Jones argues in "Presence in Absentia" (1997), that 'the documentary exchange (viewer/reader <— >document) is [...] intersubjective'. Jones' article challenges a presumed hierarchy between performance and its record, and the body encountered 'live'. Jones, whilst acknowledging the potential for 'phenomenological relations of flesh-to-flesh engagement', argues that the document of a performance 'most profoundly points to the dislocation of the fantasy of the fixed, *normative*, centred modernist subject and thus most dramatically provides a radical challenge to the masculinism, racism, colonialism, and heterosexism built into this fantasy'.⁵ The modernist subject is at the heart of how Western knowledge is constructed, including in the archive – even if, as I will go on to discuss, he (always prefigured as 'he' within a Phallogocentric order of things) re-appears in archives as fragmented and incomplete. The document of a performance dispels the 'fantasy' of some 'fixed', 'true', or 'real' subject found in the archive. Staff in *The*

³ I use men loosely in a similar vein the ways in which TOM's 'Men' are a reclamation of the words more macho-hetero connotations.

⁴ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London: Routledge, 2013), 2.

⁵ Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation", *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (December 1997): 12 [My emphasis.].

Foundation stages an encounter with the archive both ‘real’ (set in the actual Tom of Finland Foundation archive) and ‘imaginary’ (in the mise-en-scène). The artist’s body is depicted in specific relation to the archive of Tom of Finland, underlining both its contingency and dependency on the material histories which surround them. This correlates to Jones description of the body, in a reading of Derrida, as ‘supplementary’. To use another meaning of the word supplementary, the body ‘completes’ the archive, and/or the archive ‘completes’ the body. The document of the performance heightens a sense of the body as always already supplementary, as Jones explains, because the body is ‘fully dependent on the ways in which the image is contextualised and interpreted’.⁶

The Foundation captures and documents Staff’s performing body, paralleling the way in which archives capture and document. The artwork, and the archive, form part of a contextual and interpretative apparatus which ‘supplement’ or gives meaning to the body. The same is true of the inverse in that the body brings into relief a fungibility to both document and archive, ‘[t]he presentation of the self – in performance, in the photograph, film or video – calls out the mutual supplementarity of the body and the subject, [...] as well as of performance or body art and the photographic document’.⁷ And here, I add ‘archive’. As Derrida explains of the historian (he parodically describes as the ‘first archivist’) who interprets an archive: ‘[t]he first archivist institutes the archive as it should be, that is to say, not only in exhibiting the document, but in *establishing* it. He reads it, interprets it, classes it’.⁸ The body and performance and its document (which in one *context* we might call artwork, and in another might describe as archival object), reveals a contingency to processes of interpretation, which, following Derrida we might also call archivisation. The document, specifically, re-frames the body and the archive in *The Foundation*, it brings to the fore a confluence of body and archive. The layers of mediation in *The Foundation* of Staff’s body, to borrow again from Schneider, ‘peels’ away at the varying system of signification and representation so crucial to dominant Western modes of knowledge production.

It is important to detour for a moment to revisit representationalism and its limits. As I outlined in the first chapter, this thesis relies on queer theories of performance and performativity over ‘representationalism’, which I would characterise most simply as a shift from *meaning* to *action*. An overdependence on representationalism can lead to a

⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁸ Derrida, ‘Archive Fever’, 38.

cul-de-sac of a body overburdened with sign-signified-signifier – something means something else, creating a division between the thing and its meaning. What something means (i.e. ‘signifies’) is bound by the discursive limits of language. Peggy Phelan in *Unmarked* (1993) helpfully illustrates such a logic by explaining: ‘[e]ach representation relies on and reproduces a specific logic of the real; the logical real promotes its own representation’.⁹ The very notion of the ‘real’, as it connotes an original or a truth, is itself a construct of language and discourse beholden to power. Judith Butler forcefully articulates the possibilities and limits of representation in the opening pages of *Gender Trouble* (1990), asserting representation at once ‘extend[s] visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects’ whilst being a ‘normative function of language which is said to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women’.¹⁰ Representation, when it only operates within an echo-chamber of the discursive as opposed to the felt and lived-experiences of a particular individual or group, results in kinds of visibility, which Phelan remarks ‘is a trap’. Trans* scholarship on the representation and visibility of trans* subjects in culture, contemporary art, and reparative historical enquiry, builds on and revisits arguments found in 1990s feminist and queer scholarship on performance. In the excellent edited collection of essays, *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility* (2017), the editors Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley and Johanna Burton, open with the assertion: ‘We are living in a time of trans visibility. Yet we are also living in a time of anti-trans violence’.¹¹ Simply put, increased representation does not correlate to a change in the material circumstances of the trans* community; the discursive ‘real’ of representationalism, does not always translate to the ‘real’ life lived-experiences of the vast majority of trans* folks. As Phelan humorously remarks of the visibility of gendered bodies, ‘[i]f representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white women should be running Western culture’.¹² Similarly, the so-called ‘transgender tipping point’, heralded as a hallmark moment in trans* visibility with the actress Laverne Cox appearing on the cover of Time Magazine in 2014, does not directly coincide with the trans* community gaining more rights and political autonomy.

⁹ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 1993), 2, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=179272>.

¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Third edition (London: Taylor and Francis, 1990), 3.

¹¹ Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton, eds., *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, Critical Anthologies in Art and Culture (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017), xv.

¹² Phelan, *Unmarked*, 10.

Histories of trans* and gender nonconforming subjects also foreground the specific limits to representation and visibility within the archive. Genny Beemyn's article "A Presence in the Past: A Transgender Historiography" (2013) explains one of the difficulties of transgender history is applying parameters to a term which is contemporaneous to the last decade or so. The 'rich histories of individuals who perceived themselves and were perceived by their societies as gender nonconforming' must be balanced without assuming "'transgender", as we currently understand the term, existed throughout history'.¹³ Whilst not being able to account clearly for a historical subject's identifications and motivations in identifying as gender nonconforming, it is none the less 'critical' to make distinctions of gender difference 'to present a specific "transgender history"'. One of the key difficulties – which I discussed more generally in relation to the character and figure of the homosexual in Foucault's analysis on the nineteenth century archive, and the 'dead' Black girl in Hartman's exploration of archives of slavery – is any historical trans* or gender nonconforming subject is often traced within the limits of an archival record that is colonial, medicalising, and pathologising. Increased 'visibility' in the archive record, like increased 'representation', always works within the discursive limits of a given field, like the archive or popular culture.¹⁴ This is why artistic and creative interventions within the archival record – not bound by the very academic, archival, or historical conventions that may foreclose the possibility of a transgender presence in the past – are so crucially important. María Elena Martínez's illuminating article "Archives, Bodies, and Imagination: The Case of Juana Aguilar and Queer Approaches to History, Sexuality and Politics" (2014), carefully explores the opportunities for and potential collusions in artistic interventions in colonial archives. Martínez, like Diana Taylor's considerations of the performing of indigenous Latin America knowledges within and against the colonial archival record, argues for 'a radical queer approach to the archive' that 'aims to critique and dismantle'.¹⁵

¹³ Genny Beemyn, 'A Presence in the Past: A Transgender Historiography', *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 113.

¹⁴ I use 'field' in line with Kate Eichhorn's adaptation of the term from Bourdieu to include the archive as a given 'field', just like art and literature, discussed in the introduction.

¹⁵ The article considers archival, historical and artistic accounts of Juana Aguilar, a supposed hermaphrodite tried in the 1800s in Guatemala for "'abominable sins", with women'. The article traces Aguilar's story from a report written at the time by surgeon Narciso Esparagosa y Gallardo who declared Aguilar 'neither' man nor woman, and therefore incapable of having committed a crime. Martínez examines 'the problems with the colonial archive and queer history' and considers what performative and embodied practices can do to 'the imagination of historical reconstruction'. Arguing for a unity or trans-interdisciplinary unity between archive and Taylor's repertoire, Martínez explicates the ways in which the discipline of history is always subjective and uses imagination. This imaginative element to history is explored via an artistic case study with a particular focus on the 'ethics' of queer intervention as it may or

Performance and performativity, including the performativity of the document, is that which breaks us free from the discursive limits of representationalism. Indeed, I draw on the likes of Jones, Phelan, and Schneider as their scholarship moves us out of the cul-de-sac of what something means, to what a document, a performance, and a body in relation to something *does*. Returning to my encounter with *The Foundation* in 2016, it is the very ability of the power of the document to affect the viewer and create a connection across different times and spaces through desire, or as Elizabeth Freeman would call it, ‘erotics’. The notion of ‘binding’, in the opening chapter of Freeman’s *Time Binds* (2003) is particularly relevant here. Freeman describes erotics at play in Nguyen Tang Hoang’s *K.I.P.* (2004), a video artwork which uses granulated re-edited footage of gay pornography from VHS overlaid with the artist/viewer as a reflection on a glass television screen. The artwork relays the many eyes who have looked upon the two men having sex and ejaculating. The pornographic tape that has been rewound so many times retains a material trace of all those who have watched it, and in effect becomes ‘evidence’ of this ephemeral action. Freeman’s notion of the ‘present as hybrid’, comes from such an encounter with Nguyen’s work. This complicated formulation attempts to explain that whilst someone watching gay porn cannot make physical contact across time, the ‘novel possibility’ of this contact results in a reconciliation between a contemporary queer subject with a more dated representation of same-sex relations. The nuance and shift is again connected to what the artwork and the document does, which is ‘more than desire, for desire is form of belief’ (and we might say belief is a precept of meaning and therefore representationalism). Instead, Freeman argues the erotic encounter actually does something to the viewer in the present. I implicate myself in the opening example to express *explicitly* the ‘turned-on-ness’ of the encounter that is felt and experienced in and of the body. This transfer belies the power of a queer historiographic practice to extend and share a set of desires, relations, and indeed politics in and through the body.

may not reproduce similar historical imaginings. The article focuses on the ‘activations’ of the archive by Mexican cabaret and performance artist Rodriguez and her partner Litiana Felipe, who have spent many years researching Aguilar and the doctor Esparagosa y Gallardo. In a novel critique of queer historiographic practice in performance, Martínez suggests a perhaps short-sightedness to queer practices which orientate towards the future. The artist who engages the past through a present-day queer politic, Martínez compellingly argues that artists risk reproducing similar affects of the colonial imaginaries who first made the archival record. Or put another way, artistic, just like historical archival engagements, may result in accidental collusions with power (the power of those who produced and controlled the archives). To counter this, Martínez argues for ‘a queer approach to archive [that] requires an exercise of the mind that endeavours hard to treat classification schemes not just as abstractions but as systems of power that have multiple effects on lives and bodies’. In: M. E. Martinez, ‘Archives, Bodies, and Imagination: The Case of Juana Aguilar and Queer Approaches to History, Sexuality, and Politics’, *Radical History Review* 2014, no. 120 (1 October 2014): 159, 160, 174, 175.

In this section, I have used feminist scholarship on the body and performance, and specifically Jones' "Presence and Absentia", as it demonstrates the importance of performance documents in revealing the always already mediated, framed, and historically constituted body. Watching *The Foundation*, and its performative archival intervention, one is reminded that no encounter is authentic or unmediated. The term mediate, which I use continually throughout this thesis, is indicative of a set of relations and interpretations that reject the notion that a particular body, or indeed an archival object, *represents* an original or historical truth. Indeed, the mediating function of the body, performance and its document reveal a contingency to the archive's supposed ability to fix. Queer and trans* scholarship and performance practice, grounded in feminist discourses on representationalism and its limits, makes space for the possibility of femme and trans* subjects to figure – in an albeit more ephemeral and performative manner – within the archives of gay pasts. Performance and performativity moves beyond the limits of representationalism to propose ways of relating in and through archival records. The performances in *The Foundation* are quintessentially what Muñoz describes as 'queer acts'. For me, in an encounter with the *The Foundation*, a set of histories is carried across time and space and experienced as a series of bodily desires and affects. The document does not negate the possibility of these experiences, indeed it requires the viewer to 'work through' or as Freeman says, 'reconcile', an erotic's which cuts across space and time. It is precisely the ability of a document to transmit an earlier moment in time, not as a representation of a gay identity or community, but as a performative instantiation of a set of bodily affects which formed said identities and relations (communities), that makes it central to *The Foundation*.

4.2 The house as archive

In this section, I consider the *house as archive*, first to outline the significance of Tom of Finland, and specifically TOM House and its archives; second, to explore the ways in which TOM House and its archive is performative of the sexual subcultures and practices which sustain the life and legacies of Tom of Finland and a queer community; and third to introduce Staff's time spent at the house, framed in the film as 'looking' for something in the archive. Tom of Finland is incredibly important to modern Western gay identity, sexual liberation and contemporary queer sexualities. The artist created 'a gay utopia full of horny lumberjacks, sailors, policemen and construction workers, all

bursting out of their uniforms or their jeans and T-shirts'.¹⁶ His drawings reclaimed straight working-class representations of masculinity, and as Guy Snaith continues, 'paid to the notion of the gay man as a sissy'.¹⁷ First featuring in 1957 in *Physique Pictorial*, Tom's illustrations rendered the desires of an increasingly visible American and Western gay male audience. The illustrations depicted explicit sex between men, the character's unabashedly suck each other off, penetrate and are penetrated by a whole manner of objects – boots, fingers, trudgens, and penises. Alongside other homoerotic illustrators such as Etienne (Domingo Stephen Orejudos) and filmmaker Kenneth Anger, Tom recast masculinity as an object/subject of same-sex desire – in particular appropriating leathers worn by motorbike gangs and policemen.¹⁸ The art formed a community; and as the 1970s progressed '[a] new masculine identity in the image of Tom's hypermasculine fantasies' developed.¹⁹ Men dressed in leathers began working out to build muscle, aspiring to become 'prototypes' of Tom's characters.²⁰ More than aesthetic, these were new sexual communities that came together around fetish and practices commonly referred to as BDSM.

Tom's artworks are not without complications as they depicted the extremities of machismo, including the eroticisation of fascist imagery, which I return to in greater depth. It is also important to note that Tom was not immune to perpetuating racial stereotypes. Black characters are represented with enlarged penises, exaggerated lips, depicted as rapists of, or are subject to rape by white men – the racial stereotyping and white supremacist overtones cannot be ignored.²¹ Tom's artwork is at once transgressive of heterosexual norms, tastes and taboos, and in moments, reproductive of racist tropes. I must caveat what Snaith called Tom of Finland's 'gay utopia', as being predicated on a 'utopia' that is predominantly a white Anglo-American and colonial construct that has been forcefully critiqued by Black, Latinx and POC artists and

¹⁶ Guy Snaith, 'Tom's Men: The Masculinization of Homosexuality and the Homosexualization of Masculinity at the End of the Twentieth Century', *Paragraph* 26, no. 1–2 (March 2003): 77.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁸ For example see Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* (1969); for a more recent example of contemporary queer literature which explores gay leather fetish and sex, see Adam Mars-Jones, *Box Hill: A Story of Low Self-Esteem* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2020).

¹⁹ Snaith, 'Tom's Men', 80.

²⁰ It is important to emphasize here that Tom of Finland is not simply credited with representing this new gay identity, his appropriation of straight and masculine aesthetics can be understood to be *productive* of this new gay identity. This is referred to as the 'clone' within 1970s gay male communities, and specifically 'prototyping' in relation to Tom. For a discussion on 'clones' as they are parodically categorised in the photography of artist Hal Fisher, see: Richard Meyer, 'Inverted Histories: 1885—1979', in *Art & Queer Culture*, ed. Catherine Lord and Richard Meyer, Revised and updated paperback edition (London: Phaidon, 2019), 25.

²¹ For a concise consideration of race in Tom of Finland, see: Martti Lahti, 'Dressing Up in Power: Tom of Finland and Gay Male Body Politics', *Journal of Homosexuality* 35, no. 3–4 (4 June 1998): 197—99.

scholars.²² There is a complex interplay of dominance, power, and violence that needs closer unpacking – which Staff explores in relation to femme and trans* identities – which should not be conflated with problems of race.

Tom of Finland inspired and formed communities of leather-loving gay men. In 1979, Durk Dehner, and three other gay men, bought the 17-room three-story Craftsman style house at 1421 Laveta Terrace in the Echo Park Area of Los Angeles, United States. Dehner invited Tom to stay in 1980, and each winter over the next decade the artist would live and work at TOM House from a studio on the third floor. Dehner – Tom’s friend, lover, and occasional model – co-founded the Tom of Finland Foundation in 1984, a non-profit organisation that preserves Tom’s work and ephemera, alongside other erotic artworks. The original housemates left in the 1980s, but it has remained host to a collective community of gay men, artists, other residents and guests to this day.²³ After his death in 1991, Tom’s possession, at the artist’s bequest, were moved from Helsinki to TOM House. The archive in the care of the Foundation holds some 100,000 images, documents, and pieces of memorabilia, including approximately 1,500 documented and catalogued artworks by Tom of Finland. Tom’s room has been preserved as it was upon the artist’s death in 1991. TOM House is open to the public by appointment and has approximately 150 artworks on display. In November 2016, the house was designated a Historic-Cultural Monument by Los Angeles City Council. In the nomination form to become a Historic-Cultural Monument, TOM House is described as ‘a physical reflection of and a testament to Tom’s artistic, cultural and historical influence’.²⁴

The enduring legacy of Tom of Finland is one of a bold reclamation of heterosexist masculinities within the homophobic Euro-American cultures of the 1950s through early 1990s that has left a lasting impression on gay men and wider LGBTQ* communities. Tom’s legacy is complex and takes two divergent paths. On the one hand,

²² This connects with Martínez’s discussion of the colonial archive, and that queer futurity might, in its desire towards an unrealised (utopic) state of being, skirt closely to similar colonial or Enlightenment mindsets that ultimately centred a white Western perspective in defining what constituted ‘utopia’. In artistic practice, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa’s *Promised Lands* (2015) depicts a locked off shot of trees and foliage silhouetted and framing Lake Victoria at dusk (or dawn), with overlaid text and the voice of a narrator, who at one-point states: ‘Utopia is a displacement, a European invention’. Western gay subcultures and their postulation in gay and queer scholarship is not immune to a similar lack of address or acknowledgement of the ways in which professions of ‘utopia’ often entail the casting of someone or somewhere as ‘Other’.

²³ Vincent P. Bertoni et al., ‘Los Angeles Department of City Planning – RECOMMENDATION REPORT’ (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Department of City Planning, 4 August 2016), 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

his influence can be seen within a mainstream gay identity that embraces masculinity. Within gay culture, the white muscled gay man is now an aspirational norm. The erotised image of masculinity that Tom pioneered, has also, as Snaith notes, been adopted by straight men.²⁵ The artist is increasingly acknowledged more broadly in popular culture, the most recent example being the cinematic release of the feature length biopic *Tom of Finland* (2017).²⁶ On the other hand, Tom's legacy can also be seen within the queer sexual subcultures that continue to exist and thrive around the artist's work. The Foundation in its mission to protect, preserve and promote erotic art, supports a younger generation of LGBTQ* artists through an artist-in-residence programme, exhibitions and events. Notably Latinx and queer artists of colour, including Gio Black Peter, Rubén Esparza, and Rick Castro, feature prominently within the program history.²⁷ Annually there is a fundraiser called Tom's Bar, in memory of Tom's death, which often attracts prominent alternative and queer artists and musicians – for example, *Daddywood*, the 2019 event, featured Brooke Candy and Le1f.²⁸ The Foundation is also, importantly, a place where queer sex is celebrated. For example Matt Lambert's *Pleasure Park* included a zine and gay porn film made in collaboration with the Foundation and MEN.com, an adult entertainment website.²⁹ The division I set up between a 'mainstreaming' and 'subculture' is of course not as clear cut, but it is important to acknowledge the ways in which Tom's artworks enable reflection on the changing landscape of LGBTQ* communities and politics. The Foundation as a place, a volunteer-run archive and community space, is a microcosm in which a more intimate history of Tom of Finland can be told, and this is where Staff begins.

²⁵ Snaith, 'Tom's Men', 82.

²⁶ Alex Needham, 'World of Leather: How Tom of Finland Created a Legendary Gay Aesthetic', *The Guardian*, 1 August 2017, sec. Art and design, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/aug/01/tom-of-finland-leather-legendary-gay-aesthetic-touko-laaksonen>.

²⁷ See for example: 'GIO BLACK PETER Summer Presentation | 27th July | TOM House', Tom of Finland Foundation, 18 July 2019, <https://www.tomoffinland.org/gio-black-peter-summer-presentation-27th-july-tom-house/>.

²⁸ SHARP, 'TOM's Bar 2019 | 16th June | LA', *TOM's Blog* (blog), 1 May 2019, <http://www.worldoftomoffinland.com/tomsblog/tom-of-finland-foundation-28th-annual-toms-bar-daddywood/>.

²⁹ Lambert's filmmaking is exemplary of a recent shift towards 'indie' porn, which is more artistic, experimental and locates itself 'outside' of big studio funded pornography. In an interview about *Pleasure Park*, Lambert explains: '[w]ith my work generally and *Pleasure Park* specifically, I'd like to think that I make art or experimental films that have explicit content without being "pornographic"'. See: 'MATT LAMBERT: PLEASURE PARK - 032c', accessed 4 March 2021, <https://032c.com/matt-lambert-pleasure-park>.

The Foundation was some three years in the making and began with an unplanned visit Staff made to the Tom of Finland Foundation in 2012. A friend recommended Staff visit the Foundation given its importance within L.A.'s LGBTQ* community. This visit would develop into a film, and gallery exhibitions, which included sculpture, print and text. The project was co-commissioned by an international group of small and medium modern and contemporary art organisations: the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Chisenhale, London, and Spike Island, Bristol.³⁰ The film was shot on location at the Tom of Finland Foundation and on a purpose-built set at Spike Island. The film comprises footage of the Foundation, professionally shot with a cinematographer and small crew; shots on Staff's camera phone, archival footage and mise-en-scène (also professionally shot with lighting and crew). During production in L.A., Staff volunteered at the Foundation and their experiences there deeply informed the film. Staff would get to know co-founders Dehner and S.R. Sharp, alongside the community of men who live and work there. Whilst volunteering Staff worked on archiving, sorting and digitising old tapes – some of which made it into the final film. The film is a work of two-halves, which Staff describes as: '... the footage shot in L.A. at the Foundation is me ingesting things and then the footage shot at Spike is me then pushing them back out again: it's this productive intake and excretion'.³¹ The foundation of *The Foundation*, is Staff's time spent at the house and in the archive. The house is central to the project and the film.

Morning light, ashtray and empty cup, the next day. Outside the house now, the camera looks up to the first floor windows and back down to a washer, dryer and sink, roving towards a ramshackle outhouse. Staff's eye, the camera, cruising the architecture.

Staff's time spent at The Foundation is emulated in the film through the act of looking. Here, looking takes on a dual-meaning within the loaded context of TOM House being a place which holds an archive and equally a place where countless sexual and erotic

³⁰ Aileen Burns et al., 'Introduction', in *The Foundation*, ed. Aileen Burns and Johan Lundh (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2015), 5–7.

³¹ P. Staff and Katie Guggenheim, 'Interview: P. Staff and Katie Guggenheim', in *The Foundation*, ed. Aileen Burns and Johan Lundh (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2015), 118.

encounters have taken place. There is the ‘looking’ in the archive, and ‘looking’ as part of the act of cruising.³² Fiona Anderson describes cruising as a methodology, ‘a furtive mode of undertaking artistic research and practice’, as a way ‘of looking for something that is not immediately visible’.³³ The film includes footage captured by Staff using their camera phone to re-create the cruising gaze. The phone is apt, as it is the smartphone which has enabled contemporary forms of cruising via apps like Grindr, displacing more ‘analogue’ modes of looking for sex in public bathrooms, parks, or in gay bars or clubs. In one sequence the house becomes the focus of Staff’s gaze, the handheld roving movement looks up and down the exterior of the building, in the garden and to an outhouse. The camera, Staff’s eye, purposefully settles on nothing at all, echoing what Simon Ofield writing on cruising in archival research, describes as a ‘diverted’ practice. Cruising as it is associated with a complex process of looking and reading (decoding) whether or not someone may or may not share similar desires, is applicable to Staff’s initial engagement with the house. Not knowing exactly what one is looking for prevails in such an approach, as Ofield explains of his ‘cruising’ in bookshops, ‘I am committed to this kind of diversion due to my long-established commitment to the expectant pleasure of coming across what I do not set out to find’.³⁴ And indeed Staff, whilst with the benefit of hindsight has more carefully correlated and articulated their archival impulse as connected to better understanding their trans identity, *what it is they were looking for* is not entirely clear. The looking in the archive as cruising sets the stage for a more performative encounter with the house that privileges an archival negotiation that is more bodily and driven by complex desires.

Echoed footsteps, a tambourine and a chime. Cut from black. Light pierces and accentuates the dusty undercroft. Harsh whites trace outlines of heating ducts, insulation, wires and wooden struts. The foundations.

³² Cruising is a practice predominantly associated with gay men looking for sex involving furtive and suggestive glances. Bruce Rogers defines cruising as: ‘(fr *Du kruisen* = to cruise // *L crux* = cross) to search for sex; to find a need and fill it’ Bruce. Rodgers, ‘Gay Talk : Formerly Entitled The Queens’ Vernacular : A Gay Lexicon’, 1979, 56 [Original emphasis.].

³³ Fiona Anderson, ‘Cruising as Method and Its Limits’, LUX, 23 August 2017, <https://lux.org.uk/writing/cruising-method-limits-fiona-anderson>.

³⁴ Simon Ofield, ‘Cruising the Archive’, *Journal of Visual Culture* 4, no. 3 (December 2005): 353.

The house is a central protagonist in *The Foundation*. I argue that the film emphasises – in part through Staff’s act of looking – the importance of the house and the archive in order to draw out the *performative* functions and values of the archive. The house *as* archive is the embodiment of a particular gay history that correlates to a place and location. I begin therefore where Staff begins, and a somewhat literal interpretation of Rebecca Schneider’s assertion that ‘[t]he archive is built on “house arrest” – the solidification of value in ontology as retroactively secured in document, object, record’.³⁵ In the opening shot of *The Foundation* we see the literal foundations of the house. Attention is drawn to the material foundations that support and make the archive – the ducting, insulation, wires and wooden struts. The subsequent establishing shots depict various rooms in the house. There is a bedroom with an opened archive box on the bed; followed by a lounge decorated in dark mahogany wood with homoerotic illustrations on walls, and black leather furniture. In the lounge, centred in both the frame and room, there is another archive box atop a black leather pouffe. The lingering locked-off shots dwell on the details and features of the rooms, the décor, the furniture, the rugs, the books, the art. The appearance of the archive boxes in the rooms are a constant reminder that this is a home *and* an archive.

I can also say, the house *is* an archive, with *is/as* being a performative in language that I use to purposefully and playfully describe a layered understanding of TOM House. I mean this both literally and figuratively. That is, in the case of Tom of Finland Foundation, the house is the archive, and the archive can also be conceptually understood as a house. It is also commonplace for LGBTQ* archives to reside in houses, which, as I have discussed in the first chapter, is due to these archives beginning their lives in varying degrees of secrecy in the care of individuals and in private dwellings. Here, I also build on the recent comparative art historical study of *The Foundation* by James Boaden, who’s chapter “Queer Paper History: P. Staff’s ‘The Foundation’ and Isaac Julien’s ‘Looking for Langston’” notes a play on Derrida’s definition of the archive as house.³⁶ The more conceptual understanding also comes from Schneider and Derrida, who describe the ways in which the domiciliation or ‘arrest’ of archival material secures value.³⁷ It is useful to think here of the etymology of the word arrest, from Latin ‘ad-’ meaning ‘at, to’ and ‘restare’ meaning ‘remain,

³⁵ Rebecca Schneider, ‘Performance Remains’, *Performance Research* 6, no. 2 (January 2001): 105.

³⁶ Boaden, ‘Queer Paper History: P. Staff’s “The Foundation” and Isaac Julien’s “Looking for Langston”’, 181.

³⁷ ‘Arrest’, Lexico, Lexico Dictionaries, accessed 26 September 2019, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/arrest>.

stop'. The archive, in other words, gains its authority through that which *remains*, 'the solidification of value in ontology'. Put more simply, an archive as a place full of things, is quintessential to making meaning. And the film labours on this, with shots of room upon room filled with things. The establishing shots heighten a sense of curated orderliness. The well-kept reception rooms and close-ups of leather-bound books – *Sexual Outlaws*, *Megacosmic Models*, *Male Anatomy* and *Homosex 2* – emphasise a banal sense of archival order to the sexually charged content. The pacing, lighting and sound also serve to reinforce the house and its materials being 'at stop'. The shots of rooms without people feel long, the lighting is diffuse, unnatural and untimely, and the windchime noises are idle and melancholic. This is the re-assuring calm of the archive, the performativity of permanence and authority of the carefully composed camera angle capturing the curated room of objects.

The 'arrest' of objects in the archive is one piece of the puzzle in giving them meaning. It is the act of consignment, the bringing together of signs, the ordering of things and their interpretation that gives them such value (meaning). Tom of Finland's preserved artist studio as shown in the film is a unique example of the archival preservation of carefully arranged objects in a particular place. In *The Foundation* this is beautifully captured in the first few minutes of the film which dwells on Tom's bedroom and studio. On the bed sits an archive box, again a reminder of the dual function of this house as archive. In the background you can see various military style jackets backlit by light piercing through horizontal window blinds. A fan clicks overhead and the film cuts to a closeup of the desk in the room, a cup holding some paint brushes demarcates *this* is the maestro's desk.³⁸ The patriarchal orderings of the archive, its concern with mastery, takes on a duplicitous meaning in the context of BDSM sex cultures. The 'weight' given to materials, quite literally in the number of objects at TOM House, is why, when Staff reflects on their time at the house, they say: 'my experience of that

³⁸ There are interesting parallels to be drawn between Tom's preserved studio, and similar figures in art history. The artist studio can be the site for the preservation of their legacy, for example Barbara Hepworth's Trewyn Studio in Cornwall becoming the Barbara Hepworth Museum, now part of Tate St. Ives. Then, there is the artist studio which tells the story of their craft, for example the re-creation of Eduardo Paolozzi's studio at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and Francis Bacon's studio at Dublin City Gallery. Andrew Hardman's doctoral thesis, *Studio Habits: Francis Bacon, Lee Krasner, Jackson Pollock and Agnes Martin* (2014), challenges the ways in which the artist studio, specifically the posthumously preserved or re-created 'studio-view', typically assures the 'artistic mastery'. Tom does not sit easily within an art historical canon, but the use of similar strategies of preservation of 'legacy' does bare comparison. The 'mastery' of Tom however takes on a dual meaning when we think of it in the context of BDSM. For more on the artist studio, see Tate, 'Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden', Tate, accessed 1 May 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-st-ives/barbara-hepworth-museum-and-sculpture-garden>; Andrew Hardman, 'Studio Habits: Francis Bacon, Lee Krasner, Jackson Pollock and Agnes Martin' (Manchester, University of Manchester, 2014).

place is so thick and heavy with representation'.³⁹ The use of the words 'thick' and 'heavy' suggest mass, and I imagine a house filled with thousands of bits of matter and bodies. The house is filled with representation, the house is a representation, 'a physical reflection' of Tom of Finland and the gay men who have lived there since the late 1970s. Visiting the house, being affected by its 'thick and heavy' representations, is an affect of the past in the present, it is an example of the performativity of archives.

We are reading, then, our performative relations to documents and to document's ritual status as performatives within a culture that privileges object remains. We are reading, then, the document as performative act, and as site of performance.⁴⁰

Schneider suggests documents – quintessential to the archive – can be both performative and a site of performance. I want to borrow Schneider's idea of the 'performative document', and apply it to argue that the house *as* archive *is* performative and, as I go on to discuss in the next section, also becomes the site of Staff's performance. In saying documents are performative, Schneider is arguing archives (as groupings of materials including documents) are performative. Therefore, when I describe the house as performative, I am describing the house as: first, performative of the logics of the archive, that is its privileging of material, and its patriarchal cum patricidal orderings (which I also return to in the next section). Second, the house is performative of a given set of histories of Tom of Finland, that is the hyper-masculine identities and sexual communities. A document in this context is 'a piece of written, printed, or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record'.⁴¹ I use document in an expanded sense of the word to describe something which instructs, teaches and above all *transmits* information. The etymology of the word 'document' comes from the Latin 'docere' meaning to 'to teach'. Therefore, to conflate Schneider's document with the house as archive, is simply to say that the house *performs* the function of a document, that it is information, or it teaches (in of itself). Such a formulation relies on Diana Taylor's principle of 'is/as' which describes performance as simultaneously 'real' and 'constructed'. The 'is', is the ontological, the thing itself, and 'as', is the epistemological, what the thing means in knowledge.⁴² To

³⁹ Staff and Guggenheim, 'Interview: P. Staff and Katie Guggenheim'.

⁴⁰ Schneider, 'Performance Remains', 105.

⁴¹ 'Document | Definition of Document by Lexico', Lexico Dictionaries | English, accessed 6 May 2020, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/document>.

⁴² Taylor, 'Chapter 1 – Acts of Transfer', 3.

say, as I have been until this point, the house *as* archive, which means the house is both an archive (ontologically) and is also (as) an archive (epistemologically). If the house is performative of the archive, it can, in short, be is/as.

I describe the house as performative to account for the ways in which that place and that specific archive is *productive* of both archival logics and a gay history. That is to say – to somewhat diverge with Staff – the house is not simply *representative* of these things but *is also* inculcated in the production and reproduction of these things. The ‘thing’ the archive produces and reproduces can be generally considered *knowledges*. I rely here on the power of performativity of language, most famously outlined by linguist J.L Austin and foundational to poststructuralist queer theory. In *How to Do Things With Words* (1962), Austin outlines ‘performatives’ and ‘speech acts’, simply put, as language becoming action. He argued signs could become action using the example of marriage: ‘When I say, before the registrar or altar, &c., ‘I do’, I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it’. The ‘I do’, is, in short, a performative.⁴³ It enacts something in the speaking of it. Judith Butler famously extended the idea to gender, explaining: ‘[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results’.⁴⁴ A performative instantiates an action (through an expression) that has no before or after. This returns us to more contemporary uses of performativity in the writing of new materialists such as Barad, who explains in “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter” (2003), ‘[p]erformativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real’.⁴⁵ Representation, whether visual or linguistic, tells us something means something else, perhaps a more abstract or metaphysical thing. The black dildo for example can be said to represent not just a type of penetrative pleasure (itself loaded with Oedipal meanings), but a sexual community, a history and a politics. Barad argues that representationalism, the cornerstone of social constructivism and queer theory, separates matter from meaning.⁴⁶ Performatives account for what

⁴³ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 6.

⁴⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 2014, 33.

⁴⁵ Barad, ‘Posthumanist Performativity’, 803.

⁴⁶ Barad explains in more detail: ‘The idea that beings exist as individuals with inherent attributes, anterior to their representation, is a metaphysical presupposition that underlies the belief in political, linguistic, and epistemological forms of representationalism. Or, to put the point the other way around, representationalism is the belief in the ontological distinction between representation and that which they purport to represent; in particular, that which is represented is held to be independent of all practices of

something does, and that its doing is inherently connected to its being, not independent to it, whereas representation presupposes an anterior and distinction between both. In modern and contemporary art performativity has also been described as ‘the experiential turn’, emphasising a shift from what something means (representationalism) to the effect an artwork has (performativity).⁴⁷

A portrait of a hyper muscular man in a fascist uniform peering down at the crotch of an equally muscled blond-haired bare-chested counterpart. Erect cocks and fondling hands are obscured by a high-backed black leather chair.

One of the effects of Tom of Finland’s art (its performativity) are the ways in which it at once seems to stabilise (or produce) a muscled white gay identity, whilst at the very same time introduces an instability to the archive’s role in its consignment of identity. The artwork at home in the archive, oscillates between stability and instability, illustrated in the dual-meaning of ‘arrest’ in the context of the Tom of Finland Foundation. There is the house ‘arrest’ of the archive, a metaphor that describes how objects succumb to and performatively reproduce the archive and its logics. Then there is also arrest in BDSM sex play shown in Tom’s drawings, which takes place in the house. Tom draws men in authority, policemen who arrest other men, dominate them and subject them to sexual acts. Illustrations gaze out from their frames, at one another, and their home, interjecting that desires may in fact cut across whatever logics or rules that might regulate this place. The film overtly alludes to such deviations, the domestic setting of the living room contrasts with the military and leather of the wardrobe in the bedroom, or a sex toy carefully perched on a shelf. At the end of the film, in one of the final sequences, we are returned to the foundations of the house, this time rather than ducting, it is a BDSM-sex dungeon replete with chains, gas mask and a harness to have sex in. But who wore those chains, or that mask? Who was fucked in the harness? What pleasure and/or pain did they experience? The effect of Tom’s archive is that it continually points to something which is not there – a set of identities and relations that are never fully accounted for in the material. The performativity of the archive is

representing. That is, there are assumed to be two distinct and independent kinds of entities – representations and entities to be represented’. Ibid., 804.

⁴⁷ ‘The Experiential Turn — On Performativity — Walker Art Center’, accessed 6 May 2020, <https://walkerart.org/collections/publications/performativity/experiential-turn/>.

therefore the performance of disappearance. As Schneider puts it, ‘the archive performs the institution of disappearance, with object remains as indices of disappearance’.⁴⁸ Staff’s film as it lingers on materials, draws attention to what is not there, the objects, so explicit in their call to sex, touch, bodily encounters and excrements, the objects at once call forth these bodies whilst simultaneously performing their disappearance.

4.3 Performing with daddy

Staff and Durk Dehner, co-founder of the Tom of Finland Foundation, sit in the bedroom together. Staff kneels on the floor at the feet of Dehner who sits on a chair with prerequisite white archival gloves. Staff leafs through material from the archival box on the bed, both look off camera contemplating instruction. [...] Dehner’s voice begins ‘I bought the house in 1979 with a group of brothers and Tom became part of the family’. Shots of archival material on the bed then back to Dehner showing Staff a photo album, as the out of sync audio recalls the history of the house and the Foundation.

In the archive, flesh is given to be that which slips away. Flesh can house no memory of bone. Only bone speaks memory of flesh. Flesh is blindspot. Disappearing.⁴⁹

Here, I explore Staff’s performance with Daddy as a re-staging of Staff’s encounter with the archive of Tom of Finland. Staff’s relationship to the archive, to the life and legacy of Tom of Finland, is encapsulated by the complex power-dynamic and relationship with Daddy. The Daddy is a role in BDSM, a macho elder in LGBTQ* communities, and in the film, appears as Dehner, and is subsequently played by the actor Francis Lee. The Daddy denotes the archive, and a set of relations. Staff’s

⁴⁸ Schneider, ‘Performance Remains’, 105.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 102.

performance with Daddy connotes a negotiation of the archive and these relations. The negotiation is between Staff's femme and trans identifications and a particular gay community and history. The Daddy also represents a patriarchal authority, knowledge and power. The performance is the embodiment of this power-dynamic, and ultimately represents a stable authority, identity and relation, that is affected, and potentially subverted by queer desire and sexual practice. The stable authority is the white gay masculinity that emerged as a prototype from Tom's drawings and is the defacto identity/image associated with Tom of Finland. In a sequence in Tom's preserved bedroom and studio, Staff, on their knees, attentively listens to Dehner who interprets the archive and tells the history of Tom of Finland. The perennial father, the 'boy' at their feet, imparting a patrilinear history about 'the family'. This sequence early in the film is the first time Staff appears, young, blond with dark roots showing, softer in feature, contrasting with the older Dehner, and the dark mahoganies of the house. The scene establishes a connection between the archive and the body, or as Schneider would term it, the bones and the flesh. The house, and the archive, are the bones, they are what remains. Dehner in this scene is bone speaking of flesh in the oration of a history of Tom of Finland, he is the embodiment of the archive, he is performing the document.⁵⁰

Tambourine and pop. Cut to backlit portrait illustrations hanging over the window with shuttered blinds. A man holding his enormous erect penis. Ghostly outlines of trees dance in the diffuse light. A double click and the shot cuts to blinds, an empty frame is lit from behind with artificial light. The camera pulls back. A shot tracks around a stage made of scaffolding and MDF frame surrounding a wooden square platform. Strip and

⁵⁰ The orality of Dehner in this sequence does fall somewhere between archive and repertoire in the sense that as heard live it would be an orality that does not come to exist in the archive, whereas oral histories that are recorded (including Dehner's in Staff's film) do become archival objects. As Schneider explains: '... we have broadened our range of documents to include that which we might have overlooked; the stockpiling of recorded speech, image, gesture, the establishment of 'oral archives', and the collection of 'ethnotexts'. The important recuperation of 'lost histories' goes on in the name of feminism, minoritarianism, and its compatriots'. Pierre Nora also notes oral histories as part of 'the imperative of our epoch to produce archives'. See: Ibid.; Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 14; Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 23.

floodlights. Staff and an older performer push the wooden platform on rollers across the floor. Staff is barefoot. They arrange the set together. An old CRT television, couch, a door and empty frame lean against the makeshift set. A lamp awkwardly placed on the ground it's electrical coil still wrapped around its base. Club music fades in. Cut to black.

To explore the power-dynamics between Staff and Dehner, who is the living embodiment of the archive of the Tom of Finland, the film cuts to mise-en-scène sequences. Dehner's oration of the archive, which is indicative of the importance of gay elders like Dehner in sustaining the life and legacy of Tom, is made explicit with the appearance of Daddy. In the mise-en-scène sequences, Daddy is an embodiment of the archive, and comes to stand for all that does not appear in the archival record. Around ten minutes in this is staged in the theatrical performance which punctuates some two thirds of the film. There is a flicker of light and the film cuts from the house to a stage set of the house. The Los Angeles morning sun replaced by artificial lighting in a production space in Bristol. Staff is filmed quietly building the set in companionship with Daddy, the actor Francis Lee. They are constructing the stage on which they will perform together; the stage is a mise-en-scène of TOM House. They carefully place props together that re-create the domesticity of the house – a sofa, a TV, a lamp. The act of constructing the set together is the bringing together of the archive and the repertoire, the house and those that lived there. As I have been outlining to this point with the help of Schneider and Taylor, the archive is composed of that which typically remains – architecture, documents, objects, and records. The repertoire is *nonarchival*, it 'requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by "being there", being a part of the transmission'.⁵¹ The seemingly banal sequence of Staff building the set, is, put another way, *the making of the archive*. It is a reminder that archives are made from nonarchival knowledge, and made by people, by bodies and flesh.⁵² Staff makes this explicit in the performers' handling of the building and

⁵¹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 20.

⁵² I must note an issue in using the term 'flesh' and the unaddressed critique of *The Foundation* regarding race. Flesh, as Hortense Spillers distinguished, 'is the concentration of "ethnicity" that contemporary critical discourses neither acknowledge nor discourse away'. I use the word flesh, following Schneider, in

materials of the house, explaining: ‘I knew with both [the film and installation] that I wanted to extrapolate the material associations at play within the house, the pressing together of different sometimes incongruous, materials’.⁵³ They continue by contrasting ‘this old wooden house’ (the bones) with ‘guys wearing leather, who are obviously all flesh, and oil’.⁵⁴ The house, as it is performative in of itself, and as it is the site of performance, becomes malleable and open to intervention. Boaden argues this is central to the artwork, which ‘evokes a living archive, a space in which objects are to be used, touched, and narrated by those who shared the space with Tom of Finland’.⁵⁵ The opening of the theatrical performance, the building of the set, is a bringing together of the materials including those that might not remain, like oily flesh. The proposition here is that the archive is more than bone, it is living.

a context that is completely white, and therefore some of the politics talking of ‘flesh’ might represent are lost, or more problematically erased. For a discussion on race, body and flesh, see: Hortense J. Spillers, ‘Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book’, *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 64.

⁵³ Whilst I am focusing on the film element of *The Foundation*, of note is the gallery installation also extended the use of materials that have associations with the ‘innards’ of a building, as Staff explains: ‘My interest in unfinished plays and in partially constructed sets is to do with the construction and deconstruction of identity through provisionally, and feeling out liminal moments. The installation and sculptures are a continuation of what is being explored in the set. I knew with both that I wanted to extrapolate the material associations that take place within the house, the pressing together of different sometime incongruous, materials’. In: P. Staff, In conversation, interview by Catherine Wood, 5 March 2015, 120.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Boaden, ‘Queer Paper History: P. Staff’s “The Foundation” and Isaac Julien’s “Looking for Langston”’, 180.



Figure 2. Image of scanned video still from *The Foundation* (2015). Staff is being positioned by Daddy, his arms wrapped around Staff's body. The still is included in Catherine Spencer's article "The Pedagogies of Performance Afterlife" (2018) which I printed to read and scanned with my highlights and notes. The scanner has subsequently picked up my finger and hand marks that have partially obscured the still. An illustration of marks of the body being left on the document.

Cut to Staff being handled by the performer, positioning their hands and moving their head. Leaving ink traces where his hands meet Staff's flesh. A deep air of concentration in the performers face. An intergenerational exchange and movement. A slow bass pulses with all the implied sexual tension of the intimacy between the two.

On the stage that they build Staff and Daddy perform an intergenerational exchange of knowledge. They dance together, move together, and sort archival papers dressed in harnesses and other bondage-wear. The exchange oscillates in meaning, at once representative of a patrilinear knowledge that disciplines the body. This is illustrated in one sequence in which Staff is ‘handled’ by Daddy, their body moved and shifted into different positions. Black ink marks both bodies with Daddy leaving the impression of the archive on Staff’s flesh. Catherine Spencer conceives this as a scene of learning, and a ‘performative pedagogy’. Daddy is teacher, Staff is student, the performance ‘physically and psychically painful and restrictive, as one body is forced in line with another’.⁵⁶ I conceive this as not just a process of learning, but of the archive’s affects on minoritarian subjects, the will of a dominant power to identify, categorise and order. Even a gay archive by and for the community of Tom of Finland is subject to archival logics which preserve the past through limited ontologies. At the same time the exchange is also representative of a particular set of social-sexual relations that Spencer notes ‘testifies to shared histories’ between Tom of Finland and Staff’s own identifications.⁵⁷ BDSM is the medium through which these oscillating meanings of desire, power and knowledge are explored. Taking its cue from BDSM, the performance with Daddy is an intergenerational exchange of knowledge that is embodied. An embodied performance is part of Taylor’s repertoire, and represents a way of knowing or indeed learning between two bodies in proximity.

They were bound together by a common love of a certain kind of music, physical beauty, and style – all the things one shouldn’t throw away an ounce of energy pursuing, and sometimes throw away a life pursuing.⁵⁸

Music fades up. Two performers stand on a platform. Staff, blond died hair with faded dark roots tied in a bun, wearing a light mascara on the eyes, leather harness across shoulders and bare chest, loose trousers and barefoot. The daddy wears a suede apron for welding, cut sleeve t-shirt, jeans and boots. Both begin to dance,

⁵⁶ Catherine Spencer, ‘The Pedagogies of Performative Afterlife’, *Parallax* 24, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 35.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁸ Andrew Holleran, *Dancer from the Dance*, 1st Perennial ed (New York: Perennial, 2001).

echoing each other's movements to the rhythm of the pulsing club beat. Minimal movements of arms, heads move side to side, hand on the back of the head, hands on gyrating hips. Listless expressions. They mush their faces like dough. They lunge and jump backwards in a choreographed ritual of queer communion.

Performing with Daddy is an act of transfer. It is a demonstration of *nonarchival* knowledges that have been so important to LGBTQ* communities excluded from and therefore only partially accounted for in archives. I use Paul Connerton's term 'acts of transfer' as it usefully describes what Taylor surmises as the 'transmitting [of] social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated' behaviours and performance.⁵⁹ Acts of transfer for Taylor provide a means through which marginalised knowledges can maintain themselves through performance and repertoire. Knowledges here specifically relates to 'social memory', that is a communal memory that complicates the patriarchies of the archive, the pedagogical situation and the Daddy/boy dynamic. The *mise-en-scène's* opening dance sequence is one such example of an act of transfer, evocative of the above quote from Andrew Holleran's novel *Dancer from the Dance* (1978) which beautifully captures the lustful melancholia of dancing and dancing in commune in 1970s gay New York. Staff ritualises and therefore underscores the importance of dance within queer communities.⁶⁰ Staff performs with Daddy, they echo

⁵⁹ Taylor, 'Chapter 1 – Acts of Transfer', 1.

⁶⁰ Dancing, specifically social dancing common in LGBTQ* bars and clubs, is a locus for forging identities and building community. Clare Croft, Fiona Buckland, and Jane C Desmon have all theorised the relationship between dance, gender and sexuality. Buckland's book is an important work on queer dance that explores 'improvised movement' on dance floors and world-making. These worlds Buckland clarifies are produced 'in the moment of a space of creative, expressive, and transformative possibilities, which remained fluid and moving by means of the dancing body'. Staff's performance which is choreographed and not improvised, ritualises such world-making, figuring it as anarchival object, one that points to dance floors filled with bodies in movement. At the same time, the performance is distant, it is a deconstruction of the mechanics of queer improvised dance itself. Buckland argues 'queer world-making is a conscious, active way of fashioning the self and the environment'. The choreographed movements of Staff and Daddy make explicit this consciousness and the ways in which queer subjects make spaces of meaning and relating with others. This of course, as is Buckland's study, a practice with a long history, more marked at certain moments where being gay or queer was culturally and socially oppressed. There is a politics to this history, as remarked in introduction of Croft's edited collection of essays *Queer Dance – Meaning & Makings* (2017), that 'queerness emerges in action, in protest, and on stages'. See: Fiona Buckland, 'Introduction', in *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making* (Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 4, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/439>; Fiona Buckland, 'The Theater of Queer World-Making', in *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making* (Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 19, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/439>; Clare Croft, ed., *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 13.

each other's movements, at once listless and lustful looking straight forward at some vanishing point. Their bodies are weighted, tired almost, reminiscent of clubbers, drunk and in-between highs, lost in the rhythm. The rehearsed and wooden feel to the performance, a going through the motions, is a re-enactment. Schneider argues that re-enactment is 'the repeated act of securing memory' that, following Connerton, is a social memory. Catherine Grant posits re-enactment in contemporary art as a mode of learning in performative engagements with feminist and queer pasts. In the chapter, "Learning and Playing: Re-enacting feminist histories" in *Feminist Art History Now* (2017), Grant explains, re-enactment enables 'thinking about gesture, collective learning and discussion'.⁶¹ Staff and Daddy's bodies in this performance are the knowledge, a knowledge of the movements of queer bodies made a thousand times over in the small hours at clubs. Their bodies are the archive and host to a collective memory, a social memory of ways of relating. Staff in re-staging their encounter with the archive with nonarchival modes of knowledge exchange complicates the relationship between both. To perform with Daddy an act of transfer, is to perform the body as archive, and the ways in which the archive might be expressed through the body.

The set has changed, we're in an archival space with clicking ceiling fan. Lube soaked hands handle white paper. Daddy lifts one sheet, Staff another. Organising blank pieces of paper in boiler suit cum archiving uniforms. Closeups of faces, hands, and fan. Performing with the archive.

The central performance in *The Foundation* unpicks the relationship between the archive and the bodies that produce and reproduce it. The acts of transfer between Daddy and Staff are performative, they are performative of the effects of knowledge/power on the body. The performance at once emulates acts of transfer as conceived as embodied knowledges, *and also* points to archival knowledges. Taylor explains: 'the archive and the repertoire have always been important sources of

⁶¹ Catherine Grant, 'Learning and Playing: Re-Enacting Feminist Histories', in *Feminism and Art History Now: Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice*, ed. Victoria Home and Lara Perry, (London New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 263.

information, both exceeding the limitations of the other, in literature and semiliterate societies'.⁶² *The Foundation* depicts acts of transfer between archive (the drawings, dried cum stains, ephemera, military garb) and repertoire (sweating bodies building muscle or strapped in a harness, fleeting glances, moments of orgasm, tears of loss and love, groans of pain and pleasure) and back again. The histories of the Tom of Finland Foundation are continually called into question, or indeed subject of 'play', in the BDSM sense of the word, between archive and repertoire, between all the 'stuff' and all the relations. As Boaden notes, 'Staff's film is as much about materiality as relationality, with the two blurring into one another'.⁶³ Another scene shows Staff and Daddy rifling through blank sheets of paper, their hands are covered in lube which leave translucent marks as they aimlessly sort. The traces of sex left on the archive is the performance becoming archival material. It is a didactic depiction of what we might refer to as the queer archive, an amalgam of material and immaterial archives. It is a reminder of the ways in which bodies and performance also mediate material (not simply the other way around). Rather than performing the archive, they perform *with* the archive to suggest a co-dependence and the importance of the present for both.⁶⁴ Performing with Daddy acknowledges the importance of archives *and* performance in the transmitting information across different institutions and individuals (bodies).

The Foundation proposes alternative ways of knowing through loving Daddy. This is both a loving of Daddy who is representative of patriarchal knowledge/power and the longing for his undoing in queer desires. Daddy is an appropriation and play on 'father and son', a central relationship that effects the psychosexual development of children. As Freud described it, 'in the case of men [...] their early experience of being deterred by their father from sexual activity and their competitive relation with them deflect from their own sex'.⁶⁵ The son's desire for the mother and competitiveness with the father during childhood establishes 'normal' heterosexuality, or so it goes. To desire the father, and to name that lover Daddy, is a subversion of a psychology that casts the homosexual as deviant, neurotic and perverse.⁶⁶ *The Foundation* can be said to lovingly embrace the figure of the Daddy, who shares his experiences and knowledge. To

⁶² Taylor, 'Chapter 1 – Acts of Transfer', 21.

⁶³ Boaden, 'Queer Paper History: P. Staff's "The Foundation" and Isaac Julien's "Looking for Langston"', 181.

⁶⁴ As I have discussed elsewhere, the archive as it is conceptually understood is in part constituted by its mediation/interpretation, which can be said to be a present encounter not a historical one.

⁶⁵ Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 229.

⁶⁶ Freud explains neurosis as 'the incapacity for meeting a *real* erotic demand' and that the neurotic is 'dominated by the opposition between reality and phantasy'. See: *Ibid.*, 110.

archive, is to embrace the paternal and patriarchal, it is to preserve that secret within the archive, that is the death of the father, and the will to death so central in psychology and psychoanalysis. Performance, as with other postmodern cultural production that heralded the death of the author, is an embrace of the patricidal. As Schneider puts it: '[w]ithin a culture which privileges object remains as indices of and survivors of death, to produce such a panoply of deaths may be the only way to insure Remains in the wake of modernity's crisis of authority, identity and object. Killing the author [the father], or sacrificing his station, may be, ironically, the means of insuring that he remains'.⁶⁷ In other words, modernity's universal subject was replaced by postmodernity's fragmented subject, the pieces of whom continue to 'live on' in places like the archive.⁶⁸ Taylor explains this in relation to performance practices and repertoire via Joseph Roach who writes in *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), of 'surrogation', that is 'a model for cultural continuity'. An example Taylor and Roach use is the proverb: 'The King is dead, long live the King'.⁶⁹ This phrase can be taken to mean the ways in which figures such as the King, the father, the patriarchy, can be supplanted within culture and illustrates that even in absence or loss, the King might still be present in other ways. A reminder that I speak in gendered terms 'he', 'father', etc., as knowledge – the modernist universal subject and the postmodern discourses on the subject – have historically been defined within the confines of white patriarchal society. So to say 'he' lives on, is to say that culture and performance are ways in which we can continue to *transmit* patriarchal world orders or ways of knowing. Surrogation can historically explain the processes in which indigenous practices are replaced by Western Christian practice that emulates indigenous worship – think here of Saints Days taking the place of traditional Pagan or indigenous religious festivals. Roach's surrogation concerns transmission 'through forgetting and erasure'; whereas Taylor argues for survival of embodied knowledges through forms of 'multiplication and simultaneity rather than surrogation and absenting'.⁷⁰ Put another way, to deny the Daddy wholesale, is to oversimplify a relationship to the past that somehow might elide the more systemic effects of patriarchal knowledge, culture and power. Taylor's

⁶⁷ Schneider, 'Performance Remains', 105.

⁶⁸ This is a rather complex formulation that understands things like the archive following colonial, imperial, and patriarchal structures of knowledge/power, that even as they change over-time in content are still literally and figuratively shaped by a means of formulating knowing and information indebted to these dominant forces. Schneider is arguing that our dependence on material remains testifies to the fact that figures like the author lives on in albeit fragmentary forms that nonetheless still relate back to the problematic and universalist principles of modernity.

⁶⁹ Taylor, 'Chapter 1 – Acts of Transfer', 46.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

formulation is more akin to a ‘smuggling’ of alternate epistemologies on the back of dominant cultural practices – think here of the inverse of the previous example, that indigenous cultures continued to celebrate their own festivals on Saints Days, in a hybridised set of practices ‘hidden’ from dominant colonial narratives. So rather desire to destroy or forget the father, that Schneider reminds us ultimately ensures his survival in the archive, what might an embrace of such a figure mean?

We might imagine that a man being fucked is generously offering the sight of his own penis as a gift or even a replacement for what is temporarily being “lost” inside him – an offering not made in order to calm his partner’s fears of castration but rather as the gratuitous and therefore even lovelier protectiveness that all human beings need when they take the risk of merging with another, of risking their own boundaries for the sake of self-dissolving extensions.⁷¹

I propose that what Staff is looking for in the archive is a set of relations. By a set of relations I mean the ways in which sexual minorities learn from one another and build communities beyond what the archive represents, or indeed performs. Relations, as opposed to identities, affords a more generous way of accounting for Tom of Finland, and why an organisation like the Foundation is so important to the LGBTQ* community now.⁷² Importantly, accounting for relations can interfere with the logics of the archive as it desires to categorise and label individuals and how they relate – e.g. this is a homosexual and this is a homosexual act. Staff seeks out these past relations through performance and specifically adopting BDSM as a means to ‘work through’ the knowledge/power of this particular archive. BDSM is useful as it is particular to the sexual subcultures related to Tom of Finland, but also as a reflection on broader societal power dynamics – specifically masculinity and patriarchy – and how to enact alternatives. The above quote from Leo Bersani in *Homos* (1996) is one such postulation of the radical potentials of gay (male) sex and love. Bersani, like radical homosexual scholars before him, is reading a Freudian Oedipal regime disrupted, and a new way of being as a result of the ‘self-shattering’ practice of anal sex. I should note that this is not strictly about the penis or Phallus, but sexual practices which are ‘non-

⁷¹ Leo Bersani, ‘The Gay Daddy’, in *Homos*, 3. printing, 1. Harvard Univ. Press paperback ed (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 112.

⁷² This relational way of relating to a past, a history, or an archive, might also be extended to the field of contemporary art, in which engagement and public programmes use things like performances, in-conversations, or workshops are used to ‘activate’ an exhibition, or explicate them in social relation.

normative' within Freudian or Lacanian psychosexual behaviour.⁷³ Bersani specifically considers the S/M (somasochism) as a locus through which to understand how one might transcend and move beyond dominant power dynamics established by the Oedipal regime.

S/M is central to the leathermen communities of the Tom of Finland Foundation. In TOM House there is a dungeon alongside fascist and Nazi military garb that fill the rooms (and illustrations). In *The Foundation*, there are continual references to S/M. The film, installation and accompanying exhibition publication include illustrations of chains drawn by Staff. In the film, both performers wear leather harnesses, typically worn in BDSM sex. Staff's use of this motif reflects the fact, as Bersani puts it: 'S/M raises, however crudely, important questions about the relation between pleasure and the exercise of power'.⁷⁴ S/M experiments with novel bodily pleasures that can be, 'radical, even dangerous'. S/M can at once be subversive and complicit in dominant power dynamics. Tom of Finland's reclamation of masculinity is subversive as it 'puts into question assumptions about power inhering "naturally" in one sex or one race'. Yet it also, as Bersani points out, 'actually expands the notion of machismo'.⁷⁵ S/M is dangerous because it is 'a laboratory testing of the erotic potential in the most oppressive social structures', yet 'fortifies' them by suggesting 'an appeal independent of political ideologies'. This is most explicit in the appropriation and eroticisation of fascist imagery in Tom of Finland's work. One must of course be incredibly careful and nuanced when reproaching a sexual minority's use of such imagery. Lahti argues that Tom's artworks are 'a gesture of resistance and subversion' of this fascist imagery but equally cannot fully be re-signified within a gay context. Further, in a critique one might also levy of *The Foundation*, which does not directly address the fascist imagery (all the while depicting it), Lahti critiques the willingness 'to erase that history [of fascism and the Nazis] in favour of erotization of power and authority'.⁷⁶ This echoes Benjamin's similar argument in "On the Concept of History" I discussed earlier which warns against a revolutionary project that does not account for the histories and violence

⁷³ For example, Guy Hocquenghem writing in the seminal *Homosexual Desire*, argues: '[a]ll homosexuality is concerned with anal eroticism, whatever the differentiations and perverse reterritorializations to which the Oedipus complex subsequently subjects it'. Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, trans. Daniella Dangoor (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Guy Hocquenghem, *The Screwball Asses*, Semiotext(e) Intervention Series 3 (Los Angeles, CA : Cambridge, Mass: Semiotext(e) ; Distributed by the MIT Press, 2010).

⁷⁴ Bersani, 'The Gay Daddy', 83.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁷⁶ Lahti, 'Dressing Up in Power', 201—202.

of fascism. Bersani suggests S/M ‘does not reproduce the intentionality supporting the structures in society’, i.e. the racist political ideologies of Nazism, but *is* complicit in their perpetuation, even as a kind of erotics.⁷⁷ This tension is not the focus of this chapter, but it is of note, as it is *via* S/M and its problem of fascism that Bersani articulates a ‘self-shattering [...] anti-identarian identity’.⁷⁸ As J. Halberstam has noted, the self-dissolution Bersani advocates for in gay male relations is not necessarily in favour of some new queer radical political agenda, it is something *post* this, it is *post*structuralist.⁷⁹ Halberstam locates Bersani’s discourse as associated with ‘queer negativity’, which avoids aligning all that is queer with ‘good’, and describes it as contrarian.⁸⁰ Halberstam, nor I, are adverse to such a position which S/M reveals, that desires can cut across and even willingly embrace fascism and racism, but it is the means to the end where I differ. There is a tension in *The Foundation*, and in Staff’s performance with Daddy. It is a tension between the potential violence directed towards a trans femme body and the radical potentials of ‘self-shattering’ sexual practice, like BDSM. Staff is looking for, in the encounter with Daddy, a new set of affinities, a way of being (through queer relations/sex) that exceeds the discreet white cisgender gay identity.⁸¹

One of the concessions one makes to the other is not to present homosexuality as anything but a kind of immediate pleasure, of two young men meeting in the street, seducing each other with a look, grabbing each other’s asses and getting each other off in a quarter of an hour. There you have a kind of neat image of

⁷⁷ Bersani continues: ‘S/M’s celebration of master and slave renders it (on the whole involuntarily) complicit with the perpetuation of regimes that promote the erotic opportunities of domination and enslavement even though, in a final twist, it should also be noted that S/M’s perhaps useful demonstration of the need for such opportunities would be weakened were it to distance itself from the demonstration. By singing the praises of enslavement and torture, S/M self-sacrificially warns us of their profound appeal—self-sacrificially because S/M itself might not survive an antifascist rethinking of power structures’. In: Bersani, ‘The Gay Daddy’, 89—90.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁷⁹ Halberstam describes Bersani’s project as one of a ‘refusal of a gay/lesbian “we” and acknowledges that the fissures between some forms of gay political commitments and other queer radical stances might lead one position into active opposition to the other’. In: J. Halberstam, ‘Queer Betrayals’, in *Leo Bersani: Queer Theory and Beyond*, ed. Mikko Tuhkanen (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2014), 72.

⁸⁰ Halberstam suggests anarchism is a more productive mode of queer negativity, as it ‘has a plan’, whereas the contrarian cast of Bersani and his contemporaries such as Lee Edleman, turns away from ‘the theatre of the good’, which fails to address how such a move constitutes an ‘Other’, and fails to account for ‘the material reality of how otherness is endlessly represented in the U.S. imaginary – and not in the form of the gay man who gives up mastery but in the form of the racial alien’. *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸¹ Race is not addressed in *The Foundation*, and what I propose here still does not fully resolve a tension between the potentials of a radically queer way of being, the queer utopia Muñoz proposes, versus an acknowledgement of the violences of fascism.

homosexuality without any possibility of generating unease, and for two reasons: it responds to a reassuring canon of beauty, and it cancels everything that can be troubling in affection, tenderness, friendship, fidelity, camaraderie, and companionship, things that our rather sanitized society can't allow a place for without fearing the formation of new alliances and the tying together of unforeseen lines of force.⁸²

I use this extended quote from Foucault's now seminal interview, "Friendship as a Way of Life", (1981, translated 1997) to propose what it *means* for Staff to love Daddy. Although Bersani diverges somewhat, he too was interested in Foucault's proposition that the truly 'terrifying' reality of queer relations is the fact that they are instructive of different ways of living and illegible to forces of power.⁸³ For Foucault, and indeed Bersani, that fine line between the homosocial and homosexual affords an unknown or as Foucault calls it 'unforeseen lines of force'. Sex, or buggery, is an act which has a history, a law, and a psychiatric diagnosis (the 'neurotic homosexuality'), whereas the relations that circulate around it 'dissolve' categorisation and homophobic analysis. The revolutionary act, particularly at the height of gay liberation in the 1970s and 1980s, was to be fucked or indulge other 'perverse' sexual practices that required a re-negotiation of how two or more individuals relate. Foucault elsewhere in the interview gives the example of the friendships women share as akin to those of gay men, traversing limiting concepts of 'homosexuality' and building 'dense, bright, marvellous loves and affections or very dark and sad loves'.⁸⁴ The Tom of Finland Foundation is one such place where these queer relations have been forged. Loving Daddy is a 'tying together' of less unforeseen, but more uneasy lines of force between gay elders, their archives and a trans individual.

⁸² Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life', 136.

⁸³ More recent scholarship by the likes of J. Halberstam, has begun to articulate the 'unruliness' of desire in a project that explores 'wildness' as a description of desires that are unarticulated within hegemonic discourses – grounded in a white, racist, coloniser base. Halberstam's project, building on José Esteban Muñoz work on 'wildness', is a means of disentangling or further complicating the presumed radicality of gay or queer desires. In the opening chapter of *Wild Things* (2020), Halberstam states: 'wildness is the name for the force unleashed by colonial brutality and the domain of life that exceeds a colonial will to power and a form of desire that subjugates and submits in the same gesture'. Wildness is a means of addressing a vacuum of post-colonial thought within canonical Western-orientated queer theory. As Halberstam and Tavia Nyong'o describe in an introduction to a special issue of *The South Atlantic Quarterly* (2018), 'The rewinding of theory proceeds from an understanding that first encounters with wildness are intimate and bewilder all sovereign expectations of autonomous selfhood. To be wild in this sense is to be beside one-self, to be internally incoherent, to be driven by forces seen and unseen, to hear in voices, and to speak in tongues'. See: J. Halberstam, *Wild Things* (Duke University Press, 2020), <https://www.dukeupress.edu/wild-things>; J. Halberstam and Tavia Nyong'o, 'Introduction', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 117, no. 3 (July 2018): 453–64.

⁸⁴ Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life', 138.

The performer in leather harness, turns for inspection by the viewer. Shows his hands. Close-up from mid torso. Staff, curled hair, lush lashes, wears a leather harness. Pulsing back and forth between older and younger. Masc and femme. 'Don't worry, you'll grow into it, being a man', says the performer. Cut back to Staff who looks directly to camera.

Loving Daddy proposes an intergenerational learning that embraces the problems of power. In the final scene, the camera takes on the point-of-view of both Staff and Daddy, who stares directly to camera, at one another, and to the viewer in the gallery. The face-off brings to the fore the uneasy gendered distinctions and the preference of a masculine aesthetic and expression in Tom's men. Staff does not fit this mould, indeed the artist describes himself as being 'on the borders', identifying as non-binary. Reflecting on the work as a whole, Staff has said it is 'about my own gender dysphoria: my identity meltdown'.⁸⁵ There is a tension in this scene, Staff is at a clear unease under the scrutinising gaze of their gay male companion. But again, in this tension, as Spencer says of the whole performance, there is a 'wilfulness', one which I have been arguing is a will *towards* Daddy, a desire. The scene is therefore both, like Bersani's musings on S/M, a desire marked by pain and pleasure that *may* enact novel and unknown ways of relating. Central to this chapter, and indeed thesis, are novel means of *relating* to the archive and all it represents in power. I argue the performance in *The Foundation* directly confronts the archive's patrilinear tendencies, its hierarchical principles of knowledge transmission, and reverence to object. To lovingly and *queerly* embrace Daddy, both symbolically and literally, as subject of queer desire and patrilineages, requires a rethinking of how knowledge is exchanged. If knowledge is power (in a rather clichéd formulation of Foucault), and power is (in-part) 'the multiplicity of force relations', then rethinking knowledge, is rethinking power, and how we relate.⁸⁶ To love

⁸⁵ Staff and Guggenheim, 'Interview: P. Staff and Katie Guggenheim', 120.

⁸⁶ See the oft quoted but nonetheless evocative image of power sketched by Foucault which I quote in its entirety to give it the precision of meaning incredibly important to this discussion: 'By power, I do not mean "Power" as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body. The analysis, made in terms of power, must not assume that the sovereignty of the state, the form of the law,

Daddy sexually is to break the rules of the Oedipal regime; to learn from Daddy (sexually), body-to-body, is to break the rules of the archive. A *queer* relationship with Daddy is what subverts or shorts logics of how we relate and how we come to know (ourselves and others). The dual movement that emerges from the performance with Daddy – towards the archival and then away – is indicative of given ways of knowing, relating and ultimately building community/identity.

4.4 Conclusion

Shades of red backlight. Archival footage of a leather men convention, white men stand in harness and leather gear. The camera cruising the crowd, focusing in on men in head braces, a handsome man in denim jacket, head shaven. A man unzips his fly, revealing the white buldge of the crotch. The tape flickers and deteriorates. Campy and effeminate men in leather smile and talk to camera. The audio peaks and strains.

or the over-all unity of a domination are given at the outset; rather, these are only the terminal forms power takes. It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; “; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. Power’s condition of possibility, or in any case the viewpoint which permits one to understand its exercise, even in its more “peripheral” effects, and which also makes it possible to use its mechanisms as a grid of intelligibility of the social order, must not be sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary and descendent forms would emanate; it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable. The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, “but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And “Power”, insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement. One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society’. In: Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1.*

This chapter has explored how the artist P. Staff employs film-performance to mediate an encounter with an historical archive in *The Foundation*. I have demonstrated that the film, which is also a document, is what Taylor and Spencer refer to as the ‘afterlife’ of performance. Following Amelia Jones writing on feminist body and performance art, reflexive documents help us understand the layered and multiple ways in which an encounter is mediated – whether that be with another person or archival material. The archive, document and performance are intertwined, each are mediations of the past and transmit knowledge. How they do this is different: the archive and document are more conducive to ‘formal’ knowledges; whereas performance accounts for embodied knowledges and practice. Performance is the means of bridging archival and embodied knowledge, represented in the film as *the house as archive* and *performing with Daddy*.

In the first section, “The house as archive”, I began by providing an overview of The Tom of Finland Foundation, and Staff’s artwork *The Foundation*. The intention was to underscore the centrality of the house in both. The house was considered as performative of the functions of the archive. The house as archive unpacked the confluences between material archives, or a preoccupation with the physicality of archives, as one of the defining principles in how representations of Tom of Finland take shape. I used Schneider’s notion that archives and documents themselves can be performative and set the stage on which Staff’s interaction took place. The materiality of the archive is called into question when one understands that this material more than simply represents it is in fact *performing* the archival function of securing meaning. In the case of Tom of Finland, one can argue that the archive quite explicitly establishes a certain gay homoerotic aesthetic and sexual practice as its genus. Staff’s archival intervention is not a denial of this, but it does trouble the production and maintenance of this identity.

“Performing with Daddy” explicated the ways in which Staff’s archival intervention is in search of a set of relations. It is relations, over identity, that form the basis of an exchange of knowledge. Here I used Paul Connerton’s idea of ‘acts of transfer’ as it describes how knowledge can be exchanged in bodily practices. In the film these are staged as a series of performances including building, dancing, touching, and sorting archival papers. Staff and Daddy start by building the archive which establishes the house and archive as a site of performance. Staff and Daddy dance together, Daddy handles Staff, and they both handle the archive. I say ‘handle’ to equate the body with archival material, they are both malleable, and both subject to manipulation and as Staff

describes it ‘impression’. One affects the other and vice versa, echoing Taylor’s suggestion that the archive and the repertoire share in common the transmission of information. I delve further into Staff’s performance with Daddy as it can be regarded as *loving* Daddy, which articulates the complex and fraught negotiation the trans artist had when approaching the hypermasculine archive of Tom of Finland. Loving Daddy is a metaphor which describes Staff’s relationship to the lines of force within a gay archive. I explored the role of Daddy in BDSM, and as a key figure in the patriarchal and patricidal logics of the archive. Staff’s love and embrace of Daddy is a wilful desire towards him that may also be Daddy’s undoing. This echoes ideas from Bersani and Foucault who suggest queer sex and relations can lead to an unravelling of psychosexual profiles (the self-shattering act of queer sex) and structures of relations (the alternative friendships between queers). I ultimately argue here for an archive – *performing with Daddy* – as it accounts for embodied knowledges and instructs in alternative ways of relating. From such a conception of the archive, *The Foundation* offers a means by which we can critically and self-reflexively hold on to archives like Tom of Finland. *The Foundation* is, to paraphrase Boaden, an agonistic plea for the preservation of a space which makes ‘intergenerational conversation possible’.⁸⁷ Indeed, as I discussed in the overview of activity which takes place at the house, alongside Staff, it is a new generation of Latinx and queer artists of colour who continue to engage these pasts and thus promote the importance of Tom of Finland to a broad intersection of the LGBTQ* community.

By way of a conclusion I wish to offer some thoughts on the effect of Staff’s intervention on the archive itself. I propose we might conceive *The Foundation* as a *trans-ing* of the archive. *Trans-ing* the archive accounts for the specificities of trans epistemologies as distinct whilst sharing affinities to a *queering* of the archive. I argue that *The Foundation* inserts a disruptive trans genealogy *into* the archive of Tom of Finland. *Trans-ing* the archive is achieved through performance and its document – the film, installation and other materials produced. The *trans-ing* of the archive takes place through the mediations of a younger generation of gender nonconforming, queer and trans* cultural producers who engage with LGBTQ* archives and pasts. They perform a double movement in archival work that is at once historicising and historiographic.⁸⁸ I say *trans-ing* instead of *queer-ing* in this instance to propose the specificity of trans and

⁸⁷ Boaden, ‘Queer Paper History: P. Staff’s “The Foundation” and Isaac Julien’s “Looking for Langston”’, 183.

⁸⁸ For an excellent overview of this see: Beemyn, ‘A Presence in the Past’.

gender nonconforming archival engagements. Whilst trans discourse on the archive parallels the discourses of the archival turn in queer theory, it is less burdened by the limits of predominantly cis, white and Western archives from which queer theory is written and Halberstam critiques. *The Foundation* does not propose a particular transgender history in the Tom of Finland per say, but instead renders the whole concept of who or what might appear in archival traces as contingent on an ability to ‘read’ a coherent identity in the past. The trick of the archive, as Schneider asserts, is it performs a slight of hand in retroaction, that tells us that what we read from the past in objects, is actually a process of the present. Staff’s trans body in the archive, the performativity of gender as it encounters the ‘fixed’ structures of the house, the archive, and the father, impresses something. The performance *remains*, it leaves the impression that contemporary trans* subjects have genealogies and histories in gay archives. The word impression is important here as it might also be said to describe the often complex and conflicting politics of rendering a trans* identity in the archive. The film makes explicit via performance that the commonality is not necessarily one of identity – that is the antagonism in the film – but one of relations. The film suggests that, as Foucault suggests of gay friendship, the truly revolutionary politics are in the intergenerational ties and bonds queers establish that elide the hegemonies of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy administered, formed, and reproduced in and of the archive.

5. To all my homosexual schoolmasters: education and the archive in Conal McStravick's *Learning in a Public Medium* (2015—17)

5.1 Introduction

This final case study explores the role that education can play in the mediation of archives. To do this, I consider Conal McStravick's *Learning in a Public Medium* (2015—17), an artist research project on the life and legacy of gay artist Stuart Marshall (1949—93). The project is novel amongst my case studies as it comprises roughly 13 public and semi-public in-conversations, lectures, performances, screenings, and workshops, instead of a 'fixed' artwork, object, or installation. The referent archive here is also not 'fixed', or reducible to a specific place or collection of materials. For while there is a box file on Marshall at the British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection (BAFV), no extensive, publicly accessible, archive exists. McStravick's project also used the catalogue of Marshall's films which are held and made digitally available from the artist moving image organisation, LUX. McStravick drew on these materials, alongside extensive primary research, such as interviews with those who knew and worked with Marshall. I propose *Learning in a Public Medium* as a *process of archiving*. I suggest this to echo Stuart Hall's assertion that artistic engagement with archives, that is artists engaged in archiving provide '*an interruption in a settled field*'.¹ The project challenges (interrupts) pre-existing understandings of the life and works of Marshall and does so through a process of research that is collaborative and generative. In this chapter, I argue that queer education enacts a process of archiving that is reparative and relational. The title of the chapter, "To all my homosexual schoolmasters", is a play on and queering of Jacques Rancière's figure of 'the ignorant schoolmaster' and describes the teachers who lead students – in spaces of formal and informal education – to deviant and subversive 'homosexual' knowledges.² The intention is to signal both a connection to pre-existing discourses on Rancière within

¹ Hall, 'Constituting an Archive', 92 [Original emphasis].

² I use the word 'homosexual' as it is at once the historical institutional designation (in law, medicine, and popular culture) of what Foucault calls a 'character'; and as something reclaimed during the gay liberation of the 1970s and 1980s, as a set of desires which, as Guy Hocquenghem (discussed in the previous chapter) and others at the time argued, have a potentially revolutionary politic. As I use it here, the 'homosexual schoolmaster' may be politically queer, or indeed an ally, who shares an alternate and incendiary education that leads the student away from dominant knowledges (e.g. away from the cisgender white male art historical canon and atelier system of the art school).

contemporary art and propose a queer re-orientation of his emancipatory politics. The plural ‘schoolmasters’ points to the many and multiple people we learn from, and as I go on to discuss, the importance of friendship and relationships within queer cultures and knowledge exchange. Education frames an engagement with the queer past, and I propose it here as a radical emancipatory and queer practice which is exemplary of *queering archives and archiving queers*, the queer historiographic artistic approach to archives I have advanced in this thesis.

I begin with an extended introduction which contextualises *Learning in a Public Medium* within discourses on education that emerge from Black, feminist, Marxist, and queer thought. I explore queer critiques of dominant and institutional models of education proposed by J. Halberstam, Lee Edelman, Fred Moten, and Stefano Harney. I use Pierre Bourdieu and Rancière to understand the class-based exclusions and the emancipatory potential of alternate education models that may also apply to queer subjects. I also locate *Learning in a Public Medium* in relation to the discursive moment of the Educational Turn in contemporary art and use the productive critiques of the Turn by Irit Rogoff, Nora Sternfeld, Janna Graham, Valeria Graziona, and Susan Kelly, to re-orientate it towards a more materialist and minoritarian experience of the art world and education that is still rife with exclusions. This opening section introduces and situates the project within a discourse on education that carries through the chapter, and importantly draws on language commonly used in education to underscore that the project operates as much *within* given discourses and institutional arrangements and affiliations, as it seeks to enact forms of emancipatory politics that move us *beyond* given models of knowledge production.

The first section, “Reparative Queer Art Histories”, concisely outlines the central aim of *Learning in a Public Medium*, which is reparative. The project is part of a recent resurgence of interest in Marshall and increased inclusion of LGBTQ* histories in art. Marshall practiced from the late 1960s until his untimely death from AIDS-related illness in 1993 and is better known for his cultural activism during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s. The project foregrounds Marshall’s earlier studies and work in performance, sound, and video, and explores them in concert with later works. *Learning in a Public Medium* has been a driving force in this recent return to Marshall, its depth and scope unmatched, in particular the attention to earlier artworks within the artist’s oeuvre that might be re-considered as ‘queer’. In this section, I ask: what is *Learning in a Public Medium*? Who is Stuart Marshall? What is the significance of

Marshall's life and legacy? What is the contribution *Learning in a Public Medium* makes to the knowledge around Marshall?

The second section, and main body of the chapter, "Queer acts, ignorant schoolmasters, and retroactivist fandom", seeks to outline the learning methodology of *Learning in a Public Medium*. I argue that central to such a methodology are a series of three interconnected relational practices – the affects and feelings, erotics and pleasures, bonds and connections – between those involved in the project, and the artworks, objects, and ephemera, that connect to Marshall. The first part, "Queer acts", returns to where the thesis began with Muñoz's notion of 'queer acts' as performative engagements with the rigours of the academy and the ossifications of the archive. I use queer acts to describe the project's methods of working with the archive of Marshall – which as I have outlined is a loose constellation of artworks, materials, and ephemera not held in any one given location. I look to the example of citation and re-citation as acts which reparatively and performatively locate Marshall in relation to a feminist and queer art history and to a younger generation of queer artists deeply influenced by his work – including McStravick. The second part, "To all my homosexual schoolmasters", thinks through, to borrow from Bourdieu, the 'pedagogic relation' in *Learning in a Public Medium*. Here, I consider the role McStravick plays as 'teacher' in the project, and the influence of his many teachers, past and present. I propose a queering of Rancière's figure of the ignorant schoolmaster, as the *homosexual* schoolmaster, who enacts an emancipatory education that re-imagines the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student, and moves away from modes of learning that divide along arbitrary lines of those who know, and those who don't. Instead, the teachers in *Learning in a Public Medium* are many and multiple, knowing and unknowing, who guide and shape the enquiry into Marshall. Importantly I acknowledge the influence of gay and queer peers, friends, and teachers, such as Charlotte Prodger, and the late Ian White, and the ways in which these relationships are figured performatively throughout *Learning in a Public Medium* – from the citation of Prodger's artworks to a performance recalling McStravick's last conversation with White. Finally, "Fans of activist gay liberation" brings together Catherine Grant's novel methodology of the artist and researcher as 'fan', alongside Lucas Hilderbrand's notion of 'retroactivism'. Both articulate a politics to the ways we relate to the past, echoing the anti-rigour of Muñoz's ephemera, and embracing the amateur, messy, heartfelt and emotional pull of feminist and gay pasts. *Learning in a Public Medium* performs the rigours of an academic research project, and

has circulated within such institutional frames. It also seeks, through an embrace of a public medium of learning, a social and relational way of constituting an archive of Stuart Marshall. The archive in *Learning in a Public Medium*, is not ‘fixed’, but continually made and maintained in relation to those who engage, learn, and interpret the material now.

In the conclusion, I suggest that *Learning in a Public Medium* is a queer archive embodied, enacted, and performed. The project queers the life and legacy of Marshall, and the ways we learn from him. Thinking through the lens of education enables me to explore a queer body, object, or subject in relation to knowledge and power. The processual nature of the project is a process of learning about Marshall which unfolds over time across multiple different sites. *Learning in a Public Medium* as it continually returns to and re-cites Marshall in proximity to others, seeks to account for the artist’s life and legacy beyond the strictures of an academic discourse. The reparative aim of the project looks back and forth across Marshall’s body of artworks, emphasising the queerness of the early work and placing it in dialogue with his more explicit activist film and video. This back and forth extends into the present moment, to a pedagogical situation that understands the importance of queerness, as a structure of feeling, made in and of a set of relations. *Learning in a Public Medium* is unique as a project, as it relies more upon the stuff on which queer archives are built, the ephemeral, a moment in time, and an encounter between bodies, an encounter with Stuart.

5.1.1 A Queer Education: emancipatory education and contemporary art

Education, as it describes a ‘process of giving or receiving systematic instruction’, perhaps unsurprisingly, has an uneasy relationship with anything queer. Education alongside ‘learning’, which means the ‘acquisition of knowledge’, when applied in formal educational settings like the school, the college, and the university, is by design exclusionary.³ Pierre Bourdieu argues the main function of formal and institutional education is to inculcate societal norms, and therefore exclusion is one way in which such systems ‘deal’ with those who do not conform.⁴ Lee Edelman argues in a reading

³ Both meanings taken from the online Oxford English Dictionary, see: ‘education’, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/education>; and ‘learning’, *Lexico Dictionaries*, accessed 20 September 2021, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/learning>.

⁴ Bourdieu’s structuralist analysis of education divides it into a series of systematic concepts that describe a set of relations, such as pedagogical action (PA) and pedagogic work (PW). He explains the role of ‘exclusion’ in the following way: ‘In any given social formation, the PW through which the dominant PA is carried on always has a function of keeping order, i.e. reproducing the structure of the power relations

of Pedro Almodóvar's film *Bad Education* (2004), that queerness is excluded (ontologically) from education. That is, in the films chronicling the abuse of a trans woman at a Catholic boarding school, it depicts a (violent) negation of queerness.⁵ J. Halberstam in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) suggests that queer subjects learn in spaces and ways ulterior to formal and institutional education, arguing that 'failure', 'stupidity', and 'ignorance' be embraced as part of 'oppositional pedagogies'.⁶ Fred Moten and Stefano Harney in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Study* (2013) describe a way of working within the university that is 'criminal, matricidal, queer', and 'about [...] not finishing oneself, not passing, not completing'.⁷ They term this 'black study', as it describes the possibility of commonality and resistance made within the debt-laden university system of the United States, ultimately designed to negate and exclude.⁸ Queer, and queerness, in this context, describes a way of learning that does not conform to, or indeed is the antithesis of, the given (and received) ways of accumulating knowledge under capitalism. I align here with an understanding of education in its institutional guises following both Bourdieu and Louis Althusser. Bourdieu argues the school and university are reproductive of class-relations and Althusser describes the school as an ideological armature of the state, and by proxy, capitalism.⁹

Education, or perhaps more specifically how we educate and learn, following Jacques Rancière, can also be emancipatory. Poetically and rather fittingly to the focus of this chapter, Rancière 'dream[s] of a society of the emancipated that would be a society of artists. Such a society would repudiate the division between those who know and those who don't, between those who possess or don't possess intelligence'. An emancipatory

between the groups or classes, inasmuch as, by inculcation or exclusion. It tends to impose recognition of the legitimacy of the dominant culture on the members of the dominated groups or classes, and to make them internalize, to a variable extent, disciplines and censorships which best serve the material and symbolic interests of the dominant groups or classes when they take the form of self-discipline and self-censorship'. In: Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, 1990 ed, Theory, Culture & Society (London ; Newbury Park, Calif: Sage in association with Theory, Culture & Society, Dept. of Administrative and Social Studies, Teesside Polytechnic, 1990), 41.

⁵ Lee Edelman, 'Learning Nothing: *Bad Education*', *Differences* 28, no. 1 (May 2017): 124–73.

⁶ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 12.

⁷ Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013), 28.

⁸ Moten and Stefano describe in beautiful prose the act of study, like an act of resistance: 'Some still stay, committed to black study in the university's undercommon rooms. They study without an end, plan without a pause, rebel without a policy, conserve without a patrimony. They study in the university and the university forces them under, relegates them to the state of those without interests, without credit, without debt that bears interest, that earns credits. They never graduate. They just ain't ready. They're building something in there, something down there'. In: *Ibid.*, 67.

⁹ Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)'.

education which takes the artist as a model of pedagogical practice, embraces what Rancière describes as a ‘will’ to express, to know, to tell and to feel with others that is ‘outside of reason’.¹⁰ Returning and applying this to Harney and Stefano’s notion of ‘black study’, an emancipatory education may operate within, through and beyond the vestiges of formal and institutionalised education systems. A will that is ‘outside of reason’ – which is another way of saying outside of Enlightenment models of education and productive participation in capitalism – that Rancière finds in the figure of the artist, might also be described following Edelman, Halberstam, Moten and Harney, as Black, queer or Other. I have outlined here two kinds of education. The first, is formal and institutional, like the formal curriculum of the school, sanctioned by the state, and ultimately reproductive of class-relations and exclusions. As queer and critical race scholars alike have demonstrated, these are at once spaces of subjugation, whilst retaining the possibility to become emancipatory. The second kind of education is informal and expresses the desire and will of a subject, in this instance, individuals who identify as LGBTQ*. These two educations, or para-educations, are not mutually exclusive, they intersect and bring one another into relief.

Learning in a Public Medium exists within the varying and multiple uses of education in the field of contemporary art, it is at once framed by histories of formal and institutional art education, whilst embracing a turn towards alternate and radical education and pedagogies. I use the term pedagogy, as it has been the popular term for artistic and curatorial educational projects of the past decade or so, both in terms of theory of and practice in education. Here, I locate *Learning in a Public Medium* within broader discourses on education in contemporary art and explore why they neglect LGBTQ* perspectives. I then frame such an approach to education in contemporary art that is attentive to and learns from histories of activism and social justice movements out with the field. This correlates with the notion that LGBTQ* cultures and histories are not historically and contemporaneously confined to the field economically and discursively defined as ‘contemporary art’. As I go on to discuss, *Learning in a Public Medium* impresses and expands on the relatively straight discourses on education in the field, whilst participating in a general trend towards thinking more holistically about minoritarian art histories in and out of contemporary art. I focus on a timeframe concurrent to both McStravick’s own higher and ongoing education, and the discourses

¹⁰ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1991), 71.

around education in contemporary art from the mid-noughties onwards, commonly referred to as ‘the Educational Turn’.

Education in art invariably echoes other kinds of institutionalised models of learning, extending from art class in secondary school, through further education, and onto higher education. If you are endowed with the right degrees of economic and symbolic capital, you go onto either art school or university, and perhaps beyond into work within the arts, as an administrator, artist, or curator. Bourdieu describes such models of education as built on the exclusions of the working-class and the reproduction of class relations.¹¹ From art school onwards, there are varying ways in which students learn, from the traditional atelier of master and apprentices, to lectures, seminars and workshops. Art schools often profess lineages and genealogies within histories of experimental and radical art practice, from Michael Asher’s day long crits at CalArts to Black Mountain College.¹² The present-day art school however, including McStravick’s alma matter Glasgow School of Art, are far more conditioned by complex systems of assessment that ultimately quantify and qualify a student’s artistic outputs. Paul O’Neil and Mick Wilson who coined the term ‘the Educational Turn’, argue that radical roots aside, art schools nowadays tend to ‘adher[e] to a conservative master-apprentice model of expertise and transmission’.¹³ The Educational Turn in contemporary art was, in part, an embrace of alternative and radical models of education by artists and curators beyond the failings of the academy. Irit Rogoff’s essay “Turning” (2010) diagnosed the Turn as predicated on the increasing neoliberalisation of the European university system, in particular the seismic changes introduced by the Bologna Accord.¹⁴ The turn to education by artists, curators, galleries and museums, offered a counter to such a crisis

¹¹ Bourdieu argues ‘social mobility’ through education is a carefully calibrated exercise that ensures reproduction of the status quo. I include this lengthy quote to convey the fullness of Bourdieu’s thesis: ‘the School is better able than ever, at all events in the only way conceivable in a society wedded to democratic ideologies, to contribute to the reproduction of the established order, since it succeeds better than ever in concealing the function it performs. The mobility of individuals, far from being incompatible with reproduction of the structure of class relation, can help to conserve that structure, by guaranteeing social stability through the controlled selection of a limited number of individuals – modified in and for individual upgrading – and so giving credibility to the ideology of social mobility...’ In: Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, 167.

¹² For a humorous take on the studio critique format at CalArts, which reveals the power dynamics at play in such a space, see Redmond Entwistle’s film *Walk-Through* (2012).

¹³ Mick Wilson and Paul O’Neill, ‘Curatorial Counter-Rhetorics and the Educational Turn’, *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 9, no. 2 (December 2010): 186.

¹⁴ The Bologna Accord rationalised and standardised higher education degrees across the European Union. For Rogoff, ‘education provide[s] a way to counter the eternal lament of how bad things are – how bureaucratized, how homogenized, how understaffed and underfunded, how awful the demands of the Bologna Accord are with its homogenizing drives, how sad the loss of local traditions is, etc’. Rogoff, ‘Turning’, 6.

in education.¹⁵ Rogoff describes an education that is hopeful, and less burdened by institutional measurement and metrics, ‘[i]f education can release our energies from what needs to be opposed to what can be imagined, or at least perform some kind of negotiation of that, then perhaps we have an education that is more’.¹⁶ In other words, education can be a way out of its own crisis and imagine alternate ways of learning in and beyond institutional frames.

The hope of alternative education in art was somewhat tempered by the shift from one institutional context to another, from the art school to the gallery as alternate art school. As O’Neil and Wilson characterised it, the Educational Turn was a series of ‘discursive interventions and relays [that] have become central to contemporary art practice; they have become the main event’.¹⁷ Education shifted from that which might contextualise or explain the artwork or exhibition, to being the primary focus of artists, curators, and scholars, who used it to question and critique given ways of learning about art. Proponents of the Turn looked to ‘experimental avant-gardist educational initiatives outside the established system of academies’.¹⁸ Artists and curators working under the guises of the ‘Educational Turn’ preferred discursive formats, such as workshops and exercises. The alternative and radical pedagogies drew on the philosophy of Paolo Freire and Jacques Rancière; and the working practice of the likes of Black Mountain College. A notable example in recent years is *Documenta14* (2015—17), subtitled “Learning from Athens”, with the Kassel-based quinquennial temporarily relocating to southern Europe ‘in order to unlearn what we [the curatorial team but also a more general Westernised ‘we’] know’.¹⁹ Centring education and the pedagogical situation, the discourse and practices of the Educational Turn is orientated towards Jacques Rancière’s notion that learning can be an emancipatory act. The potentials of education as ‘the main of event’, particularly as a practice which is critically self-reflexive and ‘processual – involving a low-key transformative change’, were proposed by Rogoff as nothing short of changing the way the art world works.²⁰

¹⁵ This is not far from Bourdieu’s earlier sociological studies of education systems reproduction of class relation under capitalism. The difference, specifically taking the example of the UK, is New Labour often embraced ideas adapted from Bourdieu that sought to expand working-class access to culture and education under a new neoliberal model that favoured public-private partnerships. Whilst access to and university admissions have increased since the 1990s, so has the monetisation of the education system.

¹⁶ Rogoff, ‘Turning’, 8.

¹⁷ Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson, eds., ‘Introduction’, in *Curating and the Educational Turn* (London: Open Editions, 2010), 11–22.

¹⁸ Wilson and O’Neill, ‘Curatorial Counter-Rhetorics and the Educational Turn’.

¹⁹ Adam Szymczyk, ‘Interability and Otherness - Learning and Working from Athens’, in *The Documenta 14 Reader*, ed. Quinn Latimer (München London New York: Prestel Verlag, 2017), 32.

²⁰ Rogoff, ‘Turning’, 6.

The Educational Turn was observed, categorised, and named in the early 2010s, but it frames a continued interest on the part of curators and arts organisation to provide ongoing opportunities for learning outside formal education. McStravick, took part in *LUX Associate Artists Programme* (2010—11), a twelve month ‘post-academic development course’, that deeply influenced the artist’s approach to *Learning in a Public Medium* – which I will return to. Whilst AAP is now defunct, the programme is an example of a constellation of artist development programmes, including *The Associates Programme*, Open School East, London (2013)²¹; *Fellowship*, BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht (2017—present); and *Satellites* (previously *New Work Scotland Programme*), Collective, Edinburgh (2000—present). One such ongoing programme, *Syllabus* (2015—present) is summarised as a ‘collaboratively-produced alternative learning programme’ run by a group of art organisations across the UK, including Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge; Eastside Projects, Birmingham; Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts), London; S1 Artspace, Sheffield; and Spike Island, Bristol. These programmes differ slightly from the traditional residency or exhibition opportunity as they involve varying degrees of group development and learning and may combine exhibitions alongside public events such as in-conversations, workshops, and retreats. These alternate forms of learning are complemented by the burgeoning of events-based public programming, such as the ‘summer school’. The common thread between these programmes is they cater for arts world professionals and do little in the way of addressing some of the inherent issues of access to arts and culture.²² The ‘transformative change’ Rogoff described a decade ago, has failed to materialise, and indeed ‘transformative change’ feels more like managerial and marketing language to describe the streamlining of a business.²³

The institutional shift from the academy to arts organisation, does not necessarily resolve the issues of access and participation. Indeed, such alternate spaces of education

²¹ Open School East brands itself as an alternate art school, originally established by a group of artists, curators and art world professionals in East London, ‘in response to spiralling tuition fees and student debt, and a climate of increasing bureaucracy in arts education’. In: Open School East, *Open School East: Pilot Year, 2013—14* (London: Open School East, 2013), 2.

²² By this I mean these opportunities are often taken up by artists, curators, and professionals who have been formally trained or work in the contemporary art, or a similar creative discipline. There are of course degrees to which these courses are attempting to ‘widen access’ and participation, for example Collective has no formal educational requirements to apply and asks applicants to include an ‘access rider’, that will help an applicant apply and participate if selected.

²³ A quick Google of the phrase ‘transformational change’ brings up results relating to management structures and models, and for example, a page on the multinational corporation Unilever’s website entitled: ‘Transformational Change’, Unilever global company website, accessed 21 October 2020, <https://www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/transformational-change/>.

as I indicate above are predisposed to participation from artists, curators, and practitioners who have come through more traditional routes of education, specifically art school and university. I should be clear that I am not critical of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for those working in the arts but use this language – that is CPD as a common term used by HR and line management to describe employee ‘growth’ within a set of neoliberal labour relations – to tone down the emancipatory and radical potential of an education that caters for a select few. Alternate models of education that take place in the gallery, studio or retreat in the Cambridge countryside are ultimately still built on the same rotten core that Bourdieu diagnosed as reproductive of class-relations and exclusions. In an early critique of the Educational Turn’s supposed lofty ideals, Nora Sternfeld in “Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from its Political Traditions?” (2010), calls out such a tendency towards a hierarchy of education within contemporary art, privileging the discursive, the curatorial and the pedagogical and precluding the work of gallery education departments. The Educational Turn privileges the artist or curator who is well cited in the theory of education, but the practice of educating, that is the labour, is elsewhere ‘taking place for a long time beyond an intellectual public for art – in the barely visible shadows of what comes to our attention’.²⁴ Sternfeld describes this in terms of a gendered division of labour between curator and ‘mediators’ who are the education staff not part of the curatorial team and are often overwhelmingly women. In short, and perhaps a somewhat obvious point, education in art is just as susceptible to reproducing and stratifying access to culture and knowledge production. This is of central importance when the subject of such a turn to education in contemporary art is a minoritarian subject or group.

Learning in a Public Medium can be tracked within this broader history of alternate educational models in art but, importantly, it can also be understood as a reorientation of these models towards histories of LGBTQ* art, activism, and culture. ‘Reorientation’ is a term used by Janna Graham, Valeria Graziona, and Susan Kelly in the article “The Educational Turn in Art: Rewriting the Hidden Curriculum” (2016), to describe the potential of education to ‘de-centr[e] the field of art as the primary locus of public discourse and social innovation, in favour of a poly-vocal range of practices situated

²⁴ Nora Sternfeld, ‘Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from Its Political Traditions?’, *E-Flux* 14, no. March 2010 (2010): 8.

among the more complex histories of social justice movements'.²⁵ Graham et al, like Sternfeld before them, argue for a reorientation that is both 'symbolic and material', and addresses institutional issues, such as divisions of labour, as much as it might perform these thematically within public or exhibition programmes.²⁶ At the heart of critiques of the Educational Turn is the notion that it falls woefully short in both acknowledging and enacting histories of alternate and radical art educations rooted in Black, feminist, and queer practices and cultures. When we talk of CalArts Post-Studio Art programme, why, for example, do we not also discuss the student and faculty-led activism around AIDS in the late 1980s?²⁷ Or, what about the feminist pedagogical practice of Judy Chicago & Miriam Schapiro and the Feminist Arts Program? I ask these questions rhetorically, not to suggest these examples are not considered or cited within discrete queer and feminist art histories (they are), but to suggest their marginal position within dominant narratives and referents that have informed the discourse around the Educational Turn. Educational activity in the arts informed by social justice movements, such as feminism and gay liberation, may bridge the gap between an imaginary of education as emancipatory practice, and actual 'processual change', or simply change. I say this, as the past five or so years has seen a cultural and societal reckoning between what has been performed for decades under 'Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion' policy and legislation; and actual material change demanded by Black Lives Matters, #MeToo, and countless other grassroots social justice movements.²⁸

²⁵ Graham et al's critique is much more expansive and takes issue with understandings of democratic public space in our contemporary political moment. They argue, 'the public democratic spaces pre-supposed by the Educational Turn – its context within the conditions of contemporary public programming – no longer exists'. Graham, Graziano, and Kelly, 'The Educational Turn in Art', 34 and 31.

²⁶ Written at a moment when Graham was still Head of Public Programmes at Nottingham Contemporary, a great deal of weight is put on Public Programmes as opposed to say, the Education Department of an art gallery or museum, as being the place through which one would enact radical pedagogies – somewhat contra to Sternfeld's argument.

²⁷ Douglas Crimp describes the AIDS activism at CalArts, as follows: 'Due to momentum gathering among students and faculty at the California Institute of the Arts in the previous year, the school developed a program of AIDS-related activities for 1987—88. These included a course entitled "Media(ted) AIDS" given by Jan Zita Grover and open to the entire student body; an agreement by the faculty to spend one-tenth of the overall budget for visiting artists and lecturers on presentations about AIDS-related work; a commitment by the library to spend one-quarter of its video acquisition budget on tapes about AIDS; and the inclusion of AIDS information in the monthly student newsletter (this information was also regularly silkscreened onto the school's walls). The value of such a coordinated program is that students can both receive (but also generate) information that can help them personally *and* begin to reconsider their roles as artists working in a moment of social crisis'. Douglas Crimp, 'AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism', in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp and Leo Bersani, 1st MIT Press ed (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988), 14.

²⁸ Whilst not the argument I wish to make here, but certainly connected, Graham et al draw on scholar Shanon Jackson's concept of 'social work' in the art world, or what is also referred to as 'social reproduction', discussed earlier, and that such a reorientation of education in art should be 'more aware of the different histories of welfare and social policy, including those radical practices that in the past

Learning in a Public Medium can be located at the interstices of desires in contemporary art to enact models of emancipatory education and a decidedly queer turn to histories of LGBTQ* activism, education and organising. If we track the pedagogical experience of the project's two main protagonists, the artist and instigator of the project, McStravick, and the artist whose loose archive is the focus of the project, Marshall, we see a confluence in and out of the art world and alternate and radically queer approaches to education. As I go on to discuss, both McStravick and Marshall were art school educated, and circulate within what I would characterise as a 'critical avant-garde' associated with British moving image and experimental cinema of the past 50 years or so. Both are gay and queer, and draw on queer culture, history, and politics to inform their practices, and enact critiques of dominant 'straight' discourses in art and art history. I bring together *learning* from Black, feminist, and queer emancipatory practices alongside the popularised theories from the likes of Bourdieu, Freire, and Rancière, and the unfulfilled potential of the Educational Turn, to propose a queer pedagogical practice that operates within and beyond the field of contemporary art. This practice, as it inflects the life and radical pedagogies of Marshall, alongside other 'homosexual' schoolmasters, is emancipatory in the ways it enacts a mode of historiographic research that is at once reparative of Marshall's legacy (within an art historical canon) whilst actively critiquing and resisting the very systems through which such art histories (knowledges) are produced. *Learning in a Public Medium* is a bunch of queers getting together to learn about another queer, learning together and in common about the ways in which Marshall sought to work together and in common both as an activist and an artist.

5.2 Reparative Queer Art Histories: overview and aim of *Learning in a Public Medium*

In this section, first, I outline McStravick's project and its context; and second, I introduce the project's central aim, a reparative queer art history. *Learning in a Public Medium* seeks to align Marshall's contribution to the UK avant-garde sound and video art of the 1960s and 70s with his later gay activism in film and video of the 1980s and 1990s. As McStravick puts it, '*Learning in a Public Medium* seeks to affirm Marshall's importance in the emergence of UK sound and video and to clarify the foundation

exposed and politicized the continuity between reproductive care, education, culture and leisure'. In: Graham, Graziano, and Kelly, 'The Educational Turn in Art', 34.

which sound art provided to Marshall's later activity'.²⁹ McStravick argues that the avant-garde works of the 1970s are 'arguably the most queer' and are thus incredibly important to Marshall's work in the 1980s and 1990s.³⁰ *Learning in a Public Medium* rejects a 'straight' art history of Marshall, outlined by A.L. Rees who, in *A History of Experimental Film & Video* (1999), chronicles Marshall's practice as beginning 'in the milieu of video art and installation, but ultimately turned to more conventional social commentary, mainly about gay politics'.³¹ Rees' narrative creates a division between Marshall's avant-gardist works and gay cultural activism, and understates the complex interplay between both. *Learning in a Public Medium* explicates this complex interplay by re-visiting the artist's archive and earlier works and making new connections.

Learning in a Public Medium is 'active research'.³² The project developed from a protracted period of research beginning in 2010 on Marshall, culminating in the 13 public and semi-public events which are the focus of this chapter. LUX, whose predecessor London Video Arts was co-founded by Marshall in 1976, was a key supporter of *Learning in a Public Medium*. As mentioned, McStravick was a participant on the LUX *Associate Artists Programme* (2010—11) for which he proposed to explore gay and lesbian artist moving image in the collection. This granted him access to LUX's extensive collection of artist moving image, and specifically Marshall's work.³³ The research included primary source archival work in the collection of Marshall's video works held by LUX, and Marshall's papers and other ephemera held by the British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection (BAFV), Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London.³⁴ The project both in development and during the public events is

²⁹ Conal McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #1: Learning in a Public Medium', LUX, 2 December 2015, <https://lux.org.uk/writing/conal-mcstravick-1-learning-in-a-public-medium-stuart-marshalls-sound-works-part-1-hornsey-newport-wesleyan-newcastle-1968-1978>.

³⁰ McStravick specifically takes issue with A.L. Rees characterising of Marshall's practice in such a way. In: Conal McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #2: Learning in a Public Medium', LUX (LUX, 2 March 2016), <https://lux.org.uk/writing/conal-mcstravick-2-learning-public-medium>.

³¹ A. L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video: From the Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice*, 2nd ed ([Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire]: London: Palgrave Macmillan; British Film Institute, 2011).

³² McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #1'.

³³ Unfettered access to the LUX collection is by discretion, and usually granted in connection with a LUX-instigated curatorial and/or research project. LUX often partners on the commissioning, screening and exhibition of artist moving image which attracts preferential rates and costs associated with the viewing and distribution of works. Outside artists, curators, and researchers who wish to view the (digitised) collection, pay a nominal £20 fee for two weeks unlimited access, distribution costs are tiered dependant on the length of the work. See: 'LUX – How to Order: Viewing', LUX, accessed 11 July 2019, <https://lux.org.uk/collection/how-to-order>.

³⁴ These are the two main sources McStravick used to research Marshall. As I have noted, only the BAFV material is an archive, as the LUX collection contains artworks that are still in circulation and available for distribution for screenings and exhibitions.

deeply informed by ongoing dialogues with artists and friends, time spent on residences, and interviews with Marshall’s collaborators, friends, peers and teachers.

McStravick first encountered Marshall’s work in the mid-2000s in A. L. Rees’ book and through conversations with friend and fellow artist Charlotte Prodger.³⁵ McStravick’s background, his early interests in gay and lesbian film, and importantly time spent exploring the LUX collection, led to a focussed and sustained enquiry on Marshall. *Learning in a Public Medium* would develop from this initial research, with ongoing support from LUX and its sister organisation LUX Scotland. The public and semi-public events are hosted, funded, and supported by a variety of small contemporary art organisations and academic institutions. Over the two years or so of the project, McStravick worked with various collaborators who influenced the form and content of the public engagement. *Learning in a Public Medium* does not exist as a continuous programme of activity and was not conceived as a whole. Instead, it existed in fits and starts, with McStravick being reliant on collaborators and their various institutional affiliations. This case study clusters a series of activity identified using either of the following criteria: titled or subtitled *Learning in a Public Medium*; or promotional information referring to McStravick’s research on Marshall. Below is an overview of the 13 events which give a sense of the breadth of the public engagement, and which form the basis of this study.

Date	Title	Format/description	Collaborators	Venue
26 June 2015	<i>Learning in a Public Medium</i> , part of <i>Rhyme or Reason</i> Summer Summer School ³⁶	Workshop – close reading of Marshall, John Cage and Alison Knowles	Irene Revell and LUX Scotland	Collective, Edinburgh
5 July 2015	<i>Stuart Marshall, Over Our Dead Bodies</i> , part of <i>Crossing the Line</i>	Screening of Marshall’s <i>Over Our Dead Bodies</i> (1991), introduced by McStravick followed by discussion on AIDS activism in artist moving image	Laura Guy, Ed Webb-Ingall and LUX Scotland	Glasgow Film Theatre

³⁵ Conal McStravick, Interview at The Cock Tavern, London, 13 March 2019.

³⁶ *Rhyme or Reason* was led by LUX Scotland in collaboration with Collective, that ‘investigated the role of notation, improvisation and score across the visual arts and other disciplines including music, writing and geography’. See: Collective, ‘Rhyme or Reason’ (Edinburgh: Collective, 22 June 2015).

25 July 2015	<i>Archive Broadcast: David Toop in-Conversation with Conal McStravick and Irene Revell</i> , part of Electra Residency ³⁷	In-conversation between McStravick, Revell (Director of Electra), and David Toop, (a friend and contemporary of Marshall)	Irene Revell and David Toop	Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge
12—13 November 2015	<i>Artist Moving Image Festival 2015</i> ³⁸	Screenings and workshops focused on Marshall, leading from earlier event on 5 July	Laura Guy, Ed Webb-Ingall, and LUX Scotland	Tramway, Glasgow
2 November 2015	<i>Conal McStravick #1: Learning in a Public Medium</i> ³⁹	Blog post by McStravick chronicling his research to date, and Marshall's education and early practice	-	LUX website
2 March 2016	<i>Conal McStravick #2: Learning in a Public Medium</i> ⁴⁰	Blog post, more academic and theoretical analysis of Marshall's queerness in relation to avant-garde film and video practice	-	LUX website
3—4 June 2016	<i>TV Research Event: Stuart Marshall – Queer History and Public Activism</i> ⁴¹	Introduction and panel participation in 2 day symposium on Marshall	-	Birbeck, University of London
December 2016	<i>Meet Stuart Marshall - Art, Activism, and the AIDS Crisis :</i>	World AIDS Day lecture with accompanying screenings and	Ryan Conrad	Concordia University, Canada

³⁷ Irene Revell, Director of arts organisation Electra, was in-residence at Wysing Arts Centre, at this time, McStravick and Revell shared a common interest in histories of feminist and queer avant-garde sound, music and performance. See: Wysing Arts Centre, 'Electra Residency Event – Archive Broadcast: David Toop in-Conversation with Conal McStravick and Irene Revell', Wysing Arts Centre, 25 July 2015, http://www.wysingartscentre.org/archive/events/electra_residency_event/2015.

³⁸ 'Artists' Moving Image Festival 2015', LUX Scotland, 9 September 2015, <https://luxscotland.org.uk/writing/artists-moving-image-festival-2015>.

³⁹ McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #1'.

⁴⁰ McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #2'.

⁴¹ 'TV Research Event: Stuart Marshall Symposium at BIMi', LUX, accessed 14 February 2019, <https://lux.org.uk/event/tv-research-event-stuart-marshall>.

	<i>Learning in a Public Medium</i> ⁴²	workshops for students		
18 March 2017	<i>Artists' Film Club: Learning in a Public Medium: Library Live(s)</i> ⁴³	Screening, reading and performance billed as 'a live research event'	Ryan Conrad	ICA, London
13 May 2017	<i>Pedagogue: Past Presents and Forgotten Futures</i>	Workshop on Marshall, AIDS activism and the women's health movement	Fiona Anderson	Newcastle University
13 May 2017	<i>Learning in a public medium: 'If someone can stand up in front of an audience and say it, then they should say it...'</i> ⁴⁴	Performance developed from workshop with students earlier the same day	Fiona Anderson and Newcastle University Fine Art Students	The Northern Charter, Newcastle upon Tyne
Spring/Summer 2017	<i>Learning in a Public Medium</i>	Workshops with LGBT young people	Bruce Bayley, Chloe Cooper, Adam Saad and The Showroom	The Showroom; Mosaic LGBT Youth Centre; and Opening Doors, London
6 June 2017	<i>Studio is Sudden: Peter Todd, Conal McStravick</i> ⁴⁵	Performance of early work of Marshall	Giles Bailey, Peter Todd and CIRCA Projects	The Northern Charter, Newcastle upon Tyne

⁴² Conal McStravick, 'Meet Stuart Marshall - Art, Activism & the AIDS Crisis: Learning in a Public Medium' (Community Lecture Series on HIV/AIDS, Concordia University, 1 December 2016).

⁴³ 'Artists' Film Club: Learning in a Public Medium: Library Live(s)', ICA, 18 March 2017, <https://archive.ica.art/whats-on/artists-film-club-learning-public-medium-library-lives>.

⁴⁴ Conal McStravick, 'Pedagogue: Past Presents and Forgotten Futures, Newcastle University Fine Art Department, Friday 13th May 2016, 10-5pm', *Learning in a Public Medium*, accessed 29 July 2019, <https://learninginapublicmedium.tumblr.com/post/184419235296/pedagogue-past-presents-and-forgotten-futures>.

⁴⁵ McStravick discussed the workshop in an interview, the form and content of these workshops was in part driven by the group, with McStravick sharing the work of Marshall. Conal McStravick, Interview on Skype, interview by James Bell, video transcript, 15 April 2019. See also: 'The Showroom | Learning in a Public Medium', accessed 14 February 2019, <https://www.theshowroom.org/events/learning-in-a-public-medium>.



Figure 3. Poster for lecture entitled “Meet Stuart Marshall – Art, Activism & the AIDS Crisis: Learning in a Public Medium”, Concordia University, Canada, 1 December 2016.

5.2.1 Meet Stuart Marshall

It is important to introduce the artist and focus of *Learning in a Public Medium* because in many respects (as the title for the public lecture given by McStravick on World AIDS Day 2016, *Meet Stuart Marshall*, plainly states) the project is as much about introducing Marshall and his remarkable legacy, as it is a more complex reparative pedagogy. Born in Manchester in 1949, Marshall worked with music, sound, and video in a career that spanned just over two decades before his death from AIDS-related illness in 1993. Marshall was educated at Hornsey College of Art, London, during the time of the student occupations in 1968;⁴⁶ Newport College of Art, Wales, 1968—71; and undertook a one year Masters at Wesleyan

University in the United States, under the tutorage of Alvin Lucier.⁴⁷ Marshall taught in art schools and polytechnics across the UK, including Newcastle Polytechnic (now Northumbria University). As noted, he also founded London Video Arts (LVA) in 1976, which would become LUX. His earlier artworks addressed the reproductive capabilities of new technologies such as video and broadcast audio visual equipment, on which he would also publish. Feminist filmmaking practice and discourse informed his own artworks, which from the late 1970s onwards, increasingly addressed representations and mediations of homosexuality. From the 1980s, Marshall made films and video works about sexuality, AIDS, and their entanglements with a violent state and forces of power, varying from the made-for-broadcast *Bright Eyes* (1984) to gallery-

⁴⁶ Hornsey started because of a disagreement between students and the college over student union funds, which sparked a six-week sit-in that took over the college. See: Lisa Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008).

⁴⁷ It is noted by McStravick in interviews with Gavin Bryars and Alvin Lucier that Stuart Marshall had no formal training in music, but this was a recurrent interest in his practice. In: McStravick, ‘Conal McStravick #1’.

based installations like *Desire* (1989). In the 1990s until his death in 1993, Marshall made three more films, *Comrades in Arms* (1990), *Over Our Dead Bodies* (1991), and *Blue Boys* (1992) – each broadcast on Channel 4. With foundations in experimental avant-garde sound and music, by the end of his very short artistic career, Marshall had firmly established himself within the emergent genre of New Queer Cinema. Until his death in 1993, Marshall continued to write on and make work about histories of gay activism and their representations in mainstream media.⁴⁸ Whilst written about both in the fields of gay and lesbian film and known in the discrete circles of avant-garde moving image practice connected with LUX, his oeuvre until the past decade has been somewhat forgotten within mainstream contemporary art discourse.

Learning in a Public Medium took place during a general trend towards LGBTQ* cultures and histories in contemporary art. As outlined in the first chapter, this is in part concurrent with various anniversaries marking important moments in LGBTQ* history and gay liberation in the United Kingdom and United States. The project shares a tendency with recent artworks and exhibitions to be historiographic, addressing both the elision and erasure of certain artists and artworks from art history, and the structural reasons for these omissions. Within this general tendency towards reparative queer art histories, the past decade has also seen artists, curators, and researchers return specifically to Marshall's archive. This turn or perhaps return to Marshall over the past decade or so arguably begins in earnest with Ian White's article, "Stuart Marshall", published on the LUX Website in 2007. In this essay, White opens with the contemporary status of Marshall, explaining: '[i]t is ultimately a caustic irony and an ironic testament to his project that his videos, like his sound, installation and live works, have nonetheless shamefully remained outside of an authoritative international canon'.⁴⁹ The irony White refers to is Marshall's own assertion in his 1979 essay, "Video: Technology and Practice", that video art lacked (at the time) 'a legitimising history', and in 2007, it smacks of irony that the now well established histories of British experimental film would side-line Marshall. The trend in returning to Marshall's work continues in works such as Roger Hallas' 2009 book *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. McStravick was mentored by White on the LUX

⁴⁸ I discussed his last published paper "The Contemporary Political Use of Gay History: The Third Reich", in the first chapter, as it addresses the problems and pitfalls of history and minoritarian groups reclamation of symbols of oppressive pasts. See: Marshall, 'The Contemporary Political Use of Gay History: The Third Reich'.

⁴⁹ Ian White, 'Stuart Marshall', Text, 2007, http://www.luxonline.org.uk/artists/stuart_marshall/essay%281%29.html.

Associate Artists Programme. White encouraged McStravick's research into Marshall and is an important figure in both the reparative work around Marshall, and influence on McStravick's approach to *Learning in a Public Medium*.⁵⁰ It is also in 2010 that McStravick begins directly researching Marshall, and alongside White, he cites both Charlotte Prodger's work *A Forest for the Neighbours* (2010), and an exhibition curated by artist James Richards entitled *If Not Always Permanently, Memorably, Spike Island* (2013), as contemporaries referencing and exhibiting Marshall who influenced his own work.⁵¹ By 2015, *Learning in a Public Medium* begins and crosses over and collaborates with a buzz of activity around this time. A restored version of Marshall's video installation, *Journal of the Year of the Plague* (1984) is the centrepiece of *The Inoperative Community*, curated by Dan Kidner, Raven Roe, London (3 December 2015—14 February 2016).⁵² Involving McStravick but happening concurrently are special focuses on Marshall such as the two-day symposia *TV Research Event: Stuart Marshall – Queer History and Public Activism*, at Birbeck, University of the Arts, (3—4 June 2016). The reparative turn to Marshall crystallises discursively in a special issue of *Afterall* in 2016 which is dedicated to the artist with articles by Aimar Arriola, and the re-publishing of an essay by Alvin Lucier and also the aforementioned article by White.⁵³ Arguably, the reparative aim of *Learning in a Public Medium* shares much in common with this recent focus on Marshall.

What *Learning in a Public Medium* contributes to this turn to Marshall – aside from its novel pedagogical approach which I move on to – is a depth and scale to the research. Two blog posts published on the LUX website best encapsulate the scope of the project and articulate its reparative aim. It is important to emphasise that *Learning in a Public Medium*, and specifically the blog's penned by McStravick, provide one of the most complete works of biography of Marshall's early years as a student, foregrounding the artist's practice in avant-garde sound, performance, and video. The blogs also outline a methodology which I will expand on to include all the other activity, which 'reads' queerly the earlier avant-garde artworks, interpreting the abstract gestures as they may speak to Marshall's (at the time) closeted homosexuality. The first blog centres on the earlier moments of Marshall's practice, his education, and early works, and provides a

⁵⁰ McStravick, Interview at The Cock Tavern, London.

⁵¹ Both in the blog posts McStravick refers to Prodger and Richards multiple times, and in an interview with this researcher discussed the importance of his involvement in the making of *A Forest for the Neighbours*, a film featuring McStravick which I will return to in the next section.

⁵² Dan Kidner, 'The Inoperative Community', Raven Row, 3 December 2015, http://www.ravenrow.org/exhibition/the_inoperative_community/.

⁵³ Helena Vilalta, 'Foreword', *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 41 (1 March 2016): 2–3.

comprehensive and detailed account of the artist's education. The blog paints a picture of Marshall as an artist deeply influenced by his tutorage under Alvin Lucier, and committed to collaboration. In excerpts from transcribed interviews, subtle links are drawn with the student activism at Hornsey College of Art and Marshall's later gay political activism.⁵⁴ The style of writing, whilst it weaves a located and personal narrative and encounter with Marshall's archive from the perspective of McStravick, tends towards the formalism of academic writing. The second blog outlines a rejection of a linear and 'straight' narrative of Marshall which posits a simultaneity of the artist as 'coming out' in art and life – from closeted to out, from the abstraction of the avant-garde to the explicitness of his gay politics in the later made-for-broadcast films.⁵⁵ This is a rejection of a teleological narrative of the artist in favour of a more complex retelling of Marshall's past – as well as a more complex art-historical understanding of visual politics and the ways in which the political can be felt in abstract imagery. The ways in which a gay man, like Marshall, living in the 1970s experienced and navigated both life and the artworld, and subsequently how these subjects are posthumously understood within time and history, requires consideration through a different lens. The second blog does so through a theoretical and conceptual reparation of Marshall's earlier practice via queer theory. McStravick explains his reparative aim as it 'calls into question in/out categories and sets a trajectory within Marshall's work that challenges over-simplistic readings of the queer 'canon' that have tainted these works'.⁵⁶ The blog uses Jonathan D. Katz's article, "John Cage's Queer Silence; Or, How to Avoid Making Matters Worse" (1999), to reflect on how one might queerly read the work of Marshall. Katz's article ruminates on Cage's closeted homosexuality, and his use of silence as a resistant strategy in both life and art. The article re-centres Cage's sexuality, art historically regarded as 'tangential to his historical importance and achievements' and describes his embrace of silence as offering 'the prospect of resisting the state quo without opposing it'.⁵⁷ Whilst the context and time period within which Cage and Marshall made work was markedly differentiated by a pre- and post-Stonewall gay politics, Katz's article provides a framework within which one might re-read the work

⁵⁴ McStravick surmises in his interview with Marshall's fellow classmate at Hornsey, David Toop: 'I asked David how these events influenced him and how they might have shaped those involved. Further if he thought this set the pretext for Stuart's involvement in artist-run activity and activism. McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #1'.

⁵⁵ As discussed earlier, this centres on A.L. Rees' characterisation of Marshall's practice in such a way.

⁵⁶ McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #2'.

⁵⁷ Jonathan D. Katz, 'John Cage's Queer Silence; Or, How to Avoid Making Matters Worse', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, no. 2 (1999): 231–52.

of LGBTQ* avant-garde artists.⁵⁸ McStravick acknowledges the utility of Katz's queer art history of Cage by commenting that 'there is recourse to the queer potential of Marshall's works made before and after he came out, borne out in the return to Marshall's work in recent years'.⁵⁹ What McStravick refers to here, is 'a closeted narrative' that has been applied to Marshall, by the likes of A.L. Rees.⁶⁰ The blog challenges and questions how Marshall has been written about in art history by reading the artist's early works as queer, this is central to the project as historiographic.

Learning in a Public Medium's reparative aims are an explicit challenge to the implicit heteronormative bias and binaries that in the first instance fail to account for Marshall's earlier works as queer. It also recovers Marshall's gay activist works as they has been resigned to a particular historical moment of making during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s – the so-called 'gay cultural ghetto'.

5.3 Towards a learning methodology: queer acts, ignorant schoolmasters and retroactivist fandom

When you take on a commission for a television film, whether documentary or fiction, you're constantly aware of the fact that you're learning through that process. It reminds me of the situation when I was doing a lot of video installation work, and I could never get all the equipment together at any one moment in time to see what the piece was going to be like. I had this fantasy about what the piece was going to be like. When I finally got all the equipment together, it never was quite how I imagined. [...] I find that a terrific tension – to know that one's *learning in this fantastically public medium*.⁶¹

⁵⁸ For example, John Cage and his use of silence is one that confronts what Katz describes as the homophobic and macho post-war American Abstract Expressionism and extremely aggressive McCarthyite policies towards homosexuals in the 1950s. Cage as a closeted homosexual, and who subscribed to what can also be described as a homophile politics, characterised as assimilationist (although the Katz article seeks expressly to position Cage's position as resistant but not oppositional) differs from the 1980s and 1990s organising of the gay movement which Marshall was involved in, which is characterised as much more confrontation and direct. Ibid.

⁵⁹ McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #2'.

⁶⁰ McStravick characterises this narrative and references A. L. Rees, in the following extract from the post: '[a] chronology that emphasises Marshall's development through video to gay subject matter, or more broadly speaking through identity politics'. In: Ibid.

⁶¹ Martha Gever, Pratibha Parmar, and John Greyson, eds., "'Filling the Lack in Everyone Is Quite Hard Work, Really..." - A Roundtable Discussion with: Joy Chamberlain, Isaac Julien, Stuart Marshall, and Pratibha Parmar', in *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 56 [My emphasis].

In this section, I outline and analyse the learning methodology of *Learning in a Public Medium*. The learning methodology is most concisely conceived as a set of relations between the archive, Stuart Marshall, Conal McStravick, friends, former teachers, participants, and the politics from an earlier moment in feminist and gay liberation.⁶² I analyse this structure of relations by considering three distinct relational practices that can be observed in the project. The first, are the queer relations to the archive, enacted through ‘queer acts’ which describes the project’s methods. The second, is the pedagogic relation between teacher, pupil, and object of study, which entails the various roles in the project. The third, are the politics of relation, which addresses the turn to feminist and queer pasts. Relational practice is intrinsic to engagements with queer archives, in part because of the complex ways in which LGBTQ* subjects come to know themselves in relation to culture and others. I base such an understanding of relational practice on José Esteban Muñoz’s queerness as a structure of feeling. As I outlined in the first chapter, Muñoz contends that because queerness ‘has not been let to stand [...] it has often existed and circulated as a shared structure of feeling that encompasses same-sex desire and other minoritarian sexualities but also holds other dissident affective relationships to different aspects of the sex/gender system’.⁶³ Queerness here, articulates what exists and circulates between minoritarian sexualities, something that is not so easily accounted for in dominant systems of knowledge, like the archive, or the school. A structure of feeling accounts for the affective bonds and ties that connects minoritarian subjects to cultural artifacts. It is also this very same structure, which Muñoz calls ‘queerness’ and describes as ephemeral, that exceeds the bounds of objects and institutions, like the archive. I therefore contend relational practice as understood as methodology in *Learning in a Public Medium*, is the ‘process of relating’. Relational practice is at the heart of *Learning in a Public Medium*, which takes its cue and title directly from Marshall, who in an interview from the early 1990s describes making work as a process of learning in ‘a fantastically public medium’. Marshall is stating that making artworks and films is contingent and co-dependent on a whole host of collaborators and new technologies – from commissioners, to crew, and

⁶² To clarify, whilst I have suggested that Marshall does not have an archive, or an extensive archive, when I use the term here, I mean the documents and materials that relate to Marshall. A reminder that Diana Taylor describes the archive as the ‘written’ in terms of Western knowledges, therefore, the archive might even extend to things like an artwork which is a cultural product of a white Western artist.

⁶³ Muñoz, ‘Ephemera as Evidence’, 11.

crucially an audience. He is also acknowledging the sociality of learning and how we build collective understandings of things.⁶⁴

5.3.1 Queer acts as methods

Work that attempts to index the anecdotal, the performative, or what I am calling the ephemeral as proof is often undermined by the academy's officiating structures.⁶⁵

Learning in a Public Medium's methods – that is the ways in which the project enacts a reparative art history – are queer acts. Muñoz proposed the idea of 'queer acts' in artistic practice and scholarly research as a counter to an academy hung up on 'evidence' and 'proof'. Queer acts account for queer epistemologies within the academy and other fields. In the first chapter, "Archives matter", I argued that queer acts are performative, institutive, and historiographic; and bridge the archival and the nonarchival. *Learning in a Public Medium* is made through many queer acts when engaging with the archive of Marshall, and includes annotation, citation, discussion, performance, reading, and viewing. To be clear, I am not saying that a standard learning method such as reading is intrinsically queer. However, it can be, depending on what and who you are reading.⁶⁶ I use 'queer acts' to describe the methods of *Learning in a Public Medium* as it at once marks the importance of the life and legacy of Stuart Marshall whilst challenges the 'officiating structures' of art history and education in contemporary art. Queer acts, as I frame them within the context of an educational project, can be understood to be synonymous yet counter to what Bourdieu calls 'pedagogic action', 'that is, education in the broadest sense, encompassing more than the process of formal education'.⁶⁷ The pedagogic action, he explains, is 'the action of imposing and inculcating a legitimate culture'.⁶⁸ I use this formulation to locate

⁶⁴ Marshall is exclusively talking about film and television production, which by the turn of the 1990s is his main medium. His thinking around the influence of mass media as productive and influence on culture and society is influenced by the likes of cultural theorist Raymond Williams. See: Stuart Marshall, 'Video: From Art to Independence', *Screen* 26, no. 2 (1 March 1985): 66–72.

⁶⁵ Muñoz, 'Ephemera as Evidence', 7.

⁶⁶ Important to playfully note that a 'read' within Anglo-American queer cultures refers to a practice of critique, popularised in the past decade by RuPaul's Drag Race, where competing drag queens often take part in 'reading' challenges which involves them humourously pointing out flaws in the other queens. The practice, as it is associated with bitchiness and 'shade', is also, in the words of RuPaul 'fundamental', to the ways in which drag and queer culture expresses.

⁶⁷ Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, xv.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

Muñoz's notion of queer acts within a structuralist discourse on education.⁶⁹ This understands that the pedagogic action is 'symbolic violence' when enacted by the dominant culture and power. The queer act imposes and inculcates queer culture within 'legitimate culture', and in the case of *Learning in a Public Medium*, within art histories and contemporary art practice.

To give a better sense of a queer act, I will look to the project's use of citation as an example of *Learning in a Public Medium*'s approach to archival material. Citation describes the ways and contexts within which the project references Marshall. This can be in-text or during a workshop. *Learning in a Public Medium* cites Marshall queerly by citing his works in relation to queer and feminist artistic epistemologies. Further, the project's archival engagements can be conceived as re-citation, which Victoria Horne beautifully characterises in relation to feminist archival artworks, as a 'means to summon, or call, to set in motion', for a younger generation of artists to 'respond to, play with and extend the legacies of their feminist forebears'.⁷⁰ If citation is the act of referencing Marshall within queer-feminist genealogies thus placing him within a distinct art historical canon, then re-citation is the act of 'calling' him forth, to critically interrogate his relevance in the present, specifically if his work speaks to contemporary queer artistic and political practices. The re-citation takes place predominantly through performance but also includes the annotation exercises as they both respond to and reconfigure the archival material.

In the summer of 2015, McStravick co-delivered a workshop with Irene Revell (in absentia), as part of the summer school *Rhyme or Reason* on musical score in artistic practice, co-programmed by LUX Scotland and Collective, Edinburgh.⁷¹ The workshop included a screening of Marshall's artworks *Go through the motions* (1975) and *Pedagogue* (1988). *Pedagogue* is a short video that parodies the enacting of Section 28, made in collaboration with artist Neil Bartlett and students of Newcastle Polytechnic. Alongside these works, the 10 or so participants read Jonathan D. Katz article "John Cage's Queer Silence; Or, How to Avoid Making Matters Worse" (1999) and took part

⁶⁹ I believe Muñoz – who relies on William's cultural theory to develop his notion of 'queer acts' – and Bourdieu both share in common Marxist and structuralist approaches to theories of culture. Whilst Williams is perhaps not regarded as a contemporary of Bourdieu, they both shared a concern for the dominant ways in which relations are reproduced through the discourses and institutions of capitalism, be that mass media or the school system.

⁷⁰ Victoria Horne, 'Kate Davis: Re-Visioning Art History after Modernism and Postmodernism', *Feminist Review* 110, no. 1 (May 2015): 44.

⁷¹ Collective and LUX Scotland, 'Rhyme or Reason' (Edinburgh: Collective, 22 June 2015).

in a performance of Alison Knowles artwork #6 *Shoes Of Your Choice* (1963).⁷² The Katz article, as McStravick discusses in the blog post published in March 2016, provides a framework through which one can ‘read’ the queerness of an avant-garde artwork. The inclusion of Knowles’ work by Revell provided a gendered and feminist perspective of the avant-garde.⁷³ The workshop, as part of and in dialogue with the broader thematic summer school on ‘score’, interrogated score in artworks, and how this is manifest in queer and feminist artwork. This particular workshop epitomises the citational practice of *Learning in a Public Medium* for a number of reasons. First, the workshop uses two of Marshall’s artworks made some thirteen years apart – *Go through the motions* and *Pedagogue* – and presents them alongside a text about John Cage and artwork by Alison Knowles.⁷⁴ The placing of Marshall in dialogue with feminist and queer artistic and scholarly work on the avant-garde creates the possibility of connections being made between the material. This is ostensibly a queer act as it cites Marshall out with a ‘straight’ art historical narrative of 1970s experimental cinema or ghettoised gay and lesbian film of the 1980s and 1990s. The workshop explores alternate genealogies, lineages, and connections between historical moments of feminist and queer cultural production out with a formal art historical cannon. Throughout all the various activities which comprise *Learning in a Public Medium*, Marshall is often cited alongside feminist and queer artists and scholars. Feminist experimental film and artists’ moving image was an important influence on Marshall’s art practice and writing, as he discusses in the article “Video: Technology and Practice” (1979).⁷⁵ The workshop

⁷² #6 *Shoes Of Your Choice* (1963) is a performance work, part of Knowles’ ‘Event Score’, which instructs: ‘A member of the audience is invited to come forward to a microphone if one is available and describe a pair of shoes, the one he is wearing or another pair. He is encouraged to tell where he got them, the size, colour, why he likes them, etc’. In: Alison Knowles, ‘Event Score’, Alison Knowles, accessed 18 July 2019, <https://www.aknowles.com/eventscore.html>.

⁷³ Knowles was an artist associated with George Mancuinus’ Fluxus movement, which feminist scholars have noted for its inclusion (with restrictions) afforded to women artists making works that responded to affects on their bodies of patriarchal power dynamics. Kathy O’Dell discusses the feminist politics at play in the work of many women Fluxus artists, in ‘Fluxus Feminus’, *TDR* (1988-) 41, no. 1 (1997): 43.

⁷⁴ McStravick explains the selection of artworks for the workshop, as they create ‘a space that simultaneously evinces and exploits the problem “of saying one thing and meaning another”, that is, the problem of appearing as oneself, of performing oneself, of one’s self. In Conal McStravick, ‘Conal McStravick #2: Learning in a Public Medium’, LUX (LUX, 2 March 2016), <https://lux.org.uk/writing/conal-mcstravick-2-learning-public-medium>.

⁷⁵ In the article, Marshall discusses Tamara Krikorian’s *Vanitas* (1977), an early example of feminist moving image alongside filmmakers Lynda Benglis, Joan Jonas and Hermine Freed, who draw the viewer ‘into a bracketed structure of viewing which then collapses problematically with the introduction of facts of sexual difference’. The politics of specifically feminist filmmaking practices, leads Marshall to formulate what he calls the ‘critical avant-garde’, which he explicitly sees in Krikorian’s artwork, as it ‘takes up a critical position in relation to dominant televisual practice and seems to offer the greatest potential as a critical avant-garde’. The self-reflexive political practice of early feminist artist moving image can be seen in the artists’ own concern with the representation of homosexuality on broadcast television. Early examples can be seen in his works *A Question of 3 sets of Characteristics* (1979) and *Distinct* (1979), which similar to feminist strategies in artist moving image use psychoanalysis to consider

positions Marshall within a lineage of canonical avant-garde figures like Cage and Knowles, whilst Katz's article introduces a critical self-reflexiveness that riles against processes of historicisation which preclude minoritarian individuals and groups.

Citational practice is repeated and reconfigured throughout the project. I describe this as citation becoming re-citation, a performative instantiation of old and new, archive and interpreter. This is more explicit in the performance-based interventions in archival material relating to Marshall. In early 2017, McStravick undertook a day of teaching with Fine Art students at Newcastle University on the invitation of lecturer Fiona Anderson. The day comprised a closed-workshop called *Pedagogue: Past Presents and Forgotten Futures* and a 'public outcome', *Learning in a public medium: 'If someone can stand up in front of an audience and say it, then they should say it', Stuart Marshall – alternative medicine, ethics and the archive from the women's health movement and AIDS activism to the present*. Working closely with Anderson, the workshop critically interrogated Marshall's pedagogical approaches by bringing them into dialogue with 'more contemporary LGBTQIA and QTPOC practices'. The somewhat word-heavy outline of the activity goes on to explain 'this addresses the hierarchies and agencies of the pedagogical situation as much as it explores the intersection of feminist, LGBT+ and HIV/AIDS activism(s) to stage interdisciplinary strategies for producing and sharing knowledge as a critique of power'. The closed-workshop explored 'alternative medicine, ethics and the archive from the women's health movement and AIDS activism to the present', through collaborative exercises, such as annotation of Marshall's writing – including an annotation exercise of his essay "Video: From Art to Independence" (1985) described as 'an annotation workshop exercise (After Laura Guy)', named after a previous annotation exercise involving collaborator Laura Guy at the Artist Moving Image Festival in 2015.⁷⁶ During the workshop the group also watched *Pedagogue*, and considered the work of artists Kathy Acker, Audrey Lorde, Marlon T. Riggs, and Jo Spence.⁷⁷ In the evening, there was a screening, reading, and performance involving

identity and relations as mediated and reproduced through novel broadcast, film and video technologies. See: Stuart Marshall, 'Video: Technology and Practice', *Screen* 20, no. 1 (1 March 1979): 115–17.

⁷⁶ Conal McStravick, 'Pedagogue: Past Presents and Forgotten Futures, Newcastle University Fine Art Department, Friday 13th May 2016, 10–5pm', *Learning in a Public Medium Tumblr*, accessed 29 July 2019, <https://learninginapublicmedium.tumblr.com/post/184419235296/pedagogue-past-presents-and-forgotten-futures>.

⁷⁷ Northern Charter, "'If Someone Can Stand up in Front of an Audience and Say It, Then They Should Say It'...: Stuart Marshall- Alternative Medicine, Ethics and the Archive from the Women's Health Movement and AIDS Activism to the Present'., Northern Charter, 13 May 2017, <https://www.thenortherncharter.org/index.php/opportunities/?2017learninginapublic>.

Anderson and the students re-citing the learning from the day to a public audience at the contemporary art space The Northern Charter in Newcastle.

The workshop's aims were threefold. McStravick, Anderson, and the students reflect on how one might collaborate by paying close attention to Marshall's *Pedagogue*. The group then learn about queer and feminist art by reading and viewing texts and artworks by the likes of Acker, Marshall, and Spence, and through annotation of Marshall's text "Video: From Art to Independence". Finally, the group re-enact their learning from the day in the performance staged in the evening. The citation of Marshall in this example takes on a new dimension. During the workshop, McStravick, Anderson, and the students read, viewed, and discussed the material but also intervened in the material. They annotated Marshall's writing with their own notes, reflections, and thoughts. The public performance in the evening re-cites the queer-feminist citations learned during the workshop. The workshop and subsequent performance takes its cue from *Pedagogue*. Inspired by the original agitprop video response to the enacting of Section 28, the 2017 performance is a response to the students' encounter and learning from earlier moments of feminist and queer activism in art, HIV/AIDS activism, and the women's health movement. This performance is a critical self-reflection on the status of these histories in contemporary artistic practice. The annotation exercise and performance combine learning and the development of new ideas, including a new performance artwork.

The performance and performative interventions in the archive can be regarded as re-enactment. I refer specifically to Catherine Grant's concept of 're-enactment' as it describes artworks and artistic production as a 'process of embodying and analysing an event, text or idea'.⁷⁸ Grant outlines re-enactment as a feminist pedagogical practice.⁷⁹ Instead of re-presenting *Pedagogue* verbatim, the workshop and subsequent performance processes its political impetus, reconfigured to reflect the additional source materials and the input of the participants. Grant argues that re-enactment is a strategy to 'learn about history to inform our present'.⁸⁰ McStravick, Anderson, and the

⁷⁸ Catherine Grant, 'Learning and Playing: Re-Enacting Feminist Histories', in *Feminism and Art History Now: Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice*, ed. Victoria Horne and Lara Perry, (London New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 262.

⁷⁹ A reminder that 're-enactment' is a contested term, rejected by Sharon Hayes, and theorised predominantly within performance and theatre studies, as discussed in the chapter on P. Staff. I use it here as Grant does, as a performative strategy of learning.

⁸⁰ Grant uses Bertolt Brecht's 'learning-play' as a comparative model by which to understand contemporary artist's performative re-enactments of queer history. Grant describes Brecht's process of re-

students' performance blurs the boundaries between the source materials and their re-enactment of it. The Newcastle workshop did not re-enact the agitprop of *Pedagogue*, it did not start with the specific legislative changes that had a material effect on queer young people and teachers in the 1980s and 1990s. Instead, the re-enacting was one of the scene of learning from earlier in the day; a re-enacting of the students' encounter with a set of queer and feminist art historical references. The political expediencies differ as does the dual-focus the workshop appears to have: first, on the pedagogical situation – that is making 'known' the desired means of learning i.e. collaboration; and second, on a complex set of content. This workshop, as with the project as a whole, is more historiographic in its aim. The final action and performance, akin to Grant's 're-enactment' is what gives the activity its contemporaneity as a young group of artists make new work informed by old methods. This is an example of the extension of the citational possibilities of Marshall through the act of re-citation; a queer act which performatively 'calls forth' the queerness of Marshall and his approach to teaching.

5.3.2 To all my homosexual schoolmasters: the pedagogic relation

The central relation in *Learning in a Public Medium* is pedagogic, or more simply put the teaching relation.⁸¹ As I use it here, the pedagogic relation describes the relationship between teachers and students. In *Learning in a Public Medium*, I cast McStravick and his collaborators – both knowing and unknowing, past and present – as 'ignorant schoolmasters'. This way of teaching, taken from Rancière, is emancipatory, as it re-imagines who is the teacher and who is the student, and who 'leads' who to knowledge. Building on Rancière, I locate the teaching relation as routed in a queerness (a structure of feeling), namely the queerness of McStravick, Marshall, and the other LGBTQ* identifying collaborators. "To all my homosexual schoolmasters" is a queering of Rancière's ignorant schoolmaster, a making it many by acknowledging all the teachers who have influenced the project. J. Halberstam summarises Rancière's 'ignorant schoolmaster' as 'a teacher who realized that people must be led to learn rather than

reading, which can be taken literally, or understood in relation to the play, as an active process which involves audience participation and collective authoring. Similar strategies of learning and consciousness raising through performance is Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, which was intended as a pedagogical tool that enables forms of consciousness raising amongst the proletariat.

⁸¹ The pedagogic relation, as Bourdieu and Passeron articulate, is predicated on 'the power relations between the groups or classes making up a social formation', which is the 'precondition for the establishment of a relation of pedagogic communication'. The pedagogic relation is therefore one of communication and the context of where the teaching takes place, be that the school, or in this instance the gallery. In: Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, 6.

taught to follow'. Halberstam uses the 'notion of intellectual emancipation', to propose 'low theory', that are 'modes of transmission that revels in the detours, twists, and turns through knowing and confusion, and that seeks not to explain but to involve'.⁸² The emancipatory teacher, as figured queer by Halberstam, enables confusion and failure in the act of learning, indeed encourages it as a countenance to conventions in education that deem someone or something confused or incorrect. Queerness, as I might temporally tether it to homosexuality – understood as an aberration within nineteenth- and twentieth-century law and medicine that was incorrect and wrong (scientifically, morally, politically, etc.) – is that which exceeds explication. As Halberstam advances in *The Queer Art of Failure*, it is through 'failure' (not performing to the pre-conditioned standards of a normative institution or system) that alternate and queer ways of being are discounted, dejected, and rejected from the academy, and other stultifying regimes of knowledge production. "To all my homosexual schoolmasters" refers to all the teachers past and present that 'led' McStravick to the ways in which he 'teaches' in *Learning in a Public Medium*. I would include former tutors at Glasgow School of Art, Stephanie Smith and Clara Ursiti, who introduced him to a 'whole world of queer-feminist and feminist work'.⁸³ Beyond the academy, friends, lovers, even fleeting encounters with a stranger at a gay nightclub in Glasgow, might all count towards those who have taught McStravick in the way I advance here.⁸⁴ To outline such an expanded notion of the teacher in *Learning in a Public Medium*, I will first outline the role of the teacher in Rancière's emancipatory education, and then focus on those who appear in the project through acts of citation and re-citation discussed earlier.

There are many teachers in *Learning in a Public Medium*, and here I look at two examples in which McStravick cites individuals who have spurred on his enquiry into Marshall. The first being Ian White, a past mentor; and the second is Charlotte Prodger, a contemporary and friend. The project engaged a whole host of collaborators, in particular a younger generation of artists, curators, and researchers critically invested in histories of feminist and queer artist practice and activism, and include Ryan Conrad,

⁸² Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 13.

⁸³ Conal McStravick, Interview with James Bell, The Cock Tavern, London, 13 March 2019.

⁸⁴ In an interview for this research McStravick reflects on his time at Glasgow School of Art (1998—2005) as significantly lacking 'a queer critical environment'. He explains his queer education comprised extra-curricula activity like queer screening events, various artist-led collaborations, and socialising in Glasgow's well-known club scene. This echoes a queer education as one that historically took place on the peripheries and margins, for example in public parks, in the toilets of a lesbian bar, or at an HIV/AIDS support group in a community centre. Queer cultures and knowledges were and continue to be taught 'unofficially', circulating and existing in parallel to official spaces of education.

Laura Guy, Ed-Webb Ingall, Mason Leaver-Yapp, and Irene Revell. An oversimplistic reading of *Learning in a Public Medium* would cast McStravick as the teacher, and the various participants as students. Here I argue the pedagogic relation is one based on principles of collaboration and emancipation by a contemporaneous group of queers who draw on a previous generation of pedagogues. The connections made with this previous generation are not simply formal, instead the project traces a queer genealogy, akin to Elizabeth Freeman's concept of 'erotohistoriography', which 'indexes how queer relations complexly exceed the present'.⁸⁵ The pedagogic relation as I outline it here, 'exceeds' the bounds of the present moment of teaching. The pedagogic relation might most simply be described as a collective teaching of the past, of Marshall's life and legacy, by embodying it and the practices of other 'homosexual teachers' in the present. I also add, following Derrida who formulates a return to the archive as a working through of trauma, that we might also think the presence of Marshall and White, as a working through a loss and trauma. To make Marshall and White 'present' through a series of collaborative queer acts, the project mobilises past traumatic or so-called 'negative' experiences associated with queer life, as part of a queer world-making in the present.⁸⁶

In the act of teaching and learning there are two wills and two intelligences. We will call their coincidence stultification. In the experimental situation Jacotot created, the student was linked to a will, Jacotot's, and to an intelligence, the book's – the two entirely distinct. We will call the known and maintained difference of the two relations – the act of an intelligence obeying only itself even while the will obeys another will – *emancipation*.⁸⁷

Learning in a Public Medium, as it prefers collaboration as its mode of learning breaks with a simplistic binary of teacher and student. To understand the effects of such a 'rupture', I look to Rancière's figure of the ignorant schoolmaster in his story of Joseph Jacotot, who taught French literature to Flemish students in the nineteenth century at the University of Louvain. Neither spoke each other's language, so Jacotot provided the

⁸⁵ Freeman, 'Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography', 59.

⁸⁶ This connects with Freeman's erotohistoriography, alongside Ann Cvetkovich's 'archives of feelings' discussed earlier. Simply put, the queer archive as it is made of trauma, like the loss of Marshall to AIDS-related illness, informs and shapes the present – not 'representing' but to paraphrase Freeman, figuring the past in the present, as hybrid. This is a more embodied and performed way of remembering, it is deeply felt by queer subjects who trace their own genealogies and lineages in those lost, forgotten, or erased.

⁸⁷ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 13 [Original emphasis].

students with a French bilingual edition of the *Télémaque* because ‘the minimal link of a *thing in common* had to be established between himself and them’.⁸⁸ Without instruction, or explication, the students learned French using only the book. Explication ‘is the myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones’, and that which establishes the teacher as ‘the master’ whose role is ‘to transmit his knowledge to his students so as to bring them, by degrees, to his own levels of expertise’.⁸⁹ The schoolmaster discovers the need not to ‘explain’, but simply provide the student with the means to learn (the ‘thing in common’). Jacotot’s actions distinguish will from intelligence; the will of the teacher as distinct from the student; and autonomous ‘intelligences’ of the teacher, student and book. What Rancière explains happens in the example of Jacotot is a disassociation between ‘master’ and ‘savant’ (learned). In this disassociation, a pedagogical relation emerges that de-centres the role of the teacher, and centres the object of study, ‘a *thing in common*’. There are multiple ways I apply this to *Learning in a Public Medium*. First, the project rejects a wholly explicative act of teaching, instead prefers collaborative and collective acts of teaching and learning. Second, at the heart of the project is ‘a *thing in common*’, Marshall’s ‘archive’. It is however, most crucially, important to pay attention to the reimagined role of the teacher in such an emancipatory education.

Learning in a Public Medium does not negate the role of the teacher, and here I briefly consider the importance Rancière gives to the role of the teacher in an emancipatory education before looking at two examples. Reflecting on Rancière, Gert Biesta in “Don’t Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters: On the Role of the Teacher in Emancipatory Education” (2017), argues ‘that emancipatory education is not a matter of transfer of knowledge from a teacher who knows to a student who does not (yet) know, but nonetheless is a process in which teachers and their teaching are indispensable’.⁹⁰ A common reading of Rancière understands emancipatory education as *not* needing teachers, but Biesta argues Rancière’s argument is about the *act* of teaching ‘*not* that anyone can learn without a teacher’.⁹¹ The emancipatory teacher does not lack knowledge, but understands ‘*knowledge is not the “way” of emancipation*’.⁹² The teacher does not channel their knowledge through explanation, instead starts ‘from the

⁸⁸ Ibid., 2 [Original emphasis].

⁸⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁰ Gert Biesta, ‘Don’t Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters: On the Role of the Teacher in Emancipatory Education <sup/>’, *Policy Futures in Education* 15, no. 1 (January 2017): 53.

⁹¹ Biesta explains that the notion is anyone can learn, is a given, and is not point of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

⁹² Biesta, ‘Don’t Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters’, 66 [Original emphasis].

assumption of the equality of intelligence’, and is actively involved in the process of learning.⁹³ Biesta remarks that one role of the emancipatory teacher is to intervene ‘where students deny or refuse their possibility for being a subject’.⁹⁴ One might say in the context of *Learning in a Public Medium*, the project proposes the possibility of an explicitly *queer* artist subject who intervenes within the predominantly straight art historical and contemporary art discourses which would deny such a complex subject. The emancipatory teacher is one who tempers a desire to explicate and embraces an equity of knowledges, whilst not ‘fooled by the idea that the freedom to learn and, more specifically the freedom of interpretation and signification, is the way in which we inscribe ourselves in the political project of equality’.⁹⁵ I trace a similar movement in *Learning in a Public Medium*, whereby the project begins with degrees of solitary enquiry – McStravick researching in the collection of LUX and the archives at BVAF – and then takes this knowledge and shares it with willing participants and collaborators. The discursive and workshop-based formats enable a balance to be struck between the explicative (McStravick’s imparting knowledge about Marshall) and ‘the freedom to learn’, which as Biesta argues does not happen by osmosis, but through the facilitation and mediation of a teacher, or as McStravick’s collaborative working-style suggests, teachers plural. *Learning in a Public Medium* seeks to de-centre the privileged role of the teacher and the artist. In the field of contemporary art – as Bourdieu contends – the artist, and in particular the avant-garde artist, occupies a position of relative autonomy that gives their work a criticality and therefore value. The traditional role of the teacher, like that of the avant-garde artist, is one of a closer proximity to knowledge (power). To de-centre the role of the artist, is to understand knowledge, as Rancière argues, as distributed, not something to be acquired. Biesta notes this is distinct from the radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire.⁹⁶ I do not negate the importance of McStravick being an artist

⁹³ Ibid., 69.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 66.

⁹⁵ In saying this Biesta is riling against an over simplistic notion that ‘anyone can learn’, without thoughtful consideration given to the context, like the means to learn through access to materials, information, and certainly degrees of mediation and interpretation offered by teachers. It is worth emphasising, that no doubt even emancipatory teachers who believe in an equity of knowledge, will ‘explicate’. It is perhaps how this is framed, or how that forms part of student being supported in coming to their own subjectivity and emancipation.

⁹⁶ Biesta distinguishes Rancière’s role of the teacher in an emancipatory education by considering Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which he believes is based on a modern ‘logic’ of emancipation. Describing the main argument in the article, Biesta explains ‘this intervention is based on knowledge the emancipator claims to have about the objective condition of the one to be emancipated; knowledge which, before emancipation “arrives”, is hidden from the one to be emancipated. This means that the modern “logic” of emancipation starts from a distrust in the experiences of the one to be emancipated, suggesting we cannot really trust what we see or feel but need someone else to tell us what is really going on’. Biesta contends that whilst Freire’s radical pedagogy does away with the role of the teacher, it holds on to a knowledge (singular) that one has (the emancipator) and one does not (the student)

and a key driving force, indeed this gives the project its novelty and unique approach, but I argue that the projects express aim to learn in a ‘fantastically’ public medium, expresses a ‘will’ to enact an emancipatory education by making many the role of the artist/teacher.⁹⁷

Learning in a Public Medium most directly inflects and reflects on the pedagogies of gay men working in avant-garde artist moving image and experimental film. Marshall is of course central, but Ian White is incredibly important, both in terms of his relationship with McStravick, and as an early advocate for a return and reappraisal of the life and legacy of Marshall. An artist and educator, White mentored McStravick on AAP, which he ran from 2007 until 2013. At the time of his death (also in 2013), a specially curated film screening at ICA marked his life and described White as someone whose ‘ideas affected a generation of artists working with the moving image’.⁹⁸ Posthumous publications, including artist Giles Bailey’s *Talker #1 Ian White* (2016) and *Here Is Information. Mobilise. Selected writings by Ian White* (2016), have illuminated the artist’s approach to artistic practice and pedagogy. In a conversation with McStravick for this research, he described the experience of AAP as one that ‘gets in your bones’, and this is in no small part due to White’s pedagogy. ‘A force’, as described by artist and former collaborator Emily Roysdon, White’s practice as artist, curator, and educator embraced a collective and collaborative approach that was fiercely self-reflexive and critical.⁹⁹ White reflects this in the context of his hospital treatment and the authoritative doctor-patient relationship:

as object), and therefore reproduces the very same oppressive logic and indeed doesn’t account for characters such as the ‘revolutionary leader’, as being a teacher in all but name. It is Rancière’s movement away from knowledge, that is the knowing and the unknowing, that offers an alternative understanding of the process of emancipation, and the role of teachers within this process. In: Biesta, ‘Don’t Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters’, 55.

⁹⁷ Whilst not the focus of the discussion here, it is certainly important to consider the pedagogic relation through the position the artist is granted both in Rancière and within art historical discourse that locates him (purposefully gendered) within a realm of the individual and sole artist-genius. *Learning in a Public Medium* is often billed with McStravick’s name, which on the one hand entangles and perhaps overly centres McStravick in relation to a project about Stuart Marshall. On the other hand, McStravick’s commitment and ongoing research into Marshall is arguably under acknowledged and remunerated, as he has always worked from event to event, and has not benefited from the securities of a well-funded academic and institutionally affiliated research project; neither has McStravick benefited from a significant commissioning budget even comparable to the likes of Hayes’ or Staff’s artworks. *Learning in a Public Medium* exists at the precarious edges of gallery programmes.

⁹⁸ ‘Artists’ Film Club: Learning in a Public Medium: Library Live(s)’, ICA, 18 March 2017, <https://archive.ica.art/whats-on/artists-film-club-learning-public-medium-library-lives>.

⁹⁹ ‘Emily Roysdon on Ian White (1971–2013)’, accessed 10 November 2020, <https://www.artforum.com/passages/emily-roysdon-on-ian-white-1971-2013-43906>.

I tell the doctor that I'm a teacher and that I believe in education but that as such really if they want me to be paired with one of these [medical] students then really that's what's going to happen – education. That I'll not hold back, can't guarantee I won't be awful, that the main problem most times is that these kids in this discipline have no critical relationship to their own methodology, *don't imagine that a patient has any intelligence whatsoever*, etc. etc.¹⁰⁰

White's approach to education embraced his sexuality and a queering of the ways we relate in a pedagogical situation. Queer desire cuts across the power dynamics of the teacher/student relation, and reveals the complex ways in which queer subjects learn. In an incredibly moving set of blog posts written whilst undergoing treatment for cancer, he reflects on an approach to education in his encounters with a student doctor and a rejection of the notion that some simply know, and others don't. In the quote above, White – acutely aware of histories of the pathologising of sick gay men by the medical establishment – riles against a simplistic binary of doctor/patient and teacher/student.¹⁰¹ Instead he presents a more complex formulation in which he is at once powerless as the medicalised body and subject of study by doctors; and powerful as the teacher who imparts to a medical student the experience of providing pastoral care to someone with cancer. As the blog continues, White flips the relationship into something more desiring, and sexual, when he remarks on the first encounter with the young trainee doctor as being 'only the prettiest, blondest, most sparky-spunky bright-eyed little Bambi thing you ever saw'. In a later blog, "Bambi L. and I" (2012), the pedagogic relation is explicitly recast in terms of a queer desire, with the proclamation: 'Oh, come on, let's want him'. White's encounter with the junior doctor becomes a scene of cruising, '[h]e waited around in the chemo atrium, I checked-in, averting glances'. He tells of experiences of cancer and a minutia of detail around treatment, 'like pouring liquid gold down his honeyed throat and he filled and filled his little reporter's flipbook'.¹⁰² The pedagogic situation is reclaimed and reimagined as a sexual encounter, queer desire shorts a given set of power relations between doctor and patient. The intelligence of the patient is different to that of the doctor, and White offers a mode of education that is routed in an emancipatory and queer political practice. At the heart of this, is a fierce criticality of power-dynamics at play in any pedagogic relation which

¹⁰⁰ Ian White, 'In. Adequate. Time. (Prisons 1)', *Lives of Performers* (blog), 2012, <https://livesofperformers.wordpress.com/2012/10/15/in-adequate-time-prisons-1/> [My emphasis].

¹⁰¹ I think here of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

¹⁰² Ian White, 'Bambi L. and I', *Lives of Performers* (blog), 2012, <https://livesofperformers.wordpress.com/2012/10/15/in-adequate-time-prisons-1/>.

White provides a novel route through via desire.¹⁰³ White, in reimagining the pedagogic relation as one of gay desire, reframes Rancière's idea of the 'thing in common', as something not simply limited to an object, like Marshall's archive. Instead, the thing in common, might be a way of relating to others and knowledge, that I would call queerness.¹⁰⁴

White's pedagogy, and an intergenerational connection between queers, and specifically between White and his former mentee, McStravick, is performed in *Learning in a Public Medium*. McStravick cites White in an event with artist Peter Todd, organised by Bailey called *Studio is Sudden with Peter Todd & Conal McStravick* in June 2017. The final performance of the evening, McStravick's *(Unsolicited) Intimacy* (2017) was a 'loose folio of performative fragments and actions involving artist and audience that take off from the last conversation McStravick had with artist, curator and writer Ian White (1971—2013)'.¹⁰⁵ The work was presented within the context of the event which reflected on histories of performance in Newcastle upon Tyne, with Todd restaging Marshall's performance works *Idiophonics* and *Trailing, Tracing, Weaving* (1976) and Bailey presenting a new performance work-in-progress. The event traces a series of pedagogic relations, Todd taught at Newcastle Polytechnic alongside Marshall, and co-founded performance space Ayton Basement with five former students, where Marshall also performed; White mentored McStravick, and influenced Bailey, who teaches in Newcastle and interviewed White in 2012. *(Unsolicited) Intimacy* situates White within a discrete history of avant-garde artistic practice in the United Kingdom. Importantly, it weaves a relational thread between McStravick, Marshall and White. The influence of White is embodied through McStravick's re-enactment, it is, to borrow from Rebecca Schneider, the performing of 'the missed encounter – the reverberations of the

¹⁰³ In Halberstam's recent book *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* (2020) they propose a messiness to desire, and specifically desire which longs for 'wildness', an idea that encapsulates the unruliness of queerness. See: Halberstam, *Wild Things*.

¹⁰⁴ I'm suggesting here that the thing in common cast not an object but a set of more ephemeral relations, is a shift from the ontological certitude of things to the idea that meaning can be performatively made in common, through a set of relations. Queerness, as a structure of feelings, a diffuse set of indices that map the complex material and immaterial practices of queer subjects and the connections they make, is purposefully opaque in the face of a medical and scientific knowledge that would foreclose it's possibility. White's performative recollection of this scene of learning is exemplary of the alternate or perhaps para-pedagogies I wish to situate as taking place in and through *Learning in a Public Medium*. There's the learning about Marshall through the archival traces, and then there's the learning about Marshall through being turned on by his work, or flirting with a workshop participant.

¹⁰⁵ CIRCA Projects and The Northern Charter, 'Studio Is Sudden with Peter Todd & Conal McStravick', Facebook, 6 June 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/events/studio-is-sudden-with-peter-todd-conal-mcstravick/1686741578301156/>.

overlooked, the missed, the repressed, the seemingly forgotten'.¹⁰⁶ It emphasises the importance of the ephemerality of queerness and queer ways of learning, be that through a conversation with a former mentor, or in a furtive glance between a patient and a junior doctor. Moreover, the performance is a means of not only remembering Marshall and White, but also figuring and making present the less easily articulated aspects of their pedagogy which have influenced McStravick.

I am sitting in the back yard of Charlotte Prodger's ground floor tenement flat in Glasgow, it is mid-2010.¹⁰⁷



Figure 4. On the left a video still (detail) of Stuart Marshall's *Go through the motions* (1976) and on the right a video still (detail) featuring McStravick of Charlotte Prodger's *A Forest for the Neighbours* (2010).

The pedagogic relation in *Learning in a Public Medium* often reflects on and explores the ways in which McStravick learns about Marshall. The project continually enacts returns to earlier moments of learning through performance which makes that earlier moment present. This can be seen in the workshop with students at Newcastle discussed earlier, and in the performance of a conversation with White. The blog posts reflect on

¹⁰⁶ Schneider's description of 'presence' in performance relates to trauma and repetition. Processes of archiving, or Derrida's 'archive fever' is explicitly linked to a working through of an Oedipal trauma, we archive, or so it goes, in a search of origins and beginnings that lead us only to a self-shattering moment, otherwise known as the 'death drive'. Without wishing to import a psychoanalytic reading onto McStravick's performance of his final conversation with White, I would most simply say this performance could be regarded as a working through of a loss, and a trauma. Hal Foster in *The Return of the Real* explains via Freud that one 'repeat[s] a traumatic event (in actions, in dreams, in images) in order to integrate it into a psychic economy, a symbolic order'. In: Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 131.

¹⁰⁷ Conal McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #2: Learning in a Public Medium', LUX (LUX, 2 March 2016), <https://lux.org.uk/writing/conal-mcstravick-2-learning-public-medium>.

this performative set of relations, with a particularly notable example being McStravick's recollection of his involvement in artist Charlotte Prodger's artwork, *A Forest for the Neighbours* (2010). In the post from March 2016, McStravick describes his role in Prodger's film which depicts his appearing in close up showing the lower half of his beard, face and mouth. McStravick is a stand-in for Prodger, who narrates an anecdote told by the manager of a pub where Prodger once DJ'd. The video track intermittently cuts to black, indicative of the technical limitations of the 16mm camera. In the moments of black, the audio continues with Prodger heard providing direction to both McStravick and crew. The video track resumes, and McStravick continues telling the story. McStravick's mouth and his voice speak Prodger's script which is derived from a recollection of someone else's story. Prodger appears disembodied as a voice off camera providing instruction; whilst simultaneously being embodied by McStravick. Drawing parallels with Marshall's *Go through the motions* (1976), McStravick reflects in the blog: '[a]t LUX, a matter of weeks later [after shooting *A Forest For Neighbours*] I watch Stuart Marshall's video *Go Through The Motions* for the first time and the cycle of appropriation, of Charlotte's appropriation of Marshall, of my beard, becomes clearer'.¹⁰⁸ In Stuart Marshall's 8 minute 16mm film *Go through the motions* (1975) the camera frames a close-up of the artist's mouth repeating the phrase 'Go through the motions of saying one thing and meaning another'. As the phrase repeats the video track goes out of sync with the audio. What you see no longer corresponds with what you hear. What we think we know – that this head speaks those words – is revealed to be a construction of the medium of film. This deconstructive gesture is emblematic of Marshall's interest in the transmission and reception of video technology, but also the social processes of language and meaning making.¹⁰⁹ To 'go through the motions' is to repeat, and the 'saying one thing and meaning another' describes the necessities and limits of language. Regarding this work within the context of Marshall's closeted homosexuality (at the time of its making), it becomes a musing on the difficulty of articulating queerness beyond the confines of the pathologised 'homosexual'.

Prodger's *A Forest For Neighbours* is used in two interesting ways, it is an example of a queer act of citation, that at once stands as 'evidence' of the significance and

¹⁰⁸ Conal McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #2: Learning in a Public Medium', LUX (LUX, 2 March 2016), <https://lux.org.uk/writing/conal-mcstravick-2-learning-public-medium>.

¹⁰⁹ Marshall was influenced by the burgeoning anti-psychiatry and psychology movements of the 1970s. As Alvin Lucier, Marshall's former teacher, notes of artist's influences at postgraduate level, 'conceptual artists Joseph Kosuth, who Stuart particularly admired, words and their multiple meanings played an important part in his thinking' and 'deep reading of Freud, and later Lacan'. In Alvin Lucier, 'On Stuart Marshall: Composer, Video Artist and Filmmaker, 1949-1993', *Leonardo Music Journal* 11 (2001): 51.

importance of Marshall; and importantly, of concern here, examples a teaching relation (between Prodger and McStravick) and situation (McStravick's involvement in Prodger's artwork) that *leads* McStravick back to Marshall. In the blog, he explains that the queerness of Marshall's avant-garde artworks is corroborated by a return to Marshall's early work by artists Charlotte Prodger and James Richards'. He continues, 'given the return to Marshall's work by Prodger and Richards, my own 'Learning in a Public Medium' [...] this [Marshall's earlier works] deserve re-consideration'.¹¹⁰ More simply put, what he appears to be saying here is that what makes Marshall's earlier work queer is, in part, how it circulates within contemporary queer artistic production – in the works of Prodger, Richards and McStravick's own project. My interest here is the evincing of Marshall's queerness through the influence of his work on a younger generation of queer artists. This queer corroboration and evidencing of Marshall's queerness can be seen as an important queer act that is observed in the project as a whole. The performances, writings, and importantly multiple collaborations are a way of 'bearing witness' to the queerness of Marshall. The citational and recitational methods of McStravick come to stand as evidence corroborated through an entangling of other queer artistic practice with the queerness of Marshall. This corroboration is done art historically (think here of Cage and Knowles); but also contemporaneously in the various collaborations throughout *Learning in a Public Medium*. Corroboration foregrounds the social relations which mediate the archive material. It is a queer displacement of the lone scholar toiling away in the sub-basement of an archive, in favour of meaning made relationally and socially through multiple contemporaneous mediations including other artworks. McStravick's citation and description of *A Forest For Neighbours* demonstrates the complex ways in which one might evidence queerness. McStravick's citation of Prodger is an example of a tripartite of relations he uses throughout the project in differing configurations. There is the source material from Marshall's archive cited and re-cited in conventional and non-conventional ways. There is McStravick, the instigator of the citation and recitation of Marshall. And finally, there are the collaborators come corroborators, who support McStravick's presupposition of Marshall's queerness. Prodger might be a more unknowing corroborator, as they have not played an active role within *Learning in a Public Medium*, but still exists within a network of queer friends and peers of McStravick who he understands to be extending the legacies of Marshall in the present. They corroborate

¹¹⁰ Conal McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #2: Learning in a Public Medium', LUX (LUX, 2 March 2016), <https://lux.org.uk/writing/conal-mcstravick-2-learning-public-medium>.

the relevance of Marshall now to a younger generation of queer artists. When McStravick identifies in the work of another queer artist his queerness and that of Marshall's, he is revealing the embodied and relational qualities of queerness. Returning to Muñoz whose conception of 'queer acts' frames this discussion, he describes queerness as 'a possibility, a sense of self-knowing, a mode of sociality and relationality'.¹¹¹

That moustache, the masculine face on camera. Marshall's own, forty years later, as a more queer, less black and white world reflects back. Each element held in tension by ennui, repetition, disruption, dissonance.¹¹²

This 'sense of knowing' is best explained in the blog when McStravick recognises Marshall in himself appearing in Prodger's artwork and beautifully articulates a queer sense of time – 'ennui, repetition, disruption, dissonance' – that connects him to Marshall. This is McStravick learning, or we might say, knowing Marshall through an embodied experience. The connection corresponds with Freeman's erotohistoriography, which argues that encounters with queer pasts are filled with 'the value of surprise, of pleasurable interruptions and momentary fulfilments from elsewhere, other time'.¹¹³ The body, McStravick's body, is used to 'effect, figure, or perform that encounter', in this instance, an encounter with Marshall. This extends to the performance involving White, which to borrow from Freeman, 'sees the body as a method, and historical consciousness as something intimately involved with corporeal sensations'.¹¹⁴ The body as method, is a shift from the archive and other 'written' knowledges as the primary means one learns about the past. An erotohistoriography applied as a learning methodology suggests how one might learn within or on the body, and the ability of a body to have what Rancière calls 'intelligence', and what Freeman refers to as 'historical consciousness'. More simply put, McStravick's recollection of his appearance in Prodger's work elicits a feeling, a familiarity, a 'repetition', in and on his body, one that speaks to the complex ways in which queer subjects come to know and relate to their past. The act of learning is the encounter, with Marshall's archive and artworks, within the video artwork of a friend which reminds of Marshall, within a performance that recalls a conversation. The pedagogic relation in *Learning in a Public*

¹¹¹ José Esteban Muñoz, 'Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts', *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (January 1996): 6.

¹¹² McStravick, 'Conal McStravick #2'.

¹¹³ Freeman, 'Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography', 59.

¹¹⁴ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 95–96.

Medium exceeds the bounds of the project, it draws on past teachers, and the memory of performing in a friend's and queer artist's artwork. These relations, as structures of feeling, evince the queerness of Marshall and his oeuvre, as something read between the lines, transmitted, and transferred between queer subjects in knowing glances and a feeling at the pit of your stomach. This ephemera as evidence appears as 'odd' and complex citation, grounded more in feeling and memory than academic convention or peer-reviewed validation. The teacher's role is as Rancière and Halberstam explain, the person who 'leads' a student to their own learning. In *Learning in a Public Medium* this person is many and multiple, even the small acts, encounters, and the quotidian, count towards an understanding of how we learn from archives.

5.3.3 Fans of activist gay liberation: the politics of relations

The final element of *Learning in a Public Medium*'s methodology are the politics of relations. By this I mean the politics of relating to earlier moments of second wave feminism and gay liberation, the two political discourses most closely associated with Marshall. As the thesis attests, from Sharon Hayes to McStravick, artists are compelled by and turn to archives to reconsider these earlier moments in LGBTQ* history. They scour over the material found in archives and collections, all in the hope not simply to uncover something as yet unknown, but to re-activate a politics that has seemingly been forgotten and resigned to the archive. Here, I explore *Learning in a Public Medium* through Catherine Grant's notion of 'fandom', and Lucas Hilderbrand's idea of 'retroactivism'. Grant's article, "Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-wave Feminism in Contemporary Art" (2011), and subsequent edited book with Kate Random, *Love, Fandom as Methodology: A Sourcebook for Artists and Writers* (2019), proposes the novel research methodology of artist, historian or researcher as 'fan'. I then look to Hilderbrand's 'retroactivism', a term used to describe the political motivations of a generation of activists, born after the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, who have been influenced by this pivotal moment in queer history. Fandom and retroactivism help describe a mediated relationship to the politics of Marshall's early artworks, embedded in feminist discourse on artist moving image and film, and their connections to his later AIDS activist works. The fan describes an amateur, obsessive, and repetitious dimension to *Learning in a Public Medium*; and retroactivism, with its pre-fix 'retro' is something outdated yet of value now. Both fandom and retroactivism

are political modes of historiographic enquiry as they draw on an affective and emotive relationship to the past which short circuits the rigours of the academy.

I begin, with McStravick as a fan of Marshall. Grant proposes fandom as method to account for a draw to historical material that is more than simply academic. Fan suggests a less clear cut position and subjectivity, as Grant puts it, to be a fan is to have an 'emotional attachment' to history.¹¹⁵ *Learning in a Public Medium* is composed of a complex series of connections and feelings which, to borrow from Freeman, 'binds' those involved in the project across time and through objects to Marshall. I describe McStravick as a fan of Marshall, not to diminish the artist's in-depth research, but to account for the more performative aspects of the research. The novelty of *Learning in a Public Medium* is that it, borrowing from Grant, 'combines the reader with the writer, and sees the fan object as a key component in the formation of the fan's own identity'.¹¹⁶ In *Learning in a Public Medium*'s the 'reader' often becomes the 'writer' of the archive, for example the ways in which an archival document, such as a draft script, is annotated in a group exercise; or, performance is used to re-enact (another term used by Grant) the scene of learning. Most directly, the combination of reader and writer is most explicit in McStravick's performance in Prodger's artwork in which, on reflection he comes to see himself embodying Marshall. I do not wish to speculate on McStravick's complex identifications with Marshall, however I would suggest that the 'formation of the fan's own identity' via an encounter with Marshall's archive, is the formation of a set of affiliations and connections to a queer elder and his politics. To identify or see oneself in Marshall, is not to become Marshall, but to relate more intimately to his life and politics. Fandom describes a mediation, a dialogue between different moments in time, as Grant explains in relation to being a fan of feminism, it 'does not replace being a feminist, but articulates a particular relationship to histories of feminism'.¹¹⁷ The reparative aim of *Learning in a Public Medium* and its relational pedagogies proposes something similar, what I have described elsewhere as the project's historiographic dimension. The project proposes an active and performative re-engagement with Marshall's archive, at once to mark the importance of, and also, more importantly, to explore a younger generation of artists' relationships to these histories.

¹¹⁵ Catherine Grant, 'Fans of Feminism: Re-Writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art', *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 2 (2011): 269.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

To describe McStravick as a fan, or those who took part, is to privilege the role feelings and emotions play in research. As Grant illuminates, the etymology of the word fan, shortened from ‘fanatic’, derives from and still correlates to a nineteenth century idea of ‘deviance’. The use of the word fan is a reclamation, a redirection of ‘the irrational, passionate, and violent aspects’ of a desire to embrace another moment.¹¹⁸ I should note that Grant distinguishes fandom from more ‘straightforward re-enactment’, whilst both can be understood as contemporary appropriations of an earlier moment, the fan is conceived as brashly interfering and reconfiguring the past in the present.¹¹⁹ Grant gives the example of Emily Roysdon’s photographic series *untitled (Wojnarowicz project)* (2001—08) which reworked David Wojnarowicz’s series *Rimbaud in New York* (1978—9) and featured in the art journal LTTR. Instead of a man holding his erect penis and wearing a mask of poet Arthur Rimbaud (as in the Wojnarowicz series), a woman is posed holding a strap-on dildo and wearing a mask of Wojnarowicz. In the photograph, Grant comments, ‘the fraught histories between mainstream feminism, lesbian feminism, and gay liberation are re-written on the body of a young woman, articulating a queer sexuality that refuses to read these histories as boundaries’.¹²⁰ I would parallel what Grant calls ‘quotations’, of Wojnarowicz quoting Rimbaud, and Roysdon quoting Wojnarowicz, with the queer acts of citation and re-citation in *Learning in a Public Medium*. Indeed, viewed holistically, *Learning in a Public Medium* enacts itself through a series of continual returns and re-citations of Marshall via others. A lattice of quotation can be observed, not in the literal wearing a ‘mask’, but in the ways the project layers Marshall’s archive in amongst a whole host of other activity. A film screening of Marshall’s work leads to an annotation exercise, then the development of a performance. A group performs an Alison Knowles performance work from the 1960s, and then watches an agitprop protest film about Section 28 shot in the 1980s. Fandom in *Learning in a Public Medium* charts the political relations of 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s gay activism of Marshall in and out of other social justice movements, like feminism. In turn, these politics commute and transfer through the project’s various collaborators.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 272.

¹¹⁹ Of course, as I discuss elsewhere, Grant’s later writing on re-enactment very much posits it as an ‘active’ engagement with the past, so I speculate that a ‘straightforward re-enactment’ refers to a historical re-enactment which tries to faithfully recreate the original event or moment in time.

¹²⁰ Grant, ‘Fans of Feminism: Re-Writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art’, 276.

Fandom is a politics of relation that uses messy citation and traces queer genealogies. The fan ‘allows for an interrogation of the psychic dimension of the current interest in second wave feminism and protest culture, as the fan both re-enacts and mourns the desired moment of feminist revolution’.¹²¹ In other words, it interrogates why we might be drawn to something seemingly ‘lost’, or out of reach, but maintain a strong ‘psychic’ connection to it. Grant uses specifically Elizabeth Freeman’s erotohistoriographic methods as a ‘queering of history [...] that allows for an emotive and political resonance in the present’. The archival return, as Derrida conceives it, is a working through a trauma, an attempt to reconcile a past moment. Fandom, as it relates to Freeman’s ‘collective melancholia’, is the mobilisation of a trauma or loss by queer subjects now. Melancholia, as erotohistoriography, is not simply a reconciling of trauma but ‘a way of imagining the “inappropriate” response of eros in the face of sorrow as a trace of past form of pleasure’. Erotohistoriography accounts for the ways in which a queer subject might feel loss, mourning, and melancholia to ‘imagine ourselves haunted by bliss and not just by trauma’ and how these ‘residues of positive affect (idylls, utopias, memories of touch) might be available for queer counter- (or para-) historiographies’. Importantly, as ‘a way of imagining the “inappropriate” response of eros in the face of sorrow as a trace of past form of pleasure’, erotohistoriography articulates the pleasure in pain, and it reclaims the lament of mourning and understands it to be a powerful force in queer desire and world making.¹²² To be a fan of Stuart Marshall, is to mourn his life, legacy and loss from AIDS-related illness. To obsessively go over his archival materials, screen again and again his artworks, is not in the hope that something new ‘emerges’ but to work through a loss, and the feelings it elicits.

Learning in a Public Medium as it can be described as working through a ‘loss’, specifically as this is undertaken collectively, might also be described as ‘retroactivism’. In a 2006 GLQ article of the same name, Hilderbrand describes retroactivism as a politics of cross generational re-engagement with histories of AIDS activism. He identifies with a younger generation who, whilst not directly experiencing or living through the AIDS crisis of 1980s and 1990s, feel deeply connected to and regard it as part of their ‘cultural heritage’. Like fandom, the retroactivist ‘argue[s] against remembering AIDS activism exclusively in terms of trauma’.¹²³ To think in terms of

¹²¹ Ibid., 273.

¹²² Freeman, *Time Binds*, 120.

¹²³ Lucas Hilderbrand, ‘RETROACTIVISM’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 2 (1 January 2006): 307.

recent representations of this moment in time, such as Robin Campillo's lauded biopic film of the Paris-chapter of ACT-UP, *120 Beats per Minute* (2017), there is as much weight given to the drugs, sex, and sociality of the activism, as there is to the trauma of scores dying or suffering from debilitating illness.¹²⁴ Retroactivism, like *120 BPM*, pushes back against trauma and the negative emotions it often denotes; or as Freeman contends (and Grant extends via the figure of the fan), pleasure in and taken of these traumatic pasts. Hilderbrand argues for 'a more complicated history [...] that acknowledges this affective spectrum and its potential implications for subsequent generations'. Hilderbrand, and arguably Grant's fandom, 'acknowledges this affective spectrum' of queer history, and seek ways to describe the ways it affects the academic, artist, or researcher, who encounters the trace from a past moment. The wake of the AIDS crisis is a trauma still deeply felt within the LGBTQ* community. The historicisation of this moment, particularly the more dominant narratives (from within and beyond the community) around promiscuity and safe sex, accompanies a moralising around sex. The implications 'for subsequent' generations of gay men in relationship to the AIDS crisis, is a relationship to sex and pleasure thought in the negative. The moment of the AIDS crisis was also full of pleasure, and sex, which complicates any dominant trauma narrative. The historiographic work that Hilderbrand advocates for, as it 'complicates' given histories of HIV/AIDS, enables a re-imagining both of this moment and a queer subjects (affective) relationship to it now.

Retroactivism is a politics of relating to the past in the present; it is a 'mode of nostalgia that accounts for generative historical fascination, of imagining, feeling, and drawing from history'. In other words, it is a mode of historiographic enquiry, much like Grant's fans of feminism, that accounts for the affective ties and draws to this earlier moment. Nostalgia, similar to mourning, is conceived as an affect which grants queer subjects access to their own political pasts. And these feelings, 'the profound experiences of emotion, deeply felt relations and reactions', are often transmitted through queer cultural archives. As an example, Hilderbrand discusses James Wentzy's documentary *Fight Back, Fight AIDS* (2002) about the history of ACT UP, and how it 'not only records a social movement but also regenerates it'.¹²⁵ In common with Grant's 'fan object', Wentzy's documentary is a cultural document that serves, through its mediation

¹²⁴ I think specifically in the final sequences, when the main character Sean dies of AIDS-related illness, his lover, Nathan, and friends gather for a wake. A friend stays the night with Sean and have sex. As he is fucked, Nathan breaks into tears that are discernible neither as ecstasy, joy or grief.

¹²⁵ Hilderbrand, 'RETROACTIVISM', 313.

of AIDS archival material, to create intergenerational connections. Alexandra Juhasz echoes this in “VIDEO REMAINS: Nostalgia, Technology, and Queer Archive Activism” (2006) when suggesting the experimental documentary *Video Remains* (2005), is ‘potentially productive of new feelings and knowledge that might lead to collective action’.¹²⁶ *Video Remains* brings together video footage from the 1990s of Juhasz’s friend Jim who died of AIDS-related illness, with added voiceover musings on her relationship to this time, alongside footage of a group of young people discussing HIV/AIDS in the present. Juhasz calls the work ‘queer archival activism’, as it relies ‘upon the recorded personal stories’ and a ‘commingling history and politics with feelings, feelings of desire, love, hope or despair’.¹²⁷ *Video Remains* is a return to these earlier moments, which curator Theodore Kerr calls the AIDS Crisis Revisitation. Kerr postulates that the (ongoing) AIDS crisis has been marked by two silences. The first silence is the first five years of the epidemic under President Ronald Reagan; the second from 1996 as antiretroviral drugs became available (predominantly to white gay men). Cultural producers (albeit a few years after *Video Remains* according to Kerr) from the mid-noughties have been revisiting these earlier video archives to learn from these earlier documents.¹²⁸ *Learning in a Public Medium* as it often situates itself in relation to AIDS activism, uses Marshall’s archives and artworks to similarly learn about HIV/AIDS then and now. From the World AIDS Day lecture on Stuart Marshall at Concordia University in 2016, to a series of workshops with an LGBT youth group in the summer of 2017, the project has continually sought to engage a younger generation with an earlier moment in politics via Marshall’s life and works. Returning to Rancière, that ‘thing in common’ is Marshall, who becomes a conduit through which a contemporary group of queers might access their past. The queerness of Marshall’s archive is this very set of relations it forges; the affective power of his archive is, as Aimar Arriola beautifully remarks, ‘not only intent on remembering past strategies of resistance but also on activating them for present struggles’.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Alexandra Juhasz, ‘VIDEO REMAINS: Nostalgia, Technology, and Queer Archive Activism’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 2 (1 January 2006): 322.

¹²⁷ Alexandra Juhasz, ‘VIDEO REMAINS: Nostalgia, Technology, and Queer Archive Activism’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 2 (1 January 2006): 326.

¹²⁸ Theodore Kerr and Alexandra Juhasz, ‘On Care, Activism, and HIV’, *Hema* 1, no. 2, accessed 15 July 2019, <http://hematopoiesispress.com/on-care-activism-and-hiv>. See also: Theodore Kerr, ‘Connecting the Polka Dots: AIDS in Plain Sight’, *BOMB*, 7 February 2017, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/connecting-the-polka-dots/>.

¹²⁹ Aimar Arriola, ‘Touching What Does Not Yet Exist: Stuart Marshall and the HIV/AIDS Archive’, *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 41 (March 2016): 55.

Learning in a Public Medium might be better described as a fan club, that over the course of two years, brought folk together around Marshall's archive. This describes a politics of relation, routed in collaboration and collective enquiry. Both Grant and Hilderbrand, as they build on Cvetkovich and Freeman, emphasise the importance of an affective engagement with the past which is collective. This collective politics comes from earlier moments in feminist and queer organising, and is central to contemporary feminist and queer artistic production and activism. Grant explains in relation to contemporary artists who are in dialogue with second wave feminist artistic production and activism that '[i]t is here that the communal aspect of fan cultures, particularly around the creation of new writing, imagery and film, can provide a flexible and psychically invested model for these generational crossings'.¹³⁰ Hilderbrand relays an experience in commune, watching Wentzy's documentary in a packed room, the 'crowding of bodies made the footage seem all the more intimate and intense: as if the viewing experience almost replicated the protest experiences, as if we had all been there together'.¹³¹ The proximity of bodies, the encounter with cultural documents from a different time and place, creates resonances and dissonances.

To return to where I began, which was a charting of the various relations in *Learning in a Public* as they might describe the project's methodology, we might propose, instead of the teacher, or the student, the project as comprised of 'fans'. These fans are drawn to Marshall through a longing, a loss, a melancholia, a nostalgia for a radical gay liberation politics not pinkwashed by homonationalist agendas of gay marriage. These feelings are productive of a counter-politics which extends from the archive of Marshall, but one which first requires one to study, to know and understand the complexity of this past better. Education has always been crucial in AIDS activism and organising, and this continues in projects like *Learning in a Public Medium*. The project as it presents the work of Marshall, has featured as part of World AIDS Day screenings, and McStravick has been actively involved in recent AIDS cultural activism in London. Retroactivism emphasises the importance of education in critically interrogating a given history or past (even of something as specific as the AIDS crisis which is still prone to oversimplification). Hilderbrand notes that 'with the distance of time and education, we can see that we have lost not only lives but also forms of radicalism; in this way, the memory of AIDS's impact is not only traumatic but also potentially enlivening for the

¹³⁰ Grant, 'Fans of Feminism: Re-Writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art', 285.

¹³¹ Hilderbrand, 'RETROACTIVISM', 313.

formation of a radical queer community'.¹³² The politics of relation in *Learning in a Public Medium* is in its ability to form community around radical ideas and practice.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to consider mediation of archives through education. To do this, I examined the artist Conal McStravick's active research project *Learning in a Public Medium* (2015—17) on the artist Stuart Marshall (1949—93). The project uses a queer approach to archival research and public engagement which results in a reparative queer art history. McStravick aligns Marshall's avant-garde works and gay activism to account for the queerness of both. The enquiry is undertaken collaboratively and using queer methods which provide for a novel way of learning from the archive. By queering the archive and how we learn from it, *Learning in a Public Medium* is a challenge to understandings of both the archive and education in art. The project highlights the lack of consideration given to queer epistemologies in contemporary art, and redresses this through a process of learning as a means to regenerate queer political practices in art now.

I began by outlining the affinities and confluences between Black, feminist and queer alongside Marxist critiques of institutional education systems. The structuralism of Bourdieu as it articulates education systems as reproductive of class-relations under capitalism, and Jacque Rancière's understandings of their emancipatory potentials, were used to frame a queer turn to education and LGBTQ* histories in contemporary art. I looked to the predominantly straight discourses of the Educational Turn in contemporary art, and materialist feminist approaches that have sought to, as Graham et al term it, 're-orientate' discourses on education towards the conditions, labours, and perspectives of minoritarian subjects. *Learning in a Public Medium* is understood to have taken place within such a shift, that doesn't settle simply at greater visibility and representation of LGBTQ* histories in contemporary art, but asks how can we learn from these histories? The emancipatory and radical education of *Learning in a Public Medium* proposes this learning as a mode of practice, one which challenges and questions the very institutional and infrastructural arrangements (in art and education) which continually exclude queer voices.

¹³² Ibid., 308.

The first section, provided an outline of the project comprising 13 public and semi-public activities including blog posts, lectures, in-conversations, performances, screenings, and workshops. I also considered the reparative aim of the project, driven by McStravick's desire to repair the queer legacy of Marshall. From two blog posts, I explored the project's aim to align the artist's contribution to UK avant-garde sound and video art of the 1960s and 1970s with his later gay activism in film and video of the 1980s and 1990s. *Learning in a Public Medium* reclaims Marshall from a straight art historical narrative by reading Marshall's past artworks queerly. The project sits within a trend within the past five years towards queer art histories by artists, curators, and researchers coinciding with a number of anniversaries for the LGBTQ* community. This trend comprises large scale institutional surveys of queer art to more specific interventions which address histories of cultural activism. Within this trend there has been a resurgence of interest in Marshall. *Learning in a Public Medium* occupies a unique position within this turn to Marshall, observed in the two blog posts published on the LUX website. First, McStravick provides one of the most complete works of biography of Marshall's early years as a student, foregrounding the artist's practice in avant-garde sound, performance, and video. Second, McStravick reads queerly the avant-garde artworks, interpreting the abstract gestures as they may speak of Marshall's (at the time) closeted homosexuality. The aim to align the earlier work with the later more explicit gay activism is successful as McStravick demonstrates the range and complexity of the earlier work that can be understood as queer.

Central to this chapter was a consideration of the learning methodology of *Learning in a Public Medium*. I proposed, following the project's title and desire to engage collaboratively *in a public medium*, that the learning methodology is composed of a series of relations. The desire towards a more public enquiry is inspired by Marshall's interests in processes of making artworks that are collaborative and social. I argue that McStravick's use of a 'public medium' is in service of the queering of Marshall's archive and how we learn from it. That is, the public medium accounts for the social and relational qualities of queerness. To explore the learning methodology, I considered three sets of relations: first, is the relationship to the archive of Stuart Marshall and the ways it is performatively enacted through 'queer acts'. Queer acts, following José Esteban Muñoz, are modes of critically self-reflexive practice enacted by queer cultural producers. These acts are methods of archival and historical citation, re-citation, and re-enactment, which account as much for the material trace as they do the ephemeral. The

queer citation deployed by McStravick and collaborators cites Marshall alongside queer-feminist art historical references and theory. The result of this citation is the desire to break from straight, linear, and teleological narratives of art history – all of which reinforce the white heteropatriarchal norms of the art historical canon. Re-citation calls forth Marshall's queer politics emergent from his artworks and archive to generate new ideas responsive to both the archival material and current queer political expediencies. The second relational practice I explore is the pedagogic relation, conceived as a queering of Rancière's 'ignorant schoolmasters' oft cited within contemporary art discourse on alternate or radical education. This is a mode of emancipatory education in which the teacher leads the student to knowledge but does not deny that the student has knowledge or their own will to learn. Applied to queer subjects, this accounts for the many and multiple teachers who have influenced McStravick, including those who participate in the project. I paid particular attention to the influence of artist, curator, and educator, Ian White, on both the resurgence of interest in Marshall and on McStravick's own research. I looked to the way these teachers appeared within the project through citation and performance. The third section considered the politics of relations, by considering *Learning in a Public Medium* as both fandom and retroactivism. I argued that Catherine Grant's notion of the artist, academic, or researcher, as 'fan' in historical enquiry, shares similar political affinities to Muñoz's queer acts as a performative rejection of the rigours of the academic and stultifying affects of the archive. Lucas Hilderbrand's 'retroactivism' compliments Grant's historiographic method as it provides for an understanding of a younger generation of queer activists and artists interested in a previous generation's politics and struggle. Stuart Marshall's practice as an artist, and education, is rooted in second wave feminisms and gay liberation cum AIDS activism, and *Learning in a Public Medium* seeks to re-activate the politics of these earlier moments now. Fandom and retroactivism also take account of the mediated relationship to the past that builds on Elizabeth Freeman's erotohistoriography, proposing bodily ways of remembering and recovery of past moments and politics. The politics of relations, and the learning methodology more broadly in *Learning in a Public Medium*, understands queerness as a relational practice, and therefore if we are to understand the life and legacy of an artist like Marshall *queerly*, we must do so collaboratively and performatively.

Learning in a Public Medium is a queer mediation of the archive of Stuart Marshall.

The project does this through education. It started as a desire on the part of artist Conal

McStravick to seek out gay and lesbian voices in the archives and collections of the UK avant-garde. This desire was fuelled by a lack that so often marks the visibility of queer lives. A lack in McStravick's upbringing in conservative rural Northern Ireland. A lack in state education where the promotion of homosexuality was illegal from 1988 to the early 2000s. A lack in the supposedly liberal space of the art school. A lack in patriarchal, white, cisgender art history. This lack defines queer lives, as they are not easily legible in formal constructs of power, like the archive, or education, which negates them and they negate. Queer desire is a reading between the lines. It is an understanding of a lack as signifying something that acts against and evades the violent strictures of power. It is codified and smuggles itself within straight culture's artefacts and junk. It is also a desire to be acknowledged and visible within British culture and society. It is the mainstreaming of gay liberation cum LGBTQ* politics and a rejection of the latter's capitulation to a neoliberal pinkwashing agenda. Queer desire seeks a more complex sexual politics in the present. *Learning a Public Medium* addresses this lack by embracing it with a queer desire that seeks out what we might have missed or perhaps forgotten in the gradual and ongoing processes of canonisation and institutionalisation of queer art practice.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, I wish to summarise the key arguments and contentions I have made in this thesis, to outline some affinities and dissonances between the three case studies, and highlight areas of further research. Originally, I set out to explore and understand the proliferation of contemporary artworks which engage with LGBTQ* archives and history. I began with a brief overview of the turn in the past decade or so to LGBTQ* art, culture, and politics in contemporary art in the United Kingdom, and specifically a queer archival turn. I use 'turn' to suggest what Irit Rogoff calls a 'shift' and a movement towards queer and trans* epistemologies in art, rather than a word intended to capture the totality of all queer art and critical writing from a very recent past. I endeavoured to situate this research in relation to art, philosophy, and theory related to archives (places and objects) and 'the archive'. I considered the utility and limits of Hal Foster's 'archival impulse' in contemporary art to consider how these urges might apply to queer subjects. In "Archives' Matter", I then asked the more broad question: 'why do we archive?', focussing on minoritarian subjects entangled relationship with archives, history, and memory. The central movement in this chapter was from understandings of archives as sites of biopolitical control and power to an important site of performative intervention by artists, academics, and activists. Over the past half century, queer subjects have been making their own archives and telling their own histories, in turn challenging processes of archiving, historicisation, and institutionalisation, which have tended to flatten and erase the lived complexities of queer pasts. In seeking to understand the role artworks play in a queer turn to, and mediation of, historical archives, this thesis contributes to knowledge by bridging art history, queer theory, and archival studies.

Queering archives and archiving queers is the approach to working with archives and the past that I have observed in contemporary art projects. This novel proposition builds on Stuart Hall's contestation that artistic archival engagements are a mode of archiving and an interruption in a settled field. I explore the resonance of this proposition in three case studies of artworks by Sharon Hayes, P. Staff, and Conal McStravick. To unpack the layered and intersecting ways in which these artworks mediate a diffuse range of archival materials – from correspondence found in lesbian magazines to an unfinished script for an artist film – I focussed on the mediating forces of moving image, performance, and education.

“Dear readers, your then is my now” argues that the queer time of Sharon Hayes’ video and installation *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love* (2016) makes a seemingly outdated lesbian-feminist past and politics, present. In the chapter I consider how moving image mediates the readerly correspondence communities found in lesbian magazines, newsletters and queer print ephemera dating from 1955—77. The artwork highlights discord and debate in lesbian-feminist pasts, and the importance of a multiplicity of voices to forming communities and political organising. A diffuse sense of time permeates the film and installation, which draws on the DIY and home-spun aesthetics of an earlier moment of protest. The filmed ‘readers’ are a group of queer and trans* performers who re-speak (in Hayes’ terminology) the words of lesbians from an earlier moment. I focus on the characters of the Black and butch ‘anachronistic’ lesbians who emerge from the script and propose unexplored political affiliations between past and present. The artwork challenges the narratives and historicisation of Euro-American feminisms through the figuration of a trans-historical subject not bound to an earlier moment of identity politics. This chapter contributes to existing writing on ‘returns’ in feminist, lesbian, and recent trans* film and moving image, and builds on the use of anachronism in Hayes’ artworks. My study investigates Hayes’ deployment of anachronism as a method of unsettling time, situating this alongside allegory and melancholia to understand the political efficacies of strategies which bring back ghosts from lesbian-feminist pasts.

“Loving Daddy” considers the prominent role of performance and its document in artistic mediations of the archival past. In P. Staff’s *The Foundation* (2015) the archive is embodied in the sadomasochist figure of the Daddy with whom the artist performs. The artwork is about Staff’s time spent at the Tom of Finland Foundation (the house and former home of the famous homoerotic artist) and the contemporary artist’s own gender identity. In the chapter I explore the performativity of the archive and archival materials as they elicit a given gay history and sexual subculture. The artwork emphasises the emotional significance of stuff gathered in archives, and reflects on the production of a hypermasculine ‘proto-type’ and identity through the work and legacy of Tom of Finland. The film switches between the actual Foundation and a mise-en-scène of the home cum archive in which a series of choreographed performances take place. I argue that Staff uses their body to peel away at the signifying functions of the archive, particularly as this might violently exclude a trans and femme body. In the performance with Daddy, Staff performs their complex identifications with the archive

of Tom of Finland. The artwork is exemplary of the ways in which the body, performance, and its document, can challenge a system of representation like the archive. I argue in conclusion that *The Foundation* is a *trans*-ing of the archive of Tom of Finland as it locates a set of queer and trans epistemologies within ostensibly gay male archives.

“To all my homosexual schoolmasters” seeks to address what and specifically how we might learn from artistic archival mediations. The final case study on Conal McStravick’s *Learning in a Public Medium* is the more novel amongst all three as I propose the project is the constituting of an archive. Unusually, I propose education as the mediating method (alongside film and performance) through which the project brings together participants around the life and legacy of artist Stuart Marshall through a series of nomadic workshops and events that took place over a two-year period. I considered the pedagogy of *Learning in a Public Medium* within the context of the Educational Turn in contemporary art, and a specific re-orientation of this turn towards social justice and minoritarian perspectives. I argue the project enacts an emancipatory education grounded in the ways in which queer subjects relate to one another and produce knowledge. The remnants of Marshall’s life and practice found in archives, and artworks held in collections such as LUX, become what Rancière calls that ‘thing in common’, which in an emancipatory education de-centres the role of the teacher who simply leads the student to their own learning (not knowledge, as this model rejects the accumulation or a coming to knowledge not already possessed). The teacher in *Learning in a Public Medium* is at once the artist McStravick, who drives the project forward and sets out its reparative aims to recover the legacies of Marshall; and is also a lattice of collaborators and corroborators past and present who shape the project and its approach to Marshall. Central to the chapter is a learning methodology conceived as a set of relations, to the archive, to friends, former teachers, and participants, and to a queer-feminist political practice. Performance, and performative engagements with archival material, are central to the ways in which *Learning in a Public Medium* enacts its enquiry and forges connections across time.

Each of the three case studies sit at the interstices of the archival document and an embodied set of practices that are scripted, narrativised or performed by queer subjects in film, performance, or a gallery learning space. Throughout the thesis, I have returned to Muñoz’s ‘queer acts’ which he conceived as performative strategies within academic research and writing to ‘evidence’ queerness, and interpreted these to mean a set of

embodied and ephemeral practices lived and performed by queer subjects and communities. Queer acts in the archive are performative (nonarchival), institutive (archival), and historiographic (bridging the archival and the nonarchival). The performative act describes the ways in which the artworks enact performative interventions in an archive, and also the performativity of the archival materials, what Ann Cvetkovich calls their ‘sensuous liveliness’. The institutive act describes how the artworks themselves might be regarded as a process of creating an archive; an act that in part adheres to a more conventional notion of the archive, but also inculcates the performativity of queerness within the archive and its logics. The historiographic act is self-reflexive, it embraces the performative whilst seeking to challenge the institutive logics of the archive that may foreclose the possibilities of queerness. It is the bridge between past and present, made of what Elizabeth Freeman terms an ‘erotics’, that connects queer subjects across time and through things and bodily dispositions.

I wish to end with a few reflections on areas of further research. The first would be a greater structural analysis of the recuperation of queer and trans* archives and histories within the field of contemporary art. The scope of the research and thesis focussed on the relationship between contemporary artworks, archival materials, and LGBTQ* archives. I explored the ways in which artworks complement, challenge, and critique archives in their various institutional guises, particularly the role archives can play in the ossification of queer pasts cum LGBTQ* history. One of the key arguments of this thesis is that contemporary artworks which mediate archives are themselves a mode of archiving, which, following Derrida, is an institutive practice. To institute the queer past, might also be said to be reproductive of the historical archive’s desire to ‘ossify’ a set of practices in the production of a historical subject and identity. This is a process which excludes trans* and gender nonconforming subjects. This is a tension – the institutionalisation of queer ontologies – I would like to explore further within the infrastructural arrangements of contemporary art. The tension is described in recent trans* scholarship as one between the increased representation and visibility of queer and trans* individuals in art and culture, and ongoing exclusions and violence faced by the majority of trans* folks. This line of enquiry builds on my research question ‘what are the political efficacies of these artworks?’, and would explore more thoroughly the conditions in which these artworks were made. I am informed by the likes of Jeanine Tang, whose chapter “Contemporary Art and Critical Transgender Infrastructures” (2017) extends Bourdieu’s structural analysis of the field of art as reproductive of class

relations and explores ‘identity management’ within arts administration and art historical writing as trans-exclusionary. The key interest I have is how do we enact forms of institutional critique that do not ultimately ‘strengthen’ institutions through our participation and critique? Or perhaps, as Tang suggests, we might turn to the back end, the administration, the HR, the management structures, and draw on forms of organising and unionising to prefigure the politics we so eloquently perform to a bourgeois art audience at Frieze. An analysis of the three case studies, for example, might take into view their commissioning, and production by a small network of London-based contemporary arts organisations, and look to the various politics and practices of these institutions as they seek to *meaningfully* engage with queer and trans* communities beyond professions of ‘radical queer futures’ in their gallery interpretation.

My second area of development extends from my commitment to anti-racist politics and scholarship. This thesis was written during the time of Black Lives Matter, which brought into sharp relief the need for material changes to address structural racism, including the ways we write about art history. In the thesis I have sought to carefully and thoughtfully engage with Black and POC artistic practice and scholarship which engages with archives. The work of Saidiya Hartman about creative interventions in the archives of Black Atlantic culture have given a depth to my understandings of the potential violence of historical enquiry. In the chapter “Archives’ Matters” I also note the ‘whiteness’ of the ‘queer archive’, and as J. Halberstam argues, this results in branches of queer theory being built on a relatively narrow white, cisgender, and gay male archive. There is much to learn from BIPOC voices, and Hayes’ artwork is exemplary in bringing to the fore the intersectional politics of a Black lesbian who speaks from the archive. That said, it must be acknowledged that Hayes’ is a white artist – as are the two other artists who are the focus of this thesis – which reminds of the prevalence and privilege of white artists in telling and retelling the stories of others. As above in my express desire to further explore the artworld and its infrastructures that may profess increased representation and visibility of certain minoritarian subjects, more must be done to critique the material conditions of being Black, being queer, being trans*, in the field of contemporary art.

The third and final area of further research, extends from a desire to enact alternate ways of being and working in the field of contemporary art, and draws together the first two. The departure point is the final, and more speculative, of my three case studies: Conal McStravick’s *Learning in a Public Medium*. In the chapter’s opening literature

overview, I drew on Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's notion of 'Black study', which describes a way of working within a given system or institution that is parasitic. This feels like a decidedly queer endeavour, or if queer theory is perhaps itself too institutional, then we might look to José Esteban Muñoz's notion of 'wildness'. To 'study' is to commit to an emancipatory mode of learning, with the long-term commitment to the abolition of the very institutions that reproduce racialised capitalism. Study is processual, it doesn't let things settle, it keeps ideas in motion. In *Learning in a Public Medium*, study is collaborative, meaning is made and unmade over a period of two years. The learning keeps the archive in motion, the participants are involved in an ongoing and changing process of archiving. For me, this example feels closest to Hall's 'archiving' as a creative activity which is 'always a critical one, always a historically located one, always a contestatory one'. The shift is from the production of art objects to the co-production of knowledge, or knowledges that use archival materials as that 'thing in common', as a tool for learning.

I end with the question that stalks this thesis 'why do we archive?' Or why, now, does the archive exert such a power within the field of contemporary art, and drives a particular turn for queer subjects towards their own pasts? The will or 'impulse' to archive relies too much on a psychoanalytical foundation which, as Bersani observes, only ever figures as queer, and therefore does little to answer the question of why a queer might archive. Perhaps it can never fully be answered because it is built on a presupposition, one that leads us back to some Oedipal nightmare of origins and an obsession with the formation of an identity. Instead, we might say, that queers archive as a mode of survival and form of 'fugitive study' that seeks lines of flight out of the discursive trap that is the postmodern archive. To archive is to legitimate and make legible, however itinerantly, a corpus, a body, within a dominant system of meaning making. To have a past, a collective identity and memory, creates a sense of belonging and as Nora argues maintains a decaying state through the production of a national identity. The advent of LGBTQ* archives have been a joyous space for the reclamation and reconsidering of queer pasts, and artistic interpretation. However, in the neo-fascist present, archives, or at least these kinds of archives, do not seem enough. In spite of a growing body of archival and historiographic scholarship into queer pasts that one might say 'legitimizes' the existence of LGBTQ* identities and communities, we are seeing an unprecedented onslaught to LGBTQ* rights. In the United States, despite vocal support for trans* rights at a Federal level, Republican State legislatures have

begun introducing a slew of anti-trans laws ranging from access to same-sex bathrooms to participation in sports. In the United Kingdom, both Holyrood and Westminster continue to fail in their reforms of the Gender Recognition Acts. In Scotland, Trans-exclusionary Radical Feminists continue to level baseless attacks on the LGBTQ* community routed in the old tropes of stirring up a moral panic, and most recently paedophilia.¹ At Westminster, the resignation of members and subsequent disbanding of a government LGBT panel by Liz Truss underscores the paper-thin commitments supposedly 'progressive' governments have towards LGBTQ* communities. In such a climate of an endless cycle of fake news, delusions of empire, and Festival Britain 2022, that circulates on the instantaneous digital archives of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, what role does that box file stored in the back of library play? Or bringing us back to the focus of this thesis, why do artists archive? The answer might be less the legitimating of our existence – as there's plenty of videos circulating on Facebook which say otherwise – and more in building our own communities, and fashioning our cultures as Lord says 'wherever we insinuate it'. We might also turn to queer archives for moments of joy, to see trans-historical subjects – not shackled to the oppressors' two-dimensional rendering of the homo, the invert, the pervert, or the slave – to continue, fulfil, and reproduce the always already existent other ways of being and making of queer worlds. Artists are crucial to these historical re-imaginings, the camp, the glamour, the sex, the love, and put them in motion, into practice, shared as a politics that enables us to reshape our worlds in the present.

¹ A candidate of Alex Salmond's new right-wing nationalist party Alba accused LGBT Youth Scotland and Stonewall Scotland of advocating for the reduction of the age of consent. See: Conor Matchett, 'Alba Candidate Criticised for "dangerous and Irresponsible" Claims about Age of Consent by Charity', 11 April 2021, <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/alba-candidate-criticised-for-dangerous-and-irresponsible-claims-about-age-of-consent-by-charity-3196491>.

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