

DOCTORAL THESIS

Carrying Queerness

Queerness, Performance and the Archive

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**Carrying Queerness:
Queerness, Performance and the Archive**

by
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation responds to the archival turn in critical theory by examining a relation between queerness, performance and the archive. In it I explore institutional archives and the metaphors of the archive as it operates in the academy, while focusing particularly on the way in which queerness may come to be archived. Throughout I use the analytic of performance. This work builds on and extends from crucial work in Queer studies, Performance Studies and Archival Studies. As such it asks what has been said and what we can say with these givens to offer what sociologist Avery Gordon has called “transformative recognition” (1997, 8). The project contributes to knowledge a mode of inquiry I create and deploy which queerly addresses current theory and practice, asking that we move beyond to consider new forms of care with such material. Among its original moves are being first to critically explore the John Sex archive, as well as the work of artists Taylor Mac, Mitch & Parry and Christa Holka.

In the project, I also employ a methodological framework of the promise following the work of Shoshana Felman (2003). Throughout the chapters, case studies explore central notions to the archive: preservation, history, affect (desire) and community (lifeworlds). In writing the case studies my methods take off from ethnography as well as Performance Studies. In the end, the project is not conceived of as an archive; *per se*. Instead it tracks key movements of inquiry into archival practice and the situatedness of queerness in relation to such practices, as evidenced in performance, in both the theatrical and anthropological connotations of the term. I have conceived of and track three types of bodies through the dissertation: inquiring bodies, queer bodies and archival bodies. The inquiring body becomes the catalyst for archival intervention.

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CONTENTS

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements	2
Introduction: Carrying Queerness	5
Chapter 1: The Artist as Archivist	54
Chapter 2: Cut Pieces	120
Figures 1-5	164
Chapter 3: Looking for Sex in the Archive	169
Chapter 4: Swapping Spit: (Anti)sociality and queer theory	204
Chapter 5: What's the use in wondering?: Queer Debts	255
Conclusion: P.S.; or practising scholarship	297
Bibliography	304

INTRODUCTION: CARRYING QUEERNESS

The Australian performer Meow Meow is due up next. I am seated at Joe's Pub, a cabaret space at the Joseph Papp Theater¹ on Astor Place in Manhattan. I am with my (then) partner and we are in the front row at our own table. A disturbance of some sort occurs behind us, back near the bar. A woman's voice becomes more audible, something like "No, no. Sorry, No" is heard. I turn to observe. A woman with a leather jacket and black trousers is carrying a large bag. Her hair is dark brown, her eyes are glittery and she has bright red lipstick on. She is carrying two cigarettes in one gloved hand. A spotlight hits her; it seems the performance has started.

"NO!" she screams. "Don't light me!" She continues to apologise. You see, she simply can't perform tonight. Things have gone wrong. There were supposed to be dancing boys. There was supposed to be *more* to the show, and it's all gone wrong. Sorry, no. She can't go on. A stage hand runs from the stage with a microphone and hands it to her. Her refusals, and apologies, continue now more audible. She begs an audience member to help her "I have too much stuff, can you just hold this?" Handing the patron her heavy bags she continues to argue the point that the show simply can't go on. She mimes for us what would have happened, if there were to be a show. She marks dance moves, sings small snippets of songs, and as she offers a small operatic trill the spotlight hits her again. "NO! Don't light me – light the stage."

The stage at Joe's Pub is a small triangular thrust stage. A piano, a stool and a microphone stand are all that are present on the stage. The lights go up to half on

¹ A general note on usage; when citing an American scholar or venue/event I have retained the American English spelling for all words. This is most apparent in the term theater/theatre, as well as "z" versus "s" spellings of conditional verbs and gerunds and "o" and "ou" spellings as in honor/honour.

the stage. The house lights remain lit. People begin to laugh, some nervously some in on the joke. The performance begins, it would seem to some, but to what and where should it lead?

“Can you help me with this?” Meow Meow asks an audience member to help her with her coat, if she could just get it off perhaps she could, maybe, do something?

“Could you just bring that up to the stage for me?” The person holding her bag shyly moves through the crowded audience and drops the bag on the stage. One arm is free from the leather jacket. It will take another audience member to help her out of the jacket, who will be directed to take it to the stage as well. Standing on a banquette, Meow Meow asks another member of the audience to hold the microphone, as she adjusts various items of clothing on her body, smokes some of her two cigarettes and continues to explain that really the show couldn’t go on, but perhaps just a little of something? You were promised a show, after all. She calls to the sound booth to put on a track. She screams when it is the wrong one, directing them to another one. “This isn’t going well; it was all supposed to go so differently,” she notes before launching into a song.

Her voice is strong and operatic. She sings while walking through the audience, literally. She moves over and behind chairs, straddling audience members, begging them between verses to help her, to lift her leg for her, to hold her cigarette. At one point, crouched in a gentleman lap she asks “Could you just, you know, lift me up? The people can’t see.” Continuing to sing, her body hugged closely to his, singing into the microphone which is next to his ear, he stands. She wraps her legs around him and raises the arm holding the cigarettes, smiling. “Maybe just a bit closer to the

stage?” she purrs. The man begins to move, but the crowded audience makes it hard for him to navigate. “HELP ME!” she screeches throwing an arm out to a nearby audience member. Very quickly she has un-wrapped herself from the man and is being held aloft by four audience members, two holding her arms, two legs. Another audience member holds the microphone to her lips. Sitting upright, her legs split, she is passed along down the audience toward the stage. Using whoever’s arms come to get her, she “stage dives” in reverse. By the end of the song, interrupted with screams for assistance and giggles of pleasure, she is on the stage. She belts out the last few lines of the song; I don’t remember now which one. The lights go down in the audience, the spotlight hits her face: applause.

I have seen Meow Meow many times now. The trope of refusing the show, of explaining what would have happened and then being carried on (literally), is often employed. Meow Meow is carried on and carries on with a show; not *the* show. That show, the show that would have been, can’t happen. The beginning of the show (each night) is constantly deferred. Is it when she walks in, muttering? Is it when she finally hits the stage? Is it only after she has completed the present show, in place of the show we were meant to see that something like *the show* takes place? Or, are these just multiple beginnings, marked by the failure of the promise of the show that could have been, that was but isn’t anymore, offering something else? Failing to start; beginning again.

REPITITIOUS BEGINNINGS

The introduction to this dissertation is marked by multiple beginnings. This has something to do with methodology. It has something to do with storytelling, or one

might say historiography. It definitely has something to do with performance, with queerness and with the archive.

The “archive” as a site, institution, ideology or epistemology has been of key interest in much recent scholarship, within the disciplines of performance, and beyond.²

What occurs in these theorists’ passionate deployment is that its multivalent (and often paradoxical) properties of containment, order and identification (to name a few) come to stand for a plethora of arrangements of things. As Derrida noted in 1994: “Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word ‘archive’” (90). In the seeming limitless scope of the term archive, it becomes necessary to delimit where and how this term is being used or referred to so as to better understand the type of work it is doing, is not doing, or might come to do.

Similarly, theoretical deployments of the term “queer” have exploded to a point where the meaning and its use are no longer manageable. Queer theory arrives on the scene in the early 1990’s and is speedily mobilised to do work for not merely sex and gender studies but also race, post-colonial, disability and trauma studies. Like the theoretical and metaphoric engagement with the archive, Queer takes on at least two modalities: “Queer”, capital Q, with its all-encompassing theoretical terrain and “queer”, in the nominal and verbal, with specific real-world identifications surrounding the gendered and sexed bodily relationships within the social.

This project addresses the interrelationship between these two explosive (and exploded) terms. How might we archive queerness? What is queer about the archive? The political nature of these questions is caught up in both terms and their

² See Auslander 1999, Halberstam 2005, Love 2008, Merewether 2006, Muñoz 1996/2009, Phelan 1993, Reason 2006, Roach 1996, Taylor 2003, Roms 2002, among many others.

relationship to classification, censorship, knowledge production and, I assert, the body. Central to this project is a reliance on an organising principle that performance, understood in both anthropological and theatrical modes, is the best medium through which we might begin to posit an “answer” to the basic and broad questions posed above. Performance here extends to visual and theatrical cultural expressions, usually wherein body to body (either “real” or “representational”) transmission of knowledge occurs.

The archive is already quite queer. It is not just one thing, but a mesh of possibilities between actual physical documents and ephemera (in the archivists’ sense), and the larger ideological work of an institution understood to save, maintain, order and classify cultural knowledge. There are at least two generalised ways to consider the archive: first as overarching cultural metaphor (herein noted as the Archive, capital “A”) and actual physical archives (herein noted as archive/s, with a small “a”).

The first is a singularly plural Archive – a metaphor and ideology which seeks to totalise knowledge for specific purposes. The second is the plural yet singular archive – actual collections which seek to index bodies and bodies of knowledge. One might call the former the “hegemonic archive;” however, this qualification would suggest that we might understand who or what hegemony means to any one culture. This singularly plural archive is more aligned with Foucault’s definition of the archive in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* – as “the general system of the formation and transformation of statements” (1969, 146). The second archive, perhaps understood as a “resistant archive” also cannot be so reductively qualified. These archives, small

“a,” include collections and actual archival sites which, while perhaps following archival methods to maintain, classify and make public private experience, may not understand their work as “resistant.”

The encounter with Meow Meow I staged for you, how she began (or failed to begin, perhaps) comes from a specific archive, a bodily memory. I am beginning again now. This time I’m beginning with performance, in general. Not a performance, perhaps. In thinking of the beginning of a show (the kernel of an idea, the first rehearsal, the first tech, the first night, the next night after that) I am also thinking of other firsts: a first kiss, a first car, a first job, the first page of your dissertation. Each of these firsts is marked, paradoxically, by being able to be re-marked; to be firsts again. The first page of this dissertation, four years ago, used to say “Indelible Materiality” at the top and describe a dance performance I saw at Performance Space 122 in the East Village off Manhattan. Now the first page begins in the action of a performance already having begun. It’s your first, and my first, but it’s not *the* first. My first kiss was with a girl named Jen. But my other first kiss was with a boy whose name I don’t know. My first kiss with my last lover was the beginning of something altogether different than I expected. Beginning is as confusing as ending.

Beginning again: “performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity” (Taylor 2003, 2). Performance Studies scholar Diana Taylor proposes a definition for performance useful in beginning, again here. She goes on to differentiate between an ontological and an epistemological relation to performance. In the former, a thing is given the status “performance”

through a relation to “theatrical, rehearsed, or conventional/event appropriate behaviours” (2003, 3). Taylor is quick to note the cultural boundedness of this ontological status: “what one society considers a performance may be a nonevent elsewhere” (2003, 3).

In its epistemological capacity, performance is understood as a methodology for analysing events. As Taylor posits, “embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing” (2003, 3). The locality of this transmission of knowledge is again highlighted; performance as a method for analysing cultural reality is bound up in the environmental issues surrounding performances to make such events intelligible at all.

We could read my kiss anecdote through this is/as binary that Taylor sets up. Saying my first kiss *was* a performance means that it staged a specific type of response by a public. We could read my first two kisses *as* performance and unpack the various ways in which the act(s) engage with culturally situated forms of gender, sex and sexuality. In both cases the realness of the event and its constructedness are called into play.

Taylor’s definition of performance hinges on a theatrical and an anthropological use of the term performance. I have chosen it, among the many other definitions of performance because it mobilises a set of practices which frame this project.

Understanding performance as a bounded object *and* as a cultural relation will allow me to unpack various ways in which performances shape cultural intelligibility (herein usually with regard to the formation and experience of something called “queer”) as well as how and why performances get preserved. Preservation comes in

multiple forms. Taylor's work in her 2003 *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* seeks to destabilise a hierarchy between written document, as cultural record, in the archive, and embodied forms of transmission, for her the repertoire – which may be more difficult to locate, transmit, translate or carry forth. I am equally interested in the ways in which cultural memory is shaped in and through performance. My specific interest here is the way in which queerness, and queer performance, is carried forward. A method of carrying, and caring for, cultural experience is research. Research, as I and those whose work has influenced my practice understand it, is an embodied practice of inquiry and writing. The subjective encounters of the researcher, with things like performance and theory, brings to bear certain opportunities for preservation. Writing as a strategy for preservation is a concept I will explore more in relation to the project, later. I call the body engaged in research, of any type, an "inquiring body."

An inquiring body need not have an institutional affiliation – like that of a scholar or governmental official. This body desires a relation with an object; it wants to *know* something and transmit such knowledge through various means. This might take the form of a scholarly work, or a performance, a photograph, or a blog. However, the transmission might never take form in a way which is formally engaged with circulation. Coming to know, the critical act of the inquiring body, might be about the unique experience of such a process; no aims or outcomes are necessary.

Clearly a formal project like a dissertation has aims and outcomes. And I will begin to expound upon mine for you now. I will begin again. I will go back to Meow Meow, there at the corner of the bar beginning again a show that cannot begin, as such.

This will aid me in conveying the framing device that I have employed in each of my chapters. This methodological choice is one which I feel mirrors the Archive – a promise of immediacy, of liveness, of a Thing.

PROMISES: OF BEING CARRIED

Meow Meow has promised us a performance. Or, perhaps more specifically, we were promised a performance by Meow Meow. We do get a performance by Meow Meow, but not the one that was supposed to happen. This is not a broken promise, *per se*. The act of promising allows for something *other* to occur; we come to know³ differently. We are carried, like her body, back to a (different) beginning, there on the stage. The stage is metonymic of performance. And while, as I've inferred above, Performance Studies is equally interested in the *is* of performance's ontological grounding and the *as* of its anthropological propensity, the site of performance is always key.

Meow Meow is carried to the stage by the audience. She is able to begin, again, through the support of other bodies. What we receive is different than what *could* have been, or even what *was* in the performance that didn't occur for us that evening. I offer this theatrical trope, of the chanteuse playing up an inability or reluctance to go on, as a way to consider proceeding with the archive, especially in relation to performance. It was in watching Meow Meow carry out this act, multiple times, that I began to think about the function of the scholar carrying performances

³ Coming to know is a construction that is used by both Lacan in his writing on identification and transference as well as by Foucault in his discussion of heterotopias. I discuss Foucault's notion in Chapter Three more explicitly. Lacan's notion of coming to know is most clearly articulated in Chapter One of his now canonical collection *Écrits* when he describes the mirror stage and subject formation (1977).

forward into the future and onto the stage of the page, where these performances perform new functions for the inquiring body reading. The promise to make present what was past is, in this way, understood as a process of carrying the archival remains, supporting them through the subjective reason of an inquiring body. It is a choreography of transmission dependant on reference; to utterances (linguistic or somatic, and more) that have come before. Making present effects specific changes to the past performance – yet the promise of making present enacts a type of beginning, a possibility to begin again.

This effect is best expressed by Shoshana Felman in her *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan and J.L. Austin or Seduction in Two Languages* (1980). In this text, which I explore throughout this dissertation project, Felman unpacks speech act theory by staging a reading of philosopher of language J. L. Austin's *How to do things with words* (1975) in and through Molière's *Don Juan*. Austin meets Don Juan in a theoretical performance of how speech *acts*. Their words intermingle and reveal modes of exchange that are evocative and moving: love and its requisite pronouncements unpack themselves via Don Juan's linguistic fervour and the power of Austin's theory of speech.

In Chapter Two of Felman's text, "The Perversion of Promising: Don Juan and Literary Performance," she stages an important opposition to language's effect on a body. This effect is one that is imperative for considerations of the archive. It questions notions of facticity, desire and of trust. While I will outline her argument here, I will take up the question of evidence itself later on. Felman argues that within Molière's

play the real conflict is between two opposing forms of language: one constative and the other performative. In the constative view:

Language is an instrument for transmitting *truth*, that is an instrument of knowledge, a means of knowing reality. Truth is a relation of perfect congruence between an utterance and its referent, and in a general way, between language and the reality it represents. (1980, 13, emphasis in original)

Language here enacts positivity – evidence speaks itself. Yet for Felman’s reading of Don Juan, truth is less important, perhaps less trustworthy. His language is performative. “Saying, for him, is in no case tantamount to knowing, but rather to *doing: acting* on the interlocutor, modifying the situation and the interplay of forces within it” (1980, 14, emphasis in original). Don Juan’s language cannot be qualified as true or false, instead, following Austin’s lexicon for performative utterances, only “felicitous or infelicitous” – notional here of its success in doing what it says⁴.

Don Juan’s famous seductive prowess is read by Felman as his ability to produce felicitous performative utterances. His ability to seduce, through language, is most effective through his use of the promise. Promises, Felman notes, are the highest order of performatives. As I discuss in Chapter Three, Austin has a somewhat harder time with promises, shifting his stance on them. Felman address the “slipperiness” of the pledge or promise later in her text, but makes use of the capacity of promises to

⁴ Austin posits that a performative utterance can neither be true nor false. Instead it must be considered felicitous or infelicitous with relation to the conditions of the utterance to its intention of declaration, request or warning (1975/2003).

forever open up the potential for an act to occur – deferring the referent for which the speech act relies, to a futural *will* instead of a cited *did*.

Felman posits that the figure of Don Juan's life is anaphora – “the act of beginning ceaselessly renewed through the repetition of promises not carried out, not kept” (1980, 24). Don Juan cannot fulfil his promises: he cannot stay married, or stay true to assumed pledges to his father. Yet each failed promise “makes it possible to begin again” (1980, 25). Don Juan lives through repetitious beginnings; promises not kept allow him to promise again, promise more. Felman argues that this figurative position assists Don Juan in evading death – through a constant renewal of beginnings, Don Juan cannot *end*. To put this in another way, meaning cannot be made of his promises because each promise provides the space-time for a new beginning. There is no end, no resolution to the promise; only new effects of such promising. As such, linear time means little to Don Juan; issues of before and after and even behind or ahead do not have the same purchase for Don Juan, whose seductive promises pervert quotidian spatiality and temporality (1980, 29-31).

Promises shuttle us between temporalities and locations: here and there, then and beyond. They press upon normative logics of time and space through their performative force; a commitment, a pledge – open to modification, modulation, more. In Felman's deconstruction, the figure of promises rejoices in their inability to cite, for sure, what will have happened. It is this sort of productive perversity in and through the speaking body, one whose actions change the reality around it that interests me. This dissertation offers a promise, a promise to work in a manner similar to the archive, preserving certain bodies while omitting and obfuscating

others. This dissertation performs a promise *for* performance, as a means to address the complexities of living in late Capitalism; offering repetitious beginnings on the page as stage.

It is my belief, and I stage it for you in this dissertation, that the Archive promises a past in the present for the future. Archival records, fragments of various pasts, are accessed in the present, not to re-live, but to begin anew a relation to what has come before. The inquiring body entering the archive has the chance to bring you not what actually happened, not even what will have happened, but can fashion for you a reality of what occurred, there in the relation between bodies. My use, here, of bodies needs to be teased out, and I will attend to that shortly. There are always multiple bodies when one speaks of the archive or of performance.

Each chapter of this dissertation promises to carry you with me on the journey I took. While I employ other methodologies, ones perhaps more grounded in empiricism, I am sceptical of such positivist leanings in a project which seeks to negotiate a fragmented figure like the archive, with the ephemeral realities of performance and queerness. Like a good performance, I endeavour to show you, adeptly. What comes to meaning here is a relational process. I invoke scholar Peggy Phelan at the outset of Chapter Four. She says of an experience of performance that she “wants to promise rather than prove it” (1997, 16). While the burden of proof may well be on me, as the author of this scholarly work, to *prove* the work, I am interested in proofing strategies that rely on the open boundaries of promises. When I say proofing strategies I am indexing ways of coming to know an object of inquiry which may seem to be contra to normative analytics. Thus they are strategies whose

rigour is differently mobilised. Each chapter is a new promise. Each promise is built on the next; they are not autonomous, yet they are not structured to give a total picture. This is, in part, due to the fragmentary nature of the Archive – only parts of things are left behind. These parts may be pure chance, highly selected or a combination of both. Some of the things I found surprised me, some of things I went looking for. With each body that I bring to light here, I made a promise to preserve the relation of the inquiry.

While discussing certain figurative bodies that people this dissertation in the next section, I will also unpack the various methodologies that formed the structure of my research and writing. I have, until now, laid out a formal structure for my relation to the chapters; how they work as an entire project. Promises are made, are open to being broken, and are ready for new and different work.

BODIES

The Inquiring Body

I have already offered a new term: the inquiring body. I have said that the inquiring body is one engaged with forms of research and is not necessarily affiliated with institutions. I want to expand now on this formulation. Inquiry connotes the action of seeking knowledge. The term here is used instead of enquiry for two reasons. The first being that as an American, the term that first came to me was *inquiry*. Further, in American English inquiry connotes an investigation while enquiry connotes a request for information. While the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) renders the two

synonymous, I make the distinction so as to indicate the searching function of the inquiring body.

The inquiring body is one who uses things like archives. It is a body engaged with the transmission of knowledge. This may take the form, as it does in the following chapters, of visual artists, theorists, performance artists, photographers, sons looking for their fathers, or lovers. The inquiring body is engaged in research of a specific sort: one which utilises archives. This may mean that anybody is an inquiring body, and that largess is useful. Archives are becoming more and more nebulous, and as I discuss in “The Artist as Archivist,” the rise of digital cultures we have means newer and more quotidian forms of archiving to assess and access by inquiring bodies.

A body seeking knowledge also produces knowledge. The inquiring body is informed by the archival – records stored in archives. The form in which this knowledge production takes, as I’ve already noted, need not be scholarly or artistic. It may be that the inquiring body is surprised by an encounter, or is driven to know, and does “nothing” with this information. Despite “doing nothing” the inquiring body will be changed. It is my assertion that the body is archival – constantly producing the archive. Whether or not the knowledge is transmitted in a written or embodied *public* display, the inquiring body retains the trace materials of the inquiry. The body archives. Scholar and curator Adrian Heathfield describes something akin to this in relation to dancer’s bodies:

As most dancers will tell you, the body is a house of habituation: one holds oneself, acts and moves, according to learned customs laden with often

unknown and undisclosed values. Power relations are thus inhered in habitual practice. But a body is also an agency for unlearning, and the subversive reiteration of the habitual practice within an aesthetic may come to question the inherent values upon which that practice is found. (2006, 190)

The body is a creature of habit, reiterating practices it learns – perfecting some, softening others. As Heathfield infers, the body also forgets. Importantly, the body may forget what memory did not, and vice versa. Heathfield’s “agent for unlearning” pushes against disciplinary boundaries in the field of dance, yet we can also understand this to mean moments when the body unlearns its sociality, when it carries with it only scant traces of various pasts. The inquiring body sometimes comes to learn how it carries the knowledge it finds out into the world. It also must, sometimes, unlearn the work it has witnessed – forging new choreographies of transmission.

Of course, I am also an inquiring body. As such, the way I recount my experiences in the archives I discuss requires a certain methodological respect for the form of narrative. The implication of the first person narrative which operates in this project is indebted to methodological structures from literary theory and from ethnography. In the former I am thinking specifically of the work of feminist scholar Jane Gallop, who rationalised in her 2002 project *Anecdotal Theory* a working structure for using the personal (seemingly trivial) in making theory do more.⁵ In the latter, the work

⁵ Gallop is not the first to argue for the personal as political. Decades of feminist theory pried open the space for such scholarly work. I foreground her work here because I am motivated by Gallop’s position on this matter.

specifically of anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) on participant observation and the writerly technique of “thick description” operates herein to open up the promise of my investigation.

I came to Jane Gallop’s work through a course on Freud during my graduate study at New York University. The professor made an off-hand comment about her essay on Lacan in the collection and I went to search it out. I devoured the book and found that it offered a rigorous method for attending to the conflicting desires of the inquiring body – one whose research and pedagogic life are awash with the corporeal desires for Others: students, theorists, lovers. Her stories of falling in lust with the intimate exchange of supervision, of being called up on charges of sexual harassment, on stalking Derrida, all unpack ways in which the inquiring body can contribute to knowledge and the ways in which desire is intimately connected to such an ambition. She argues that:

‘Anecdote’ and ‘theory’ carry diametrically opposed connotations: humorous vs. serious, short vs. grand, trivial vs. overarching, specific vs. general.

Anecdotal theory would cut through these oppositions in order to produce theory with a better sense of humor, theorizing which honors the uncanny detail of lived experience. (2002, 2)

Implicating the first person in the scene of inquiry allows for a different textuality to the research, making it more corporeal. But the attention to analytic rigour isn’t lessened in utilising anecdotal theory. In fact, she proposes that:

Beyond theorizing anecdote, I would hope to find the seductive fissures in theory. Beyond theorizing anecdote, I would hope to anecdotalize theory – to make theorizing more aware of its moment, more responsible to its erotics, and at the same time, if paradoxically, both more literary and more real. (2002, 11)

The realities of the encounter shaped by the project of inquiry are made more apparent in this practice. This is a reflective process which engages critically at the level of inquiry; performing a type of writing that preserves the encounter. For Performance Studies scholars this may sound something like a strategy of performative writing. (I will discuss this strategy more later when considering the performance of the archive and the archival body.) The reflexive properties of anecdotal theory mirror for me some of the key elements of the ethnographic writing that so many performance and dance scholars utilise when the role of their witnessing mixes with active participation (one may question whether a spectator, a witness to any event, isn't always already participating).

The ethnographer participates in the culture he or she is researching. They observe yet engage. Theorists in the early days of Performance Studies forming a discipline foregrounded a relationship to performance research that necessitated anthropological methodologies. Because so much of our critical acumen in performance research is second order interpretation (we aren't always *doing* the thing we are carrying forward), we are finding a way to write which brings forward the ways in which we are situating the signs we inscribe. Ethnography, as Geertz offers, is accounting *for* the cultural event. He posits that the "ethnographer

‘inscribes’ social discourse; *he writes it down*. In doing so, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted” (1973, 9, emphasis in original).

The ethnographer here sounds something like an archival records creator, producing for an archive. In Chapter One I will lay out the difference between a records creator and archivist, in the professional sense established since the 1890’s. However, new cultural forms – especially the digital – are producing new modes by which these connected yet functionally different positions (creator and keeper) may work. In fact, as I argue, there may be a functional collapse between the positions which will necessitate a change in the way we understand archives and how the metaphors within the Archive operate.

Geertz defines three characteristics to ethnographic “thick” description. First, it is interpretative. Second it is interpreting the flow of discursive functions operating in and around the object of inquiry – interpreting the interpretation. Finally, the interpretation “consists in trying to rescue the ‘said’ of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms” (1973, 10). Two things are assumed in Geertz’s definition. First is a semiotic approach to culture, which in reality is a product of the growth and interdisciplinarity of a discipline. Anthropology didn’t always make peace with the textuality of culture – though Geertz’s use here of the semiotic approach is appropriate for this project. If the intelligibility of things like performance, queerness and the archive revolve around culturally weighted signs, then emphasising textuality is appropriate. And if the representational force of each of these three terms can be related at all, it is through the subjective fiction of an

account of an experience. Or as Geertz puts it, these writings are “fictions; fictions in the sense that they are ‘something made’, ‘something fashioned’ ... not that they are false, unfactual, or merely ‘as if’ thought experiments” (1973, 8). The second assumption that Geertz mobilises is that of the ephemerality of cultural experience. This is a foundational notion for Performance Studies, as well. I will discuss this later in relation to my understanding of how evidence (case studies, anecdotes, archival materials) operates within this dissertation. The ease with which cultural forms evade the present, yet are felt long after their realisation (subjectively), draws many scholars to such interpretative work. Capturing what happens becomes a problem of fixity. To fix, as I discuss below, is a paradoxically mobile action. Indeed, as with Geertz’s definition, to fix is to promise something, again, for a different purpose in the future.

Dance ethnographer Julie Taylor, in her beautiful book *Paper Tangos*, negotiates these subjective fictions eloquently. Her attempt to fix the tango culture of Argentina, at a period when shifting governmental roles highlighted so much about the gendered and sexualised power structures at play in the country, slips and slides like every pledge. In a moment of thick description she describes performing a *cumplé*. This move involves bending the back deeply so that the torso and legs form a slightly curved “L” shape. In a moment of stark yet slippery reflexivity Taylor writes “my body’s head touched the floor” (1998, 112). In this shift from first person narrative to third person, we feel the (embodied) requirement of the ethnographer to be present and absent simultaneously – to interpret interpretation, even if this is an out-of-body experience. Here the inquiring body, Taylor as ethnographer, slides

us through the relationship of her body to the research, of inquiry deep in the body. In writing this experience she moves us, a second order inquiring body, perhaps, into the queer relation of self to object, and back again.

Before moving onto the queer body and then the archival body, I want to clarify the figure of the inquiring body. It is a body in the process of coming to know other bodies in and through something like archival research. I am an inquiring body, as such the implications of my relationship to the bodies I make present in this dissertation requires the use and analysis of my first person narrative. I employ writerly techniques such as anecdote and the ethnographic model of thick description to situate the experience of coming to know objects. You, as reader, are also an inquiring body, moved along by my words to find new things, different things: queer things. We share in the promise of inquiry.

The Queer Body

I understand all of the bodies you will encounter in this project to be *queer*. This does not mean that each of the bodies I engage with would identify as queer. In fact, queer cannot necessarily be understood as an identity. Instead queer might be best understood “as a practice or process of critique, an ongoing challenge to whatever stands as the norm” (Kemp 2009, 13). In Chapter Four I describe the arrival of queer as a theoretical term and model within critical theory. Queer theory, itself, is a body. It is a constantly shifting body of related texts which seek to negotiate practices in the social which push against normative regimes. Queer is most often thought about in relation to sexuality; and the politics of the bodies that sexuality is bound up in are

intensely related to queerness. However queer is not a newer sexual identity. As novelist and scholar Jonathan Kemp posits:

Queer is whatever it at odds with the norm. Queer is about not simply imitating the norm but exploring alternatives, and as such it has an inherently political motivation that sees sexuality itself as inherently political. For this reason, sexuality becomes the terrain upon which most queer theory and practice work. (2009, 12)

A queer body need not be homosexual (an identity caught up in the politics of sexuality) nor transgendered (a body caught up in the politics of medicalised notions of sex). A queer body would not preclude such forms, but cannot be said to have an inherent relation to them. This doesn't mean, as Kemp implies and I explain in Chapter Four, that queer bodies don't have the work of feminist, gay, lesbian, transgendered and race scholars to thank for language with which to position their critiques. Queer bodies are those that resist the norm, as well, I argue, as those that sense the paranormal and are changed by it. Chapter Five explores, with the assistance of scholars Avery Gordon and Joseph Roach, the queerness associated with the ghostly qualities of being haunted. Haunting can happen to anyone, and as such a relation to queer might be something that, while resistant to cultural norms, might just happen to anyone. Or to put it another way: it's not just that "anyone might be queer" but that "something queer might happen to anyone" (Britzman in Haver 1997, 288).

Part of this is to do with the fact that, as scholar Sara Ahmed argues, "queer does not have a relation of exteriority to that with which it comes into contact" (2006, 4).

Queer is a relational practice for negotiating hegemonic culture. Again, it is worth figuring that everybody must negotiate hegemonic structures. Despite the desire to imagine a monolithic centre of normativity which expels the abject, hegemony is an operation of power which produces normalised regimes as much as resistant ones. Michel Foucault's various projects have sought to define this notion of modern power, especially in *Discipline and Punish* (1973) and *The History of Sexuality* (1980). Foucault's modern power is non-authoritarian, non-conspiratorial and non-orchestrated – there is no “normal” at any one time. Normal is a process, a condition, of a set of bodily disciplines and cultural discourses which produce Subjects and with which they are constantly negotiating.

The paradox of queer identification continues. Queer identification takes on the full force of the term identification;⁶ it is a process and involves a dynamic matrix of forces to assume or come to know such space. To claim a queer identity or to be identified as queer is to thwart normative codes and practices publicly or privately. Queer bodies, when they come to be called as such, or name themselves, stand out. They are resistant. Archiving queerness is a hard task. Queer as resistant strategy pushes against disciplinary boundaries imposed by the archival techniques of description and classification. During the early days of gay and lesbian activism visibility strategies were put in place to draw attention to and define boundaries of those identity categories. Queer does not operate in the same way; it does not seek classification and often descriptions of queerness evade the empirical. This doesn't

⁶ Both Lacan's and Winnicott's writing on identification resolves identity as a process (Lacan, 1977, Winnicott, 1989). This psychoanalytic deployment of the term has offered for critical theory, and especially those engaged in identity politics, to draw out the constructed force of identity and identifications.

mean that queer can't find a home in the archive. But it requires a strategy of archiving that attends to its motility.

The bodies that I carry forth in this project are queer *to me* because of a way in which I understand their work to coincide with a set of theoretical paradigms aligned with what has come to be called queer theory, and because they haunt me. They shift the present condition of my being, they pull me back and carry me forward. Their work makes queer, for me, a relation to given modes of space and time, and indeed, given forms of knowledge.

And some of the bodies would call themselves queer. Photographers Catherine Opie and Christa Holka are able to discuss queerness, their identities and their artistic practices as related. Performer Taylor Mac happily refers to himself as queer. Performance duo Mitch & Parry both work in queer scholarship as well as queer art practices. For these artists and scholars queer is an optionable term to transmit modes of inquiry and operation. Applying queer as identification to others in the dissertation requires an ethics of situating their work and their identification alongside my desire to relate the queerness of my relation to them. Visual artist Kara Walker is not, necessarily, a queer artist. The term may mean nothing to her. Yet the way in which she mines history and the given archive of African American culture produces for me queer effects, as I discuss in Chapter Two. The performance artist John Sex, while flamboyantly sexual didn't utilise "queer." Queer at the moment he was creating the work I engage with, the 1980's, had different political ramifications. It was associated with the AIDS crisis. While Sex died from AIDS related complications, my analysis of desire and the archive, through his archival collection,

is not about *his* queerness, but the urges that seem out-of-place in a physical archive, and those bodies who aren't able to *be* in the archive in "normative" ways. Such a problematic, of a body's relation to the archive presents a final sort of body that I want to address.

The Archival Body

I consider the records in an archive as a body. Archival records are the remains of an entity; the documents are synecdochal for what transpires over time during the existence of an entity, in some cases its life. I say entity, instead of *person* because archival records preserve both cultural and administrative records of an entity – both institutions (which in legal parlance *are* bodies, acting as individuals with regard to law and finance) and individual subjects. I suggest this figurative move is necessary when attending to the remains found in archive.

Most societies are anxious about where remains are laid to rest. As Joseph Roach describes in *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996) cultural relations to the dead are tied up in geographically and temporally situated attitudes about the body in culture. For example, when societies became anxious about bodily contagion, they moved cemeteries from the city centre to the outskirts of the towns. This shift from a central mourning space for the departed to an abject space signifies changing attitudes about our dead. Thomas Richards, in his *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (1993), conceives of this shift in terms of the epistemological capacity of the archive. Knowledge, he argues, is only useful when it is containable, fixed. An anxiety about the dead returning (in his book this is figured

by the vampire) is an anxiety about knowledge and power.⁷ If the body can return from the dead, then what we know is no longer true. Fixing knowledge, in this case literally pinning the dead down, becomes a central metaphor to the Archive in its earlier positivist strains.

For many scholars as for Performance Studies scholar Rebecca Schneider, this anxiety also has to do with a relationship to the remains and memory. Knowing where the dead lie means being able to recuperate from such loss. In psychoanalytic terms this means mourning – letting the dead go. Mourning’s pathological other, melancholia, sees the living subject unable to let go of the lost other. (Below in the Introduction I discuss a queer relationship to mourning and melancholia.) Having an identifiable resting spot operates psychically as a means for us to negotiate loss *and* identity. The living person requires knowledge of the dead person’s passing, of his/her material effects and the location of those effects (including their body, or their body of work), in order to carry on and to carry memory forward.

Thus I begin to consider the archival records a body, and I follow the rich tradition of language nominating records in the archive with metaphors of the body: not simply the common term of “body of work,” but also how we refer to cultural heritage archives as a “corpus.” Staging these remains in an archive, preserving them in this way, sheds light on the life lived: we can re-animate the live from the technological means of its production. Put another way – we can live with them again by visiting their archival records, crafting a story of their lives in our present.

⁷ Elsewhere in this dissertation this anxiety crops up around queer bodies (also variously figured as vampiric) and as ghosts, returned from the dead to unsettle time and space. See chapters Four and Five.

Using the language of the body for records reiterates how much of my work on the archive must attend to writing. And writing about the archive mirrors writing about performance in that writing about performance also alters the event. Peggy Phelan in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) argues that a form of writing is called upon by performance: writing toward disappearance. “The act of writing towards disappearance, rather than preservation, must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of subjectivity itself” (1993, 148). Phelan calls this performative writing – writing that *does* what it says. This strategy is often employed, to varying effect, in performance scholarship. In Chapter Four I suggest I am attempting something *like* performative writing, in that I am writing to capture my presence in the event that transpired. I am cautious about naming that type of writing “performative” for two reasons. First, I am conscious of my desire to write something more like an ethnographic account, as I’ve discussed above. Second, to care for and carry archives is to distrust a notion of writing “toward disappearance.” I am invested in preservation. I write here to preserve the archival experiences I had – to carry out towards an audience the inquiry that took place.

While the thrall to a writing that enacts the subjectivity of its spectatorship is laudable, my work falls somewhere between Phelan’s view on writing being a practical mode of transferring performance encounter and Philip Auslander’s view that writing cannot function in this way. In his 1999 book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* Auslander argues that liveness itself is a position created only in opposition to its other: the record. Without reproductive technology there would be

no need to classify one experience as live (or more live) than another. The live, in his theorisation is “only that which can be recorded” (1999, 51).

Although Auslander argues against writing as a mode of record, in so much as it relates to the liveness question, this does not mean he dismisses the written record.⁸ Rather, he argues, the “static” recording processes (photography and writing) do not retain the same access to the live event. His theory depends upon our conception of the recorded image and sound as temporally “live” – one that engages a spectator in a “now” relation to the performance as well as one that assumes the ability of the records to wear. As a record wears, the experience of the recorded performance changes. Each new viewing is, in his theorisation, a new lived experience of the event (1999, 43-47).

Like Auslander, I am receptive to the ontology of the record, conceiving of it as a lived experience for the inquiring body. Unlike Auslander, I am interested in the “static” record very much. Half of the case studies in this project involve photographic or textual records from archives (Chapter Two deals explicitly with the photographic). As I discuss throughout the thesis, I do not see writing or photography, or any attempt at reproduction as “static.” The notion of records being fixed, and as such transferrable (either intellectually or economically), is untenable. As Auslander himself theorises, the wearing down of filmic recordings highlights their ontological status – they too degrade, decay and die.

Both Phelan and Auslander anthropomorphise the record. Phelan sees the writing record as acting (doing, in her Austinian inflected language). Auslander sees the

⁸ In his fourth chapter he examines copyright law, and the legal ramifications of writing, of and on performance.

record as aging and malleable. In these ways, I am following a tradition of seeing the after effects of performance (of the live) as being “embodied.” Indeed archival theorists also engage with the bodily-ness of the record. Archival scholars Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz⁹ describe how:

There is a basic dichotomy of archives being, on the one hand, heritage places with documentary records that *embody* historical memory and humanist culture, and archives being, on the other hand, bureaucratic by-products that encompass administrative evidence and public accountabilities. (2002, 181, emphasis mine)

The record here, in the cultural archive (“heritage place”), stands in for a body (individual or social). This synecdoche figures the after effects, the remains, as becoming bodied through archival interaction. In my argument the inquiring body kindles this interaction, reanimating possibilities and negotiating the construction of, as I discuss in Chapter One, lifeworlds. Obviously the ability to access these records is in and through the body of the archivist, who, as we’ll see in Chapter One, also has a hand in figuring the archival body.

In the triangle of archival body with inquiring body and archivist body, the positions are neither exact nor equidistant: each could shift positions. Any and all could be

⁹ As Cook and Schwartz advise this dichotomy represents historical practices of functional archives, as well as braiding in the cultural metaphors of how Archives function. Yet, neither strain of thought has concerned itself with thinking through the shaping of archives – how things are put in and how things are preserved, and to what purposes. Shifting societal ideas about “evidence and accountability, representation and reality, history and memory” (2002, 177) saw the shape and contents of archives change. As such, they argue for archives to be understood always as “sites of contested meaning” (2002, 181), wherein the performance of record, record manager, archivist, inquiring body and the archive itself are always called to question.

queer bodies, depending on need, one may dominate another's mode of inquiry or identification. However, I find it useful if we think of the archive as working in contrast to a library. In a library, objects circulate *as* themselves. Any object in a library on loan can leave and come back (mostly) *as* itself. In an archive, the records do not circulate. They can only leave *as* something else. To activate the archive is not to write towards disappearance then, it is to reproduce for the sake of circulation – to re-animate the bodies (of work, of people, of ideas). These bodies, as evidence, can speak to us, haunt us and turn us on. Figuring a body from the remains does raise specific issues about hegemonic deployments of the Archive (as I discuss in Chapters Two and Three). However, I demonstrate throughout this project how conceiving as the archival record as evidence *of* a body that you can *come to know* produces new associations from which we can produce other forms of research.

OF BALLOONS AND BARNACLES: FIXING EVIDENCE

This dissertation project has had to attend to various forms of evidence, but taking, as it does, a queerly postmodern perspective, evidence here can't necessarily be meant to mean fact, truth or even, sometimes, reality. This project has within it glittery fairy stories, haunted scenes and abject material bleeding out of its lines. What this project carries might not be evidenced in the same way, but it promises to show you something, to carry what it can.

Various theorists from disparate disciplines provide a form of scholarly evidence. Scholarly evidence is practised through invocation and citation; it is ritualistic in this way. Bringing other voices to the table means that the work that has come before can be carried forward in new ways, or represented to ground the work in ways

which allow the reader to engage with the material in the way that I did. Scholarly tradition asks for evidence to primary or secondary source material. Postmodern scholars, especially of queer and Performance Studies, have argued for the empiricism in the everyday – the way in which feeling and experience, while subjective, provide analytic frames.

To get at what is carried, herein, I want to consider two things. First, I ask what our relations to notions of fixity are: of evidence providing truth. In Chapter One, I discuss the way in which archival paradigms seek to furnish “truth” by preserving documentary records without appraising them. In this way the objects retain their objectivity by being carried into the archive in the form and order that they were created in. Appraisal has become acceptable in certain modes. Documents have come to be seen as carrying multiple truths. This evidence is seen to be open to interpretation. And we continue to return to the archive to find evidence, even if we are open to the plastic facticity of each of the documents we find there.

In presenting various forms of evidence I am adding to an archive: of queerness and of performance. I look to performances in the social, on the page and on the stage, to consider the contemporary engagement with queerness and the archive. These forms don’t stay still. Not that the archival documents are unmoving, either. This relation to fixity will help me develop the way in which I see the inquiring body as able to carry – a technique of the body which preserves histories in dynamic ways.

“To fix” is a verb whose transitivity marks a unique problematic for the archive, both as an analytic tool but also as a material practice. The archive attempts to “fix” culture by making firm or stabilising in place remnants and fragments of the past for

use in the future. This “[securing] against displacement” (OED online) is aimed, paradoxically, at reproducing culture *by* displacement: the archive operates through selection, censure, and erasure. Further, the modes of collection utilised by archives often render access impossible. Data on a floppy disk from 1983 is nearly impossible to retrieve now; the rising costs of server space make the massive digitisation projects by cultural archives like the British Library, or even on a smaller scale the performance archive Franklin Furnace, unsustainable. In its diagnostic function, “to fix” attends to mending or a repair, to go back and study. The OED offers¹⁰ that to fix is also “to castrate.” Woven between making stable and castrating is yet another meaning, from the French, “to put down in writing.” As I’ve explored above, the role of fixing culture through written documentation is a function of colonial space invasion, of assuming oneself in space so as to claim place, not for any past (as these are usually smudged away) but for a future.

As a purveyor of the archive, like most scholars, I’m intrigued by the associations one might make with the forms of the verb described above. Yet I’m most keenly aware of my own obsessional nature within an archive, wherein I am fixated upon an object; one object or one piece. To fix can also mean to fasten affective energy, in psychoanalytic terms, to cathect, onto an object. This fixation, this fetishisation, is a “crisis of the visible” (Lepecki 2004, 4) wherein desires dance across objects fixed for inquiry. To attend to these choreographies of desire I will describe my encounter with a sculpture by the artist Ricky Swallow. Swallow’s piece aims to examine issues of permanence and ephemerality, stillness and motion.

¹⁰ “fix, v.”. OED Online. June 2011. Oxford University Press. 4 August 2011
<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/70815?rskey=FC7yHj&result=3&isAdvanced=false>>.

Ricky Swallow was born in Victoria, Australia in 1974. I encountered his sculptural work by chance at the end of 2009 on a trip to Melbourne with my then partner. The National Gallery of Victoria's beautiful (and gorgeously air conditioned) showrooms were a chance reprieve from the immense heat and an opportunity to see some of the work by Aboriginal artists whose work I had encountered through reviewing a book by scholar Susan Manning. I wandered upstairs and happened upon a show entitled "The Bricoleur," curated by Alex Baker. The show included works created by Swallow since 2004, a combination of his better known sculptural work and a selection of his watercolours.¹¹

Swallow is well known for his meticulous wood carvings. Perhaps his most famous works "Killing Time" (2003-04) and "Salad days" (2005) are life size renderings of freshly killed foods (in "Killing Time" forest game and in "Salad days" a table of meats, fishes and fruit). Intricate carvings create a three-dimensional tableau of life just passed.¹² The passing of life, and the demarcation of such loss through the material remains of the life once lived, is a constant theme in his work. Bones feature frequently in his work, in whole or in fragments. Carved smoothly out of limewood, the bones take on an uncanny fleshy hue; the soft colour of the blonde wood imbuing a different liveness to expected bleached remains of a body since decayed.

While I loved the bones, especially "Tusk" (2007) – two skeleton arms suspended from a wall, their two boney hands clasped together amazingly carved from one long

¹¹ Gerald Vaughan (2009) "Director's Foreword" in Alex Baker (Ed.) *The Bricoleur: Ricky Swallow*. Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria Press, pp. 11-13.

¹² The passing is, of course, also highlighted in his use of wood. The now dead wood serves to transmit a once live event. So often in the archive one forgets the forest of once live trees that populate the many folders and books.

block of wood – I was struck by one of Swallow’s bronze cast pieces: “Caravan” (2008). “Caravan,” is a bronze sculpture of three “inflated”, yet grounded, balloons each encrusted with a cluster of barnacles. The sculpture, as I encountered it, struck me as purely emblematic of my research project – of the attempt to capture time, to capture the ephemeral, and to address the weight of both concepts *and* their representation. Further, its particular queerness – the oddity of the grounded balloons, with the colonies of barnacles on their delicate (bronzed) skins – appealed even more to me and the project I was still formulating at that time.

*Pulling things into and out of time*¹³

The surrealism of “Caravan” relies on a paradox of space/time. Barnacles and balloons, however perfectly capable of being the same space, can’t be in the same place. Their relationship to time requires them to inhabit space differently. Balloons, furtive and flighty, are a ludic delight, ephemeral, filled with ever depleting air, or floating away to burst there, way up there, out of reach. Barnacles are, as Swallow’s curators discuss, “nature’s testimony to the passing of time.” (Baker, 2009 27); barnacles take time to collect, grow and, unlike balloons, harden. Their endurance in space and over time is queerly juxtaposed to the balloon’s impermanence. The desire to realise their married relationship to space and time results in an odd collection – a forged memory encounter, a surrealistic dream. *The Bricoleur* curator, Alex Baker, offers that Swallow’s sculptures are archaeological; they are enduring fragments of human relation. Swallow works to realise, in intimate detail, pieces

¹³ Swallow says “I’ve always been interested in how an object can be remembered and how that memory can be sustained and directed sculpturally, *pulling things in and out of time...*”(emphasis mine), as quoted in Alex Baker (2009) *The Bricoleur: Ricky Swallow*. Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria Press, 17.

which “bear the marks of aging” (2009, 27), of time passed, caught from passing, fixed. In their fixity, as art objects, as heavy material, they endure in a way that the subject matter will not have; like our quotidian objects – that necklace your grandmother wore, your father’s wedding ring, the scrap of paper squeezed between two laminate sheets your mentor left behind. Baker, speaking for Swallow, says that his work, these “intimate objects... can be viewed almost as gesturing bodies” (2009, 18).

To what do these bodies then, gesture? Where do they take us and, perhaps even more importantly, where are they gesturing from? In the silence and moving stillness that I see in the theatre of Swallow’s work, I’m drawn back to the figure of the archive, of the collected remains of acts and the paradoxes of our scholarly (and pleasurable) engagements therewith. What gets lost, or perhaps displaced, in so much “archival” research, in the very sense of the Archive, are the processes, the material conditions, of the documents’ production, the bodies moving, gesturing in their present. In a Chapter One, on the role of the archivist, I will discuss further the interpretative function of the archivist on this very issue, but having already discussed documentation as process, as a queerly performative epistemological encounter, I want to consider the fluidly fixed nature of the memory encounter that “Caravan” incites.

Director and Performance Studies scholar P.A. Skantze invokes a notion of fixity in relation to her theorisation of stillness and the theatres of the seventeenth century. Speaking of Ben Johnson’s writing and the intimate exchange between reader and

writer of play text via the textual document, she discusses the “conjunction of the still in the moving”:

Though the work cannot ‘last’ unless ‘still,’ because what it was, was made in motion and the elapsing nature of performance results in a stillness at the end. No word is perhaps more wistful than ‘still’ in its two meanings, ‘still’ as in continuing and ‘still’ as in fixed before me to see forever. (2003, 35)

The fix, in Skantze’s critical move, invokes a sticking of desire in a moment, unhinged from normative time. The place of this fix, her gaze, lasts ‘forever;’ it lodges itself in memory, where it, like the conditions of its making, move. It will also decay in both “theres” – its archival place and in memory; wearing down, never still enough. Like the balloon the text itself might simply fly away, in bits from years on the shelf, and in the mind, like the barnacle, edges will calcify and the entity of the memory will be hardened over, a scarred shell.

Similarly, the dissipation of contact and slippage of context occurs in the scholarly practice of writing about writing. The reanimation of the material objects by those of us, especially in Performance Studies, inquiring in the archive may forget the body *in movement*. “The act of writing about writing,” Skantze cautions, “further encourages this forgetting, this neglect of the moments on stage when a body cannot enter unless it opens a door” (2003, 4).

BODILY TECHNIQUES

The choreography of opening a closing needed to manage the scene of the encounter, in writing, of the bodies entering and exiting in the scene describe by

Skantze is one that I need to unpack. Such choreographies will lead us, finally, to the technique of carrying that I invoke in the title of this dissertation project. In 1934 sociologist Marcel Mauss put forth a treatise on the body in culture.¹⁴ Published in 1935 as “Body Techniques” Mauss urges his reader to understand the various acts a subject performs within culture as a set of techniques of and for that body in relation to its cultural environment. As Barbara Browning helpfully glosses: Mauss’ “biographical list of body techniques’ begins with the choreography of birth and breastfeeding, and ends with the observation that ‘nothing is more technical than sexual positions’” (2004, 104). Mauss has expanded on Plato’s teachings on the technique of dance to engage with a specific understanding of the body in culture. The body he describes is one always engaged in the transmission of knowledge from body to body. Understanding that one culture’s association of a body’s capacity to move alone or with another is entirely indebted to a system of choreographic exchanges opens up the way one might engage with performance. Performance in this context is doing the double work of both its theatrical meaning and its more anthropological capacity. And the archive, of performance and of cultures in general, has to attend to the constantly shifting role of the performative scripts of social conduct.

Both Helen Freshwater and Lauren Stoler attend to this choreography of information and the issue of censure in a socio-cultural context, though in different veins. For Stoler, in her inquiry into Dutch archives entitled *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic*

¹⁴ Marcel Mauss, (1935/1979) “Body Techniques,” in *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 70-88.

Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense (2009), the navigation of what information became taboo or reprehensible is about moving with changing social mores:

Navigating the archives is to map multiple imaginaries that made breastfeeding benign at one moment and politically charged at another; that made nurseries a tense racial question; that elevated something to the status of an “event”; that animated public concern or clandestine scrutiny, turning it into what the French call an ‘affaire.’ (2002, 9)

She reminds her reader that conducting archival research is as complex as the negotiations of what and how those things came to be archived, in the way they are archived. As social codes shift what is recorded and coded for posterity alters; the researcher must be aware of the way things take precedence or fall away, or the placement of things in a trans-historical context.

So, as a means to understand the archive I turn to the choreographic techniques whereby archives are created and used. But what do I mean when I invoke the metaphor of choreography? If, following Mauss, all techniques of the body are choreographic, and I extend this definition to include the creation and use of archives as choreographic, what exactly is choreography? “Corpus” a self-described internet “magazine for dance, choreography, performance” posed this very question to 100 artists and scholars. Adrian Heathfield’s response aids my understanding of choreography, as I am both an ex-dancer and a scholar of performance, queerness and the archive. Of the many declarations he makes on the subject, here are the first seven I employ in thinking about choreography:

Choreography is both the considered structure and the visible pattern of moving bodies in space and time. Choreography is not limited to that which is rendered visible. Choreography is the authority of phenomena; it seems to contain within itself the totality of movement expression. Choreography is a trace-work of feeling in time. Choreography is that which connects the animate to the inanimate, the air to the ground, the living to the dead. Choreography is the impossible attempt to re-move the paradox of the stillness inside movement. Choreography is a transaction of flesh, an opening of one body to others, a vibration of limits. (Heathfield, year unknown)

Heathfield offers his reader a poetic disambiguation of the term. While I agree on multiple levels with these first seven statements, I do not think Heathfield is defining choreography as such, but indicating the constellation of meanings with which we might come to define *dance*. He later posits: “Choreography is the indecipherable language of bodies presented for interpretation” (Heathfield). In this sentence Heathfield engages with the politics of the term “choreography” more explicitly, moving from what I see as a description of dance to the notion of a *culturally specific scripting* of bodies in motion.

How we come to script the bodies that shape our world is, in my understanding, a choreography of the archive. Bodies enter the archive and are moved to re-enliven the various bodies they find there. The action of archival retrieval, of carrying forward the information we’ve gathered, isn’t at once as simple and complex as the techniques that Mauss describes. Carrying is a promise, a promise to not just furnish forward the information retrieved. In carrying you must bear various weights and

strains, you must go back and forth, like Meow Meow, moving from a place where the performance can't go on into surprising places where the performance continues. Before concluding with a description of what I have carried in the course of this dissertation, I would like to query the how, the technique of carrying queerness.

CARRYING QUEERNESS

An ending to mark the beginning; a question: how to carry queerness?

After listing “forceful movements” (pushing, pulling and lifting (1934, 17)) Mauss notes that this classification of movements is “the place for conjuring tricks” – where the body acquires techniques which astonish – force gives way to fine motor activity. As such he moves from forceful movements to techniques of care for the body. He lists rubbing, washing, soaping, dental care and defecation hygiene (1934, 18). As with all of his techniques, Mauss sketches for us the way in which the movements of the body in all of these actions are acquired and not natural (1934, 6).

I situate the answer to the question of carrying queerness somewhere between the forceful movements (Mauss shifts the term lifting to holding; I to carrying) and bodily care. Carrying queerness invokes a forceful movement which, delicately, cares for bodies through space and through time. Carrying gives way to care – both for Mauss’ beginning and ending: birth and sex – but also in the ways in which brute force gives way to the intimate proximity of bodies.

Queerness cannot be said to carry itself. Queerness exists as a relational technique, experienced when and if the body senses something contra to normative modes of

sociality. To carry queerness is to attend to the haunting, performative and obscure relations of pasts and presents which otherwise may not have a future. Importantly, following scholars such as Carolyn Dinshaw (1999) and Heather Love (2007), carrying is not necessarily a forward movement. Sometimes we have to carry things back to their place, putting them down, carefully, after inspecting what is there. Queerness can, in this way, be carried to a past which did not articulate itself in such a resistant discourse. But it must be care-full about its ability to change the objects it comes in contact with.

Carrying is a form of transmission. In using this term I am signalling the importance of the bodily relation to transmission as well as the psychic. Often we do not know, exactly, what we carry with us. It is moments when we *come to know*, in and through other bodily relations that the weight of what we have carried makes itself known.

The metaphor of carrying *as transmission* haunts me, and this project, in the spectre of AIDS. While I have carried this dissertation to fruition, a dear friend died from AIDS-related complications, and too many friends have contracted HIV. My friend never told anyone he was HIV-positive; it was only after his death that we learned what killed him. The interestingly terrifying thing about AIDS related death is that the virus you carry is not what kills you. Instead it makes you a carrier; your immune system falters and makes you a receptacle for viral contagion which, in a HIV-negative body would usually not be lethal.

With the death of so many men and women from AIDS related illness in the 1980s a lot was left unsaid and unsaved. Because no one knew exactly what was happening for so long procedures for care were improvised. When drug companies began

responding to the epidemic, and life-sustaining treatment was initiated, people still had no idea how to carry on. Activism at the time responded with a shrill cry for visibility. Not simply in terms of bodily activism – through groups like ACT UP and Queer Nation – but also through performative gestures of art intervention. Art became something that remained even after its creator was suddenly gone. As Douglas Crimp noted “Art is what survives, endures, transcends; art constitutes our legacy” (1987 4). Crimp is not arguing for art’s value in the pandemic. He is careful to note that art, while a record of the event, also produces associations in and around the epidemic.

He does argue that “AIDS does not exist apart from the practices that conceptualize it, represent it, and respond to it. We know AIDS only in and through those practices” (1987, 1). Art in the age of AIDS not only carried certain artists’ legacies, it also carried signs of the stigma that AIDS was producing. Scholar Paula Treichler argued in 1987 that AIDS “is simultaneously an epidemic of a transmissible lethal disease and an epidemic of meanings or signification” (32). Her decisive argument explicates the ways in which the intelligibility of AIDS which was rampant in the early ‘80s (no one knew *what* it was, biologically) and remains today (the meaning of AIDS has drastically shifted – it *isn’t* meaning the same thing). The metaphor of AIDS at the time of Treichler’s essay saw it conflated with the perceived perversity of the homosexual community. Read as a “gay disease” and a “gay problem,” public opinion about care of bodies and support for research was mired in phobic associations. And fear.

Fear permeates through to our contemporary moment, though its focus has shifted. As anti-retroviral drugs became more accessible and HIV-positive people became People Living With AIDS (PWAs) a new form of the strategy to make visible began its work. Safer-sex education and condom use became the buzzwords for all sex practices, but especially among homosexual men. The queer shift in AIDS signification practices was that it never fully opened up to being a pan-sexual problem. The bodies dying, in huge numbers in the early days of the epidemic, were gay male bodies. As the epidemic began to be regarded as a worldwide pandemic, affecting all sexes, the stigma never fully wore off. As a young gay man, I inherited the forceful message of using condoms to practice safer sex.

This trend caused its own backlash. The rise of condom-less sex (known as barebacking) has produced a new tide of infection. As such friends and lovers of mine are now living with and dying from AIDS in ways that we were taught *couldn't* or *wouldn't* happen to our generation. So much of this project originates in Downtown Manhattan where so many men died from AIDS-related illness. Having studied the pandemic since my days as an undergraduate, feeling the effects for real has been, frankly, terrifying. As a generation who grew up in the shadow of AIDS, many of us thought we would be and could be smarter and safer. We didn't have anything but the stories of the generation before us to carry us forward. We weren't there caring *for* the many bodies dying. Part of the charge of this project is fuelled by my desire to find ways to care for the bodies that died. So much of the work of those men who passed in the late 80s and early 90s didn't find its way into collections: there is no archive. One way I can care for my friends now, and those

who I feel indebted to from before, is to carry their work forward: to tell their stories.¹⁵

In certain ways however, the digital age is changing the shape of archival strategies.

Where we thought there was no archive we are finding records. During the writing of this project I worked to find information on the performance artist John Sex, who died of AIDS-related causes in 1991. In the three years after I learned of John Sex,

¹⁵ The archive of AIDS-related scholarship, like the bio-medical research ever continuing to stem and stop the virus, is plentiful. So many other scholars have already done magnificent work in managing this archive and its uses. It is imperative to gesture to this work, as it is to them that I am indebted in various ways. Indeed, as I have noted, to carry queerness is, in part, to carry this archive. It is also, for many invoked here and many working in and on queerness, a material fact – the virus is carried there, deep in the DNA.

It was often scholars and practitioners in the literary, visual and performance arts that were at the forefront of the activist strategies of early AIDS pandemic. Forming groups like ACT UP and QUEER NATION (in the US), these activists forged in-roads into bio-medical research, re-shaped social representations, and formed systems of material care for bodies learning to live with the disease. Imperative to me, in this project, was research conducted on art and activism in the early 80's undertaken at New York University's Fales archive. I discuss Fales more specifically in Chapter Three, when I engage with John Sex's archive. However many of the weeks of research there, and at Franklin Furnace Archive, were spent locating various artists working in response the pandemic. Whether marked (REPOtime's public art works on queer histories including those lost to AIDS) or unmarked (Michael Musto's 1986 writing on the downtown which refuses to mention AIDS, despite its presence on every page), queer research requires attendance to the significant weight of AIDS. Already in this introduction I have invoked the necessary contribution of Douglas Crimp (1996, 2002). Crimp refocused critical inquiry to expose the performativity of the AIDS across multiple discourses. Working with and from Crimp I have also invoked Michael Moon and David Eng's (1995 and 2000, respectively) reformatting of the melancholic aspects of queerness and its relation to (inter)national moralism. More recent work has already been noted in this introduction as well, including Richard Gere's dance ethnography of the AIDS pandemic (2004). Foucault's contribution to the AIDS archive was in and through specific discursive gestures. His body of work did not speak directly to AIDS for some time, however his activism and volumes on the history of sexuality (1976, 1978, 1984) all work to situate sexuality and its resultant socio-somatic relations as operations of power. Important to note here, as well, is the work of Susan Sontag in her *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (1988), which sought to situate the discursive reality of AIDS in the early days. Diana Fuss' 1991 collection *Inside Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* and Grant Kester's 1998 *Art, Activism & Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage* both bring together important work on the relation to activism and theory in and on AIDS. Other voices join me in the pages that follow with regard to the AIDS pandemic, including Leo Bersani (1998), Barbara Browning (2004), Richard Dyer (2002), David Halperin (1995), David Román (2005), Sarah Schulman (1995, 2012), Michael Warner (1999), Simon Watney (1988) and many others. As well, recent work by colleagues (especially Debra Levin's recent PhD (2011) at New York University on straight and lesbian care work arising from ACT UP and the creation of new art works out of care), ghosts my thinking. Even this short enumeration of work that makes itself present in the project begins to show the immensity of the AIDS archive and its various strains of making legible, tangible and practical the realities of the pandemic for *all* bodies, not just those attending to queer and performance histories.

and by the time Chapter Three was fully drafted, many significant new records have come to light. The rise of blog culture and webcasting (people who upload video content to sites like YouTube) means that people are mining their personal collection and making it publically available. Thus new records are being formed by a disparate collective of people. These records constitute a mobile archive; new inquiring bodies are finding ever more innovative methods of finding the evidence they seek. Footage of John Sex, which had been restricted to only his small archival collection at New York University, is now growing with new YouTube videos being uploaded monthly. One of the ways in which these new archival strategies operate is in a form that was highly theorised subsequent to the outbreak of the AIDS pandemic.

Reconceptualising the structures of mourning and the fetish became central to scholarship at that time. Scholars like Michael Moon and David Eng have produced work that refigures our relationship to the dead and dying and to the fragmentary records which have been left behind. Michael Moon's posits an erotics of mourning, urging us to drop the stigma of the AIDS pandemic: we must "re-enact and reverence our erotic connection" with the departed (Gere 2004, 103 and Moon 1995).

In the Freudian conception of mourning, we appropriately *let go* of the lost object. In newer conceptualisations of Freud's theory on mourning and its perverse counterpart – the obsessional melancholia – the mourner is seen to occupy a less purposeful position. The melancholic cannot let go of what has passed. Scholars like David Eng argue that this position is ethically and politically more charged for subjects dealing with the immense traumas of a State-sponsored terror and the AIDS

pandemic. Indeed Eng argues that considering the use-value of melancholia means thinking of “the dis-ease less as individual pathology than as a model of group formation” (2000, 1278). This structure of thinking, and of feeling as Raymond Williams terms it, offers a reason for the contemporary rush to record creation via the digital technologies at hand.¹⁶

Making sense, and use, of our melancholic and fetishistic attachments means paying debts to the work that came before us. One thing that bodies, in general, carry is debt. In Chapter Five I explore debt structures in the social in more depth. For now I will note that those of us working in marginal sectors of society have much debt owed to the feminist, race and sex/gender theorists who have done the forceful work of shouldering the weight of carrying out new methodologies. Our job is to attend to these debts not through a re-payment, per se, but through a shared value in carrying – in caring together.

The spectre of AIDS produces methodologies then, for attending to archival records – for inquiring in the archive. It also manifests connections between carrying and care.¹⁷ In this chapters that follow I hope that my promise to carry you with me, and to care for the bodies that I have found, will provide new ways to apprehend the record and animate our inquiring bodies. The form and function of this work is indebted, and, as I argue in Chapter Five, this is inherently social. One form of my

¹⁶ I engage with William’s text (1977) most explicitly through elaborations made by Heather Love (2002) and Avery Gordon (1997). See chapters one, four and five.

¹⁷ The notion of care has been theorized in respect to the body, and especially the body after AIDS, by Foucault in his 1984 *The Care of the Self: History of Sexuality Vol 3*. Care, for Foucault, is a regimen for the self that produced self-mastery, self-sufficiency and happiness. It is inherently social; Foucault describes it as “an intensification of social relations” (quoted in Halperin 1995, 70). As David Halperin argues in his *Saint Foucault* (1995), Foucault’s care of the self was an individual strategy which worked to consider the *art of life* and not the *science of life*. For gay men, Foucault reminds us in the height of the AIDS crisis when sex and sexuality seemed like a death sentence: “Sex is not a fatality; it’s a possibility for creative life” (quoted in Halperin 1995, 73).

contribution to knowledge is the promise to carry on, to provide strategies for inquiry in the archive in ways that are new¹⁸, and that require a care of the work that has passed.

WHAT I CARRY

In the first chapter, “The Artist as Archivist” I argue for a functional collapse in the subject positions artist and archivist. With the rise of digital cultural techniques for preserving media, and the growth of online community sharing websites like Facebook, YouTube and various blogs, artists have new and more accessible forms of archiving their work. The open question of this chapter is what these new forms mean for the Archive and for archives themselves.

Still working from the position of the artist, Chapter Two moves in the opposite direction. Instead of artists creating archives in new forms of digital technology, I explore two artists who mine traditional archives to create new forms of history. In “Cut Pieces” I argue against historicism in the Archive. The archive is a contested site, one rife for new performances *of* history. The visual artists Kara Walker and Catherine Opie make work that takes documentation into and onto the body, back to the lived experience of phobic trauma.

Chapter Three, “Looking for Sex in the Archive” remains in the archive. Inside New York University’s Fales Library and Special Collections holdings I look for the remains of performance artist John Sex. I argue here for the archive as a site of desire.

Rethinking our bodily relation to the site of inquiry I carry further the notions of

¹⁸ They are new, by means of a relation to the work that has come before. My work has been to stage what is already there, in the multiple archives of theory and performance (and lived experience), and to see what emerges from such inquiry.

melancholic attachment and fetishistic joy. Looking for Sex also means looking for sex. Exploring the ways in which bodily knowledge is transmitted not only from archival record (made fetish) but also between inquiring bodies (in places that might be archives – bedrooms, toilets, stage spaces), I expose queer methods for research. Queerness is given an historical treatment in Chapter Four, *Swapping Spit*. Taking a performance piece by the artists Mitch & Parry as its central case study, the chapter carries us back to the early days of queer theory to arrive at questions of queer futurity. The delicate move between carrying and caring is explored in the ritualised performance by Mitch & Parry. I argue, alongside other queer scholars, for the use of the anti-social in queerness. What might the negative feelings in culture provide us with to carry us forward?

The performer Taylor Mac carries us back in the Chapter Five, “What’s the use in wondering?: Queer Debts.” Using Taylor’s performance *The Young Ladies Of* as a way to critique structures of social debt, I argue for a method of queer relationality that unpins us from identificatory desire. While the desire to *come to know* still operates, the violence of identification is thwarted through queer performances of inquiry. The inquiring body here is haunted by archival records: letters from a deceased father, a ghost returned and a haunting effigy on a stage. Alongside sociologist Avery Gordon (1997) and Derrida (1995) I consider the way in which the archive and hauntology are intimately linked in producing subjects. The chapter ends with more to say (P.S. ...) and as such propels me to consider, again, the modes in which this project said what it did. Like this introduction, which stages various beginnings – the promises I intend to have kept for you – the conclusion to the dissertation goes back and forth

across questions of practicing scholarship. What have I contributed and what more is there to say? The project concludes by not requiring the work to be done in the future perfect, a tense Derrida has ascribed to the archive – and one I push against; enjoying the fantastical possibilities of “Once upon a time.”

Carrying queerness one does not simply go forward *for* the future. Rather I offer this method as a technique of inquiry which forcefully cares for bodies, across space and time. We come to know ourselves through the relation to others. The strength it takes to carry others can be disremembered; the weight lifted from us does not mean that the torn muscle fibres will not miss the weight. To care is not to fix, in the diagnostic sense; carrying cares for by moving with a body. It is a promise; ready to begin again. My desire now is to carry you with me, back to where I went and to present you with the bodies that I now carry, here in this archival performance.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ARTIST AS ARCHIVIST

In this chapter, I will address the productive crisis of the archival turn which has seen a theoretical growth since at least the mid 1990's. This theoretical turn has produced a number of practical and theoretical texts which seek to position the Archive, archival practices and archivic realities as unfixed. Both the archive and Archive become a question: what is it? What does it do?

As scholar Kaye Mitchell has recently written "the archive has become [...] less a place, more 'a way of seeing or a way of knowing'" (2012, 1). My project is wary of the sort of easy move away from the material reality of the archive that Mitchell signals. There is always a material place of the archive – it may well be the body itself in the act of remembering/forgetting, or the institutional site of records' repository, or somewhere in a vast barren expanse where servers store masses of electronic information acting as the internet and (simultaneously) its archive. This is important. Why theorize away from the material reality of the archive?

This chapter argues for the consideration of a newer subject formation, the artist as archivist. To do so it relies heavily on a text by archival scholar John Ridener (2009). Ridener swiftly charts in his *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* the rise of the archivist as a professional and, importantly, international figure. To achieve such a position the archivist has to situate itself in relation to an entity, a *place* from which to do their work. This place is the archive. Through the rise of the archivist and growing *use* of the archives, over time, we see this place change drastically. Contemporary concerns with the archive call into question the use and value of the digital, as well as its practices. The digital gives rise

to a number of opportunities and questions for the archive. Considering the use of the digital, the focus here is on the way in which an entity like an artist might also be an archivist and vice versa. I focus first on an artist as an archivist and then on an artist archivist, both addressing new digital technologies within the archival.

This chapter addresses the technological shifts as key to paradigm shifts within artistic and archival practice; however it is not within the scope of the project to address these technologies in great detail. Instead, following archival scholar John Ridener, and others, this chapter will negotiate the role of the digital age in artistic and archival practices as the new, and perhaps queerly charged, space for present and future inquiry. Both of the artists who I will focus on as case studies are engaged in a relationship with cultural production and cultural recovery in digital space. The first, photographer Christa Holka, creates work that documents queer lifeworlds in both the United States and the United Kingdom. Holka has abandoned the curated space of the museum for the seemingly “open” space of the internet to present her work. This type of archiving highlights a shift in the ways in which we actively seek out and reproduce our lifeworlds. The second, performer Martha Wilson who founded and continues to run the archive and producing company Franklin Furnace, in New York City, has been working to support, produce and archive performance since 1976 (Sant, 2011, 21). The shifting landscape of archival technology has seen their immense archive of performances which charted the artistic production of downtown Manhattan throughout the early 80’s until the present day move into a digital realm. Wilson works to fundraise for the project of digitising the holdings of Franklin Furnace. Their project is no longer a question of material space for

documents but one of the economies of digital space. Wilson's work initiates questions about the use of the archive in contemporary culture. Further, Wilson as performer and archivist materially represents the collapse of the two positions I am negotiating in this chapter. Before considering Ridener's text and formulating, through Walter Benjamin and Hal Foster, respectively, the subject position of the artist as archivist, I want to chart the archive itself more succinctly.

THIS IS (NOT) AN ARCHIVE

To begin with the archive you turn first to the collection of documents which constitute it. How you decide to define the document and its physical formation (or not) is where things get more complicated. But archives begin as a formalized (though not always formal) collection of records. As Charles Merewether offers in his edited collection *The Archive* (2006):

Created as much by state organizations and institutions as by individuals and groups, the archive, as distinct from a collection or library, constitutes a repository or ordered system of documents, both verbal and visual, that is the foundation from which history is written. (10)

Like so many definitions of the archive, Merewether's operates through the exclusion of other related terms. What constitutes the archive then is what it is *not*. For Merewether the archive is not a collection or a library. As I discuss in later Chapters part of this exclusion is that collections have limited ordering systems and/or methods of care involved in sustaining records for use. As I noted in the Introduction, archives are not libraries: the archive does not circulate its documents beyond its imagined or perceived borders in the way a library does. The archive's

circulation resolves itself in the telling of 'history' by and through other inquiring bodies who represent their findings, who circulate not the record but their relation to it.

It is important to pause here and consider that Merewether's definition and my first steps at unpacking it are entirely post-modern in their construction. They assume a central tension around anything like the terms evidence, record, document or even memory. The instability of these objects and indeed the instability of the Subject who will view, use and/or criticize such objects will be in question. To question the remains isn't a newer construction of New Historicism. What constitutes a record has always been a germinal tension in archival production. As I discuss in Chapter Two and Chapter Five, questioning remains – of performance, or of lived bodies – is a necessary response to archival realities. However the structure and use of archives has come under immense pressure in the post-modern era to achieve its status as hinge point for cultural memory. As I noted in the Introduction via scholars Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz, the archival dichotomy of place and metaphor is also met with the dichotomy of an open documentary embodiment of the past and bureaucratic censorship of the administration of lives lived.

My project considers this space of the archive within cultural practices usually situated between England and the United States. This is a specialisation that is fraught with an intense history of colonial terror. I discuss the place of the archive, especially into relation to the inquiring body, in Chapter Three more extensively. Here, however, I want to address two central theorists – Foucault and Derrida – and their constructions of the archive as a way to chart out how others have extended or

critiqued that. As well, I will take up historical archival science as a means to consider the practical realities and ethnic dimensions of archival practice.

Foucault begins, in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, by articulating that, by archive, he does *not* mean “the sum of all texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past,” nor does he “mean the institutions, which, in a given society, make it possible to record and preserve those discourses that one wishes to remember and keep in circulation” (1969/2002, 145). He then moves toward a positive definition, one which attempts to define the archive as an active agent, speaking and editing: “The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements... but the archive is also that which determines that all these things do not accumulate endlessly... nor are they described in an unbroken linearity” (1969/2002, 145).

Foucault needs to chart the motility of statements to create the figure of a “complex volume, in which heterogeneous regions are differentiated or deployed” (1969/2002, 145): the archive. Yet the archive will not be built before us. Excavating, and not building, Foucault moves through negation to achieve the figure of the archive.

While I read with Foucault a specific longing for bodies to take shape in the spaces he provides, often bodies are left out, left silent, even as they are engaged in the immense play of discursivity that his entire scholarly project develops. Perhaps we can read his negative definition of the archive as a way to re-figure the speaking body. What would be unique in this formulation is that Foucault is carving out a

space, in the present, for the inquiring body that seeks something in the “complex volume” of statements around any given historical object.

In Foucault’s first negation the document, the material remains of culture are established as archival, but not the archive. The secondary clause decolonizes the documents in a place, forcing them, already negated as archive, to be specialised differently – to exist as space. His move to a positive definition, from which he will truncate his final positive definition, removes itself first, in the secondary clause, from the entropic tendency of total knowledge. The archive isn’t then, total knowledge, as he will clarify in a few paragraphs, but a subjective editing function.

He goes on to negate the saving function of the archive: “the archive is not that which, despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement, and preserves, for future memories, its status as an escape.” Nor, he continues again, “is the archive that which collects the dusts of statements that have become inert once more, and which may make possible the miracle of their resurrection” (1969/2002, 146). It does not have “the weight of tradition; and it does not constitute the library of all libraries, outside time and place; nor is it the welcoming oblivion that opens up to all new speech the operational field of its freedom” (1969/2002, 146). The archive, after these specific negations, is given a final, positive, definition: “It is *the general system of the formation and transformation of statements*” ((1969/2002, 146, emphasis in original).

Foucault’s use of negation in defining the archive is specifically about place. In negating place, Foucault is able to render the archive a cultural space – an “immaterial repository” (Halberstam 2005, 33). Queer scholars, especially, have

found purchase in considering the archive as immaterial repository. In this way the seemingly hegemonic archives of culture and history, which declassify queer lifeworlds through taxonomy or through pathological inscription (to name a few ways in which lives are censored out or negatively included), can be revised.

Halbertsam, like scholars Ann Cvetkovich (1997), José Muñoz (1999), and to some extent Rebecca Schneider(2001) and Valerie Rohy (2010), see immense value in configuring the archive as “floating signifier” (Halberstam, 2005, 169). As Halberstam states:

The notion of an archive has to extend beyond the image of a place to collect or hold documents, and it has to become a floating signifier for the kinds of lives implied ... The archive is not simply a repository, it is also a theory of cultural relevance. (2005, 169-170)

This archive, Halberstam and Cvetkovich argue, is a queer archive. It is one that resists easy collection and distribution because of the ephemeral nature of its varied forms of record. In both Halberstam and Cvetkovich the records utilized as archival are “the product of alternative presses, performance venues, film festivals and other cultural spaces and networks that nurture a fragile yet distinctive independent media” (Cvetkovich2003, 8). Indeed they are often the after-effects of queer performances within the social which, Cvetkovich remarks, are “hard to archive because they are lived experiences, and the cultural traces that they leave are frequently inadequate to the task of documentation” (2003, 9).

I, like so many queer and performance scholars, am enthralled by this notion of an archive that is not archival. And throughout this project I, too, engage with the

records which may seem to resist normative modes of documentation, preservation and care. Yet the scholarly act of writing even marginalised or reactionist/revisionist histories adds to material archives in multiple ways. Of course these projects can, and are doing, great work in prying open spaces in the social for queer lifeworlds, but I'm reticent in complying with an archive that is more theory than material. In the digital age so many of our feelings and experiences are captured in new forms of documentation (blogs, tweets, Facebook status updates, vlogs, comments, likes, email invoices, etc.). These forms of record seem fleeting yet are retained in vast and intricately managed, though often highly inaccessible, storehouses: servers. With the spur to digitize not simply our everyday but, indeed, the archives that these (and my) projects utilize means a different kind of material trace and a different kind of site for the archive that isn't inscribed in the floating signifier. Later in this chapter I attend to such questions.

Derrida's 1995 *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* was a huge spur for me in this project. Derrida wants to attend to the "half-private, half-public, conjurations, always at the unstable limits between public and private" (1995, 90) that the archive offers as a critical space. Despite being an opportunity for Derrida to consider Freud's museum – the site of an archive of Freudianism – the text instead moves to theorize away from collected knowledge as a locatable end. As Derrida's translator Eric Prenowitz offers, the archive "is only a beginning. It is not *the* beginning, and it never contains its own beginning" (1995, 109).

Derrida could take the critical space to interrogate Freud's archive, attending to the physical remains there in the Freud's museological home. Instead he mines this

home as a metaphor for the Father's home – Freud the Father of psychoanalysis. This home becomes, then, the Archon's home – Derrida has used the etymology at its Greek root: "*arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded" (1995, 2, emphasis in original). A privileged space Derrida notes but "unnatural" in its economic sense: "it keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves, but in an unnatural fashion" (1995, 7). In his *Exergue to Archive Fever*, Derrida does begin to examine the site of Freud's home, as he had of the Archon's home in the prefatory note, but this gives way to considering the way in which these sites save cultural memory as and in Law – the law of the Father.

Rebecca Schneider has pushed against this patriarchal imperative in Derrida for her on-going project of considering how records remain, and indeed perform (or re-perform) for us in and out of the sites like archives. I discuss this more explicitly in Chapter Two but it suffices to say here that neither Derrida nor Schneider consider, fully, the material politics of the Archon's home that both rely on to make their arguments for the archive. As scholars James Sickinger (1999) and John Davies (2003) both offer in their detailed research into Greek archives (potentially a model for so much of what we think of as Western archiving), the archive was not as easily *placed* nor as distinctly gendered as we receive from Derrida and Schneider.

Archives in ancient Greece were a new form of colonial control as Athens itself became a seat of centralized power. As we will see in relation to post-1800's archives, the seat of government and the role archives play in substantiating rule (not unlike Derrida's theorization of the commencement (of polis) and

commandment (via law)), create new and uniquely situated conditions for archival intervention. Indeed new technologies – such the turn from oral narrative history to written histories in Ancient Greece (partially brought upon by the increasing use of papyrus) – change how Law and its histories get shaped to ensure power. The position of Archon was not held for very long at all, as Davies recounts (2003). Instead this position moved among men, who worked bureaucratically to ensure that formal rules were operating in outlying areas that mirrored centralized government’s wishes. The archive itself was often not in the Archon’s ‘home’ (or even office), but instead, as Schneider makes use of, in the Metroon (or “mother’s room”). A specific administrative process, which shifted over the centuries, moved documents into and out of the Metroon.¹⁹

The task of creating, organizing, storage and retrieval, was not given to the Archons at all. In fact the move from orators (men who told the cultural and legal history of the people) to a reliance on written document saw a rise in literacy of slaves, who copied, categorized, and operated storage and retrieval tasks within the archives. Like the National Archives that Carolyn Steedman (2002) and Ann Laura Stoler (2009) discuss in their books, outlying magistrates’ offices held local records and only sent more general decrees – usually with regard to land and money treaties – to central archives in Athens.

For all we make of the power and intrigue of the archive (and I perpetuate this sort of theoretical hype, as in Chapter Three when I consider the erotics of the space and

¹⁹ Interesting for theatre scholars is that, in the 5th century, this also included a move to include play scripts. Thus some of what theatre history has from this period is indebted to a shift in the perspective of what is national record (see Davies 2003).

the ghostly bodies you encounter within archives) archives are administrative hubs. While the archives, as Steedman reminds us (2002, x-xi), are filled with potential via the information they store, the functional practice of archives is less exciting than the post-modern considerations applied to such practice.

This doesn't mean that the practices of the archives – selection, order, care and storage/retrieval – aren't useful to mine. The remainder of this chapter considers these modes of practices – these techniques – as the rise of the archivist as an international profession begins to shape the field of archive studies and the material archives themselves. What goes into archives is not always the whole story, and what comes out of archives is certainly a process of inquiry that is wholly subjective.

A desire for objectivity has always been at the fore of historical research. I have glossed this in the Introduction and will continue to think through the ruse of positive knowledge (as in Chapters Two and Five for example). Thomas Richards's useful *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and Fantasy of Empire* (1993) evocatively describes Britains' use of the archive as a site of imagined total knowledge and total (colonial) power. Like Derrida, Foucault and others, Richards' theorization moves more and more away from physical archives. This is in part due to the de-centralization of the archival knowledge and the ever increasing technological expansion realized in the Industrial Revolution, which re-shaped Imperial knowledge systems. What becomes the archive is not the archive, but how *it performs*.

In a performance studies context, scholar Diana Taylor considers the performance of colonial knowledge and the role of bodies in and out of the archive. Her 2005 *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* has already

been invoked as way to consider what I mean by performance throughout this project. Her book sets up a dichotomy between oral and performance knowledge practices and the written document as proof. Taylor is interested in the importance that the written document has in retaining cultural memory, and how performance practices may remember and reshape such histories differently, or in fact better. She, along with Joseph Roach (1996) and Matthew Reason (2006), are anxious about the ways in which the immaterial repository of cultural practice – the ephemeral traces Cvetkovich utilizes – are replaced by written documents, which seem to have more durable and, for Taylor, more censorious relationship to cultural memory.

When the Americas were settled by colonial powers, the histories of indigenous people were not documented, or at least not documented within the language *of* those people. Trace patterns of indigenous memory and indeed their responses to colonial imposition remain, for Taylor and Roach, in the repertoire of bodily praxis that is more easily transmissible in sites like performance and activism. “The dominance of language and writing has come to stand for *meaning* itself,” Taylor writes (2003, 25 emphasis in original). For Taylor, and many others of which this project is in debt to, sees performance (whether understood anthropologically or theatrically, to use Taylor’s binary), as a way of *making meaning*. “Every performance enacts a theory, and every theory performs in the public sphere.” (2003, 27) Taylor posits.

As I’ve noted already in the Introduction, and as has been invoked by Halberstam and Cvetkovich within this Chapter, the modes of retaining performance memory – of capturing these ephemerality – is still a question of and for the archive, if not for

its practitioners and theorists. As we move to the digital realm, every key stroke enacts a theory and every theory performs, perhaps, a key stroke: how is this new language allowing us to archive differently? How is the new technology changing the archive?

As I have said, this project moves between the material site of the archive and the theory-driven realm of the Archive. I am uneasy with utopic projections of either – as total knowledge or as means to usurp meaning. Instead I attempt to care for the places where archiving comes into question, specifically in relation to those things identified as *hard* to archive: performance and queerness. As this chapter will outline, the artist as archivist, especially in queer and performance modalities, has a new burdens of care, as the ephemerality of the transmission become immediate, simultaneous and, ever more, out of the control of those who are participating, in the digital age.

Archives are contestable sites of power, inscribed culturally. As I have attempted to show they are often defined specifically by what they are not. Indeed their very specificity as site, in the contemporary constructions, has been taken to task.

Formed by the technologies available of their practitioner's they form various modes of cultural memory, however they are *not* cultural memory (a point that Steedman argues stridently in response to Derrida). The archive is not history, but produces history (I argue this point more specifically in Chapter Two). In what follows I consider the role of those who simultaneously archive their own lifeworlds, aided by digital technology.

POSITIONS

How does one do archiving in the digital age? The question of the archive is formed in the post-modern conceptualisation of knowledge transmission and the way power structures rise and fall in accordance to subjective notions of truth. The necessity of the archive, indeed the archival fever that Derrida made so popular in 1994, is a response to new governmental forms²⁰ as well as challenges of viral pandemic reshaping practices between bodies. As well, there is immense technological change occurring in what we can now begin to understand as the digital age.

Four key terms – custody, order, appraisal and use – remain sources of anxiety for the professional archivist. This anxiety might not be unproductive; there needn't be paranoia in the practice. Yet the shifting role of the professional archivist has, since at least the 1890's, utilised these terms as a means to chart, create and utilise the archive (Ridener, 2008). It is Ridener's perceived professionalisation of the archivist which will assist me in analysing the paradigm shift which initiates dialectic of artist and archivist. My argument is parallel in design to Hal Foster's in his essay "The Artist as Ethnographer" (1996a), which follows Walter Benjamin's structure in his "The Author as Producer" (1934). Our arguments produce certain problems. One is a binary assumption of an assumed Other, as well as notions of propriety and privilege that crop up in the work of both artist and ethnographer. Another is the problematic

²⁰ As I will describe, governmental forms, especially in America since the 1930's see more representation of the citizen by the government and greater desire for transparency by governmental institutions. The period in the late 1980's in the United States which came to be called the "Culture Wars" saw issues of censorship in relation to artists' work come to the forefront. Further, as the shape of the private sphere widens in the digital age, questions of identity and propriety see new interventions to secure rights and privileges.

of practice, and indeed, to invoke Benjamin, a question of technique. Benjamin's use of the term technique, as described by John Heckman, is meant to invoke the "aesthetic quality of a work, but with considerable scientific and manufacturing connotations" (in Benjamin, 1934/1970, 8 n2). I want to consider the possibility of the artist as archivist not to displace either from their identitarian positions (again, they cannot be understood as static or globally definable), but to consider the material condition of the production of a figure collapsed. The artist/archivist collapse that I propose indicates a subject who is tacitly trained, socially coerced and technically able. How is this beneficial (or not) and what does it mean for the future of archives, if not the larger metaphor of the Archive?

By way of Ridener's text a historiographical shape will be given to the figure of the archivist since the 1800's. He identifies four key paradigm shifts which I will put to use after fully exploring each below. I have mined his bibliographic references and chosen to foreground his text because I understand his methodological use of appraisal as useful for setting up the artist as archivist frame.

THE MIDDLE POSITION

In his recent book Ridener charts the rise of the professionalisation of the archivist. While nominally a book project about archival theory in general, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* (2009) traces the rise of appraisal techniques in archival practice from the 1800's to the present day. As archival scholar Terry Cook notes in the preface to the book "appraisal is *the* critical archival act by archivists" (2009, xiii). Ridener's focus on the emergence of appraisal within archival science is as much a central methodology as it is a focus of analysis.

Ridener selects key paradigm shifts that he sees as contributing to the construction of the professional archivist in terms of the rejection or acceptance of record appraisal. Appraisal is a key issue for archives because it determines whether the record will be retained as a part of the archive for future reference. Will the record be granted the status of archival record or be disposed of?

The archivist carries a burden (within the scope of appraisal) of conferring upon records “evidentiary, juridical and cultural” (2009, 3) value. The archivist transfers the archival record from the record creator (the institutional body creating documents) to the inquiring body (historians, heritage seekers, scholars, or artists) for re-use, research and reanimation. Ridener offers that this “middle position” (2009, 8) is best understood as one loaded with cultural agency in and through the role and growth of appraisal techniques. It is this engagement with the question of value which shifts the activity of the archivist from “merely” practice to praxis, a theoretical engagement with practice. With Ridener, I am cautious about this binary between theory and practice. While often emphasised in the early archival manuals he engages with, the binary is best thought of as a dialectic between practice and theory, one which allows us to engage with the material conditions of records creation especially as the contemporary era creates so many new forms of records, as well as questions about access and modes of description and storage.

Ridener presents the would-be archival scholar with three vectors of change that shape archival paradigms: geography, history and historiography, and technological change. These vectors shape the material conditions of the production and use of the record along the continuum of record creator, archivist and inquiring body. Four

archival paradigms shape his argument, each responding to perceived crises from one or more of the vectors of change. He terms these: consolidation, reinforcement, modern, and questioning. I will chart these four paradigms before unpacking them in relation to archival scholars who have already populated this project, specifically historical notions of the archivist as “keeper,” the Archive as metaphorical repository of total (usually national) knowledge, and the issue of postmodernity and the way queer or queerness might function.

Consolidation

Ridener accounts for the consolidation of archival practices with the publication of the Dutch Manual in 1898 by Samuel Muller, Johan A. Freith, and Robert Fruin. With the growing nation-state of the Netherlands standardisation become necessary at this time. The authors promoted a notion of the archivist as record organiser, pulling together medieval records with those newly created through the expanding nation-state. The most important shift in this record organisation was from a chronological bulk of ordering to a method of organisation respectful of the record’s creation.

The late 19th century saw a rise in positivist historical thought – writing about history “as it happened” – and as such the notion of retaining the record keepers’ organisation, or *respect des fonds*, was taken seriously by the authors. The manual, created to assist in governmental archives to retain objectivity for national heritage, requires less consideration of appraisal and more for arrangement. Archivists were urged to study the source institution of their collections and to focus their role as organiser/keeper via an “imposition of the record’s internal structure upon them as

a result of record keeping processes based upon the activities the organisation understood to create records” (Upward quoted in Ridener, 2009, 33).

The Dutch Manual sets out specific definitions of archive and record which Ridener argues become a benchmark of its time in relation to both practices in and of archival records. Each paradigm shift sees adjustments of these definitions as a means to respond to the historical and technological demands of their era. The Dutch Manual defines an archive as all of the printed matter (inclusive of maps and drawings) officially received or produced by an administrative body intended to remain in their custody for use (2009, 31-32). The archive is understood in this way to be a natural extension of the course of institutional business. Respect of the arrangement made by the record creators, thus, presents the most explicit picture of “how it happened.” Records are understood to be archival when, formally, “drawn up in the appropriate form... they may serve as evidence of what is mentioned in them” (Muller et al quoted in Ridener, 2009, 32). Records in this way are treated as implicitly evidentiary; their function situates them as documents of the “truth” of the operations that transpired there in the original institutions quotidian administration.

Appraisal plays no explicit role in the Dutch Manual however the role of minor records – meeting draft minutes for example – is seen as unnecessary, as these are an un-ratified record of the quotidian administration. Retrospectively one may see this hierarchy of records as less objective than a total record retention system.

Having worked in institutional archives myself, I know how often letter drafts and marginalia on minutes or outlines produce the most interesting insights into process,

activity and sociality of a group or individual. Ridener highlights this method of disposal as an early form of the tension that archival theory confronts between subjectivity and objectivity and of the truth value of records.

Reinforcement

Between 1860 and the First World War the invention and wide spread use of typewriters and telephones changed the communicative and administrative landscape of the Western world. These inventions also drastically changed the scope of the archive not simply in terms of bulk but in terms of documentation and authority. Phone conversations began to replace some written correspondence, changing the collection of records. Typewriters and typing pools meant more records with often limited scope for the actual authorial voice behind them – letters may be drafted, written and sent under a signature not of their creator. Scholar Thomas Richards discusses at length the ways in which telecommunications exploded the mode through which knowledge production and knowledge control were managed (Richards, 1993). Documents could move faster and pile up more rapidly than ever before. Richards argues that the excessiveness of records necessitated a change from the organisation of knowledge to the functional disorganisation of knowledge (1993, 76). Archivists became central, according to Richards, in dis-organising record bulk.²¹

²¹ Richards argues further that this disorganization created “new modes of counter-organization that ultimately became the bases for making the state into the central information-gathering apparatus of modern life” (1993, 77). In each of Ridener’s paradigms the state takes on the mantle of archive-proper – these manuals were functional for state archives and became the basis for archival administration across local and personal archives, often. The move to the personal archive in the contemporary age, an archive of self, shunts the ideological control that the State-as-Archive holds on cultural mnemo-technics.

Questions of record bulk and record authority became a crisis within the archives of pre- and post- wartime Europe. England's Sir Hilary Jenkinson, a war archivist, sought to reinforce administrative proficiency within the archive and became a germinal figure in modern technological record management. Part of Jenkinson's practice was dealing with the temporary and mobile nature of governmental and military administration during wartime. His 1922 *A Manual of Archive Administration* seeks to adjust archival practice to deal with increased bulk, plastic constructions of administration and changes in governmental needs. Jenkinson's archivist resembles a professional records keeper; the job of this archivist is to shepherd records into care and retain them for the eventual use of historians and general citizens.

Jenkinson defines the archive as "a substitute for memory" (Ridener, 2009, 52). The positivist strains of total knowledge are still operating for Jenkinson as he constructs the war archives of World War I and writes his manual. This is despite shifting cultural paradigms, specifically towards a more relativistic notion of historiography. The notion of truth is losing its critical hold as the question of evidence becomes more interesting, or useful, than the object itself; not for Jenkinson. Nonetheless, Jenkinson's manual and his theoretical interventions produce the first English language guide for the institution of archivists within larger governmental bodies.

Building on the Dutch Manual, Jenkinson continues with a limited subjective approach from the archivist where appraisal is extremely restricted. Records accumulated in the course of administration of a body's affairs are all apt for archiving, in his terms. He takes the *respect des fonds* to an even more specific level and argues for unbroken custody with all records collections: "contents of the

archive should never leave official channels of communication or storage” (2009, 58) so as best to retain an accurate picture of the archived body. Archivists work with record creators to ensure their custodial care as a means to retain objectivity and authenticity. If an archivist chooses to dispose of records for any reason; only the official body, the records’ creators, have this authority.

Jenkinson’s archival theory is backwards looking. He is uninterested in a practice for archivists that question the use-value of documents for the future. Records are self-evident and as such, for Jenkinson, provide objective evidence of what occurred. He sets the stage for modern advancements in archival management, with this positivist or “total knowledge” view, because he sets up strategies for custodial care and record maker intervention that allow for technological changes. When met with historical and historiographical changes, specifically relativist theory and later, social historicism, his theoretical advancements allow the professional archivist to handle the technological advancements which create ever more and dynamic records.

Jenkinson’s model, in this way, sets a standard for a type of use of archives, rendered from the processing and access of records. These issues remain in contemporary archivisation and I will draw us back to Jenkinson, later, considering the digital bulk we now experience. For now I will continue to outline the professionalisation of the archivist with Ridener’s final two paradigms.

Modern

Jenkinson’s manual dovetails with what Ridener positions as the third paradigm shift: the Modern paradigm. Jenkinson is working in the United Kingdom, and his influence is strong for American counterparts seeking to establish archival

procedures between and after the World Wars. The Second World War, and in America the Great Depression, brought about drastic changes in how governments interacted with their citizens, and how historians reflected on the past. That the future became an active question in these times is not surprising. Recognising that there *could* be a future after such social turmoil meant a number of changes to the archive and the role of the archivist. Issues of identification and the way which the government intervenes in identification became a central question for governments. In the United States, Roosevelt's New Deal²² provided systems for financially rebuilding the social systems which required larger than ever archival projects suturing identification records to a subject's future, specifically in the form of social security taxation and repayment. The Nazi regime demonstrated the terror of fascist identification effecting despotic eradication of the collections of an entire people. The move towards social historicism saw new archives fashioned on ever more marginalised groups and a renewed importance in personal heritage.

In this period, the archive became an ever more active reality for the everyday person; the inquiring body in the records room was shifting from scholars and government officials to the lay-person. Of course, archives have always played a genealogical function in heritage identification, but a renewed sense of the transparency, accuracy and accessibility of these records became a reality of what Ridener calls the "modern" paradigm in archival theory. The creation of Social Security during the time of the New Deal is a perfect example of the everyday citizen

²² The New Deal was a fiduciary recovery reform measure created by and during Roosevelt's time in office, as a response to America's Great Depression. Public works programs were put in place under the rubric of the three R's: Relief, Recovery, and Reform, to transform America and revitalize the economy.

having renewed interest in governmental records. Social Security operates through identification numbers, similar to the National Insurance operating in the U.K., that are tied to a citizen's tax payments. Instituting such a measure increased records of each citizen and the communication between governmental agencies and citizens.

Theodore Schellenberg's *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (1957) is emblematic of the questions of transparency and accessibility. Schellenberg presents a future-looking, efficient, and appraisal-heavy model for the archive. Responding directly to Jenkinson's text, Schellenberg charts a geographically situated archival theory, opposing notions of total theoretical models for more subjective techniques, namely a priority given to the archivist's ability to select records. Schellenberg challenges a total theory of the archive and creates his manual with the aim to espouse the need for archivists to consider the production of their records. For example, he invited them to consider that what works in the UK might not work in the US. Despite being a strident advocate of the role of subjectivity in archiving, Schellenberg still requires of the archive an objective technique for records management, but one that sees the archivist considering the actual use-value of records over time instead of keeping records for the sake of a past now gone.

Schellenberg's new definition of an archive meets Jenkinson's, collapsing the notion of record and archive. Their difference, however, is a move from Jenkinson's custodial requirement to Schellenberg's enforcement of appraisal. The archive, in America in the fifties, then, is one of records "adjudged worthy of permanent preservation for reference or research purposes" and those that "have been selected for deposit in the archive" (Schellenberg in Ridener, 2009, 82). The language here is

about choice not accumulation – an archive is understood as value driven, not value derivative.

The archivist, in this conception, is an “intermediary who is able to connect citizens with government information” (2009, 88). Schellenberg revolutionised the processing of records into archives for the United States government during national and international crises producing a flurry of records, an enormous archive of the contemporary traumas I sketched at the beginning of this section. The role of the archivist is to appraise the value of a record. Schellenberg creates a split value system. The primary value is evidentiary: “does the record show evidence of an action?”; the secondary value is informational: “would a researcher want to use this record to understand more about the contexts of its creation?” (2009, 84).

Schellenberg’s goal is then “based on subjective notions of future research interest” (2009, 88).

Clearly the figure of the archivist in this “modern” form has a trickier role to play between record creation and record retrieval than before. Instead of “keeping” records, this newly re-formed professional subject must practically intervene in valuing records. This valuation, in Schellenberg’s theory and via his manual, creates new requirements for description and classification. As archivist and scholar Marvin Taylor (1993) argues of archival structures within libraries, this valuation, while potentially practical in forms of record management and efficiency for the modern inquiring body, poses a great threat to practices which are outside the archivist’s purview. Despite the growth in social historicism and, later, the rise of identity politics in the post-modern age, archivists could, in this appraisal method, easily

wipe out bodies and knowledge practices which did not seem to “fit.” I will return to Taylor’s questions of queer records later. Now I will discuss Ridener’s final paradigm shift, the awkwardly termed “Questioning.”

Questioning

The contemporary era for archives and archivists is highly fecund in terms of theorisation. Part of the reason that there has been such an archival turn in critical theory is due to technology. While Ridener highlights the invention of the computer, ushering in the digital age, his Questioning paradigm is about a range of theorists who engage with post-modern theories of authorship, historiography and epistemology. Importantly in this paradigm archive studies positions itself as post-custodial and, instead, curational. The notions of, and indeed questions of, curation and custody become extremely interesting when considering the digitisation of archives, especially archives of performance.

Ridener cites archival scholars Brien Brothman, Terry Cook, Carolyn Heald, Eric Ketelaar and Heather MacNeil (2009, 102) as archival scholars who represent a shift in archival theory in the postmodern era. Each take the relevance of cultural context, practical experience combined with a theoretical position situated in post-modern critique, and technological shifts via computers as reasons for paradigm shifts. Postmodernism, Ridener argues, brought about many *questions*, usually about authenticity, truth, authority and notions of power. We understand that for these theorists the archive “changes purpose from a exclusively statist, power-based structure to a collective, memory-based structure” (2009, 111).

We can see strains of Jenkinsonian thought in this new definition of the archive: it remains a mnemonic device for culture. Yet in this definition the emphasis on governmental control and any sort of easy identificatory institutionalisation of the record is supplanted by the “collective,” which, problematically, may be understood as “global.” As innovations in global telecommunication did, in fact, connect greater parts of the world with unprecedented speed, and colonial rule became late-capitalist investment, the notion of community expanded. This operates positively and negatively. The role of the contemporary archivist involves more dynamic forms of records with a need for “interpretation and recontextualisation” (2009, 118). While the informed post-modern archivist reflexively positions records in order to highlight power structures assumed by record creators, the urge to curate such records so as to denaturalise or codify systems of cultural construction is contestable. In highlighting the constructed-ness of such systems, new omissions are created while other things are made visible. A tangible example is homosexuality. Marvin Taylor explains that the subject headings utilised by the Library of Congress, used to interpret and contextualise records, were called into question when the term GAYS was used as a subject heading for both gay men and lesbians. This umbrella term was used in place of HOMOSEXUAL. The move to GAYS was already a shift from HOMOSEXUAL. Taylor notes that HOMOSEXUAL “inappropriately unite[d] the clinical term with the politicised terms of GAY and LESBIAN” (1993, 28). The desire to inscribe the newly visible subject position GAY, subsequently hid under its assumed umbrella the subjects for which gay did not signify. The act of indexing records in this way is further complicated by the contextual question – does the record containing work about an assumed gay, lesbian or queer receive such a

listing? Post-modern critical theory will require of its participant a reflexive and critical methodology of placement and genealogy of thought and creation. Yet this still has the potential to “closet” certain relations, perhaps personally or politically at odds with the archivist’s appraisal. MacNeil posits: What has changed in a postmodern context is making the implicit explicit; an increase in transparency” (1994, 9). Yet the ethics, and material consequences, of such “transparency” have significant weight.

The subjective burden of appraisal for the archivists is problematic. Ridener offers that through this they can “achieve a transgressive performance as a profession” (2009, 123). Archival scholar Eric Ketelaar sees this transgressive propensity as a product of postmodernity understanding its records as operating under “double power” (Ketelaar, 2002). Records can liberate or repress.²³ This is a wholly different concept of the record, even from Schellenberg’s point of view. While he rejoiced in appraisal methodology, his aim was efficiency for future scholarship. Ketelaar’s approach to records confronts the practices of the archive and the way in which culture utilises the Archive. Metaphor and materiality spin here over the figure of the archivist – the middle figure between the record creator and the inquiring body. Of course, this figuration of the archivist shows how the quasi-liminal position of the archivist is actually one which performs the dialectic of record and inquiry.

Acting in this middle position the archivist takes on a position akin to that of the artist/ethnographer – curating the experience of culture through the dispensation of records to a public, the inquiring bodies in the archive. How this archive moves, is

²³ Ketelaar is clearly re-mapping Foucault’s negotiations of power as a dynamic of non-centralized forces onto the archival record, specifically in a post-colonial modality (Foucault 1979).

circulated by later inquiring bodies, may have less to do with the archivist and more to do with the inquiring body. As I've discussed throughout this project, queer modes of inquiry may find the ghosted potential of queer acts where others may not. However, the agency of both archivist, acting as cultural artist, and the inquiring body, acting as curating historiographer (perhaps), foregrounds the politics of representation that exist in and through archival structures. Digital modes of archiving make the archive circulate differently; with representations being ever-more-speedily toyed with. This can be fruitful, as I will discuss in relation to Holka's photographic documentation, but can also raise issues of authenticity and legal issues of intellectual property, as I will discuss in relation to Franklin Furnace Archive.

This chapter considers the movement from document to record in the contemporary age. While I take on the movement of the record out of the archive, I'm interested more here to explore curation of the archive. In the next chapter I will discuss modes of archival representation, where documents are produced in and from archives to produce new effects. The artist in Chapter Two is not an archivist in this sense; it is an inquiring body using the archive for new purposes. Here the figure of the archivist becomes central because it is the archivist who can and must access, categorise, catalogue and describe documents as records of value. The use value of a record is the basis for contemporary versions of archival theory, if one utilises the perspective of the archivist. Use-value alters over time and can, as discussed in Chapter Three, produce anarchives – "fake" archives, produced not by selection and codification, but by contingency or creation. The same may be true of post-modern archives.

Brein Brothman understands the archive²⁴, in the postmodern condition, to be both a material institution and a discursive operation. Brothman sees the collapsing of the two differing definitions of the archive as a limit test to archives as we know them; this is in part due to the explosion of metaphor of the Archive.

The shift in the field, for the archivist, from “objective” records keeper and manager to “subjective” appraiser and in some cases curator raises questions of knowledge production and transmission. It also invokes, curatorially the figure of the artist.

What occurs in the collapse of artist archivist – when these two middle positions are figured as one? Who and what become inside and outside? Why might we desire this spatial referentiality? Do we actually have that in the digital archives that are forming constantly – a newer paradigm in both the art and archival fields? What does this mean for the future of the archive (especially in relation to performance and visual cultures), and what pressures does this apply to the artist in producing work?

I am negotiating a dialectic between the figure of the artist and the figure of the archivist. I take as a jumping off point art historian and critic Hal Foster’s “The Artist as Ethnographer” from his *The Return of the Real* (1996a) and engage with the central notion of his article “The Archive without Museums” (1996b). In both texts, Foster questions the position of the artist as a cultural producer and seeks to imagine potential futures for the political use-value of art work. The collapse of the subject positions in Foster’s chapter parallels Walter Benjamin’s 1934 article “The Author as Producer.” Following Benjamin, Foster proceeds to consider producers of

²⁴ Here is a perfect example of the collapse of the archive/Archive binary that I have attempted to utilize for clarity. Brothman means both here; inextricably.

intellectual and artistic property and how these subject positions engage with the shifting landscape of their lifeworlds²⁵ within capitalism. Foster wonders about the “relation between visual culture and electronic information” (1996b, 108), in the latter, questioning the art work itself and its potential for circulation in and through archival institutions. This chapter begins to question the future of the archive and ways in which the Archive now is managed within culture. With regard to both the institutional (archive) and ideological (Archive) forms of the term, I analyse the role of digital culture.²⁶ As digitisation becomes common practice, and artists are required, more than ever before, to produce documentation prior to and subsequent of the creation of their work, how will the archive function?

Foster’s and Benjamin’s identity positions (author, producer, artist, ethnographer) are not static or by any means fixed. As cultural theorists have shown for years now, identities are prone to shifts, they collapse and are revamped with and as a result of changes in cultures. The conditions that produced a situation whereby these identity positions do change is often through necessity: a crisis occurs. Archival scholar John Ridener notes that shifts in archival paradigms are resultant of a crisis within the field. Clarifying, he remarks that “the inability to work with new situations using old theories promotes different conceptions of both the problem

²⁵ A lifeworld is an “environment created by [its] participants that contain many voices, many practices and not a few tensions” (Buckland 2002, 4). Dance ethnographer Fiona Buckland uses “lifeworld” because it indexes more subject positions than a term like “community” or “group” might offer. The verbal construction, Buckland notes, is not “referring to the creation of a bordered culture” but a “production in the moment of a space of creative, expressive and transformative possibilities” (2002, 4). I follow this usage and reintroduce it later in the chapter.

²⁶ Like any binary opposition, the archive/Archive construction is harder to uphold in instances like those in this chapter where material changes in record management see recalibrations to larger theoretical interventions and metaphorical links with the ideologies of record stewardship. While I will attempt to uphold the distinction, this chapter functions, in a way, to remind us that the continuum from archive to Archive is more nuanced and needs ever more engagement to detail.

and possible solutions” (2009, 9). Benjamin and Foster both seek to reconceptualise the positions of author and artist in terms of a crisis within the fields of cultural production. In doing so they question our assumptions about how cultural production is situated and the means by which subjects in the West, specifically, are crafting the world around them. My mapping of the figure of the artist as archivist will engage with a number of crises (cultural and theoretical) which have caused the positions to shift or collapse – seeing the artist as archivist and/or the archivist as artist. The dialectic that I put forward between these identity positions has both positive and negative social valence. In relation to the larger project within which this chapter sits, the AIDs pandemic drastically re-shaped the way in which queers, specifically, went about both making work and saving lives for posterity in various forms of archives. The epic loss of material bodies and, often, the personal collections which would make up their archives resulted in modulated forms of cultural recovery, of saving and of carrying memory.

Having already outlined the position of the archivist, via Ridener’s paradigms, I will now outline the positions argued in Benjamin’s and Foster’s articles, respectively. This will give shape to the archivist position as an interventionist in culture. Then I will engage with case studies of the artist(s). These will give purchase to the artistic position and allow me to consider how these artists function as archivists notionally and practically.

POSITIONS

It was in reading Foster’s chapter that I was first drawn to Benjamin’s essay, published just one year before the canonised “The Work of Art in the Age of

Mechanical Reproduction" (1935). Reading "The Author as Producer" one can read the genealogy of thought which produces the 1935 article; Benjamin begins to lay down the blueprint for thinking materially about the technical means of production and how these may be best put to revolutionary use. In it he calls for the writer to change from a "reproducer of the apparatus of production into an engineer who sees his task as the effort of adapting that apparatus to the aims of the proletarian revolution" (1934/1970, 8). Thus he asks, like many of those at his time, for those on the Left to side with the proletariat. Benjamin desires that the writer be an active agent – a producer – who intervenes in class struggles by manipulating the techniques of their artistic production.

Foster suggests that Benjamin's desire to consider "aesthetic quality versus political relevance... [operates] through the third term production" (1996a, 172). He gestures to 1980's and 1990's art practices, specifically work in response to the AIDS crisis, abortion and apartheid. Benjamin, in both "The Artist as Producer" and "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" responds to the "aestheticization of politics under fascism" (Foster 1996a, 172). The revolutionary act Benjamin envisions utilises mediatised tools for artistic reproduction. In the former, he discusses the newspaper (as well as theatre, via Brecht) and, in the latter, film. Fascist regimes rising in Europe at the time of Benjamin's writing were proving far too adept at manipulating these media for propagandist purposes. Benjamin sought artists to shape these mediums of mass-consumption to the ends of the proletariat; to perform struggle through their art. Brecht's Epic Theatre was extremely influential on Benjamin, providing a way to utilise an artistic form to require more of the

spectator – to produce conditions within the product which revolutionised engagement from the masses.

Foster argues a parallel paradigm with this writer/artist as producer and the artist as ethnographer. He posits in *The Return of the Real*, as in “The Archive without museums” published in the same year, the anthropological turn in art and art criticism with a focus on ethnography as the reflexive methodology most desirably employed by those working from within these fields. He is quick to caution against making parallel what in one era was a critique of the subject’s economic relation and in another of a subject’s cultural identity (1996a, 173). In both situations an Other is assumed, with the artist always figuring as a unique subject position from which to understand, intervene or stand-in for this Other – as Foster notes, there proletariat (Benjamin), and here postcolonial other (ethnographic paradigm) (1996a, 174).

As historian and anthropologist James Clifford charts in his “On Ethnographic Surrealism” (1980) the anthropological turn in art arises in and around the 1920’s with cubism and surrealism and a turn to “primitivism.”²⁷ Post World War II the zeal for Modernism’s forward looking myopia subsides. The 1960’s move to social historicism, finding ways to unpack the local historical - the neighbour-Other - reclaims the anthropological in art and activism. In the primary moves of the anthropological turn the artists’ positions was an envied “middle position.” The artist “became a paragon of formal reflexivity, a self-aware reader of culture understood

²⁷ Primitivism is a movement in art and scholarship wherein images and symbols associated with folk or “pre-historic” peoples are utilized. An assumption that life “before” was more fecund than industrialized societies, and that such “naïve” forms of life could assist in representing and defining the social exists in primitivism. Primitivism has been intensely critiqued by post-colonial scholarship, seeking to re-position the binary of Western industrialized subject and third-world or Eastern/African object/Other.

as text” (1996a, 180). Foster argues that this envy has, perhaps, turned on itself: now, ethnographer envy. As a way to resolve a tension between theory and practice, artists (and critics, he notes) undertake fieldwork and strive to create as a participant observer (1996a, 181).

For Foster, this re-flourishing of the anthropological turn by means of an ethnographic model creates critical tensions within the fields of art and anthropology that mirror the rise of identity politics. Anthropology as a discipline, he says, regards itself as a science of alterity that takes as its object of study culture. Between the two fields there is link via the critical language associated with cultural production of self and other. Already the reflexivity and contextualisation of ethnographic methodologies are seen as a beacon to artists and historians who seek, in post-modernity, to be aware of the critical space in and from which they write; as well as being inclusive of the multitudes of critical and practical devices from which they draw. Finally, Foster positions anthropology as a discipline split between a focus on “symbolic logic, with the social seen in terms of exchange systems” and practical reason, “with the social seen in terms of material culture” (1996b, 106).²⁸ Thus, writing in 1996, he argues that “in our current state of artistic-theoretical and cultural-political impasses, anthropology is the compromise discourse of choice” (1996a, 183).

Erosions, in the art world, of the boundaries between notions of art, artist, identity, community and the space and formation of spectatorship arising from site-specific, minimalist and performative iterations of art from the 1960’s forward, provoke,

²⁸ Foster notes that this analysis is reductive of anthropology but uses it as a means to further its relationship to art and art critical methods (1996b, 106 n20).

Foster argues, the ethnographic turn. Moving from “institutional frames to discursive networks” (1996a, 184) art was, and is, being critically formed not only on the walls of museums and galleries but in everyday actions and conditions. (Foster uses the following examples as sites of discursive formation for art: “desire or disease, AIDS or homelessness” (1996a, 184)).

This move from site to iterability, Foster suggests, operates “horizontally, from site to site, across a social space, more than vertically, in a discourse inscribed with a historicity, a responsibility of form, of its own” (1996b, 105). This synchronic movement²⁹ can conflate artist/ethnographer with that of the disciplinary community it sought to represent. In fact, Foster argues that this move can reduce both identities to be inextricable – one guaranteeing the other (1996a, 198). What I hope to show, later, is exactly how queerly productive this collapse between artist and archivist can be given a different paradigm: the archival turn. The artist as archivist necessarily guarantees the archivist as artist (there transposition is easily gleaned in queer and performance archiving) and as such produces a mnemotechnic where other inquiring bodies can access lifeworlds which may be marginalised, or even lost, to hegemonic inscription.

Both Benjamin and Foster’s paradigms question the repressiveness of ideology. Benjamin offers “ideological patronage” as an “impossible position the “advanced artist” might strive to move towards” (1934/1970, 4). From this impossible position the artist (writer and intellectual, to use Benjamin’s terms) could side with the proletariat, creating art which opposed the fascist regime of technological

²⁹ Synchronic analysis approaches on point in time and unpacks those events. Diachronic analysis, on the other hand, studies and critiques an evolution of events.

reproduction of forms. Foster's move to a cultural position, hinging on identity (constructed in and by social norms), sheds this impossibility, somewhat. Foster reads ideological patronage as a relation between identity and identification – or between the said and the process of saying. Patronage in this form sets up an Other, entrusted by one position to support the Other, always operating somewhat repressively.

For Foster the question of critical distance becomes a way of dealing with this impossible position where work is not wrought to forsake (or furnish a space for) an Other. Framing and re-framing the way in which the artist or ethnographer, or even the artist/ethnographer, is working and situating their subjective contribution to knowledge is imperative. In "The Archive without museums," Foster calls this process *strategic autonomy* (1996b, 119, emphasis in original). This notion strips away, he hopes, some of the fetishistic quality of cultural re-presentation and re-production.

I will return to Foster's notion of strategic autonomy later. I will use the term to address modes of archival inquiry and production, later, via my case studies. It suffices to say, now, that the positions presented by Benjamin and Foster are dynamic and problematic. Using my own proposed subject position – the artist as archivist – I will interrogate some of these dynamic problems. While I do not think that the archive paradigm that I put to use in analysing the artist as archivist resolves the problems that are made evident by Benjamin and Foster, I am hopeful that considering such a position will assist us in understanding the archival turn. In particular, the questions surrounding the future of the archive arise as the project of

archiving dwells outside of institutions and become a necessary (even quotidian) function of Western cultural reality. (Facebook, Twitter, blogs and the thrall to speedy access in the digital reserves through search engines all shape lifeworlds and their construction and use of archival records). Before attending to these issues, via the artists I noted at the outset of this chapter, I will turn first to consider Ridener's concept of the professionalisation of the archivist to flesh out that position, lost somewhere in the middle of document creation and research, as the body which assists in translating objects into "historical evidence and/or cultural exempla, invested with value, and cathected by viewers" (1996a, 196).

I WAS THERE

When I moved to London I was fortunate enough find myself surrounded by performance artists and scholars. Many of these people were already well established in their respective "scenes," and most of them were working across disciplines, blurring lines between the positions art director, curator, dancer, chef or scholar. The way in which I was able to hit the ground running as an active performer and scholar drastically altered the ways in which I was making work and researching for this project. Indeed, it was the people who I came to know in my first flat in London that urged me to consider the curatorial aspect of the archive, something I had planned to leave to the side of this project. Yet the appraisal methods I utilised in selecting what was going in and out of this project began to take such interesting shape in the light of the life I was living while working that I realised how imperative it was to formulate a response to my lived experience. My first room in London, on Mayola Road in Hackney, was rented from the photographer Christa Holka. Born in

upstate New York, Holka had moved to London a year before me to study at Central St. Martin's. Her Master's work considered the role of the gendered body in photography, stemming from her recent past as drag king performer with the Chicago Kings³⁰ and her desire to represent various forms of gendered bodies that she had begun to document as she began her career as a photographer.

In the past few years Holka's career has steadily grown from specific project-based photography to nightlife and live art documentation. A recent publication in Germany calls her a daughter of Nan Goldin (Reichert, 2010). This genealogical gesture invokes the performative and documentary force of both artists' photographs. Goldin's photographs, documenting sub-cultures in the early days of the AIDS pandemic, became emblematic of a specific genre of documentary photography. Goldin has called her photography "the diary I let people read" (quoted in Ayers, 2007). In a 2007 interview with THE MOST CAKE, a self-identified "lesbian blog," Holka cites Goldin, saying that she was "the reason I ever thought I could seriously consider ever becoming a photographer" (TMC, 2007).

Unlike Goldin's work which has been reproduced in various forms of print, from postcards to galleries and museum walls internationally, Holka's work is rarely printed for the sake of exhibition. Holka has never been one for the white walls of the gallery space to display or circulate her images. Her website, her blog, Facebook page and various other social media outlets online have formed the queerly curated space of her exhibitions. Recently, someone asked Holka where she kept her archive. She noted to me that she had no idea how to respond, because she didn't

³⁰ The Chicago Kings were a Chicago based drag king group who performed from 2001-2006 (www.chicagokings.com).

understand what the person meant by “archive” (personal conversation, 2012). I responded that probably that person meant: where are the files and files of negatives, the stacks of printed and framed images and the lists cataloguing what has been taken? She responded: “Oh, no I don’t do that” (personal conversation, 2012).

In 2011 Holka began an online blogging project entitled “I WAS THERE” that was a formal collection of years of nightlife documentation. Simultaneously, throughout 2011 and early 2012, Holka was invited by the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Tate Modern, in London, and New York University, in the United States, to present papers on her work. These talks and the project they address, the I WAS THERE blog, provide me a means to begin considering the artist as archivist.

On February 25, 2011 Holka gave a talk at the Victoria & Albert Museum as a part of their “Archive Live” event, entitled “WE ARE HERE”. Using the frame of her first lesbian romance, a relationship she began online, as a way to consider her relation to affective economies of cyberspace, Holka describes how her documentary work is made and how it *moves*. Like Goldin, and the work of Catherine Opie, which I discuss in Chapter One, Holka’s photography performatively engages with its subjects, interpolating them into the scene of their own reflexivity while engaging the viewer with a type of temporal thrall, making you believe you just witnessed what you are looking at. What’s different in the modality of these three artists is Holka’s defined

interest in the literal movement of her photographs, the ways these documents perform in cyberspace.³¹

As she describes:

I photographed this girl Grace Savage (a/k/a Gracious B) for a most cake story. This photo then got picked up by the blog “hellagay.” And I guess as of a few days ago like 16 or so people “liked” it and/or reblogged it, so then it went from hellagay to RELUCTANTLY ME, to RIGHTOCAITO and from RIGHTOCAITO to QUE SERA SERA on to IT’S NOT A BAD LITTLE WAR where something like 17 people liked and or reblogged, and I could have traced it further, but I think you get the idea....And this happens to lots of my images... (Holka, 2011, 13-14)

Holka’s photograph exists, for all intents and purposes, online. She utilises digital photography, and while the “original” of this digital image is stored on one of her external hard-drives, it was first circulated on THE MOST CAKE blog. Through the interface of Tumblr, a blogging site where users can “like” and “re-blog” images onto their own blogs, the image moved through different frames of reference, usually still quite queer, but always moving and always subjectively curated into the space of representation.

Holka’s photographs are snapshot of events she’s taken part in. Unlike much of the London nightlife photography, however, the majority of Holka’s shots are moments

³¹ I am not arguing that these artists have no interest in the circulation of their images or that one type of circulation is inherently more useful than another. There are financial, artistic and personal concerns in any type of circulation of these artists’ works. What I am pointing to is the way in which Holka generally refuses normative circulation techniques and favours the transmissibility of her images, with less proprietary concern via the digital. Copyright forms a separate state-sponsored archive which protects and limits artists’ ability to circulate. The changing landscape of digital art promotion and circulation is yet to codify how artists’ archives can be legally disciplined.

unstaged for the camera. Holka captures moments within the night, arresting them for our gaze.

I don't care if you think they're *just party photos*, but I will go ahead and think they are something else -- a record of the people I see, that see me, and the interaction they have with me, my camera, and finally the image they see in my images which are here. These images are documenting this time and place, a dance floor, an energy, a moment where all of a sudden there were all of these "Lesbian club nights", a time when every single night, there is a different place for us to get together—a place for people to see and be seen. (Holka, 2011, 16, emphasis in original)

Holka perceives her practice as relational. There is an active curation in the methodology of her documentation. She is fully away of the representational force of her photographs; they signal a reality of queer-world-making that was different to what came before ("there were all these 'Lesbian club nights'") and this type of documentation might mean something. She notes that "[the photographs] also become a representation of a person – a part of their archive" (Holka, 2011, 16). The possessive pronoun utilised here speaks volumes about the way in which Holka's documentary photographs *work* as archival records. Instead of seeing these artistic creations as pieces of, only, *her* archive, they exist as a circulating object/record which makes up pieces of *Others'* archives. The simultaneity of the archival function of this record is strikingly different from perceived forms of evidentiary records in traditional archives. As I've discussed above, Schellenberg shifted the way archivists look at a record from a product of administrative function which yields truth by means of production to the record as containing potentially both informational and

cultural value. Holka's work as nightlife archivist, then, produces records which index evidence in a queer modality. Identity, place, action can be verified by these records, but they begin to index a temporarily and, importantly, a lifeworld which is fleeting. Queer nightlife, as Fiona Buckland (2002) and José Muñoz (2001, 2009) have both argued, is effervescent and produces utopic moments of lifeworlding. A cultural space is created momentarily, as Buckland argues in her usage of the term queer lifeworld (or the act of queer lifeworlding), for queer acts to be performed with the hermeneutic force of the situation supporting them, where often in phobic hegemonic cultural reality they would dissipate, or worse, be destroyed.

These are records of performances of everyday life – performance in its anthropological sense. In this way, then, Holka acts as the performance ethnographer, participating and observing. This ethnographic account, following in the steps of many artists who I have dedicated space to in this project, seeks to produce value in and of the sub-cultural realities which construct normative practices, both structurally giving them an outsider position to set themselves in opposition to, and to draw from as an inspirational Other, fetishistically. I do not mean, in these last few sentences, to argue that Holka, specifically, charges her work with a desire to, as she says “see and be seen” in ways which structure normative and anti-normative cultural practices. However, the records created do open up space for marginalised realities, and for their circulation beyond any originary purpose. Like any archival record, it is the inquiring body which will re-shape the record for purposes completely subjective. The form of this circulation, a blog site which exists on shared images amongst blogs (not necessarily user-created data),

forms a different type of inquiring body, one less engaged in utilising the tools of classification and order so lauded in most archival structures. I will discuss this form of the inquiring body more when I come to discuss briefmagazine.com.

If Holka is participating in an ethnographic turn in photographic art, her photographs perform, like Goldin's and Opie's, as a way to index lifeworlds which may be otherwise lost. Preservation here isn't about administrative record keeping and classification, but about a desire for the future to appraise the contemporary for cultural recovery. It is a project that is entirely steeped in identity politics. Bodies documented can position themselves within an archive, one that is malleable, living, moving. Holka's images, her art, do not set out to index the bodies involved with the space. This is not the "archival body" that Allan Sekula describes; of a photographic project set to rationalise identity (1986) nor is it the fascist archives described by historian Ernst Van Alphen (2007). In Sekula and Van Alphen's examples photography is performing a function of the state, identifying subjects for the purpose of subjugation. All of these archives can be seen to utilise a mechanical form of reproduction to archive culture; yet the subjective desire of their creators shunts them from the institutional regimes which so often upheld state-sponsored criticalities. Holka is a post-modern artist/ethnographer who understands the way in which her production of images creates not just her archive, as artist, but produces archives of the self for her subjects. Again, Holka's work *could* succumb to the ideologies of the state and function as repressive identification. However, it is not produced as such and functions beyond such strictures.

The Victoria & Albert flyer for “Archive Live” says that Holka is participating in “today’s interactive self-published archive” – a processes of auto-archivisation of “story-telling, personal narrative, identity, self-representation and art practice” which is situated on Facebook, Twitter, blogs and personal, as well as professional websites (V&A, 2011, 4). This description leads us to consider the way in which post-modern archivisation is a uniquely subjective experience and one that is mediated by digital cultural paradigms. Artists often keep “archives” of their work, or it is kept for them, or collected posthumously.³² In archival theory, these “archives” would be collections; not given the mantle of archive until their institutional processing, care and preservation. This distinction has the vestigial qualities of positivism – documents aren’t records until they are sponsored as evidence by an archive. They become archival at the moment of their appraisal for preservation and re-circulation by inquiring bodies.

Holka’s work, the way it arrests and produces meaning via documents, challenges this notion. It moves even beyond some of the early post-modern theoretical interventions described above by Ridener’s Questioning paradigm. It causes us to re-consider how the metaphor of the Archive has collapsed on the space of the archive and the action of archiving. If the contemporary situation is one always steeped in archiving, and this is done in a manner dependant on self-appraising in a digital space – what and where is the archive?

³² This posthumous collection may be with or without the artists’ appraisal. For instance, in the case of John Sex, discussed in Chapter Three, some elements were collected from his home as he was dying, other components were added by Palmieri, whose archive John’s collection resides in.

First let us back step to remember Jenkinson. He believed, as would Schellenberg after him, that records creators could not be archivists. If, in the creation of records, a process of selection beyond the normal course of administration took place, then the evidentiary nature of the record (let's put aside the essentialising term nature for now) would be lost. It was the job of the archivist, and records specialists at archival institutions, to process and maintain (in Jenkinson's theory) or appraise and maintain (in Schellenberg's) the record for posterity. Both theorists argue that the value of the record was its capacity for representation for a future inquiring body. Post-modern theorists working beyond these initial theories rely much more heavily on Foucauldian notions of the archive as a "what can be said" to have happened, moving away from the truth-seeking nature of the record. Thus, knowledge production becomes a process of interpretation and not of collection. Yet, in this way archives are becoming diffuse as material entities. Judith Halberstam utilises these Foucauldian notions of archives to serve his discussion of the life and death of the transgender youth, Brandon Teena, made famous in the film *Boys Don't Cry* (1999, dir. Kimberly Peirce).³³ The collection does not exist materially in one spot; it is a collection of things said *about* the case: films, newspaper articles, transcriptions of court cases, interviews. In this way, Halberstam, as inquiring body, acts *as* archivist to create an archival holding form which to produce new knowledge.

³³ Throughout I refer to Judith "Jack" Halberstam with the pronoun *he* as that is his preferred mode of reference. Halberstam discusses the Brandon Teena case in Chapters Two and Three of *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005).

Holka's work has limited engagement with print – the most widely accepted form of archival document.³⁴ Historically, the printed document has been regarded as easily classifiable, catalogued, and preservable. In the digital age, new materials and disparate materials pose questions to these three categories. Today, unsurprisingly, the current question is *how* to archive and *what* to conceive of as archive. I will attend to some of the problematics of this rise in digital archives below, when I turn to Martha Wilson and the Franklin Furnace Archive. However, I want open the question of how this everyday archive, this auto-archive might function. Firstly I would consider it a queer apparatus, more queer than the utopic promise of a history revealed in records of the past that the Archive always offers. Secondly, I would say that the auto-archive radically shifts the notion of producer that Benjamin sets forth, as someone who might offer “ideological patronage.” What if that impossible position of ideological patronage appears in the matrix of practices and methodologies afforded by the digital archive of the self?

Foster offers a partial answer to this question in “The Archive without Museums” (1996b) where he investigates visual culture's “cult of the image” and the archival “cult of the text” and the way in which digital archives require a paradigm shift. The move of Holka's work as art piece from document to archival record operates at the level not of artist intention or choice, but through an intervention of an inquiring body. Holka's art is documentary and the subject may or may not transfer the value

³⁴ The primacy of the printed document has been in place since at least 5th century Greek archives, as evidenced by, among others, James Sickinger's history of ancient Greek archives (1999) or John Davies' (2003) discussion of Greek records. Both authors discuss, in detail, the rise of the printed record from oral traditions. Sickinger focuses his research on the development of the public record in Greek archives. Davies charts the creation of “official” documents in the same time period. Of course, contemporary theorists including performance studies scholar Diana Taylor (2003) have challenged the primacy of the document.

of the art-document (the image-text, in Foster's language) into record status only in and through the operation of selection and preserving, made by someone who adds it to a personal archival collection. This is something like strategic autonomy. As noted earlier, strategic autonomy is Foster's term. It is a way of moving from fetishistic re-presentation of the other (what archivists perhaps, but anthropologists definitely have, fostered as a method for years now). This strategy attempts to pry apart the collapse of subject and image.

What if we make this archive even more autonomous? A way to do so might be through a radical strategy of representation that produces a constantly shifting collection; one which archives according to a notional set of desired relations. It is in this way that I understand the work of Brief Magazine to operate. Brief Magazine is a website of queer (usually male) ephemera. Browsers of the site have two options, submit an image-text or refresh the page. Upon each refresh a re-sorted collection of image-texts appears. Images of sex, bodies, beer cans, surf boards and/or texts, some scribbled on bathroom walls, some transcribed from other places, pop up. Each refresh produces a queer collection: queer both in juxtaposition and queer in the relation of found images which have no internal consistency, no custodial linking matrix. Like an archival lottery, the refresh button acts as a pull of the lever on a fruit machine. The material interacted with depends on an algorithm set in the web's architecture which pulls materials from its collection to produce a page. You may never see an image you want again, and you most certainly won't get the same images surrounding it.

Before considering the way in which Brief Magazine *could be* an archive, a queer one, which upends the archival anxieties of custody, order, appraisal and use, I want to offer that Brief Magazine, and indeed Holka's project also, *may not* be an archive. Holka's work hasn't "officially" transitioned her documentation into record. This performative act, as I've outlined above, is a process by which an archivist would decree such a position shift. However, as I've been arguing, the digital landscape is changing our relation to archival structures – the archive of the everyday is upon us. Holka's work moves *like* a record, even if *isn't* a record, in the archival sense currently employed, yet. Part of this is because of the archival turn, and the ability to collapse the artist into the archivist and vice versa.

Brief Magazine, more so than Holka's collection, operates as an "anti-archive." Archival scholar John Davies, who studies ancient Greek archives, has put forward the term "anti-archive" (2003, 327) to describe sites where documentation has an intrinsic and adventitious unity; but was not collected with intentionally archival purposes. Davies uses an example of the "ostraca:" pots scratched with the names of politicians who citizens wanted ostracised were often dumped into wells after counting. Archaeologists uncovering these "documents" can usefully find something like a historical record. However, in keeping with the ancient Greek understanding of an archive, this pile of used documents constitutes nothing but refuse. These documents do not constitute nor were they intended to be cared for as archival sources of information; they were processed data. This is not to say that Brief Magazine resembles a dump; that is far from the case. While certainly a public source of documentation, the adventitious acquisition policy and passive (in the

sense of no formal research tools or criteria) access marks the site as anti-archival.

The anti-archive must be understood to signify a place where archival techniques are employed yet never enacted into an archive as it has come to be formally accepted, if not fully understood. The transformation of the document to record, for Brief Magazine is a subjective quality of meanings conferred by and with the site and its users – the chaos driven curation shifts agency fully onto the inquiring body – who may also act as record-maker (indeed artistic creator), adding to the collection.

How might both Holka's archive and Brief Magazine be archives then? I argue that they function as a mobile archive, one that can do without an institutional repository - a "site-able" archive space (though both require the electronic home-page as "site" – really a networked function of multiple server signals which congregate upon a specific address to create the sense of electronic location via image-text) . As archive, it does not concern itself with custody, order, appraisal and use that were foregrounded by the archivist strategies I've laid out above. In fact it queers each of these terms. Further, it requires of the inquiring body a functional role as archivist, consuming the images which may create meaning of the order (or not) out of its collection. Users of the site can submit material that they deem to fit with the collection as they see it. They may thwart specific homoerotic negotiations of image-text or uphold stereotypical notions which could be seen to govern the site's collection. The order of the images may repeat, or reassemble; there is no cataloguing function. Unlike blogging sites like Tumblr or Flickr, there is no tagging system to classify and thus search by specified type of image-text. The notion of appraisal within the archival context is extremely interesting for Brief Magazine.

Submissions take a form of appraisal, as does the order-shifting “refresh” button.

But meaning is made, if it is indeed conferred by the inquiring body, in and through a dynamic network of image-text relations which constantly shifts. This archive performs itself as an “approximate construction” (Richards 1993, 128) of transmissible knowledge, of an object, of a subject.³⁵

The inquiring body acts as archivist here, its agency thwarts, or queers, presumed or achieved knowledge. Instead of truth-making, the process in these archives, functioning in a postmodern context, is one of lifeworlding. To negate Holka’s mobile art collection or Brief Magazine’s digital repository of their archive status - perhaps as anarchives – would be to highlight the very archival nature of their projects.

However it is the techniques of the engagements by the inquiring body which do not engage with codified models of archival practice – where dominant knowledges take certain forms.

Inquiring bodies in these archives do not get to use the tools of the trade; they construct relation as a means for a navigation of the subject. Thomas Richards describes this non state-centred dominant knowledge form as something like a “folk archive” (1993, 133). Local or subjugated knowledge, practices of perception outside of the norm in a terrain that constantly shifts – for Richards this is the coastal geography of WWII Europe – are able to produce new truths which provide material reward. Geography, he offers, is a “science of imaginary precision able to produce representations that exist without certain reference to anything at all” (1993, 128).

³⁵ Foster notes that the shift from art history to visual cultures is one from style or form to one of a “genealogy of the subject” (1996b, 103). Knowledge is produced without reference to a “subject which is either transcendental in relation to a field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout” (Foucault in Foster, 1996b, 103 n15).

In a chapter on the archive's double – an imagined counter intelligence to State-sponsored knowledge regimes – this science reads exactly like the post-modern archive described by Ridener and Foster in their various constructions.³⁶

Holka's archive and Brief Magazine highlight the way in which the self becomes archivist, artistically in the sense of curation, and how such archival structures may be queerly navigated – on shifting sands of image-text. One question remains in relation to the circulation of these images in the archival lifeworlds – and that is usage. Users of Brief Magazine submit image-texts that in some cases are reproductions of works of art or the intellectual property of other artists. The users of Tumblr that circulate Holka's images may or may not link back to (in this way citing) Holka's blog or website. Credit to the original creator of these works is often *not* paid. The question of the digital age's widespread ability to archive and transfer image-texts across many channels simultaneously raises the question of artists' theft. Intellectual property and copyright laws regarding internet fair usage are just now evolving, and having to change constantly to keep up with forms of usage and new software capabilities. Appropriation and contextualisation of art work found on the internet for personal archival and public performance remains an open question for producers and archivists, alike, to consider and to challenge.

I will now move to an ever-forming digital archive project which presents other problems for the artist as archivist: issues of propriety, access and preservation.

³⁶ In situating Holka and Brief Magazine as I am, I am opening up space for the larger questions of the limits of the digital and the future of the archive. This chapter cannot answer all the questions of this huge territory, nor could it. My expertise is not in digital cultures or information technology. My research and interest are in the ways that digital culture is shaping our relation to archives and the Archive – forming it as a project of the everyday. This is a window onto a larger territory than I have the space to cover.

Where the opportunity for archival intervention produces new lifeworlds it also presents material challenges for the continued access and representation of such experiences. The burden of digital accessibility is apparent in the commitment of the Franklin Furnace Archive in using the internet to give the public access to their records. While online access offers an ease of dissemination, problems with data transfer, access and storage give rise to a whole new archival paradigm shift, one that isn't as easily theorised in its material complexity.

HOTHOUSE

In the summer of 2009 I returned to New York City to associate produce downtown performance haven Dixon Place's annual queer arts program: The HOT! Festival. I made the trip and took the role for two reasons. The first was to return to NYC and work with a bunch of queer pioneers and up-coming artists so as to keep my feet in that pond. The second was to do research in and around these artists, at two local archives: The Fales Collection at NYU's Bobst Library (discussed in Chapter Two) and The Franklin Furnace Archives (FF). I emailed Martha Wilson, performance artist and doyenne of FF, requesting access to the archives for early work on a PhD on, what I called then, "queer archives." She agreed to a preparatory meeting and put me in contact with the senior archivist Michael Katchen.

We sat down for an hour long conversation prior to my first dip into the archives. I had scanned, already, the ever expanding web database the FF provides of its earlier holdings. Of course the problem was that I didn't have, at the time, a specific artist or performance in mind. I was interested in understanding the scope of work created in the downtown scene, especially in response to the AIDS pandemic. I was aware of

FF as a producing entity that pushed boundaries; many of the artists that I had encountered in my studies at NYU had often been funded and produced by FF. Just two years earlier I had worked with pornography star turned performance artist Annie Sprinkle, an early FF star, as her associate producer for her newest show EXPOSED. I already felt connected to FF in various ways, and was excited to have the opportunity to talk with Wilson.

Our meeting was germinal for my project in a myriad of ways. Coming away from that meeting, I had visions of a much different project than has now come to fruition, one which mapped queer performance space across the downtown scene, one that was interactive, one that performed the past for its audience here in their present. What became clear was that this notional project was far too large in scope for a dissertation. As well, what I realised I didn't want to do was perform the role of archivist so explicitly. Part of the thrust of this project, and indeed a large proportion of its contribution to knowledge, is the way it functions as archive of often overlooked artists, newer artists yet to be archived or critically engaged with, and situating a time and space of queer production since 1980, generally. Yet it is by no means exhaustive, it attends to specific collections in the vein of post-modern archival studies: curating a specific scope of work to a subjective end. I didn't have the desire or the means to become a master archivist of twenty years of performance art for this project, something outside the scope of a PhD. But it prompted me to ask more questions about what and how the Archive functions for queers and performance artists (and of course, any and all who cross over those

awkward positions). There already were folks who *were* that. You see, what occurred to me, nearly a year after meeting Wilson, was that I couldn't be *her*.

In the hour we sat together Wilson recalled countless performances that could be of use to me in considering various modes of inquiry into "queer" and "archive." If queer meant sex, gender or sexuality to me then there were countless artists grappling with that in the FF archives from 1975 forward. If by "archive" I wanted inquiries into artists *and* archives there was Anne Bean and her work in and on the archive, as well as FF's own *History of the Future* series which mined its own archives for production, promotion and, over all, preservation.

She knew them all. Wilson could nearly get every performance name, artist and year correct, or at least two out of three each time. They were works she supported, cultivated. They were friends of hers, old and new. She had lived it. And that was the crux of what came to me in FF. I couldn't be Wilson because I hadn't lived it. And my anxiety about the archive, as I will describe in described in Chapter Two via the work of scholar Amelia Jones, was the fact that I didn't want to have missed out on the lives of those that have shaped the space for me and my colleagues to make work, scholarly and artistic (usually a collapse of the two). And that was when the other works had to make their way in, recent work by Taylor Mac, Mitch & Parry, Christa Holka and others, who touched on queerness and Archival notions and needed to be situated herein. It was Wilson who showed me how important a methodology formed by your community might be.

Martha Wilson was born in 1947 in Philadelphia. Her artistic work deals with questions of female subjectivity through various media including video,

photography, and performance. She founded Franklin Furnace in 1976. The name was formed out of geography and idealism. Franklin Furnace was originally located at 112 Franklin Street in Soho. The space, a bookstore and performance/installation space was meant as “a hothouse for artists’ idea, a place where ideas create light and heat” (Sant 2011, 35); thus, furnace.³⁷ Quickly the live-work loft became just that, a forging ground for what Wilson calls “avant-garde” artists.

The avant-garde for Wilson, as evidenced by FF’s mission statement, is art and artists “that may be vulnerable due to their institutional neglect, their ephemeral nature, or politically unpopular content” (franklingfurnace.org). FF serves as both producer and archive, then, for artists whose work for reasons of funding, form or message may not find purchase within other areas and whose work would be troublesome to preserve. The work is troublesome because in many ways FF has designed itself to be a store-house for emergent forms of artistic production, specifically film documentation and digital media, which is highly susceptible to material corruption in preservation. Further, the technology which provides access to these materials is ever changing, thus ever outdating itself. And the mission to promote the work of artists who sit on the outskirts of the viable produces various problems. I will discuss the archival trouble more in a moment. I want to touch on some of the issues which have seen the evolution of FF from a resident arts space to a “virtual institution” (franklingfurnace.org). These are, in part, a result of its stance as an avant-garde producing entity.

³⁷ As Wilson explains to Toni Sant in an interview transcribed in his book on FF, the name was originally coined by Willoughby Sharp, a co-creator of the 112 Franklin Street Space, of which the Furnace was a portion (Sant, 2011, 35).

The original space was shut down, in 1990, due to a complication with the fire code after a patron complained. The performance attended that fateful night was one by feminist performance artist Karen Finley, an artist regularly supported by FF. This was the same month that Finley, artist John Fleck, and performers Holly Hughes and Tim Miller received notification from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) that grants awarded them were to be denied. The artists sued the NEA, citing First Amendment rights violation. Their awards were denied due to the sexual and political nature of the artists' work.³⁸ FF was demonised for presenting artists such as Finley. Yet the organisation responded by holding a fundraiser to support its *Franklin Furnace in Exile* series, noting that it would not censor its artists. Two years later the NEA rescinded monies to FF because of "sexually explicit content" by one of its artists, Scarlet O (Sant 2011, 24). Because of mounting pressures financially, the 112 Franklin Street Space became an archive storehouse, with installations of works occurring throughout Manhattan.

In 1993, when the judgement in favour of Finley, et al came to pass, FF transferred its collection of artists' books to The Museum of Modern Art (Sant 2011, 25). Despite a reopening, subsequent to purchase of the 112 Franklin Street loft, Franklin Furnace did not complete its capital campaign and renovate the loft space but sold the loft and, in 1997, became a production company. The company moved to John Street, just over a block away from the World Trade Centre. FF felt the effects of 9/11 both as citizens of Manhattan, and as a business operating in lower Manhattan. Wilson

³⁸ The artists sued on the grounds of First Amendment violation due to rejection of their applications, post award, "on political grounds" (NEA v. FINLEY), yet their work was repudiated for the role that sexuality played in each. Similarly, a subsequent 1994 case regarding artists Robert Mapplethorpe and José Serrano work saw similar moves to strike down governmental funding of work marked obscene by a specific subset of the governing body.

notes that after the move from 112 Franklin Street, given the prevailing affective malaise post-9/11, they “figured out that it didn’t matter where [FF] were located. The business of the organisation could be conducted from anywhere” (Sant 2011, 46). In 2004 FF moved to Brooklyn in the 80 Arts Building, which is now the administrative hub and main archival holding space for past and current projects.

Toni Sant’s recent publication *Franklin Furnace and the Spirit of the Avant-Garde: A History of the Future* (2011) positions Wilson and FF as leaders in considering the space for preserving artistic heritage in downtown Manhattan. Importantly, this position is one that is specifically engaged with the digital. FF became forerunners who realised the use-value of the internet and the ways in which it might be utilised as an artistic space and a store house. 1997 saw the end of a physical performance space for FF but the emergence of its website, www.franklinfurnace.org. The website became, and remains, a platform for artists to create work as well as for inquiring bodies to engage with the unique holdings of the FF archive.

Sant describes in detail various partnerships FF created with digital media organisations from 1998 onwards (2011). That year also marks FF’s first year of netcasting – a program of work programmed and stored on the internet. As a producing company with an archival focus, the shift to the new arena of the digital brought specific and exciting questions about the way in which work could be preserved. And since this new arena was under construction, questions of intellectual property and usage became increasingly material in a space where no matter existed for anyone to take control over. FF was at the centre of an explosion of production in and of the ephemeral: digital performance and digital archiving.

In Chapter Five of Sant's text, "Preserving the Avant-Garde" he deals with the very questions of the artist (in this case the arts organisation, but also Wilson's own artistic work, archived by FF and Wilson on their websites respectively) as archivist that I have foregrounded in this chapter. These include questioning what constitutes archival procedures and the transformation of the document into record in the archive. These processes are all acts of preservation. Preservation, as I've demonstrated above, also becomes a question of accessibility and propriety when the focus of an archive is for public consumption of records. With the advent of digital performance and digital modes of archival techniques, questions of sustainability arise, both in terms of modes of preservation but in quality as well.

In 1980 FF hired Michael Katchen as archivist. Alongside Wilson he has worked to sustain the holdings brought to the company prior to the non-profit incorporation in 1976 and works with performance records which continue to be produced. While Wilson is widely synonymous with FF, and its archive, it is Katchen who oversees the practical techniques of classification, catalogue and preservation. After my meeting with Wilson I was given instructions by Katchen on the use of the archive. Like most archives, I was allowed to use paper and pencil as notation devices. Gloves were worn when looking at some images, and I was only allowed access to one set of *fonds* at a time. This is typical archival procedure, ensuring the least wear and to avoid loss of items. Katchen manages the archival interns and the procedures involved in preserving the various media in the FF archive. Katchen, in this archival institution, acts as a record keeper. Appraisal methods shift here, in the institutional space of FF. Wilson, alongside various teams who contribute to selection panels,

appraise artists who *will* be added to the archive. In this way, Wilson's archival knowledge is more encyclopedic in terms of making a catalogue. Wilson knows what's going into the archive. Yet, in terms of appraisal for the public consumption of the archive via the FF website or the use of records in the office, Katchen is in control.

Like so many non-profit organisations, the founder represents the company. Wilson is as much the archive as the archive is Wilson – her vision, her tenacity, her prowess. It is hard to separate her role as artist and visionary from the functions of the archive she runs. Mapping this model onto Schellenberg's, for instance, one might see Wilson as the archivist and Katchen as the archival assistant, who manages the records. Yet this reduces the requirements of each position, their abilities and procedural function of their roles. There is a third element operating as well: the artists. The artists are given the opportunity *to be archived*, not simply to produce work which challenges the mainstream. Breaking with most archival theory, the artists are aware of the records they produce *as archive*. The relation between their selection (by Wilson, et al) and their archiving (by Katchen, et al) is a matter of their potential use. This use is policed by Katchen, in terms of media preservation, but also by expanding and ever-changing governmental regulations concerning intellectual property and fair use in the digital realm. This use has another governance, however, and this is created by the relation the artists has to funding bodies. As Sant expounds "performance documentation is important for artists seeking funding because it is often a major component of what can be viewed by

grant foundations, arts councils and other such institutions when they adjudicate which artists should receive funding” (2011, 141).

Documentation can mean funding. The fact that FF has had overall success in funding structures since 1976 is partially indebted to the mission’s concern with active documentation. And of course, the mission of FF, upheld during the early 1990’s “culture wars,” as they came to be called, was a product of artist’s documentation being “adjudicated” by those who could and would use such material against the artist. An interesting temporality, indicted by Sant’s invocation of a FF archival event *A History of the Future*, is imposed by the funding mandates made on the artists and the production of archives. Artists must produce active records (production ephemera, marketing collateral, reviews and rehearsal or production documentation) of work to receive funding for the future. The past work is the only recourse through which future funding is secured. The import put on an artist’s archive, especially via the United States’ non-profit structure, is exceedingly high. While this archival injunction began in and around the early 1990’s culture wars, it has transpired into the early 2000’s “for-profit” turn in U.S. non-profit structures. Marketing became the key term – the image-text of the artist could be put to financial gain, ensuring profit.³⁹ The archival techniques of modern technical reproduction, here, become a different type of fodder for the bourgeois regime than Benjamin ever foresaw. But what are the material effects of such a thrall to documentation for the artist as archivist?

³⁹ This model was championed by Michael Kasier, executive director of the Kennedy Center. Kaiser successfully brought various non-profit companies into a profit-bearing status. In this model successful non-profits modelled their budgets after for-profit companies (belying the nominal category and financial sector that their incorporation would assume).

PRESERVATION

FF has been making materials from its archive available to the general public since the mid-1990's via its website. This is a costly endeavour, both in terms of labour and sustainability. Digitisation requires thorough processing capabilities and expensive storage services in the form of servers. The technology required to process and maintain digitised files is always upgrading and constantly changing. However, the goal of this online archive is to diversify the audience for the materials within the FF archive – to allow ever greater access.

When I did my research at FF they had just received two large servers purchased with grant monies. These servers were to hold the next phase of digitisation. Archival interns were busily scanning photo slides and migrating VHS recordings to digital format. "Migration is the process of copying digital files from outdated storage device and software configurations to current equipment" (Sant 2011, 138).

Migration is common practice in contemporary archives. It is also an archival technique unique to the digital age where records must be manually and digitally altered for storage and access.

In some ways this process is useful. Migrating VHS files to MP4 data files is a way to preserve the record in two ways: one, from degradation (VHS tape is easily decomposable) and, two, from technical access issues. VHS tape easily strips. At both FF and at the Fales Collection at NYU inquiring bodies are not allowed to rewind VHS tape midway to return to a moment in the record; even pausing is discouraged. Both

of these functions cause wear to the record that is irreparable. Transferring to MP4, for example, assists with these two procedures and erases the problem of an archive having to provide multiple VHS players. But even the playback technology is a problem. So many forms of mechanical reproduction technologies become outdated within years. This is especially true of computer software. The floppy disc format that a majority of data was stored on in the 1980's and 1990's is incompatible with current computers and even when data ports are maintained the files stored on those discs become corrupted in migration because current operating software cannot "read" the record.

What constitutes a record, materially, for current archival studies and archival practice is bound up in not simply identifying the object but mapping the ways the record has technical resonance for future use. If an archive receives a batch of floppy disc files but has no computer capable of retrieving the data and no staff capable of migrating the data or the proper cold storage meant to sustain the life such a storage format, what use is the record?

Another form of digital manipulation is emulation. "This involves recreation of original works on scalable computer systems in an attempt to keep the original work available for future access" (Sant 2011, 139). Emulation is necessary for work like netcasts and net streams that were popularised in the 1990's. Sant notes that Wilson and FF, along with other major media services, do not see emulation as a viable preservation method. It changes the form of the reception of the artistic medium completely and as such retains little of the original media's formatting and thus its experiential nature. Both techniques of media preservation for digital archives are

reminiscent of archival concerns since modern archival practice began to be codified: if the archivist has to manipulate the record, does this change the informational and cultural relevance of the record? While digitisation presents itself as a means to get more information out in a seemingly durable and “easy” to access manner, the processes involved in getting there may alter and corrupt the record completely. As we’ve seen, access is also limited to an archival institution’s ability to financially and technically stay up to date with digital equipment and software. Can they keep up? And in keeping up, does the archive no longer have purpose? As Foster reminds us “The transformation of medium into image is fundamental to the archive without museums” (1996b, 114). In the migration of medium to digital image-text, the site of the archive becomes not a storage room but a server. This is not, necessarily, a bad thing. Yet the paradigm shift means that the archive may drastically be reshaped. What was a clearly material physical repository (paper, photos, ephemera, etc.) becomes, in the digital age, an *electronic* a storehouse for memory.

And in the age of blogs, YouTube, Google and countless other web-based for-profit companies with major resources, and the millions of webcasters (users who broadcast data through these channels) what role will archivists have to manage and maintain records? Even more importantly, because of evolving software and personal home computing, what rights do artists and producers of art and performance records have with their material? If footage from a migrated VHS from FF’s archive is ripped (a process of copying simultaneously from a web-stream to a hard drive) and presented by a webcaster, what rights do FF or the original artist have to their intellectual property? Another way of putting this is – if everyone has

access to the archival tools, and everyone can and does begin to archive, what will happen? This question is very large in scope, but the inquiry modes that result from the digital age are those obsessed with ease of access and speed of access. The archival fever, as Derrida notes, becomes a digital question – where everything can and will be “saved” but access and transfer become an urgent problem (1994).

I’M WITH YOU

The case studies employed in this chapter overlap at the site of artistic record and digital archive. Each sees the function of the artist and archivist collapse, with respective quandaries arising out of the technique of the artistic medium and the contemporary speed at which we can circulate such records for use on the internet by a public inquiring body. A relationship between lifeworlds and the digital can be seen in both: for Holka and Brief Magazine this is queer culture and the speed at which records of such culture might be circulated; accumulating personal archives in the public arena. For Franklin Furnace this is a community of the “avant-garde” artist, of which founder Martha Wilson is undoubtedly a member, as well as pioneering archival champion. These lifeworlds are finding their feet in relation to producing and archiving in the digital age.

The collapse of artist and archivist is, I have argued, a productive subject position to figure in the contemporary era. It is one that addresses through its construction the question of the critical turn to the archive (what constitutes an archive) and how we form them (in the digital age, constantly reforming itself with new technologies).

Benjamin’s concern for technique is here seen to be a way of circulating

performance to fashion lifeworlds – sites where multiple bodies engage and inquire of a product to enhance, shift, critique or otherwise position their own subjectivity.

Following Hal Foster’s suggestion that in this age of an “archive without museums,” under the thrall of image-texts, we might seek to strive for a strategic autonomy from and of the image, I have situated practices which yield not *answers* but useful *problems* to the storehouses of cultural memory. The structural force of the Archive, in and through various forms of archives still offers space from which to speak, while silencing a number of voices simultaneously.

This introductory chapter cannot answer the question: what is the future of the archive? However, I have navigated, through the collapsed subject position of the artist as archivist ways of seeing how we might work from the “impossible” position of ideological patronage – to make space in the social for lifeworlds that might be marginalised. However, the techniques of such work also bear issues of becoming-marginal, as technology outstrips the usefulness of the medium in which artists and archivist are working. As we refashion cultural relationships with the Archive, we may find new forms of archives from which to tell our tales – more radical in form, less formal and ever shifting, ever moving. Shifts in the landscape of performance, queerness and archival studies are transpiring at a uniquely dynamic time. Reshaping lifeworlds will enact political change through the losses which, re-membered or disconnected, in the archive, always hold promise.

The next chapter moves in an opposite direction to this, in relation to the artist position. The artists I explore move into archives to produce new documents. These documents form part of the artist’s archive, yet do so in more formal documentary

ways than I have explored in this chapter. The Archive's ability to represent subjects is called into question as artists begin to challenge the promise of the archive to shape their identity at all.

CHAPTER TWO: CUT PIECES

In this chapter I will explore memory, history and identity as they are performed by documents whose responsibility it is to index specific bodies.⁴⁰ This responsibility is permeated by the trauma of lived experience and of memory. The Archive is full, Derrida reminds us, “of half-private, half-public conjurations, always at the unstable limit between public and private, between family, the society, and the State, between the family and an intimacy even more private than the family, between oneself and oneself” (1994, 90). The Archive, then, has a special relationship to identity. It is from this institutional site that cultures retain fragments of their history to be used in the future. These fragments are indexes of lives and events which shape a culture’s general sense of (national) self. Archives, then, stage bodies – bodies of knowledge about corporeal bodies – as always already fragmented. The requirement for other bodies to bridge those gaps is the call to and thrall of the archive; in those spaces of mnemonic traces one gets to piece together what might have happened, what is happening and how it may happen.

My thinking in this chapter engages three key texts (among others), two of which are intricately linked in their formulations. All three, however, elaborate ideas about the resistance of subjects, by performative means, to repressive apparatuses. The

⁴⁰ I use the term index here as an extension of the definition of documentation. As Joseph Donahue notes, the term in its secondary usage refers “to the *apparatus* of documentation – for example, to taxonomies, lists of textual variants, footnotes [etc...]” Donahue, J. (1989) Evidence and Documentation. *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*. Iowa City, University of Iowa Press. I am calling attention to the indexing of bodies; how we classify, organize and assume identities within and through the ideology and institution of the Archive.

Archive is the means through which each of these theorists find subjects resisting. The first is Joe Kelleher's "On Self Remembering Theatre" (2008), wherein he offers a notion of performance as a mechanism for memory which works as much without us, as for us. The second, Fred Moten's *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (2003), posits that objects do resist and the sonic materiality of the object's screaming resistance is a theoretically fecund space to propel change with and through the social. The third is Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997) which deals directly with the paradox of subject formation when the ability to qualify as a subject in the eyes of the state is impossible.⁴¹ Following these thinkers, I am attempting to offer a methodology of dealing with and performing the Archive that addresses the violence of subjectivity for those for whom subject status is not so easily assumable. Not all bodies have access to, or purchase within, institutionalised archives. Some bodies are left out or retained in the archive as abject objects.⁴² These minoritarian⁴³ subjects have to find new ways to deal with quotidian phobic violence. Their recourse to subject status is intricately linked to the archive as a site from which to cull a social identity. Issues of race, sex and sexuality mark the two artists I will explore. Their work, as I see it, operates from archival sources to produce a new

⁴¹ Moten responds directly to the first section of Hartman's book in his assertion that objects – in this case the slave bodies – do resist, but resist differently than might be understood by white hegemonic and heteronormative means.

⁴² Dominant culture defines its centre, and thus regulates its standards of normativity, by delimiting a class or group of people as abject. Archives that highlight or simply reference this minoritarian subject are doing another type of erasure. I am thinking here of legal and medical archives which procure documents to criminalize and pathologize subjects. I will discuss this more with relation to portraiture later in this chapter, responding to Allan Sekula's work on the subject. This type of archive pushes the marginal out to secure the normative centre and thus eradicates any potential fixity by creating shifting boundaries between them.

⁴³ I use the term after José Muñoz's definition: the term minoritarian, "[indexes] citizen-subjects who, due to antagonisms within the social such as race, class, and sex, are debased within the majoritarian public sphere" (2009, 56).

archive – a new set of records – which cannot be understood as “source texts” but intricate cuts into the social. Their documents *do* history differently; they *do* identity differently and destabilise notions of what an archive is and is for.⁴⁴ Further, they re-stage the archive through its own mechanisms, applying specific types of stress to their own bodies thus reincorporating something that is almost always left out of the archive – the fleshy reality of lived experience. Queerness comes into play in their refashioning of documents and thus their performance of the Archive in producing documents which attempt to deal with a history of oppression and marginalisation in and through their bodies/documents. Put another way, their performance of the archive via documents that produce a new (perhaps “resistant”) archive queers our relation to narratives of the subject in and through institutional archives (and the ever shifting archive of history). This type of queerness is understood always as a relationship between an explicit reference to the values inherent in hegemonic/institutional archives (and the monolithic ideology of the Archive (understood as singularly plural) and actions which cut across, beside and into such epistemological sites. I will attend to two artists who in addressing some actual (perhaps resistant) archives, and creating new ones of their own, offer us a way to engage in methods of dealing with the monolithic and totalising force of the cultural metaphor of the Archive.

⁴⁴ The representational transmission of knowledge, specifically in the examples to follow, sustains the performative dimension of my analysis. The work requires a witness to, as Benveniste would have it, authorise the event (in this case of its documentality, and indexing of a body) (1971, 238).

CUTTING HISTORY

The Archive has no history. That is, the Archive proper, capital “A,” cannot be said to have a history. The multitudes of spaces and collections that one may call archives, however, have highly specific histories.⁴⁵ Archives (in both senses) have everything to do, as Carolyn Steedman rightly posits, with “longing and appropriation” (2002, 81) but their relation to history, and so the political nature of their collection, use and deployment, is vastly different. The Archive has no history, “which emphatically does not mean there is no history in it” (Althusser, 1969, 160). Foucault describes any analysis of the archive as occurring in a “privileged region: at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us” (1969, 147). Temporally, then, the Archive pervades the present with a tugging past-ness, all in the name of futurity. The past, and thus the discursive arrangement of past events which we might call history (already, nominatively plagued with a gendered narrative – HIS-story) is always already embedded in the Archive. History is, of course, an active agent in the Archive, but only in and through its deployment by dominant culture. History, like the Archive, shifts in perspective.

⁴⁵ The archive, as a state sponsored project for cultural memory, and specifically and more germinally a legal storehouse for the perpetuation of the state, is thus very simply an ideological state apparatus. Althusser, in his initial sketching of the reproductions of the conditions of production, offers a framework that I augment here. He says “It is quite obvious that it is necessary to proceed towards a theory of ideologies in the two respects I have just suggested [a theory of ideology *in general* or a theory of particular ideologies]... ideologies have a history, whose determination in the last instance is clearly situated outside ideologies alone, although it involves them. On the contrary, if I am able to put forward the project of a theory of ideology *in general*, and if this theory really is one of the elements on which theories of ideologies depend, that entails an apparently paradoxical proposition which I shall express in the following terms: *ideology has no history*” (1969, 159).

If dominant culture “controls” history in the Archive, then what of minoritarian subjects? As well, what does one do with history in the Archive? A working definition of history: a discursive practice utilised to narrate cultural memory according to State (local or global) imperatives. History, while never monolithic, is entirely disciplining for bodies. It, empirically (and imperially), cuts away at the excessive temporal “overhang” which confuses past and present in the name of the future. The teleological narrative that history must conform to drives through events and carries only what frames the hegemonic normative.⁴⁶ Much is left to the side, paved over, swerved around. This practice is entirely fallible, and as such, any and all histories much be treated as subjective fictions.

The Archive, and the many archives from which I and other scholars draw upon, houses not bodies, per se, but *bodies of knowledge*. These bodies, fragments and pieces of documents, constitute something proximate to but never fully accounting for the events and peoples recorded therein. These gaps terrorize, pull, assault, mock and lure us, as we, researchers, artists and those just casually interested⁴⁷ attempt to find *something*. What we are trying to find is as different as the many (or few) of us taking up time in, or producing, the archive. In my case that something coalesces around the queer body. The queer body, for me, is very much the gendered and sexualized “queer” which becomes a central political figure in the

⁴⁶ For the moment I will conceive that history “must adhere” to a teleological narrative. In a later chapter, I will draw attention to the way in which queer uses of history work outside a melancholic recuperative practice of seeing/touching. Queer subjects, anachronistically, might disturb this narrative through-line, and thus offer us a different modality of history-making, for the time being I will propose that history must conform to a teleological construction.

⁴⁷ I conceive of this “we” in the archive as an audience, witness to something subjective yet organised under the auspices of a collective (w)hole.

1980s during the height of the discourse on identity politics and the AIDS pandemic.

The ways in which I have come to know this body, having grown up since the deployment of the term queer, has everything to do with a relationship between the “archived” and the “lived” experience of queer bodies. So then, this project is an attempt to put some pieces together – to negotiate systems of power which have erased and marginalised certain bodies, how bodies of knowledge have been created from and within existing epistemological frameworks, and how these same bodies have negotiated ways to be seen, saved and savoured.

I begin my investigation via a critical engagement with a piece by artist Kara Walker.

Walker’s work attempts to account for the unaccountable – the terrorised subjectivity of the North American chattel slave. Terror and enjoyment here are understood as terrifyingly linked terms in the staging of slave subjectivity. The slave subject as lived commodity is figured as one “to take delight in, to use and to possess” which configures a “transubstantiation of abjection into contentment” (Hartman 1997, 23). In Walker’s phantasmal re-memorialisation of slave figures a new “archive” is produced from and within existing archival figurations. Walker dramatizes fantasies of plantation life in two dimensional black paper silhouettes. These works are pieced together from archival sources of slave narratives, from an archive of racial feeling and a personal history with the daily phobic resistance to Walker’s black female status within white male patriarchy. The way in which these, her own and the more formalized historiographical archives, documents perform assists me in understanding some of the fraught negotiations a project about queer bodies will have to make. This is not to say that queer and slave (and post-slave)

cultures are collapsible. They have related, yet entirely different, histories and systems of oppression, repression and expression. While there are certainly important ways in which queer theory can be used to interrogate slavery and post-slave cultures in the Americas, I am more interested in the methodology that Walker utilises to deal with a phobic and marginalizing history. Walker, and photographer Catherine Opie whose work I focus on at the end of the chapter, produce new archives out of existing archives, by slicing through personal experience and historical representation. With a sharp exact-o knife, Walker cuts figures dreamt (in nightmare, in day dream) from her experience as a black women in the United States and from histories of slavery. This methodology requires other documents – historical, ephemeral – and responds to the trauma that these documents represent by enacting another sort of archival terror: slicing them open. The documents queer normalised assumptions of how documents perform in their roles as a verifiable, fecund and stable mnemonic device by attending to the reactive violence a minoritarian subject might utilise to intervene in the Archive. Documents in the archive are proof of an event. Yet what the Archive and archives do/es with documents is never objectively as simple as representing the events and people it stands for. For, insistently, the Archive is understood to hold proofs of events which present its use-value as futural. Archives are made of the past, for the future as a means to ensure a culture's identificatory stability over and with time.

By cutting through the layers of received versions of history and narrative, Walker demystifies the alluring documents' hold on truth and historical fact. This cut disallows any easy teleological authority for and of a white patriarchal history. It

produces seeping gaps in bodies of knowledge which heal over, and like any wound, leave faint traces whereupon new memories, and thus new histories, are made, linked, and performed. Congruously, Catherine Opie's work involves and makes cuts – pictures which excise the event into a document, and literal cuts made onto her flesh – to destabilize normative associations with subjectivity. My interest in body art – performance and visual art that takes the body and its permeability as a canvas, or site of intervention – drew me to think in the first instance about the ontology of performance and its relation to the Archive and the many archives of those performances. Opie's work, like Walker's, offers the body as archive and the documentation of this archive renders the force of the Archive more visible.

I propose cutting as a methodology for and with the Archive. As I've already briefly discussed, the narrative force of traditional history must shape, sharply, the contours of the bodies it represents. In this way, archives then are already subjectively excised and more often show their torn, scabbed or neatly mended edges. Cutting as Archival method draws attention to and creates new gaps, fissures, fictions and marginalisation by severing ties and wounding old traumas for new archives. It delimits any permanent sense of origin, lineage, and cultural/filial debt by both severing those ties *and* bridging those gaps between "beginning" and "end", "past" and "future" through a performative healing of a wound rehearsed on a site of trauma.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ My use of trauma, here, is meant to gesture towards the broken and fragmented nature of the Archive – the stress of those fractures and of the decaying process of time – not simply as a "painful" reminder. Trauma here should notate a stressed *remainder*, one to which history, the State, and other bodies (the researcher, the artists, the Archivist, the friend) have applied extreme pressure. I am indebted to Ann Cvetkovich's model of treating trauma as cultural rather than clinical. She follows on

In the case of both of these artists' work the production of a new archive – an archive of the self – relies on systems of representation of the self as a historically marked subject. The use of silhouette and classic portraiture informs these pieces. Thus, the artists are mining a historical archive for modes of representation of the self. The documents they produce then have strong emanations of received models of history yet, by exposing or foregrounding the partial nature of that model, cut away from – or perhaps, better, cut transversely through – them, producing something different. In this way they resist the archive's historicity and perform an Archival mode of representation – one which, as I outline above, is "historical" but isn't "history." When I say that these documents perform, I am taking the visual presence of their work as a form of a speech act, caught (yet not fixed or static) in their own artistic mediums. In creating work that enacts the self within the social, these artists attempt a "body-to-body" (Schneider 2001, 105) mode of transmission of self-knowledge in and through archival modes which may be (and probably have been) silenced or marginalised in their enactments of identity.⁴⁹ Following Benveniste's assertion that performative utterances only exist as an act of authority I see these documents as enacting a counter-authorial and authoritative gesture by utilising a cut which opens up a space in history's occluding narrative for the self to be presented (1971, 238).

Cathy Caruth's important work on trauma and culture as an "epistemological challenge" which structures the traumatic event as "'unclaimed experience'" (Cvetkovich, 18). To re-perform certain types of trauma – in this chapter the incisive brutality of figurative language on the body – highlights the performative nature of speaking body (of trauma, of history, of experience) and listening body.

⁴⁹ In her article, "Performance Remains", Rebecca Schneider asks her readers to "resituate the site of *any knowing* as a body-to-body transmission" (1991, 105).

HISTORY IS NEVER OVER⁵⁰

Rebecca Schneider, in her article “Performance Remains”, compels the reader to “resituate the site of *any knowing* as a body-to-body transmission” (1997, 105). Yet the crux of her argument in the essay revolves around the problematic of the document of performance, and of history. Performance often lacks significant documentation.⁵¹ History, on the other hand, often produces excessive amounts of textual documentation. Performance history is harder to define because of the absence of material remains. Schneider theorises this desire for and reliance on material remains as a “patrilineal, West-identified (arguably white-cultural) logic of the archive” (1997, 100). Following especially Richard Thomas’ book *The Imperial Archive* (1993), Schneider argues that the Archive is interested in reproducing culture under the name of the white male figure yet does so by obscuring the “flesh with its feminine capacity to reproduce” (1997, 104). Schneider’s argument, not unlike Diana Taylor’s work on repertoire, tries to unpack the obscuring of the body as site for cultural memory by a patriarchal paper trail.⁵²

Schneider notes that “the habit of the West is to privilege bones as index of flesh that was once, being ‘once’ (as in both time and singularity) only after the fact. Flesh itself, in our ongoing cultural habituation to sight-able remains, supposedly cannot remain to signify ‘once’ (upon a time)” (1997, 104). The fleshy body has a resistance,

⁵⁰ Blau, Herbert (1982) *Taking up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point* (quoted in Schneider, 100).

⁵¹ For a thorough analysis of performance documentation in relation to different performance media – especially between theatre, performance art and dance, see Matthew Reason, (2006) *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. I will address this issue more specifically in Chapter Three.

⁵² See Diana Taylor (2003) *The archive and the repertoire: Performing cultural memory in the Americas*, Durham, Duke University Press.

she urges, to imprint and so the archival system utilises the hard remains – the bones – to “speak the disappearance of flesh, and to script that flesh as disappearing” (Schneider, 1997, 104).

In having the bone script the flesh’s disappearance, Schneider promotes her reading of the archive as one which secures itself as institution through a retroactive process of valorising specific materialities of permanence. “The solidification of value” in what the archive is, she demands, is a “retroaction secured in document, object, record” (1997, 104). She figures this value through Derrida’s *Archive Fever* (1994) and through Freud, the haunting father of that text, by foregrounding the patriarchal nature of the archive.

Following Schneider then, the Archive (in the West) may be conceived as an ideology or episteme that foregrounds disappearance and who scripts this disappearance as natural or necessary. The archive wants us to believe that performance, like flesh, disappears. Conceived of as a body of knowledge the Archive exists without us, but only for and by us, cutting away the fleshy bits and leaving us with particular remains which we must read. I am examining the knife edge between a terrifying Archival body that obscures others, and the useful protective home of the archive that through a particular saving offers a mnemonic apparatus for the future.

In the artists’ work I will examine how the body, and thus the identity, is represented through document queers the relationship between the feelings about what has happened, the present condition and the narrative of history. Schneider

promotes a critical move with documents to understand the (performing) body's relation to history and to how western culture performs that history. The representations of the bodies in the pieces I will analyze might allow us to remember differently, perhaps queerly, across and with time.

FORGETTING TO REMEMBER

In his "On Self-Remembering Theatres" Joe Kelleher reminds us that "theatre has, surely for as long as any of us can remember, been a machine *for* remembering, a fail-safe against losing one's way in the elaboration of thought and the production of feeling" (2008, 7, emphasis in original). It does so, he continues, through an "arrangement of things – texts, images, objects – in a particular place or set of places that are more or less possible for an interested spectator to 'relate' to, giving a disclosing of this arrangement to that spectator over a specific distance and temporal sequence. "The theatre here becomes a "physical manifestation of the old art of remembering" (2008, 7); one which incites a body to remember through a particular interaction with text, documents and space. Following Kelleher then, memory is a precarious negotiation between writing and event – somewhere on a knife's edge where history and the present reside concurrently.

Fellow Performance Studies scholar, Jen Harvie recalls that:

The act of remembering constitutes and produces identity, providing narratives or performances of events and times that are understood to define an individual or a community. But remembering is not an objective act: each instance of remembering constitutes its subject differently and subjectively, eliminating some details and enhancing others as changing conditions

demand. Different versions of the 'same' memory serve different social function and produce different effects of power (2005, 41).

Harvie draws our attention to ways in which memory (especially cultural memory) cuts away specific events, ideas and feelings not simply to efface those things but to inscribe a particular picture of history.

In a similar construction, Joseph Roach offers that, "memory [like performance] operates as both quotation and invention" (1996, 33). As we will see, artist Kara Walker cuts out something like (her) memories. Walker's graphic metaphors draw attention to the "stagedness of the violently (and sometimes amelioratively) quotidian" (Moten 1999, 169); of living a life each day in a body which contradicts the normative standards which society sets up for it. These "effects of power," that Harvie invokes, produced by different performances of memory (performances, say, in a gallery, in a book, or even all around you) recall Derrida's oft-cited footnote on the effects of the archive on the political. As he posits: "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory" (1994, 4). He goes further to state that "effective democratization" is measured around "the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution and its interpretation" (1994, 4). The three criteria which ensure a body's effective democratization (what we might call its national subjectivity) are markers of a distinctly Western and patriarchal privilege.⁵³ To have

⁵³ Derrida would agree, in this instance, that the archive is patriarchal. He conceives of the archive through the doubled figure of Freud (as father of psychoanalysis) and the Archon (as keeper of the Law, or specifically legal documentation). Any and all archive fever is in a thrall to the loss of the Father, and what can be saved by those who will inherit after such a loss. The scene of the archive for Derrida is that of the home/resting place of the documents of the Father/Law. Interestingly, of course, the female body is occluded. Despite it being the body which "carries" futurity, Derrida and most of psychoanalysis defers to the Father. In a future chapter I will explore this in more depth, considering the issue of inheritance and genealogy in queer performance, specifically through an analysis of two of Derrida's "seminal" texts – *Archive Fever* and *Spectres of Marx*.

access to, to thus be able to alter and then to interpret cultural memory is not a right.

To consider his self-remembering theatre, Kelleher moves from a dance performance to an interactive gallery installation and finally to documentation of an action by Sanja Iveković called “Triangle” (1998). This documentation takes the form of four photographs [see Figure 1]. The first is of a woman in a white t-shirt on a cement balcony smoking a cigarette and reading a book, a Jack Daniels bottle sits on the ground to her right. The second is a shot of the cavalcade for the President’s procession, from above. The third, again from above, is of a crowd below a “nationalistic” flag. The fourth is of a tall modernist building with what appears to be a body perched on the very top of it. The action, Iveković states, “begins when I walk out onto the balcony and sit on a chair, I sip whiskey, read a book, and make gestures as if I perform masturbation. After a period of time, the policeman rings my doorbell and orders that “persons and objects are to be removed from the balcony.”⁵⁴ She describes the piece as an intercommunication between three persons: herself, the person on the roof and a policeman on the street. The spectator on the roof can see the action from above and is able to communicate with the policeman via walkie-talkie. The policeman can communicate with the artist directly, but not see the action. The artist chooses not to participate or take view of the national procession.

⁵⁴ Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb 1998, S. 27, <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/triangle/>

It is through Iveković's piece that Kelleher is able to fully conceive of the moment when the self-remembering machine can be exposed as such. Really, it is through the body of Iveković: her body lying there "in full view of the interested spectator" (Kelleher 2008, 15). Her body, in its act of "mimetic self-exposure... provoke[s] the situation to expose itself" (Kelleher 2008, 14) as she "rehearses the gesture of forgetting the very theatre on whose stage her actions are given to take place, feigning indifference to what cannot be forgotten, what refuses to be forgotten, the self-remembering machine that is already devouring the 'persons and objects' on its stage" (Kelleher, 2008, 15).

Kelleher sees the body, cut away from a performance on the national stage (a procession for a visiting President), in its gestures of disinterest as staging a type of forgetting which requires the spectator to remember the ongoing performance of the social. Yet in that doubled act of forgetful remembrance the performance opens a space, Kelleher proposes, "just behind and inside the action for something else to be acted out, an inkling of something perhaps that has not been written yet and which will be worth remembering in the future..." (2008, 16).

Thus in the moment of seeing the mechanism of cultural production at work – one which goes on without us but requires us none the less – the body urges us towards an archival practice; it asks us to save something of this difference. What is so interesting in "Triangle" to me, and even more so through Kelleher's deployment of it, is the way in which the documents of her intervention, documents which document a body seemingly not intervening, become intrinsically tied to a queering

of a national performance. It is her body, nothing in this act without the document, which provides a space just behind and inside the action. But it is the archival product, the document, which opens up the space – the document which cuts into the flesh of the event to produce a different narration of a history and of the national machine.

How, then, might subjects whose history has been cut away search back? As Schneider has asked, how might they read differently the documents of those who have effective control over the archive and what affects might these encounters produce? Here, I want to think about certain performative (and so bodily and discursive) interventions by artists who have taken up the practice of the archival system. These produces documents excised from historical events to maintain and sustain themselves as an institution of memory (a fail-safe, or self-remembering mechanism, in Kelleher's terms) as well as that of the culture it supports. The artists have cut back into history, sliced documents open to allow us to read a wound, or maybe dance around its edges.

WORDS DON'T GO THERE⁵⁵: KARA WALKER'S *CUT*

"I describe a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth."
(Spillers 1987, 65)

Kara Walker's 1998 self-portrait "Cut" is one of her many evocative silhouette pieces. I first encountered the piece in 2007 at the Whitney Museum in New York City in an exhibition of her work entitled *My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*. The piece, cut black paper on white museum wall, depicts a female form in a dress leaping into the air, one hand brandishing a razor, wrists freshly sliced and four squirting black curlicues of blood spurting forth. On the "ground" next to the image are two small puddles of the same black blood. [See Figure 2]

While not her only mode of visual representation, Walker is well known for her use of large scale silhouettes cut from black paper and adhered to gallery walls. She uses similar silhouettes in short silent films. These pieces all depict a fantasy of plantation scenes. Severed heads may float above a scene while vomiting up another body engaged in some other act altogether. A child peeing in the corner might be issuing out of a pond where other bodies recreate. The images, mostly, are continuous and excessive in their narrative scope, like a nightmare loaded with too many symbols. "Cut" is notably different in that it is a piece that stands alone (the piece is 88 x 54 in (223.5 x 137.2 cm)). It is cut away from these larger scenes which depict Walker's

⁵⁵ "Words don't go there" is an excerpt from a quote Moten cites by Charles Lloyd: "asked to comment on a piece of his music by a radio interviewer, he answered: 'Words don't go there.'" (2003, 41 n30).

social imaginary for a history she shares, is not a part of, and could not be (exactly). Literally, it takes up its own corner wall. “Cut” produces, for me at least, something like a “figuration of freedom” (Hartman 1997, 11) that has everything to do with what Saidiya Hartman has discussed as the “indiscriminate use of the black body [which] makes possible the pleasure of terror and terror of pleasure. Within this framework, suffering and shuffling were complementary” (1997, 29). Walker re-writes history by cutting into the museum walls, re-membering and dismantling the black body that she has come to know but not fully understand.

Walker discusses her use of silhouette as “a blank space that you [can] project your desires into. It can be positive or negative. It’s just a hole in a piece of paper...” (Quoted in Ferguson 2009, 186). Roderick Ferguson, in an article on Walker and African American history, urges us to see these “holes” as a new form of writing history. In his move to read the (w)hole image as word, thus prying open the white hegemonic grammar which is unyielding, at best, in accounting for African slavery in the Americas, he queers history’s textual relationship to its document. By this I mean he makes strange our reliance on certain grammars which script history, asking us to write with new languages, new modes of addressing the past.

As scholar Ann Cvetkovich has argued “traumatic events such as slavery, lynching and harassment ... [demand] models that can explain the links between trauma and everyday experience, the intergenerational transmission from past to present, and the cultural memory of trauma as central to the formation of identities and publics” (2003, 38). The figure in “Cut” is excessive. It exceeds description. Words don’t go

there. They don't fit between, or extend beyond, the delicately harsh edges cut out for us, pasted there onto the museum walls. The trauma here figured as the black female body in rapturous cutting requires a new grammar, performs a different modality of expression, to figure the archive, history and personal memory.

In her persuasive book project of the same name, Ann Cvetkovich argues for an "archive of feeling." Central to her thesis is a belief in trauma's formative properties in cultural identity. Traumas, for Cvetkovich, are felt along generational lines and experienced daily in multiple and simultaneous ways by all citizens. "Trauma", she posits, "becomes a central category for looking at the intersections of memory and history (2003, 18). Cutting trauma free from pathology, Cvetkovich conceptualises "how affective experience that falls outside of institutionalized or stable forms of identity or politics can form the basis for public culture" (2003, 17). Because the public cultures for whom she writes her book, gendered and sexually minoritarian subjects, so often have no material evidence for their history, save the brash erasure which is both felt and lived in addition to the daily phobic practices employed by hegemonic cultural to maintain their minority status, she requires her readers to consider ways of registering memory and affect as valuable documents of their history.

A critical tension arises from Walker's work: both in the function of her figures (especially, I argue in the self-portraiture of "Cut") as art piece and as her art work is engaged with and consumed by a critical and capitalist art market. Walker offers work that never coalesces around a succinct feeling towards the trauma of slavery.

Her uses of the received archives of slavery (historical texts, racial kitsch, etc) are not dismissive or apologetic, or laudatory: they produce different affects.

In each of her intricate cuts Walker “depict[s] what has been effaced, what can never be resolved” (Ferguson, 191) from American history. Her cuts then pierce not just the black paper adhered to the walls of museums across the globe, but history itself. These cuts scream the fictions of identity, of origin and of history. Following Ferguson, I would argue that Walker performatively slices through the archive of American history to offer us glimpses into pasts that have gone missing. But these cuts do more than visually represent a new narrative of past-ness, Walker presents the terrifying reality of a now-ness, a present that is still reeling from the past – a “wavering present”⁵⁶ – and does so along what Fred Moten might call a deep sexual cut.

I want to read in her “black holes” a response to something she senses as missing in the archive – she imagines, fantasizes and makes literal the bestial nature of chattel slavery. I also want to hear a terrorization or queering of what is there, to unsettle assumptions about desire, loss, ownership, and agency. One way of understanding Walker’s cuts is to conceive of them along lines of an affective democratisation, one which carves out the history of subjugation by the subjugated. It is to leave Derrida’s notion of a subject’s democratic efficacy to the side and attend to the felt system of

⁵⁶ The construction “wavering present” I borrow from Avery Gordon who makes use of Jameson’s notion of the spectre as that which “makes the present waver” (Jameson 1995:85, in Gordon 168). Gordon conceives of the wavering present as a crisscrossing of “hard-to-touch, hard-to-see abstractions” that cross our daily lives. These abstractions may come in the form of historical ghosts which haunt our present day. It is Gordon’s assertion that “to write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities,” as the artists I analyze herein do, “is to write ghost stories” (Gordon, 17).

ordering, attending to, dancing with, harmonising or riffing on an archive that is felt so much in on your body that you cut it away.

Moten tells us that “every disappearance is a recording” (Moten 2003, 39). He is speaking here of a sonic materiality – of sound which fades away but imprints itself in bodies – across time and without lineage. I read his axiom as a description of a scar. A torn flesh wound disappears, recedes, heals but is never gone. Faint traces, skin-pigment change, tenderness (or the ghostly itch months later, the shooting pain of neurons re-firing) remain and continue. This is key to the sexual cut. Moten receives the notion of the sexual cut from scholar Nathaniel Mackey. Mackey hears the cut in the syncopated reggae rhythms he analyzes. In these he posits a “broken claim to connection” and an “insistent *previousness* evading each and every natal occasion” (quoted in Moten 2003, 259 n7, emphasis in original).

Walker stages this broken claim to connection through her (ph)antastical⁵⁷ self portrait. It is not, however a clean break. The subject in “Cut” is cut out, away from the more dramatized/narrativized stories that exist in much of the rest of Walker’s work. These dioramas depict slave life in an abject spectral phantasmagoria. “Cut” is disconnected. It resists. It resists along a radically sexual cut through history’s archive. Walker stages a fantasy of the abject freedom of any subject in her black hole that is no one and everyone. This sexual cut highlights while distorting the role of race and gender in the history of slavery in the Americas.

⁵⁷ I am invoking her both a phantom experience, a haunting, and the fantastical. I explore the relationship between fantasy and haunting in Chapter Five.

The cut is sexual, Mackey claims, because there is no escape from the structural folding of genders onto one another. It's not simply sex or sexuality. Instead the cut represents a bodily relation to the institutional powers that fortify and distress it – for example, in this case, the way sex is worked as a performative force of labour in and on the body. This line of reasoning is tangential to the work of Judith Butler and the performativity of gender. Yet in this case the role of race, as it is foregrounded in and by Walker's work, offers an even more nuanced relationship to sex. If ethnicity is, as Hortense Spillers would have it, a "powerful stillness" that makes the body "a defenceless target for rape and veneration," (1987, 66) then we excavate history out of a visible emptiness that, in the case of Walker's "Cut", is the artist herself. The collapsing of gender, race and sexuality is dangerous, but the cut that made it possible, the sexual cut, reminds us that these subject positions "adhere to no symbolic integrity" (Spillers 1987, 66) under the sway of hegemonic dominance.

To escape the telos of genealogical knowledge Moten urges us towards a free-form personal historiography. He call for us to improvise a transition "from descent to cut" (2003, 70) towards an openly furtive flirtation with the area opened by the cut and all that it undoes in its opening. Hortense Spillers identifies the illogical structuring of gender in relation to the captive black body in her "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" (1987). The illegitimacy of births by slave women marks a unique disjuncture in any claim to a socio-cultural inheritance by the progeny. A women's body, enslaved, has no agency in its sexual partnership. Children born in slavery have necessarily been understood in terms of a matrilineal association. Spillers deftly reminds her readers that the dominant culture "assigns a

matriachist value where it does not belong: actually *misnames* the power of the female” (1987, 80, emphasis in original). She explains further that: “the female could not, in fact, claim her child” and that matrilineality is doubly false “because ‘motherhood’ is not perceived in the prevailing social climate as a legitimate procedure of cultural inheritance” (1987, 80). The question/spectre of the father arrives in a “dual fatherhood... comprised of the African father’s *banished* name and body and the captor father’s mocking presence” (1987, 80). For even if the father is known the child has no recourse to (cultural) name or inheritance. The slave owner will not/cannot have given his name freely, and the Black father will have had no right to the ownership of the child or his own name, as he was also already property.

Because “only the [Black] female stands *in the flesh*, both mother and mother-dispossessed” she paradoxically exists “*out* of the traditional symbolic of female gender” (1987, 80, emphasis in original). Spillers charges us, her readers, with the task of making place for this “different” social subject. In making her cuts, Walker exists within this paradox and answers this call to task. She makes visible space (and, following Moten, an unsounded disappearance) on the white gallery walls while, about what we do with the pain of abjection.

This image may well “[speak] of the construction of Walker’s artistic persona and her attempts to better understand her own role in a history by re-creating it in the present” (Shaw, 129), but if Walker speaks here, it is in a language of a sound we can’t index if we can even hear it. Of course the piece speaks of the present, of an (processual) identification that requires past-ness, and it is a present enacted by

taking a knife to binaries (white/black, past/present, life/death, male/female etc) and slicing open history. This history is written to a beat that is figured in cut common time. Moten notes that the rhythm of in/visibility is “cut time.” This (dis)advantaged space/time engages the trap that, following Lacan, Peggy Phelan reminds us is pervasive in attempts at representation (Phelan, 7-11).

Cut time (*tempus imperfectum diminutum*) is quicker, speedier: two beats to each measure and the quarter note gets the beat. I read this time signature from the spurts of blood, two from each wrist, and two on the ground. In this queer temporality – diminished imperfect time – reproductive futurism is cut short. Walker’s double cuts – the (self) figure is cut out and is cutting – aborts transactions on her subjectivity – she can no longer be held to account for the (received hegemonic) past or for her future. The feeling of these two temporalities is present, in (ph)antastic ecstasy.⁵⁸

Reproductive futurism is a notion set forth by queer scholar Lee Edelman in his polemical text *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004). Edelman posits that queer subjects offer the productive problem of cancelling out any heterosexual futurity by being subjects who do not reproduce biologically. He argues that the future is understood through the figure of the child, the biological product of a heterosexual coupling. Queers exist in a different temporal register for Edelman, and for Halberstam (though their arguments differ) because they perform a refusal of

⁵⁸ Ecstasy here must be understood in its more archaic and etymological definitions as being “outside oneself” – free of the temporal restrictions of “straight time” – a time unlike queer time which is unyielding to reproductive futurism.

this reproductive time which understands the future only in and through the figure of the child.

For Halberstam, heterosexuals can and do exist within queer temporalities. Any refusal of the economy of heterosexual reproduction is, then, queer.⁵⁹ The moments of refusal, of thwarting the reproductive drive, of subverting patriarchal temporality, shuttle the subject into queer time. Following queer theory's recuperation of a pejorative term – queer – to anchor its theoretical weight, I read Moten's invocation of cut time, of a diminished imperfect time, as a queer temporality that exists only through a sexual cut. The sexual cut, we will remember, is “a broken claim to connection” and an “insistent *previousness* evading each and every natal occasion” (quoted in Moten 2003, 259, n7, emphasis in original). Mackey argues that the cut is sexual because it is always in relation to bodies; one body cannot be sexed without a relation to another.

Schneider's discussion of the retroaction of value ascribed to hegemonic documents mirrors Edelman's construction of reproductive futurism. Schneider, riffing on Ann Pellegrini's nuanced reading of Freud's theory of identification, promotes an equation of “retroaction” to solidify value in the archival document, as it too features as the futural figure of the child – a product of the white male father whose job it is to secure his worth retroactively and continue to reproduce the culture in his name. As Pellegrini states: “In this retroaction of objects lost and subjects founded,

⁵⁹ It's important to note that Edelman's writing completely leaves out non-white and non-male subjects. Nor does he ever fully address the reality of the queer child. I mark these omissions in his work as I make extensions into those areas in my own. Further, Edelman would not follow Halberstam in understanding queer subjects outside of those that identify as (white middle class and usually male) gay. In Chapter Four I address this further.

son fathers parent(s): pre- is heir to post-; and 'proper' gender identification and 'appropriate' object choices are secured backwards" (1997, 69). The child, as futural agent, secures the status of parents. Their work is to reproduce culture in and through the figure/body of the child. Of course, in this Freudian construction, the figure of the mother is eradicated. It is her body which will carry the child, but it is the child as object of the father, and his name, which will provide the child an opportunity to secure his own past in a patristic (identificatory) image.

Walker's self portrait cuts itself free of reproductive futurism. Firstly, by staging her "self" outside of the narrative force of her larger dioramas she offers the movingly static image of her cutting (herself) as a challenge to the viewer. Hereby she excises the self and requires that the cutting action be addressed in relation, as I see it, to Spiller's assertion that blackness provides a static target. This target is moving; it's bleeding. Secondly, the sliced wrists signal, for me, an economic suicide, not a physical one. Her cut out body is jumping in a dance of freedom, not simply from the historical complexity of the hegemonic discourse around the slave body and of the history of slavery but of the somatic bonds made on the female body to be the bearer of the future. She carries out an action that will not let her carry forth the received history. This cut literalises the outsider nature of her already marginal status. Queerly enough, following Spiller's thesis, this cut would also eradicate the potential for her body to remain a site of motherhood (though it may have already been so). By taking the matter into her own hands, and re-inscribing agency on the female gender, to the Black body, Walker moves us, and moves with us, there on the wall. She cuts herself free of any claim to her body, whose use value is caught up in

its brute force and capacity to reproduce new labourers-as-subjects. Cutting herself free involves slicing into a body which normally, under the ideological strain of the Archive, “cannot remain to signify ‘once’ (upon a time)” (Schneider 1997, 104), yet does.

PORTRAITS

Jane Gallop reminds us that a portrait is a “representation of a real person” and that a “portrait” “leads us not only to representation in the visual and theatrical senses, but to re-presentation, replication, the substitutionality of one woman for another” (1985, 200). In her analysis of a certain discursive portraiture – that of Freud’s Dora – the ambiguity of the hysteric’s position within the social and within psychoanalysis is in question. Citing Clément, Gallop teases out this ambiguity – one between contestation and conservation (1985, 202). I see this ambiguity, and its marginal and substitutional effects in Walker’s work – or I should say, in approaching a language with which to describe the work of Walker’s piece.

Following Gallop’s logic, the black hole created by Walker can be any woman . Yet the piece is referenced as a self-portrait. The inability for Walker to account for the phobic trauma of her present life, growing up a black woman in the racist south, or the slave history which is marked by so many gaps, might require Walker, then, to replicate the vast feeling of non-singularity in her piece.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Which is, of course, not to say that she couldn’t have grown up in a racist any-direction.

The double cutting, as I've urged, that Walker depicts with this piece, offers a uniquely queer position to the subject and history. If we, again, follow Shaw's assertion that "Cut" is about Walker's persona (2000, 129, see quote above), then we would be best to analyze this representation as a visual performance of her ego. As Elizabeth Grosz articulates: "the ego is regarded as a tracing of the subject's perceived corporeality" (1999, 269). This tracing, this silhouette, is also a juncture of two processes which suture the psyche, first a "mapping of the body and the circulation of the libido on the psyche; and [two,] a process of identification with the image of another (or the image of itself as another, as occurs in the mirror stage)" (1999, 268).

This suturing between an understood exterior and interior is made by our eyes. The seam between black and white – or of flesh and patriarchal history – can never be fully fused, but it is this rupture between the spaces from which the figure takes shape. Importantly, like in "Triangle," a (perceived female) figure (a subject) disrupts the teleological (white) scene of history parading behind it, here represented as the white walls of the gallery. Already, Walker has had to displace an activity of her psyche to the viewer; she cannot mediate that seam, so she has cut it away.

As the female figure (the Mother) is the primary other who the subject must face and sever ties with (to become, in Lacanian terms, the fragmented whole via the mirror stage), the figure offers us a notion of a primary rupture with an Other (Lacan, 1977/1980). Walker has cut away the excess, the other, the totality of the world in forming her self portrait (ego). The secondary cut, the sliced wrists, are more

confounding. We might read the severed wrists in a perversely literal manner, as an example of castration. This secondary slicing, under (whose?) agency, instantiates the subject's relation to history. As Juliet Mitchell describes:

Psychically speaking, there is no past until after the repression of the Oedipal wishes by the castration complex. The castration complex destroys the phantasy of the eternally satisfying relationship with the mother, it introduces the command that the Oedipus complex be over and done with ... The castration complex, bearing the injunction of human history, inaugurates history within the individual. (Mitchell in Klein 1986, 26)

As Mitchell explicates, the castration complex allows the individual to situate itself within a temporal space which aligns a pastness with a (reproductive) futurity. The continuum needs to be severed so that we might knot it together and grapple onwards. By severing ties with the imaginary and entering into the symbolic order, Walker's figure queerly narrates history as a phantasmic life/death, one where the future is as uncertain as the past from which it will have been built. The mouth is agape, head thrown back in act of slicing, with unsounded screams. Words don't go there. In this way her new archival document – an archive that is of her body of artistic production, an archive of her national feeling, an archive of her relation to a subjectivity that does not fit – *performs*.

Walker creates a document that performs the body in a pain that is not hers alone and is secreted, held inside the home of a white master, a father (the father of her children? Her father?), a body at the whipping post whose story is (not) told, who denies History. The "blood stained gate" (quoted in Hartman 1997, 3) which is the

(black) female body provides us with a “primal scene,” a site/sight where we can inaugurate history, without origin. The female body becomes a threshold, not simply for the reproduction of the human race, but for our understanding of a social body’s complex relation to itself as a product of the (necessary?) trauma that history inscribes.

THE HOUSE IS BLEEDING

“Documents pull us backwards, and the event of performance threatens us with a
future.”
(Johnson 2005, 16)

The photographic document has a long and complex history. While the scope of this chapter cannot attend to the myriad complexities of the use and theoretical weight of photography within the social, this section will address a relationship between performance and photography. Specifically I will engage with the event of performance staged for and by the camera and *not* performance documentation. The difference in these performances for the camera from any sort of standard performance documentation is that in this case the photographer “is always the sole witness to the singular live event, which also takes place in a non-theatrical space of the artists’ choosing” (Johnson 2005, 12). Further, I will negotiate the gendered and sexualised performance of self as staged by artist Catherine Opie in three of her self-portrait pieces taken between 1993 and 2004. Creating an archive of the self, Opie brandishes not only the flashbulb of her camera, searing the moments, arrested in time on the photographic negative, but also a knife. The

resultant documents doubly archive the event of the performance of self. But the self is not stabilised or totalised in these documents; through creating the documents the artists achieve a process of individuation which produces constant new meanings in relation to one another.

As we were reminded by Jane Gallop, above, self-portraiture “leads us not only to representation in the visual and theatrical senses, but to re-presentation, replication, the substitutionality of one [body] for another” (1985, 200). Opie’s self-portraiture, like Walker’s, queers the chain of signs which might offer up this substitutional economy. If Opie’s body, as represented, is substitutional, it is through the portraits’ inability to index or settle as a functional piece of evidence of her identity. Her portraits do not fully adhere to conventions of photographic portraiture, especially of the “self.” They do not serve to “define the *generalized look* – the typology – and the *contingent instance* of deviance”(Sekula 1986, 7, emphasis in original) that Allan Sekula has marked as a central formalising agent in photographic portraiture as social regulation. Nor do they strictly adhere to honorific portraiture that take their form after painted portraits of the upper classes. Opie’s work queers what Sekula remarks is the double system of representation in photographic portraiture: being “capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively*” (1986, 6, emphasis in original). Her queering of these structures requires a citation of both components of the system: to never fully produce the bourgeois self on the one hand or the pathological individual on the other. Always fragmented, in flux, and bleeding from the pressure of the spectator’s gaze, Opie’s portraits reframe performance documentation, in what Dominic Johnson calls geometries of trust.

Johnson, in his “Geometries of Trust: Some Thoughts on Manuel Vason and the Photographic Conditions of Performance”, offers that staged performance for the camera “always resists the tendency to try and sum up a temporal performance in an iconic image that is deemed representative of a larger, unseen whole – that wishful strategy recreated in most photographic histories of performance” (2005, 12). Here, Johnson marks out a territory of live art documentation by the photographer Manuel Vason as not truth-making but trust-making. Working away from an idea of the photographic document of performance as synecdochal evidence of the reality of the event that you weren’t there for, Johnson moves to the term “trust” to demarcate a relationship between the staged event, the document and the viewer of the document. He explains:

We need to trust that the long-lost event still deserves some time among the living; that it benefits us to engage with and endure the event’s photographic corpse, and to give a little of ourselves in return. This trust marks the yearning for a mutual passage that attempts to overcome the apparent certainty of hostility and pain in our interactions with the other, while claiming a space to inhabit with that other, consoled by the manifest possibilities offered under the sign of art (2005, 13).

In this relationship, trust acts as a destabilizing mechanism for normative or traditional conceptions of spectatorship and self-knowledge. Trust does not solidify the event into empirical data, but serves as a hinge point for mediating the loss of the event and the witnessing of a staged encounter with an(O)ther body. In the majority of Vason’s photographic work, the live artists we encounter are performing extreme acts on the body: suspending the body, cutting the body, piercing, tying or

confining the body, etc. These acts are performed for the camera as witness, not for a “live” encounter which is documented. Of course, Vason acts as a bodily witness, but it is his eye mediated through and with the use of the camera which “witnesses” and documents. We do not come to *know* the performance cut loose from time by the photographic document, as we would in traditional performance documentation which captures moments of a relationally live event. Instead we are asked to interrogate the permanence of the document as a performative reality of the event which we could not be privy to but now re-witness.

The textuality of the photograph, as evidence of event, invokes Kelleher’s ruminative and utopic vision of the self-remembering theatre, in the earlier section of this chapter. The photograph of a staged event of performance is also “just behind and inside the action” (2008, 16), and it too serves as an “inkling of something” that “will be worth remembering in the future” (2008, 16). And of course, this remembering will be enacted by the performative force of the document – the way in which it will require us, the viewer, to *do* something. The force of that doing resides in the documents excision from the standard model of performance documentation. Instead of relying on the after-effects, the detritus of performance, this model of archival performance requires the viewer to see the piece as a (w)hole in which there is an active engagement of doing – a doing that is a remembering, a rehearsing, a new staging of relationality that feels the effects of the ephemerality of performance but is able to escape the tired dichotomies of absence/presence. Of course issues of our absent presence, as witness of the event *at that time* are wholly important. We might understand this type of performative document, of and for the

archive, to be generative of a “modality of knowing and recognition among audiences and groups that facilitates modes of belonging” (Muñoz 2009, 99). In this way we are seeing the performance with each glimpse of the photograph; the document is the performance. Unlike most archival performance photographs which cut out a portion of the event-ness, Vason’s, and I argue Opie’s, photographs enact performance through document, untethering the temporal indexing structures of normative performance documentation: that is to say, letting the bindings of our desire to time/date stamp fall to the side – present but less restrictive to our encounter.

MARGINAL STUFF OF THE MOST OBVIOUS KIND⁶¹

“The body art event needs the photograph to confirm its having happened; the photograph needs the body art event as ontological ‘anchor’ of its idexicality.”

(Jones 1997, 16)

Catherine Opie is a photographer whose portraits of city highways, family homes, high school athletes, San Francisco S&M communities and queer performance artists have been lauded internationally. Highly regarded in the live and performance art communities, Opie famously used the world’s largest Polaroid camera to take shots of artist Ron Athey’s performance work. Described as an “American Historian,” (Lossin, 2010) and as an “Artist, Leather Dyke, PTA Mom” (Graves, 2006). Opie says the driving force behind her work is “trying to capture, document people and places before they disappear” (Reilly 2001, 94).

⁶¹ This subtitle is lifted from Mary Douglas in Erdrich, Loren (2007), “I am a monster: The Indefinite and Malleable in Contemporary Female Self-Portrature”, *Circa*, 21, 46.

Since the age of nine Opie knew she wanted to be a social documentary photographer. Opie's work then as a social archivist working the medium of photography, is of interest. Her work foregrounds itself as traces of lost and fragmented social reality. While I will focus on her self-portraiture here it is important to note the powerful way in which Opie's work offers us a suspended glimpse of the liminal – of bodies in transition from male to female, youth to adolescence, life to death, together and alone. We are able to discern Gordon's "wavering present", here again, in Opie's images. While the picture may be a static representation of the real, we sense in her photographs the tugging of past and future on a now we witness in stunning large scale colour portraits.

Opie's 1994 "Self Portrait/Pervert" [Figure 3] is a self-portrait photograph showing the artist, bare-chested, a black leather bondage mask covering her face, 23 hypodermic needles pierced through each of her arms and the word "pervert" freshly sliced into the skin above her breasts. The same floral motif that cascades down the backdrop of the portrait is used beneath the word, as etched filigree. A year earlier, Opie had created her "Self Portrait/Cutting" [Figure 5] a piece of the artist, her back facing the camera, in front of a green backdrop. On her back, freshly etched, are the figures of two women stick figures with hands clasped together, a house, a big puffy cloud with two bird-like stick figures flying to its right. The house, like the top portion of the puffy cloud, and the skirt of the right-most female figure, drips with blood.

In 2004 Opie shot another self-portrait. Entitled “Self Portrait/Nursing” [Figure 4] the photo shows the artist seated in front of a similarly floral filigree to the 1994 self-portrait (this time in red and gold, instead of black and white), her face is turned profile, while her body faces us, bare-chested. Her young child (decidedly toddler sized – large in the frame for suckling baby) is nursing at her left breast. The nursing child and mother are locked in a gaze. On her chest are the barely visible remains of the “pervert” scarification – healed over.

In each of these three pieces Opie stages the self and produces an archive of her identity which queerly engages standards of photographic portraiture and identification. Her tropes of staging the body in a manner reminiscent of painted portraiture, with all its racial and class implications set us up for information we do not receive. We cannot exactly index Opie in these pictures. We know they are self-portraits, we know then that the artist’s body is present. Yet the work of a portrait to index the individual is distorted by the performative traces of the staged event of the photo.

Opie’s disclosures are deflected. We cannot come to know her, *per se*. We see her and must trust that the evidence provided qualifies as an index of the subject: Catherine Opie. One might say that Opie “comes out” in these photos, but never as a whole or stable identity. Her performances for the camera, two scarification acts and one of breastfeeding, while not far in presentation style from those of much, to use Sekula’s term, honorific portraiture stemming from painted portraiture’s

conventions, remind the viewer of the stabilising mechanisms of photographic portraits and the gestural and figurative cues that present a subject to be viewed.

Literary scholar Ernst Van Alphen notes that “the photographic portrait and the archive seem to share an ability to represent (historical) reality in an apparently objective way. In both cases there seems to be a minimum of intrusion of ‘presentness’ of the subject or medium of representation in the product of representation” (2007, 367). The objectivity of the lens in locating social, racial and class distinctions (which, in the case of Van Alphen’s project, include the vast photographic archive of lives destroyed by the Holocaust) became a repressive tool for the State in maintaining its social body. Similarly, as Allan Sekula sets out in his “The Body and the Archive” the project of pathologising and criminalising “types” required a sustained formalizing project to ensure ease of classification. This archive of portraiture, he notes, “necessitated a massive campaign of *inscription*, a transformation of the body’s signs into *a text*, a text that pared verbal descriptions down to a denotative shorthand” (1986, 33). In this way the photograph was as much archived as it was archiving. Or, as Derrida has put it, as broadly: “archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives” (1994, 18). The subject received a photographic treatment due its mode of use (legal, medical, honorific), with each having a strict semiotic system tied into it.

The images of Opie literalize the slippage between the photographic archives which “honour” or “repress” (and in this case, repress most easily is read as pathologize) individuals. This effect is brought to bear though an intrusion on the photographic

scene a reminder of the “presentness” of the event of the documentation. The house, freshly scratched into Opie’s back, is bleeding in the 1993 image [see Figure 5]. This self-portrait never collapses into static repose – it seeps with the viscous reality of the event staged for us as a way of coming to know Opie. The blood is fresh and we, as viewers, anticipate the drops *to drip*. Dripping, it signals the present event of viewing the photo, of being with Opie as she bleeds *as well as* the performative event of cutting. Opie’s portraits make apparent a reader’s assumption of the static-ness of evidence, of documents, through the implied movement – what Schneider, above, refers to as the hard materials, the bone. It makes the document motile, performing across different registers, unfixing any reliable claim to authority.

This event is inscribed on the body, formalises it as its own fleshy archive. Opie has felt the trauma of being iteratively cast as a “pervert,” not simply because of her own disclosures of her sexuality, but because of her proximity to and association with social groups which, for multiply covalent ways, maybe understood as abject. I do not mean simply the portraits of the S/M community, or of the transgender community (who may find homophobic or sexist responses, among others), but also of the lost and decaying highways of California, and, even more recently, her work with teenage boys, playing afterschool sport. These marginal, and liminal, communities that she archives derail normative assumptions about the evidence of a portrait.

Cuts into human flesh are meticulous and messy. The edge of blade onto the skin, while decisive and often easily demarcated, undermines its own determinate

sharpness by opening up and out internal layers and systems of transfer that are not mundanely apparent on the skin. Cuts bleed. They seep. They become infected or scab over; sometimes they heal noticeably or disappear. The cut makes the relationship between outside and inside apparent while manifesting the permeability of the perceived borders. The seeping wound allows abject substances to subsist in the everyday. Abject substances, in relationship to the work of Opie and Walker, might include paranoid fantasy, disgusting feelings, phobic utterances, painful memories, erotic fictions and/or quotidian drama.

Opie has said that she made the 1994 self-portrait discussed here in response to a dialogue within the GLBTQ community around normativity and normalization (Sandlon 2008). Her reason for creating the piece then was to wedge a space into the homonormalising movement⁶² by materialising a phobic interpolation. The interpolative force of the scarification works in at least two ways – it calls to the subject who identifies as a pervert and it calls to the speaker who would brutalise another body under such a sign. The added gestures of gimp mask and excessive piercings connect these polarised subject positions through a series of deflections. The pain of the scarification is amplified by the inability to meet the subject's gaze and the multiple hypodermic needles piercing its arms. This is not simply a lesbian body, an S/M body, an ugly or beautiful body; it's a queer subject. By making her body a performance of queered abjection, Opie performs her/the self as a site of

⁶² I am using the term homonormativity as following Lisa Duggan's mobilisation of the term in her *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon, 2003. Therein she defines it as: "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (50).

antinormalisation from both the marginalised and normalised fields. The photograph requires the interpolative performative act “I do:” succumb/identify/enjoy/fear this image. What is normalised about the photograph is the way in which it depicts a certain mode of epistemological break. In “coming out” as a pervert Opie enters into a new “closet” which ensnares any and all iterations of her identity within a different system of expression and oppression. Yet Opie doesn’t “come out.” She resists the thrall to elide her perversity with her countenance, not to downplay her identity but to remind us, the viewer, of our role in perpetuating a certain knowing-ness about a subject, the way we read bodies and assign systems of value to them. I want to focus in on the literal cutting now, specifically in “Self Portrait/Pervert” and “Self Portrait/Nursing.” It is in this pair of documents that we can see the literal workings of an archival cut. An archival cut, as we have already seen with Walker, also a sexual cut.

TIME PASSES: THE PERVERT IS HEALED

The ghostly and barely legible remains of the 1994 scarification are there, just above Opie’s child’s sight line. The cuts have healed. [See Figure 4, detail] They are a ghostly echo of the prior event/document. Time has passed. In Opie’s staging of time, wherein we see through the lost figure of the pervert to the figure of the nursing mother, we do not experience a reparative act. The suckling child does not stage a futural hope, necessarily. Opie’s staging can be understood as representing a subject, herself, who has succumbed to or at least has participated in a form of reproductive futurism. Instead, for me, the mother/child performance staged for the camera – and titled singularly as self-portrait – performs a more nuanced sexual cut.

The “mother” performed in this photo is perverted. It says so on her chest: elaborately but lightly. The child draws our attention to the sign of difference.⁶³ The very standard triangulation in this photo, between camera, mother and child, draws us to the “heart of the matter:” Opie’s chest. It is her photo that draws the viewer into a spatio-temporal apparatus of the archive. It foregrounds time through its association with the healed scar and the large child. One wouldn’t have to know of the 1994 image to achieve this relationship to Opie’s time. And Opie’s time, as it is rehearsed for this picture, might be read then, as “straight time.” She proposes for her audience the fecund image of mother with child.

In utilising her body as archive, literally carving into her own flesh, Opie indexes the strange relationship to truth and verifiability that an archive might attempt to, ideologically if not epistemically, produce. Opie’s cuts in this self-portrait, unlike Walker’s, follow the normative timeline – they do not cross it. Instead they open up a parallel space, which demarcate, uncannily, the assertion of history’s hold on event and subject. The event “cut out” which draws attention to the old cut, there bare before us, urges us to remember. The state sponsored nuclear family, while “celebrated” as subject in this family, is also shunted. First by the title – as a self portrait the family is erased though queerly and synechdocally represented (the absented father, though not necessary within patriarchy for this type of “evidence of

⁶³ The child appears, to me at least, a tad too large (so then, too “old”) to be breastfeeding. I concede completely that this intuitive read, on my part, is conservative at best if not highly normitizing. According to the World Health Organization, and the American Center for Disease Control, children can and should be breastfed up to at least two years of age. See http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/exclusive_breastfeeding/en/index.html and <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/fag/index.htm> [Accessed 10, Sept, 2010]. However, my impetus to read the child as “too large” to be at breast is additive to the queering of the mother/child dyad as a way to inscribe at least one more layer of perversion to this “healed” representation of perversion.

the familial subject," does add a specific tension). And secondly, by its figurative inclusion in an archive of self that seeks to, though through formalised means, offer an abnormal body – that of Opie herself.

The pairing of the child with the healed scar operates further to disconnect this photo from any "straight time." Since "coming out" as a pervert, Opie has had a child; she's reintegrated into the social through the apparatus of (hetero)sexual reproduction. Yet the portrait serves to pull her away from that temporality. The old cut still operates here, as an index to a time and place not yet gone. Even a viewer unaware of the prior portrait would have to access the inscription on her chest within this portrait. As Rebecca Lossin notes:

The inscription's permanence, no longer bloody but linguistically intact, does not speak to its lasting and painful stigma as much as the reformulation of its meaning when written on the subject of its history. Not only does the word take on significance in terms of the virgin birth, but in terms of ten years on a living moving body – the intersection of the unifying, transcendent narrative of History and its individual and finite performance (2009, unpaginated).

Lossin calls Opie a historian. Opie's historiography, for Lossin, is in her creating an archive of portraits that depict bodies "that are too often spoken for even if they are rarely spoken of" (Lossin, 2009). This is the sort of performative historiography that Schneider has called for, a fleshy permanence which is never wholly permanent. The flesh here, torn, will not disappear because of the document, the interlocutive performance from 1994 haunts this photo and realises the flesh as a material remain; a reminder and index of the past. Or to recapitulate Moten's words, this disappearance is a recording; a recording that will not fully disappear. Something has been cut out to be made to stay. My analysis hinges on seeing the two portraits in a direct line, which, I believe, offer us a way to attend to the archives historical

capacity to empty out history – or what I described at the beginning of this chapter, following Althusser’s line of thinking: the Archive’s emptying out of history.

The relationship of the camera to the subject is not one to one, nor is the effect of triangulation given to centre Opie – she paradoxically exists “out of the traditional symbolic of female gender” (Spillers 1987, 80). Lesbians cannot “have” children (one might say, by way of homophobic polemic). Of course, biologically the capacity to reproduce may well be available. But her perverted subjectivity – signalled by an inscription on her skin – offers as an echo of Spiller’s notion of motherhood, in a different register. Opie’s self-portrait with child draws to centre her queerness by drawing attention, like her initial “pervert” cut, to the normalising effects of the social on her body.

As a queer subject, Opie resists the thrall Edelman describes in *No Future* as figurative of the future dependant on the hetero-couple. In this self-portrait we are meant to be given Opie, and it is in this instance that the child, instead of simply representing the future, actually gestures to the past – the pale inscription of her mother’s perversion. It is through then, the figure of the child, with seemingly fewer ties to the normalising force of patriarchy through the doubly absented father, that a history is presented without giving us any history. It is important to note that Opie’s perceived whiteness also allows for this experience of history and queerness. Unlike Walker’s piece, which cuts away the reproductive futurism that would always already be in the name of the white father’s child, Opie’s self-portrait hinges on the agency of a white subject to operate from within the oppressive system.

Opie dramatises the “cruelty of the speech act” (Felman 1980, 13) of naming and being named – of assuming a subject in the Lacanian or Fanonian sense. For Opie, like Walker, the performative gesture of the excisive cut stages the subject in its resistance to the archival act of “truth” telling. The relationship to history, memory and felt practice of living – so the agency of the subject – are called into question and performed queerly by these documents. This queering of the document, as queerly performative, offers us another way to understand what documents in the archive might be saying. They performatively make us aware of that wavering present, conjured between private and public, history and memory, effect and affect and draw us closer to something like the self.

Figure 1: 1-4



From: Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb 1998, S. 27,
<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/triangle>

Figure 2



Kara Walker, Cut, 1998, Cut paper on wall. 88 x 54 in. (223.5 x 137.2 cm)

Figure 3



Catherine Opie, Self Portrait/Pervert, 1994

Figure 4



**Catherine Opie: *Self Portrait / Nursing*, 2004
Chromogenic print, 40 x 32.**

Figure 4 (detail)



Figure 5



Catherine Opie, 'Self-Portrait / Cutting', 1993
C-print, edition of 8, 40 x 30 inches

CHAPTER THREE: LOOKING FOR SEX IN THE ARCHIVE

“...

Where are you from
you said

Your hands
On my lips like thunder
Promising rain;

A land where all lovers are mute.
And
Why are you weeping
you said

Your hands on my doorway like rainbows
Following rain
Why are you weeping?

I am come home.”

- *Pirouette*, Audre Lorde (1957)

The chapter begins with two gestures home. The first is through the excerpt, above, from the first published form of poet and scholar Audre Lorde’s *Pirouette*. The second, is through the film *Last Address* by Ira Sachs. Both pieces assist me in opening a space to the place of queerness in the archive. How this place gets figured is through a relation of bodies to an Other, an Other not wholly there. Or, if they are there, it is only in and through a body’s desire to animate them, to bring them into an existence.

Queer subjects have an odd relation to intelligibility. Socially, the threat of exposing (coming out) one’s queerness can mean phobic abuse. Archivaly, the queer subject

can be hard to locate. Structures of classification and preservation have often been at odds with queerness, or the identities that queer can index: homosexual, deviant, gay, lesbian, trans. In some cases, however, the archive can protect queer subjects, even give them a home. In this chapter I want to explore a queer relation to archival place. I argue that the process of coming to know a body in the archive, of locating the queer subject (even reflexively) is a project tied intensely to desire and the site of knowledge transmission.

In a later version of the Lorde's poem the final line has been modified: "I have come home." The adjustment of the verbal form in the final edition, for me, destroys the potential for the weeping subject of Lorde's poem to enact the possibility of a place called home. To have come home marks a definitive return. She will have gone back to somewhere – there in the first line of the excision above, where she is *from*.

However the original enacts a choreography of space that realises the fluid nature of *place*. Perhaps in that muted place of lovers that Lorde's subject describes, there can never be such a simple notion of a fixed *home*; perhaps there is a process by which coming and going can address the complexities of our bodies as we move through space, as we come ever-homeward.

I begin with this excerpt for two reasons. First, because it was this final line in its original form that catalysed my exploration on places queer subjects can call "home." Secondly, the choreography of the page presents the reader with a unique space from which to conceive of an embodied relation to *come to know* an Other. Her use of enjambment and line formatting perform for the reader a pirouette. The repeated "you said" line lifts and suspends as in, what is called in ballet terminology,

passé. The working leg is raised to the side, with the knee sharply bent so that the toe is pointed next to the supporting knee. This position is standard for a pirouette – the action of lifting the leg up and turning the head sharply while controlling the core abdominal muscles is what spins the body around.

The feet in a pirouette shift, as well, usually sliding out and then quickly and tightly back into the body, forming the passé position and then sliding back down to meet together in one of usually three positions. This temporary “home” for the feet, a position in space which will send it off into another, centres the dancer, allows them to get their bearings after the pirouette. The subject of Lorde’s poem comes home, and marks it, in this first version, as transitory: moving. Home is not static, it is unfixed. We carry home; it travels with us. If a home is destroyed a new home forms. The archive can be something like a home. Homes themselves can become archives.

Sachs describes the piece, *Last Address*, as “an elegiac film made up of exterior images of the last residential addresses of a group of New York City artists who died of AIDS” (Sachs, 2010). And that is, quite simply, what it is. Shots of exteriors of the homes of a handful of artists who died between 1983 and 2007 are inter-spliced with images of busy New York City streets, roosting pigeons, the darkening skyline, street lamps and city trees rustled by wind. Text appears to mark the name and address of each artist; the only sounds are those of the busy New York City of contemporary 2010.

Sachs’ description of the film as “elegiac” is significant. As a visual lamentation, it serves to commemorate a significant loss from a place of a number of bodies – those

from the AIDS pandemic. This commemoration functions like an archival record – it documents for posterity the geo-spatial location of a place that housed a body. As well, it does so, as elegy, under the auspices of a certain silence – a silencing of the artists produced by the spectre of AIDS. This silence stages, perhaps, a highly political and queerly melancholic response to the necessary mourning of these many bodies.⁶⁴ Sachs has metonymically charged the place of the artists’ bodies last addresses (some of which have destroyed since their death) as a unified last address: an unsounded invocation to what was there and cannot be anymore, living and moving in the “present,” now passed.

Last Address cannot be seen to mark a return, but instead must be seen as a process of remembering *with* place to re-animate the bodies we have lost to a terrifying and on-going pandemic. Put another way, *Last Address* hasn’t come home; it *is* come home. Like Lorde’s subject, the act of a present reckoning with the places of memory – for her it is lips and a doorway, for Sachs it is doors, street signs and the corners of buildings – conjures up a space that feels locatable; something like home.

One of the addresses featured is 65 St. Mark’s Place, the final home of performance artist John Sex (Sachs 2010). Sachs’ film was sent to me by the archivist Marvin Taylor. Taylor had introduced me to John Sex’s work during my field work in the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University’s Bobst Library. Fales houses the Downtown Collection, the largest aggregate archive of performance and visual art records from downtown Manhattan – an area notably rich with artistic

⁶⁴ The structure of my thinking here is due to David Eng’s on-going deconstruction of melancholia and its relation to queerness. See specifically David Eng (2002), “The Value of Silence,” *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 1, pp. 85-94.

expression for decades. There I fell in love with a performer whose life I had heard nothing about but who seemed to have been everywhere in the 1980s. The John Sex archive is actually a collection subsumed in the archive⁶⁵ of performer April Palmieri. I became obsessed with the work of John Sex after viewing the work in the archive. The few handmade posters for his shows, the too few hours of video of his work: here I saw work that appealed to me, by a performer outshining those around him. And because I became so interested in Sex, I became interested in considering the way in which this luminary figure of the 1980s East Village performance scene was situated posthumously. There was something about his place, or emplacement, within the archive, that further interested me. It had something to do with the act of sex and sex, the biological determinant for bodies within hegemonic binary systems of bodily expression.

Sex, and his emplacement within an archive, got me thinking about place: the place of the archive in contemporary criticism, the place of queerness in the archive and the place of the archive in queerness, and about archives as physical sites. It is notable that the “place” of the archive in contemporary criticism is a disinterest in the physical site of the archive. Actual repositories, while clearly utilised in scholarship – the scholar often had to go *to* an archive – are left to the side.⁶⁶ In this

⁶⁵ Palmieri’s archive is actually a “living archive.” This term indicates that the collection is continuing to grow because a record-producing entity has yet to terminate. Because Palmieri lives, her archive remains active; growing.

⁶⁶ This assertion is only slightly exaggerated for the sake of argument. Perhaps the most often cited critical text on the archive, Derrida’s *Archive Fever* (1994), utilizes the stage of Freud’s home turned museum to think about the Father/Archon figure, yet, analytically the physical site is put aside. Judith Halberstam’s *In A Queer Time and Place* (2005) assumes a Foucauldian notion of the archive as immaterial repository. There is no physical site for the most analysed archive in the text. In performance studies Diana Taylor’s *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003) utilises a notion of document vs. embodied practice which seeks to position the archive, here functioning more like the metaphoric Archive of Western colonialism, as a set of illocutionary and somatic practices – the site here may be considered the body but only in opposition to written document. Steedman’s *Dust*

chapter I argue that the Archive is a site of desire. The physical site itself has a relation to the body which may seem sterile or austere, but can also be enthralling, exciting or arousing. Thinking of the inquiring body in the archive coming to know other bodies is a relational act founded on desire – a desire for knowledge, a desire for mastery, a desire for an Other. I posit that a relationship to the archival object in the archive is a site of queerly potent fetishised longing and melancholic manipulation which the inquiring body's experiences, there in the archive.⁶⁷ This chapter argues that the physical site of the archive is also a site of desire: a desire for other bodies perhaps or a desire for a home. Like Lorde's poem, place becomes a processes of relating bodies. Place may be archival, or archivable, but it requires different modes of inquiry. My relationship to the physical site of Fales is intimate and implicates queer modes of inquiry and bodily practice.

HOW GOOD IT FAILS

“The act of failing thus opens up the space of
referentiality – or of impossible reality – not because *something is missing*,
but because *something else is done...*”
(Felman 1980, 57, emphasis in original)

A play on two key terms: fail and sex. The latter term references, as a proper noun,

(2002), for historians, and Reason's *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (2006) for performance studies, some of Hal Foster's work in *Return of the Real* are just a few that interrogate the physical realities of Archives. Archival scholars, who I focus more on in Chapter One, of course, take the practicalities of place and the physical materiality of the space of the archival institution into question more seriously.

⁶⁷ When I say mastery here, I am thinking of scholar Leo Bersani's reading of Foucault's notion of discipline and bodies . Bersani's example is masturbation, a technique he describes as the phallus exerting control over the hand which would manipulate it (1988, 103) My invocation of mastery here inscribes the remains of the body/performance/entity as exerting power over the inquiring body. We often think of the historian or scholar as exerting control over the remains of the past, but I would like to offer that it might be more oppositional, if not extremely dialectic than such hierarchical architecture.

the performance artist John Sex. In its more general nominative the term references a confounded space of associations that feminist, gender and queer scholars (among others) have scrutinised for years now – sex as a social and/or biological category. As well, it indexes a set of bodily practices or techniques: sex as act, a body to body transmission. The former term references a scholarly obsession with Shoshana Felman’s text *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan and J.L. Austin, or a Seduction in Two Languages* and her mobilisation, therein, of the notion of failure, as it relates to language and performance (specifically J.L. Austin’s theorisation of performativity), as I describe in the introduction to this dissertation. Secondly, fail references, as homonym, the archival place where I went looking for sex – the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University’s Bobst Library. There, in their “Downtown Collection” holdings, I found John Sex and devoured the few hours of VHS, the minute references in texts and the few production ephemera that were to be found in the files.

Together the terms fail and sex attempt to index a certain queer pleasure in a deflected, fetishised, and sexualised scholarly practice of coming to know a body. Coming to know is an epistemological practice which can occur in many places and in multiple modalities. Coming to know can be intensely sexual, and sex itself is a process of knowledge transmission, amongst its other features. The epistemological encounter in this chapter happens in the archive, but it does so by looking at other sexualised encounters outside of the bedroom – in more publically private locations, like the archive. This chapter, then, is about a desire to know a body without ever being able to come into contact with it. Not unlike any fan – who desires contact

with their star but never meets them – I turn to documentation in and on the object of desire to approximate a relationship with it.

I could never see John Sex live. I was not yet in high school when he died. So I must, instead, find ways to make contact with him through what remains of his body of work. Touching that body requires a relationship to the textual quality of performance documentation. Art historian and visual cultures scholar Amelia Jones argues for a more intimate relationship to the practices of the body and of documentation in her essay “Presence in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation” (1997). As a scholar interested in live art practices from before her birth and of her early youth, the only entry point to the work is through documentation. The majority of my research carries a similar burden of proof – much of what is left behind for me to experience as art practices of 1980s queer subjects are only in and through various documentary sources. Especially because of the lack of documentation held in this archive, the work done has less to do with what is said but what that saying does (to me). Thus, Felman’s text, a well-worn object in my personal library, becomes a beloved tool with which to conceive of my relationship to sex and Sex, to Fales and failure.

Felman’s text is assuredly about a speaking body – a body in the act of locution. The speaking body of her text is Molière’s Don Juan – a lover whose ability to seduce with language allows Felman to unpack the density of the Austinian speech act theory. Sex is dead. Sex cannot speak anymore, at least for himself. My desire to speak *to* his body becomes, in this thesis, a promise to speak *for* his body. I aim to situate his presence through the absence left by his passing. Felman locates through

her comparative reading of Austin and Molière⁶⁸ the “dimension of *pleasure*”, which she notes is “quite distinct from that of knowledge” (1980, 41, emphasis in original). Don Juan’s language under the analysis of its performative dimensions, Felman argues, substituted the “criterion of *satisfaction* for the criterion of *truth*” (41, emphasis in original). How does this substitution occur? By refusing, through an act of speech, the death of a subject. This act is the promise. Meaning is made, Felman postulates, when a conclusion is drawn. No ending means a continued satisfying elaboration, and indeed labour, of desire. To end would bring satisfaction to desire (1980, 39), and thus the full force of meaning. Yet Felman reads the third ending of the Don Juan story, the afterlife of his death, as a space where his unpaid debts, the promises yet realised, remain scandalous and still scandalising. She suggests: “if the promise of ending does not succeed in realising itself as *meaning*, it cannot realise itself as *silence*, either” (1980, 40). The scandal still speaks. Not, perhaps, for itself any longer. The failure of meaning is the success of the promise un-kept (still speaking and being spoken about). A place to speak from. A body to speak for. I want to make use of this illocutionary magic to conceive of the place from which a body might be spoken for, its promises re-uttered – with all the pleasures and traumas that brings with it – might realise itself in the archive. The site of a certain (form of) silence.⁶⁹ Documents are taken up by the inquiring body and used to speak

⁶⁸ Lacan’s writing, specifically on the form and function of Lack, is another key intertext for Felman. The epigram to this section is the summation of Felman’s reading of an Austinian misfire – when a speech act cannot achieve what it says to *do*. Misfires, things that miss their goals, are everywhere in psychoanalytic theory, especially via Freud and Lacan. Lack does not signify a material absence (phallic jealousy or castration anxiety, *per se*) but “an enactment of difference” (Felman, 57), as a misfire in the relation between what is said and what is done. She elaborates: “The act, an enigmatic and problematic production of the *speaking body*, destroys from its inception the metaphysical dichotomy between the domain of the ‘mental’ and the domain of the ‘physical’” (65).

⁶⁹ One might hear, here, in this unsounded (written) silence, a gesture of Foucault’s axiom in *The History of Sexuality 1* (1990) when he says “There is not one but many silences, and they are an

for those that have gone: the pleasures continue; new promises are made. A pledge to keep present that which evades such a time stamp: the dead, queerness, performance, even the document itself.

I take it for granted that the Archive is full of promise, and I'm not alone. There are promises assumed in the site of the archive and in the metaphor of the Archive that the past, lost to the present, is in some form preserved for us. I want to consider a structure of these promises. Derrida offers that "the archive has always been a *pledge*, and like every pledge [*gage*], a token of the future" (1994, 18, emphasis in original). A pledge, in its authorial proclamation of future event, does not constitute a performative act, per se. J.L. Austin delimits a pledge to the realm of commissives (1975, 157-8). Commissives commit the first person singular to an action in the future. The temporal displacement of the event from the speech act cannot allow it to be explicitly performative. But in his definition, Austin offers that there is slipperiness between "intending and promising" (1975, 157) And the shift from first person singular to third person plural, which one may argue would take on the narrative voice of the Archive, transports a pledge to the arena of the promise – an explicit, yet unhappy, performative in the Austinian lexicon.

The Archive as pledge then, as an unhappy promise, propagates cultural knowledge in unequal and uncertain ways. More concretely, archives themselves have specific pledges, missions in fact, as not-for-profit organisations. In his book *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (2006) Matthew Reason

integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses" (1990, 27). Foucault argues that we must be attentive to the ways in which bodies may or may not be able to speak and thus to disclose, keep secret or transmit knowledges.

examines more closely the relationship between the missions of performance archives, specifically, and what these institutions provide as a result of said service to the public. It is through these that Reason offers an explicit “archival promise,” one where “neutral access” to records, based on “comprised positions of selection, omission and manipulation” (2006, 32), is established in the hopes of constituting values of truth. The archival promise is to reach back, then, and carry forward bodies to “reconstruct and rediscover” them in a new time (2006, 33). The performance archive is always already a revisionist archive. The archive as repository has traditionally (or historically, though both terms are entirely loaded) been a place for the storage of financial and legal reports for institutions. Archives have not been the site of historical truth, but of a bevy of “historic” tender produced in the administration of an institution’s business. Of course, performance archives (like personal archives) are also the repository for the produced after-effects of the business of performance (or everyday life). However, traditional archives were not necessarily sites to reconstruct “truths” but to validate evidence.⁷⁰

Scholar Helen Freshwater notes that the “archive has become an increasingly attractive place,” (2003, 5) and I couldn’t agree more. She notes that its attractiveness, as a site, is one for researchers in cultural studies seeking to legitimise their practice as scholars. Access to and use of archives for academic studies offers the scholar a certain level of empirical authenticity to the project at hand; providing what Freshwater traces through the positivist strategies of historian

⁷⁰ Or, in another entirely structuring vein, many archives are created to establish filial relation, both financial and biological. The archive served (and continues to serve) as a site to track origins, of debts and losses for ideological bodies: businesses and families. I attend to this more specifically in Chapter Five.

Leopold von Ranke, as “showing what actually happened/how it essentially was” (2003, 6). The “allure of the archive,” Freshwater notes (2003, 1), is hinged on this positivist strategy despite theoretical moves away from such thinking. I’m attracted to the action of piecing together the fragments of performers’ bodies of work and their own personal histories as a means to understand better how queer subjects have come to save their lives since the 1980s.

I’m turned on by the archive. It’s all those bodies almost there but not there; people’s lives left behind to be fiddled with. The documents’ that constitute the archives I’m attending to provide access to an inaccessible past, and to bodies who can no longer be with us. They take on a special characteristic, not simply providing the scholarly project with legitimising force, but appealing to my body, the inquiring body, as a line of transmission from past event to present experience. For archaeological theorist Michael Shanks the “archival fragment operates as a literal substitute for the lost object, the unrecoverable past” (Shanks, 99). Thus the archival fragments, or record, can take on the nature of a fetish object by disavowing the loss of a thing never there, as such.

Fales fails to fully archive Sex. Yet it can’t have meant to be seen as promising anything other than a proximity to a body, a way of coming-to-know. This coming to know will have to have failed, as a promise of an encounter, so that new encounters may occur. I will not have fully fleshed out a relationship to John Sex, and in promising to bring him to these pages, I open up the possibility for more meaning to be made by never foreclosing on an ending, never attempting to speak for all that may have happened. As I will describe, the processes of looking for sex and for Sex in

the archive are intricately linked to the allure of the archive, as site of embodied pleasures, seductive scandals, and the relation of an inquiring body to the fetishized documents found there.

WASHROOM

I had just cruised the toilets at New York University's Bobst Library. (Cruising is a term to reference actively looking for sexual activity in a public space.) I had returned to do field work in the Fales Library and I had taken a break. I found a boy, maybe 19 or 20. We jacked off in one of the "busier" toilets of the upper floors of Bobst. I didn't know him. We didn't exchange names. We didn't touch. We watched each other, nervously craning our necks to the door to the toilet, until we both reached climax. The hot thing about tearoom sex, of course, is the fear of getting caught. Tearoom is a term used within homosexual male culture, usually, to refer to the site of such activity. While potentially a British slang usage, a more common usage in the United Kingdom is "cottaging" – public toilets in parks and along motorways are often built like small cottages.⁷¹

The thrill of tearoom sex is its out of place-ness – of another person coming in as you stand there pretending to pee, completely erect, wondering if they'll notice, if they'll join in, run away or rat you out. After I came, I smiled at him and washed my hands. He retreated into a stall to await the next horny library goer. As I walked out, I spotted a staff member of the library I knew quite well heading towards me. I shuffled down an aisle and pretended to be looking for a book as he walked past.

⁷¹ Sociologist Laud Humphreys is the most cited scholar with regard to the term "tearoom" and the activity therein. In his "Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places" (1972) he describes the origin of the term via the usage of "tea" for urine. In their dictionary of British slang Dalzell and Victor (2007) offer that the term may have been "t-room," short for toilet room.

Trailing him was a young undergraduate. They each entered the toilet in a familiar fashion. I giggled to myself and left the stacks, turned on with the thoughts of what they'd all be getting up to in there.

It was that same week that I came across artist Simon Leung's 1994 piece "Transcripts." In the piece Leung had painted on a wall: "we are all in the washroom but only *some* of us are in the tearoom" (New York Times, 1990). This axiom that Leung provides locates the tearoom as a site of a queerly sexual epistemology. Leung's notion hinges on the traction of ephemera as evidence: that the fleeting glance and excited fumbling will be intelligible to some and not others, those who would prohibit such acts, even in the socially coded prohibition-laden space of the public toilet. José Muñoz, in his 1996 essay "Ephemera is Evidence" posits that "queerness is often transmitted covertly" (1996a, 6), because of this covert operation of knowledge exchange, the empirical cues which denote a queer act can't be held up under the same microscope of the social as non-queer (or normative) cultures. Using "ephemera as evidence" or "a kind of evidence of what has transpired but certainly not the thing itself" (1996a, 10), Muñoz offers queer subjects a mode of materiality more in line with the way in which they live in the world. As with Leung's tearoom, these ephemera are not simply artefacts and affects that are singly made aware to a queer body; this evidence does not "suggest that a minoritarian subject has some primary or *a priori* relation to ephemera, memory, performativity, or the anecdotal; instead [it calls] attention to the efficacy and, indeed, necessity of such strategies of self-enactment for the minoritarian subject" (11).

It's not just the queer (usually male) body entering the washroom that senses and operates under the techniques of the tearoom that knows something's up. However, it is the queer body that may engage, pick up, perform and leave with the knowledge of the full scope of the events of the washroom in a particular way so as to both be a part of the action, and remain simply "in the washroom." Standing at the urinal, the feverish glances at other men incite and spark not simply erotic enjoyment but the potential crushing force of homophobia. These moments certainly are ephemeral. They are fleeting, they are feverish. Like any (social) performance the action speeds by and it is the left-over qualities, remnants of affect, memories which adhere to the body, spin around inside us that urge us back into this space of a "wavering present" (Gordon 1997, 168).

Something queer happens to time and to memory in certain spaces which house the histories, memories and remnants of acts that a culture saves. Derrida has supported the view of a fever towards and a resulting fever of the archive. In her response to his 1994 publication, and its preceding conference draft, Carolyn Steedman, in her *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (2002), notes the translation issues which actually open up this image/figure of the fever – of something that overtakes us fleetingly, something that might burn us a bit, leave us scarred. In this book Steedman takes two critical moves against Derrida's hyper theoretical engagement with the archive. First she offers a critique of Derrida's grammatical tense of the archive: future perfect. In this retrospective logic of "will have to have been" – the future is sublimated through various modes of memorialisation. Steedman calls for a

magic realism in the writing of history, a “once upon a time” model, in the preterite tense, which accounts for “what *was* there” (2002, 146) and not Derrida’s what will have been. Like Lorde’s poem, shifting tense produces a new experience of space-time. The encounter, linguistically, between bodies is different. This story book narration will become more important as we consider the political and affective ramifications of telling the stories of queer subjects.

Secondly, Steedman offers an “actual fever – Archive Fever Proper” (2002, 9) – that is somatically real for the historian and the researcher in the archive. Not simply a thrall to the evocations of what the archive holds, but an actual occupational hazard resulting from archival activity. In the “deeply uncomfortable quest for original sources” (2002, 9) researchers from about the 18th century began dealing with a breakdown of the substance of the archive – the decaying matter of their original sources. Steedman uncovers a fever caused by the anthrax produced by the book binding’s slow decay that begins to slowly poison researchers. This archive fever proper adds a new dimension to the way in which the body accepts, interacts with and transmits knowledge. Knowledge transmission might be lethal, in the tearoom, in the archive or in the space of a lover’s bedroom. Coming to know a body is an act of border crossing, a limit test where the permeable membranes of skin or the receptive neurons of the brain make a contact that leave traces the body may carry forever.

As I moved from the stacks to the toilets and back again I began to think more about the closeted nature of the archive, as a structure for policing knowledge and as a site

for cruising for sex. Further, if the archive is like a closet, then how might it work to index a subject, or more specifically how a queer identity might be fleshed out in such a place?

SOME OF US ARE IN THE ARCHIVE

Theatre scholar Anne Fleche has offered that “homosexual identity is conferred spatially by its proximity to the closet rather than its within or without-ness; it is relative to this image, rather than dependent on its placement inside or outside” (1995, 265). Fleche is expanding, in a theatre studies context, on a theorisation produced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). Sedgwick’s project considers the act of disclosure, of making intelligible in language a structure of identification. As she notes in the introduction:

The most significant stakes for the culture are involved in precisely the volatile, fractured, dangerous relation of visibility and articulation around homosexual possibility which makes the prospect of its being misread especially fraught; to the predictable egoistic fear of its having no impact or a risible one there is added the threat of its operating destructively. (1990, 18)

“Coming out,” or the act of disclosing a sexuality, is not simply an act of “truth telling.” The promise of assuming an identification can fail or be met with a failed sociality.⁷² The potential for such an act can be met with a continuum of possibility ranging from fear and phobic attack to bemusement or expectant excitation (among many others) and can create a situation where to disclose produces new closets from which new “truths” may need to be secreted or pronounced. Coming out isn’t

⁷² Coming out can be joyous, but as Sedgwick narrates more than once, such joyous acts of disclosure often are for those already “in the know” where the truth is something less like a disclosure. In the performative sense, the sexuality is not performed in the act of coming out, instead it fails to enact a moment of disclosure, despite the information being transferred.

reduced, simply, to a question of sexuality. Sedgwick's project, like Judith Butler's published in the same year (*Gender Trouble*, 1990), utilises Foucault's theorisation of the relation between sex, knowledge and power. As she paraphrases, "cognition itself, sexuality itself and transgression itself have always been ready in Western culture to be magnetized into an unyielding though not an unfissured alignment with one another" (Sedgwick, 1990, 73). Sexuality isn't the only discursive practice by which coming out operates. Sedgwick, in the first three chapters, is clear to note that the relationship between sex, sexuality and gender (and the requisite practices and techniques of such social performance) are all optionable for a discursive-spatial relation to "closets." Within the epistemological space of any closet knowledge is, as archivist Marvin Taylor describes, "either forcibly suppressed from the outside or wilfully withheld from within" (Taylor 1993, 22).

Fleche expands her formulation through Judith Butler's negotiation of sexual identity as always already closeted, to include *any* identity. Identity, she posits, "requires displacement, and is required as a displacement, and a disavowal, and then as an avowal of that displacement as a place, and of the place as an identity" (Fleche 1995, 267). So then, what we disclose about ourselves is not so much a letting in or out of a "closet", but a relationship to the figure of the closet which we carry, figuratively, with us. The place-ness is a result of a set of relations to knowledge production and transmission.

She mobilises this spatial configuration of the body to closet as a way to understand identificatory practices within the epistemological space of the theatre. What I understand from her argument is the way in which the spaces wherein self-

disclosures are enacted become extremely important in the way we *come to know* a body and then how we circulate these disclosures for our own (academic) enjoyment. As an excavation site of personal histories, the archive has a unique relationship to something like the structure of the closet, where certain publically private truths are brought out or into publically private domains. These truths are gleaned from the historical fragments which, following historian Carolyn Steedman, realise a magical potential in their use value – they become fetish objects for the researcher.

Fleche urges us to conceive of the closet, however, as a fetish. “If the closet is a fetish,” she says, “it is hiding something, qua closet, something that’s *not* there. It’s a reassuring presence masking a fear of absence” (Fleche 264). This reassurance of presence in fear of absence speaks to the archival thrall which is performed by Fales’ Downtown Collection. The holdings I engaged with brought to life for me a pile of dead bodies, most of whom were queer and had died by 1991 from complications from AIDS. John Sex’s archive within an archive fails to approximate the life of its artist. Yet it achieves something different – the remains remain differently (to invoke Rebecca Schenider’s construction, (1997)). Sex is never there, nor do I *come to know* him. But I am drawn to believe that I can approximate his “body” by access to and negotiations within the site of various disclosures – his archive.

The closet, like the Archive, is a non-place. It is a figure of a site where knowledge is transferred. Its locatability is a negotiating between literal places and the bodies that are encountered there. I want to think more about the non-place-ness of the Archive, and the way in which the spaces of literal archives produce a productive

anxiety akin to that of the closet. I do so through an essay by Foucault which attempts to consider the valence of placeless places: what happens in the space where transactions between the literal and figural (the archive and the Archive, as I've upheld) are enacted by bodies?

PLACELESS PLACES: HISTORY MAKING IN HETEROTOPIAS

In his 1967 article "Of Other Places", Foucault argues that the nineteenth century's greatest obsession was history.⁷³ A history, he posits, which "found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics [sic] (1)." As scholar Thomas Richards reminds us in his *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, this second principle is understood as "the inexorable tendency of the universe, and any closed system in it, to slide toward a state of increasing disorder" (Richards 1993, 80). We might also call this "entropy." A century obsessed with history mythologised in entropy, Foucault argues, is replaced by a century obsessed, not surprisingly, with space and locatability.

Foucault notes that "the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than time" (1967, 2). The nervousness around space has everything to do with bodies, in Foucault's article. The international anxiety he draws into the space of his article, via metaphor, is certainly in response to the 'space race' – of the use and navigation of "outer-space" as a new colonial frontier. And the colonial imperative is, of course, as Richards notes, always about knowledge. Securing knowledge of and for the Other operates to sustain a fantasy of control, of order, and of a sticking into place the identifications of both the coloniser

⁷³ I am indebted to Dr. Emily Orley for my engagement with this article.

and colonised. What is not just a semantic shift, is the way in which the “control” or “use” of the knowledge of and by the Other becomes the anxious (or for Richards, the paranoid (1993, 109) see Chapter One) state of the space between (globalised) States in the 20th century.

The 1960s were marked with a number of productive failures in the colonisation of outer-space, especially by the United States and the then USSR. Mission failures taught the governments interested in fixing the place of space more about the improbability of any such secure control, while at the same time scaffolding from the knowledge of how to chart and navigate the place of outer-space. I take the time to mark this gesture into the space race because it situates a part of the shift in terms that Foucault’s article highlights. The obsession with knowledge of the Other (place) slips into the anxiety about the knowledge of the Other (place). As we will see, the archive itself is figured by Foucault as a heterotopic space. A question for my project, specifically in relation to the issue of queerness and queer identity, revolves around the problematic, and materially political, issue of my own researched obsessions (people, places, events that occurred in contemporary queer performance) and the anxiety surrounding their representation in the critical space of this dissertation. This anxiety is, at least doubly, tinged with my own anxious fear of writing these figures into history, but also an archontic⁷⁴ anxiety surrounding their representations and modes of “truth” of two things already terribly hard to pin down: queerness and performance. This anxiety is expounded upon by a desire in most scholarship, which

⁷⁴ Archontic is a term employed by Derrida. Derrida is obsessed with the notion, if not the physical manifestations, of the place of the Archive. In *Archive Fever* he details that the etymology of archive stems from the greek “arche” which means commandment and also commencement. Archontic references what he calls a topo-nomology a relation to place and the law (in this case of the Father/Archon) as well as the consignation, or gathering together of signs, which coordinate a “single corpus” from which we may inquire (Derrida, 1994).

finds its purchase in the historical archive to follow the positivist strain of thought.

Reporting “what really happened” is impossible in most circumstances, but even more troubling given the ephemerality of performance and queerness.

The movement of bodies into and out of these other spaces begins to locate specific places. Place can only be understood in relation to the indexing of bodies, their interrelation of those spaces and the techniques of memory which engage place (Orley, 2010). As we will see, identity and place are inextricably linked. The desire to know a body or a place, to maintain this knowledge, becomes a question for the Archive and for archives. How do we identify archives? How do we *come to know* a body through archives? What is done there and after?

Heterotopic spaces have everything to do with bodies entering sites where certain bodies are controlled by the space. In opposition to utopias, which “are sites with no real place,” imaginary spaces of perfected society, heterotopias are real (though maybe lost, off-road or under-utilised) places.⁷⁵ Examples Foucault puts forward include psychiatric hospitals (as a site of social deviation), the cemetery (bodily relations to loss), the theatre (a juxtaposition of places represented simultaneously), museums or libraries, brothels and ships. In these places “real sites.... are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.” To describe these sites

⁷⁵ Recent work by scholar José Muñoz has extended a similar definition of utopia, following Ernst Bloch. In Muñoz’s account, utopia is always temporally figured as futural. Because it has no “place” it must be imagined ahead in time. He conceives of this as fundamentally queer. Queerness, as he has argued throughout his scholarship, evades the present. He states on the first page of his new book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), queerness is essentially about a rejection of a here and now an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world (2009, 1). Muñoz’s project is centered around understanding queer lifeworlds, and he places the political possibility of such lifeworlds as always evasive. My project walks beside Muñoz’s in that I see a material displacement in queerness’ ability to be materially enacted; phobic attacks from a heterosexist patriarchy often stifle queer life worlds and result in painfully real nullifications of such expressions. I, like many others, see the Archive (and figurations of the archival) as a place activated by the inquisitive body, providing the key to any and all queer futures.

Foucault offers a heterotopology – a “simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space” (1967, 3). For all of his attention to the ways in which societies necessarily shift heterotopic space to adhere to the contemporary needs of their epistemologies, his example of an ideal space between utopia and heterotopia – the mirror⁷⁶ – performs a formidable erasure by inscribing the same agency on to every subject.

As Foucault offers, the archive is a heterotopic space – it is a place to leave the remains, the pieces of the once-fleshed whole of a body. The Archive functions as an ideology of the state, but its practices at once support and reject the ideology of the state as a place-less space. As discussed above, the document cannot be the performance, cannot be that body, and so the desired relation comprised of subject and object of inquiry begins to shift.

How do we attend to this shift? How do we, as inquiring bodies, relate the experience of the place-less place, the home away from home, the never-never land of the fantasy that we created in our desire to *come to know*? Before telling Sex’s story, I need to consider the way in which what has transpired in these pages, the theories I have braided together, assist me in trying to depict the encounter I had.

⁷⁶ Foucault’s construction considers the mirror utopic because it is a placeless place: it “enables me to see myself there where I am absent” (1967, p. 3). The place that the subject occupies is unreal: an imagined assumption of subjectified space. The heterotopic aspect of the mirror resides in its reality as an object which “exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy;” it constitutes the reality of the place where the subject stands by connecting the subject with the space around itself via a virtual portal of place-ness. Foucault says that in the mirror “I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to *reconstitute myself there where I am*” (1967, 3, emphasis added).

HOME STORIES

Once upon a time.

If history can be written in the modality of fantasy, as Steedman argues it should be, then our relation to the archive may be even queerer than we thought. Before attempting to re-animate John Sex, I want to consider the way in which his *other* last address, his home in the archive, might function as a way to tell the stories of our pasts that aren't easily told. At the beginning of this chapter I discussed Audre Lorde's *Pirouette* and the way the verbal form of the final sentence created a space of emplacement for the Subject, with respect to its desire to *come to know* an Other. This putting into position was a negotiation with "home," a space I began to argue might be something one may want to conceive of as processional rather than static, fixed, or permanent.

Archives, as repositories for the remains of a Subject's work, perhaps, function like homes. Derrida has offered that the "only meaning" of archive, from the Greek *arkheion*, is "a house, a domicile, an address." Documents in this home are under "house arrest," (1995, 2) he says. Derrida unpacks a scene of domiciliation in Freud's house, where Freud's documents are kept to speak *for* and *as* Freud. We require such an arrest of the documents because, he argues, "the archive takes place at the place of the original and structural breakdown of the said memory" (1995, 11). In this way the archive, for Derrida, must take the place of the failure of memory: that which will have been forgotten.

At the juncture of failure and memory the archive arrests fragments of bodies past. This location is not a site (localised place), but a space between the record and inquiring body. Foucault has elucidated that the archive as heterotopia might function by “[presupposing] a system of opening and closing that both isolates [it] and makes [it] penetrable” (1967, 4). Derrida’s domicile as archive functions similarly – the home is a publically private space. For some this home is a place, a location fixable by signs collected together, agreed upon. In this way the place-ness of home is performative, it requires an authorial voice and an audience (of sorts) to be citable as location.

There is no history, anymore.

Shaw’s statement, read alongside Sachs’ film, performs the journey of Lorde’s subject that begins this chapter. Once upon a time there were men here who shaped the downtown performance scene. Once upon a time they found a home there in the sleazy streets and dive bars – not a home understood by hegemonic culture, but a home nonetheless. Many of them no longer have homes. After their deaths, nothing remains. Or their home moved, was renamed, renovated, changed. We can’t re-enter the home-space and attempt to place them within the social. For some, stories can still be told; fragments remain, memories ache to speak of the scandals awarded them. Some of them are cared for, posthumously, in the never-never-land of friends, colleagues and scholar’s stories. They cannot return, but they can move again, setting the future alight with what may have come to pass.

PLACING JOHN SEX: WHAT REMAINS?

Peter: I ran away and lived among the fairies.

Wendy: You really know fairies?

Peter: Yes, but they're nearly all dead now!

'Peter Pan' Danceteria, 1983

This section takes place in two sites: between a range of avenues and streets between 14th Street and Delancey in Manhattan, and somewhere between what is recorded and what we know has been thrown away. In trying to place the figure of John Sex I attempt to locate the place of the archive in queer scholarship. The archive as a resource for both queer and performance scholars requires a different type of remembering, in place, because so much of the history of the enactments we scholars in those disciplines want to engage with was not, and more importantly often could not have been, saved.

In the summer of 2009, I was fortunate enough to be the associate producer for downtown New York City performance venue Dixon Place's annual HOT! Festival (hotfestival.org). The festival is the nation's oldest and largest queer performance arts festival, outside of pride events. The mighty Split Britches, Peggy Shaw and Lois Weaver, were on hand in preparation for their fall debut of a new work dealing with the "death of the Bowery" and its rebirth as a real estate hot bed in downtown Manhattan. Instead of a performance, Split Britches offered us all, at HOT!, a long table: *A Long Table on Everything Lost*.

Like a dinner table, set with your nearest and queerest, this democratic and self-disciplining discussion space was situated around the question of nostalgia. As the

discussion progressed around fears and hopes of what nostalgia might mean – nostalgia for time, bodies and space – the group swerved into the AIDS pandemic. Most of the women (there were just two men, myself and festival Director Earl Dax) had lived through the initial shock of AIDS in the East Village, many having been caregivers during that time. Shaw, at one point, about mid-way through the conversation said: “In the eighties so many people died, so many of our friends died; so there isn’t any history anymore” (Split Britches, 2009).

There isn’t any history anymore.

BACKSTAGE

1983. Danceteria. Scott Whitman (now famous for his Broadway production of *Hairspray*) has assembled a group of downtown performance artists and notables (including performance artist Wendy Wild and columnist Michael Musto) to perform *Peter Pan*. John Sex, downtown cabaret darling, is starring in the eponymous role of the boy who wouldn’t grow up.

I’m watching a video of a backstage rehearsal of the production in Fales Special Collections reading room on the 3rd floor of Bobst Library in New York City. It’s 2009. I remember specifically that I was typing into my laptop – so only half paying attention to the material I was studying, really – when I heard the exchange noted above in the epigram to this section. I paused the film and, against archive policy, rewound it myself to hear it again.

Sex as Peter explains to Wendy as Wendy that while he knows fairies, most of them are dead now. Neither of the performers takes this exchange for more than it is: a line in a campy production. The fairies, a term used since roughly 1895 to index a type of male homosexual (OED online), present at the production (or in my case, viewing the rehearsal footage) might recognise the queer interpellation, but may not have known into what material politics they were hailed. In 1983 the reality of the AIDS pandemic hadn't fully hit. Hearing it in 2009, the full effect of exactly what was being "rehearsed" – a queer portent – came through. In just a few years a number of the cast of this production, including Sex, will be dead from complications arising from HIV infection.

THE ALL-AMERICAN BOY⁷⁷

John Sex was a flamboyant nightlife figure in the downtown Manhattan scene for much of the 1980s. As Steven Hager describes: "incorporating elements from Liberace, Tom Jones, Mamie Van Doren and Paul America, Sex gradually evolved into a glitter, Las Vegas version of the all-American kid – a handsome, fun-loving sex maniac with a foot-high shock of blond hair" (1986, 81). Well known as much for his bawdy cabaret acts as his past as a go-go boy, he could be picked out of any crowd if not for the towering Flock-of-Seagulls-esque hair (which he reportedly kept erect with a combination of "Dippity-do, Aqua Net, egg whites, beer, and semen" (Metzger, 2011) then for his extremely large python. In many performances,

⁷⁷ Sex is introduced at the Pyramid Club in October 1986 as "The All-American Boy;" he then sings "Bump & Grind" See: Pyramid Show (1986), The April Palmieri Papers; 115.0014; Series IIA, Video Recordings; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries [Accessed 5 August, 2009].

Delilah, Sex's 12 foot Burmese python, would join him on stage.⁷⁸ He was a regular star at the Palladium (since demolished and refurbished as NYU's glamorous dorms and state-of-the-art three story gym), at the Pyramid Club and at Club 57. Sex queerly exchanged sexualities on stage via his song lyrics. Singing in "Hustle with the Muscle," for example, about his useful endowment: "I've been with queens, I've been with whores, I'll make your pussy jump out your drawers!" (Sex, 1986a) In 1989 Sex signed a record deal with Sire Records. He created and released two singles and videos from his EP⁷⁹. It is just then, as well, that Sex disappears from the radar after what will become his final performance at the club Mars. Two years later he will have died at his home on St. Mark's Street (Sanchez, 2010).

Sex was born in 1956 as John McLaughlin in Centerport, Long Island (Hager 1986, 68). He attended the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan. It was there that he met a fellow visual artist Keith Haring; the two became lifelong friends. Sex moved from the visual art world to the stage via evenings go-go dancing in gay bars. Sex explained to author Michael Musto that he "couldn't effectively communicate what he thought onto a canvas" (1986, 125) and so moved to the stage. At the Mudd Club he began what he called his "acts of live art." It was here that Sex's larger-than-life persona emerged.

⁷⁸ The Flock of Seagulls were a popular music band in the '80s. The lead singer had a unique hairstyle which became synonymous with the band. His blonde hair was teased up on both sides of his head. The longest part of his hair drooped down, forming what I would describe as a shiny blonde slide.

⁷⁹ Sex's first single "Hustle with the Muscle" was also featured in the film *Mondo New York* about a woman stumbling into the "underground" of New York city nightlife. See reference on IMDB: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0093558/>. "Hustle with the Muscle" can be viewed here: <http://youtu.be/i-42r6fT32M>. "Rock your body" can be viewed here: <http://youtu.be/3BEEA2-LSkQ>.

Two other close friends, Klaus Nomi and Joey Arias – two performers who might best be described as futurist-drag musicians – are reportedly the ones who applied the new moniker to Sex after “a period of rampant promiscuity” (Hager 1986, 31). Sex had a different origin story for the character name, one that collapsed his own life and that of the stage persona. In a 1986 interview with CNN Sex tells the following version of his naming:

A lot of people think that it’s a stage name that I picked – but the real story is: when my ancestors came from Ireland to America they wanted to become more American. They didn’t want them to know where they were from, that they were immigrants. So, they changed the name from Sexton to Sex to be more American. (Sex, 1986b)

Sex can’t deliver this tale as deadpan as might be necessary but the CNN news anchor doesn’t press the issue. Sex’s performance of dis-placement as a means to identify himself is important here. He is Other, in place, by means of performing first generation immigrant. Even more so by choosing Sexton, which crudely reads as literally the “place of Sex” with the suffix “-ton” meaning “town” or “place.”⁸⁰ This origin story is queerly tinged through appellation. What makes John Sex more American, ostensibly, is S/sex. Sex becomes then, a signifier of his place. The place of sex, itself, in relation to 1980’s America becomes elaborately complicated by the bio-politics around the issues of AIDS.

Trying to unearth the truth about Sex’s background, and his death, prove to be as confusing and as spirited as his own performances. It is thanks to April Palmieri that

⁸⁰ I’m indebted to artist and scholar Ella Finer for reminding me of the surname connection to towns and for those immigrants who left and carried their place in their name (personal conversation, 23, June 2011). In response to a version of this article given on 28 June, 2011, Finer also noted that Sex’s choice to drop the “-ton” marks a critical leaving of the town, his home town for the city of sin – the place of Sex (Ella Finer, (2011) “Response”, Talk talk Hear here, Postgraduate Symposium, Roehampton University, London.)

there is any such collection. Palmieri was a sometime member of the Bodacious Ta-Ta's, Sex's rotating duo of backup singers. She's more famously known for her work as part of Pullsulama, an all-girl, 12 piece drumming band in the Lower East Side, and for her graphic design work throughout the eighties for downtown performance artists and locales. April worked closely with Sex for years and was, as it states on the holding description for her collection, "given his archive upon his death" (Fales, 2003).

These holdings are meagre at best. The scattered bits of video footage, clipped references to Sex's performances and the few flyers that constitute his archive are paltry. One stand-out piece is the 1986 video recording of the CNN interview with Sex. Sex had recently catapulted into a celebrity status as the poster boy for the downtown scene of visual artists turned performers – of punk gone high art. Marvin Taylor, the director of the Fales collection, recounted to me that CNN no longer has this footage (personal communication, 9, Aug, 2009). Despite its vast archive of holdings, this entire episode has been erased. While it remains documented as having been shot, the footage no longer exists in their archives and Fales is the only known institution to have a copy of this event.

Sex was interviewed by CNN as part of a feature on the East Village that is, as they put it, "one of the wildest sides of this town" and "easier experienced than explained" (Sex 1986b).⁸¹ Sex is the spokesperson for the East Village scene, a place that CNN describes via Punk Magazine as full of "sexual, faggot, hippie, blood sucking

⁸¹ In his book of the same name, Michael Musto places the East Village 'Downtown' as "technically the area between 14th Street and Houston, bounded by the Bowery and the East River" (1986, 25).

ignorant scum".⁸² By 1986 the art market in the East Village had been catapulted from gutter-trash obscurity into the high-art economic realm usually understood as taking place in mid-town and west side galleries. Artists and performers were starting to cash in, if not check out – from rising deaths associated with AIDS and drug addiction. The evening news piece featuring Sex is attempting to place performance art into a framework for the masses – though doing so by marking it as always already abject. Sex dissidentifies with this role. In an exchange just prior to Sex recounting his name change the interviewer says "We want to show America what it is you're doing. What is it you're doing?" After showing a clip of Sex singing on stage with his back-up singers and python, Sex says plainly: "It seems I'm singing a song" (Sex, 1986b). Performing the all-American boy, Sex queerly refuses the assignation that his "downtown" (queer, arty, faggot) work isn't already simply accessible.

That which culture has thrown away, its trashy downtown nightlife counter-culture, has risen, economically, to the point of national news. In the piece Sex is metonymically linked with the East Village. Performatively, he *is* the place, a site that, by 1986, was beginning to be decimated. The influx of money into the Downtown scene via the art market was confronted with a disappearance of a majority of its artists. CNN's discarding of the tape of this interview from their archive might be read within the state sponsored erasure (usually via censorship) of the arts during this time (soon to be labelled the Culture Wars). As a figure lauded as

⁸² The Punk Manifesto written by Legs McNeil from which the CNN interview excerpts this descriptor actually reads: "Punks were not asexual, faggot, hippie, bloodsucking ignorant scum as the media would have you believe" (as quoted in Hager 1986, 2). McNeil and other punks were eager to set themselves apart from the "art" scene which moved from Soho at the end of the '70s and took over the East Village.

the site of East Village performance, Sex's disappearance from the self-same site (through his death) and disappearance from the hegemonic archive (which one could argue CNN maintains in various contexts) produces a rapid erasure of the potential for an accurate history of the Downtown scene.

WHAT REMAINS?

Shaw's statement might be interpreted as one of mourning, in the Freudian sense that one who mourns has absolved their relationship with the lost object. The bodies lost to the AIDS pandemic can no longer speak their story and might never have collected the remains in a meaningful way. Within another person's archive, Sex's collection speaks the way in which queer lives, so used to living peripherally, didn't yet have structures for saving lives, of recording what was about to be lost. In some ways, structures were in the making, and Palmieri's emplacement performs, culturally, the way in which many female friends of HIV positive men in metropolitan areas specifically were caring for and harbouring the memories of these dying men. Palmieri's archival collection carries Sex to us.

One way of thinking of the immense loss of the AIDS pandemic is, following David Eng's position, to productively engage with melancholia. He urges us to "consider melancholia not only as a depathologised structure of feeling but also a psychic condition through which individual tragedies return from the silent past for a reckoning with the future" (2002, 88). In this way an individual purposefully engages with the pieces that remain memories and ephemeral fragments, thus preserving the lost object in the psyche and, thus, "[leaving] history open for continual re-negotiation (2002, 88).

Palmieri's emplacement of Sex, positioning his scant remains within her archive, models the psychic potential of Eng's version of the melancholic. By maintaining some pieces of what was left she allows scholars and fellow artists the opportunity to engage with the history of Sex in a queerly open space. Queer scholars and theorists of performance have always had to engage with the archive in a much more open fashion than most. The archive, as literature scholar Valerie Rohy has offered, is an "identity machine" (2010, 344). It is a place that produces subjects through their relationship to apparatuses of the State – usually administrative, related to the law (medical, economic and legal records). Queer identities haven't been easily identifiable, for purposes of legal and personal safety. The modes of personal and performance archiving in the early 80s weren't equipped, prepared, or understood to fulfil the archival promise of a subject, subscribed to and transcribed in history. This is, in great part, due to the unforeseeable need to record what transpired as a result of the AIDS pandemic and its erasure, if we are to follow Shaw's statement, of history. My own first response to Sex's archive comes from this anxious turn to the mournful. Understood in this way, the archive, as identity machine and historical tool, could seem to keep the remains safe and in place; allowing us to move on *from* it.

Sex, as he is (em)placed – within and as a site of queer performance/history – is paradigmatic of a productive failure of the archive to represent queer lives and

cultural artefacts.⁸³ Even in densely populated collections, like that in *Fales* of artist David Wojnarowicz, a representation of the subject, in the positivist terms of archival creation – to represent “what really happened” – isn’t possible. This repository, this home of the remains, is not, as Derrida attests, under domiciliation, or house arrest. Conversely, it is come home. To move like *Sex*, queerly in place, in the place of the archive, we might take on the position of the melancholic.⁸⁴ The melancholic regales itself in the to-be-found, the refuse and possibility of objects to become useful. Never fully relinquishing the lost object (in this case the bodies of artists and their bodies of work), we can begin to imagine the never-land of history and, as in the case with *Sex*, meet a bunch of fairies.

⁸³ The notion that any archive cannot fully represent history, is not new or novel; it follows common post-structuralist arguments surrounding the writing of history and the power relations creating scripts of the past. What is important for this chapter is the way in which the archive functions to support hegemonic norms. There are myriad instances of social practices of archiving to exclude and include queer bodies and queer lives in various ways (including pathologizing, as well as movement to anthologize queer lives, etc). What I bring to the fore here is the way in which AIDS necessitated a drastic change in the way in which, especially New York, citizens began to save records of lived experience.

⁸⁴ Following scholar Emily Orley (2008), who argues that places remember events only in and through the activation of memory by what I would like to call an inquiring-body, we might see the archive is always already queer. The records which remain there, always the refuse – the surplus – of lived events, become mnemonic devices to produce histories. The polyvalent experiences of inquiring-bodies produces a myriad of histories all of which enact a certain facticity that might fail under certain disciplinary regimes, but produce powerful structures of feelings for, especially I would argue, queer bodies.

CHAPTER FOUR: SWAPPING SPIT:

(ANTI)SOCIALITY AND QUEER THEORY

“I want to promise it rather than prove it.”
(Phelan 1997, 16)

This chapter has two connected promises. The first is a promise to share with you a performance that shifted my thinking about queer theory. The second is a promise to situate a move in queer theory that has come to be known as the anti-social turn. Both promises are offered in response to the Archive. In the first I contribute to the performance archive: I preserve an encounter with performance duo Mitch & Parry’s 2009 show I HOST YOU. NOW TO TONIGHT, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW. In the second I engage with the scholarly archive of Queer Studies to unpick what has been termed the “anti-social turn” in queer theory. Enacting a contribution to the archive and engaging with material from the archive I work to consider how we archive queerness. If queerness is not an identity but a matrix of relations, how does the archive as identity machine (Rohy, 2010, 344) operate in and for queers and queer performance? As well, if queerness, as I consider below, is about thwarting normative modes of circulation within the social then how do share queerness – how do we support queer lifeworlds?

That anti-sociality may be a means to negotiate experiences in the social, and indeed in the archive, offers strategies for subjects at a loss, or for whom there seems to be no promise. In the introduction to this project I have already laid out a framework

for considering these chapters as promises – a set of speech acts that carry us back to a moment, an idea, a time, and resolutely fail to contain, prescribe or fulfil the event, thought or situation. Like any archive, these promises contain fragments that piece together the inquiring body’s perspective, their desires, their proprietary concerns, their genealogies of thought. I begin with a quote from Peggy Phelan’s *Mourning Sex* (1997) that I feel is evocative of a type of queer research that this chapter undertakes, one which sustains (in)congruous elements beside one another without giving way (fully) to the analytic force which so much research requires of itself, sustaining and enduring the “thing” for and with another. While analysis occurs (one gives way to such pleasures, such traumas), the methodology employed here is more associative, parts are juxtaposed instead of sutured together. Phelan calls this type of writing “performative.” I have already, in the Introduction, suggested that what I am doing isn’t exactly performative writing; it is not writing toward disappearance but is personally writing towards preservation. As such, my writing here performs two disparate forms of archiving: the first, an auto-ethnographic account of a cultural text: a performance piece; and the second, a historiographical account of a theoretical movement: queer theory’s development within the academy.

As I will attempt to lay out in the longer second part of this chapter, the academy has been a generative space for “queer” as a term, a theory and, perhaps, a methodology. While the social may have spat queers out, to paraphrase Phelan (1997), the academy has accepted some of them. The granting of value by a discipline of theory that has at its heart an opposition to hegemonic structures

produces an interesting result in that the pedagogic machine begins to structure a discipline for an anti-disciplinary thing. The thing of queer theory utilises its disembodiment to thwart disciplinary regimes. Queer is disembodied because it lacked for so long a bibliographic, disciplinary centre and, importantly, cannot (or will not) take up a purchase by way of an identity, per se. Queer exists as ephemeral cultural possibility. It skirts the social. As novelist and scholar Jonathan Kemp has argued, queer “can never, must never, settle” (2009, 22). It is always moving. Its mobility, and indeed its critical plasticity, is driven by the many sources from which it draws: sexuality studies, feminism, gay and lesbian studies, cultural studies, and deconstruction.

Where queer is going: this question came at the end of my response to a performance as a result of the way in which processing it made me consider the anti-social structure (or turn) in queer theory. As a recent article in the *Journal of Higher Education* has asked: “Queer, and then?” (Warner, 2012). If we follow José Muñoz’s most recent project *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009) the future is all we have for queerness. Queer only exists in temporal displacement – in a possibility which exceeds the then and now for a potential recontextualisation of both in a moment always at a vanishing point. I will return to Muñoz’s promise after attending to my own.

SWAPPING SPIT

Mitch (Andrew Mitchelson) and Parry (Owen Parry) are, respectively, an English and Welsh performance art duo who, until recently, both resided in East London. I first met them when they lived a street parallel to mine and both were undertaking

Master's degrees at Queen Mary, University of London. Each retains a practice of their own, which, like their collaborative work is intensely body-based. As their collaborative bio on Duckie's website notes, together they stage durational work wherein they "mostly look at each other" (2010), but also create participatory performances where audiences are able to deal with their issues, be they affective or somatic (in 2008's "Anger Management Olympics" they assisted audience members in beating up the things they hated, and in 2009's "Mitchelino and Parriola's Chocolatier" they cast audience members nipples in chocolate and sold them to other willing participants).⁸⁵

Together they interrogate the limits of each other's bodies – often in sexualized forms of fight/play – as well as engage the audiences in testing these boundaries. Indeed their bio states that they "employ their bodies to explore notions of intimacy" but that as a collaboration they have turned to "anger violence and the imperfect" as way to deal with their performance relationship (Duckie, 2010). Performing anti-sociality, they inquire what it means to be social.

Not unlike other performance artists who have turned to the body, Mitch & Parry use the body as material to pose questions about the materiality of the body and the ways in which we can effectively transfer information between bodies. The two have an on-going exploration of the "possibilities of human saliva as a material for creating dialogue" (Duckie, 2010). And it is to this possibility that I turn in this chapter.

⁸⁵ Duckie is a performance producing entity with weekly events on Saturdays at London's Royal Vauxhall Tavern.

To spit in the face of something, or someone, is most often seen as degrading that something or someone. It is a choreography of de-valuation. The sexual practice known as “gob” involves spitting from the gob, or mouth, onto the face of or into the mouth of a sexual partner. It is listed as a “Fetish” in the Gay Sex Guide’s categorisation:

Verbal/Gob

This involves spitting and aggressive speech during gay sex. It is usually between two partners who have set roles of being either Dom or Sub. (thegaysexguide.com)

This practice is usually about the implication of sexualised roles. In their language this “aggressive speech” act is about degradation and delimitation.

But the practice of gob, perhaps like queerness, cannot simply define a bodily role. Perhaps in its disruption of the space between bodies, and as an aggressive speech act, it might *do* other things too. It might, in its ritual form of what we may want to read in the social as boundary marking by degrading, bring about other types of options. The spit, loaded with social significance, can at least lubricate, if not soften the surfaces of bodies. It can penetrate and drip. Perhaps, it can even cleanse and cure – a salve for the stresses of late capitalism, in a world obsessed with anti-bacterial stripping of the skin.

Spitting is an act of transmission. This chapter is an attempt to reanimate such an act. Reanimation works bodies back into and out of various archives. This chapter reanimates transgressive acts through writing with the idea that writing might be something very much like dancing. In this way it asks, after sociologist Marcel Mauss, to denaturalise our understanding of a variety of cultural forms of and through the

body. In 1934 Marcel Mauss wrote a short treatise on an area of cultural anthropology which he felt ethnographers were failing to consider fully. In considering the quotidian rituals associated with the body – sitting, standing, swimming, spitting, fucking – Mauss purported that too often anthropology was relegating these techniques, as he called them, to a miscellaneous category outside of necessary scrutiny. The import of the constructed nature of these techniques – learned socio-culturally over time and often geographically significant – for him was a necessary space through which to study difference. Dance scholars such as Susan Leigh Foster and Barbara Browning have picked up Mauss’ bodily techniques to consider the way in which these seemingly tacit regimented and practised techniques of the body may be both a useful structure to consider a choreography of the everyday and a means for further understanding cultural practices.

Mauss wrote his treatise to reflexively attend to ethnocentric analysis within ethnographic practice. As one attempts to reanimate culture through the technique of writing of and for an Other – the project of ethnography – there must always be a consideration of the ways in which a participant-observer brings so many desires and fears to their work. Herein I will attempt to show you a piece that constantly thwarted my desire to analyse it. Instead of providing an account of the event symptomatically I will employ a reflexive thick description of the event. To invoke dance scholar Barbara Browning, in a similar context when she writes towards cultural recovery, I am archiving a moment when my “understanding of the fluidity of cultural forms” met with a different understanding of “literal bodily fluids” (Browning, 98).

As an integral part of this research, I endeavour to try a different type of saving. In doing so, I hope to be more aggressively playful with the notion of queerness.⁸⁶ I will not attempt to provide analysis which is charged with my own desires and repressions. Or I will. I have leaked those onto these pages already. My participant observation is infused with something I see in the duet of spit I shall try to show to you. “I want to promise it rather than prove it” (Phelan, 16).

So it is here that I hope to enact for you a ritual of queerness, which utilises anti-social behaviour, and consider the queerness of ritual, which might disturb meaning, spitting in the face of any easy identification.

I HOST YOU. NOW TONIGHT, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW – PART 1

The screen shows two faces from the nose to the neck. Both chins are covered in stubble. They are close together. As I enter, the face on the right has a river of spit running down from its chin, frothy and white. The spit streams out of the frame. On the floor where, were these faces with us live, the stream of mucus might fall, is a small pool of liquid. It runs along just under the table supporting the projector. Everyone, including me, is careful to not step in the liquid.

The lights dim. We watch the mouths move slowly. They form spit bubbles and streams of mucus. Tongues slightly protrude so as to force the spit onto the others face. The bubbles of spit erupt from the mouths, showering celery-white wetness across their faces. Sometimes they move their heads, alternating the side of their face on which their noses touch. One might consider this choreography that of

⁸⁶ As Sara Ahmed notes, to *queer* something is to also *offer* a queer *something* in that “queer does not have a relation of exteriority to that with which it comes into contact” (2006, 4). My attempt to queer ethnography is exactly the same move to offer a queer ethnography.

kissing. But if this is kissing – it is perverted by the space between mouths, the space between bodies. Swapping spit usually requires a semi-sealed space, sealing together two bodies at the seam of language. Language. This could be a waltz of words, baby talk, angry epitaphs?

In this film, in this space with the film, the spit fires across time, space, and meaning. Threads of mucus form, sag, and suspend from mouths. I like the bubbles. The two bodies could be whispering sweet nothings. No words appear to form, but maybe they are forming? Spit, that which, when kissing transmits one body's DNA, one body's gastrointestinal residue, the biography of that mouth, cannot speak sealed inside a kiss. Queerly, this spit traverses space, is apparent, and is a central figure. It shouts; it transgresses boundaries. It refigures the space between the mouths, it refigures meaning.

I HOST YOU. NOW TONIGHT, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW – PART 2

We've entered a performance studio; one wall has a mirrored section. In front of the mirrors a thrust "stage" space is created by tape. Two bright ellipsoidal lamps point up, filling the space with light. Many of us sit on the floor, others stand to the back. Two bodies walk onto the stage space. Both wear colourful, geometrical hooded zipped sweatshirts and white cotton underwear. Their hairy legs are bare. They stand opposite to one another, centre stage. The one stage left, Parry, hurls a spit wad, which splashes across the face of the other, Mitch, and out past the taped out stage. It hits the man's sneaker next to me. He and three people next to him push back. The crowd laughs. Spit wads continue to fly – splashing beyond the delineated

performances space. More people move. A girl in a yellow dress stands, laughs loudly, and scurries to the back.

The two bodies spit at each other. Sometimes walking up to the other and aiming for the face or chest, other times spraying mucus across the distance of the stage. They switch sides, unzip their sweatshirts part way down. Parry fires more and more frequently. Mitch winces, turns his head, grunts in disgust, then coughs up more phlegm to hurl back at Parry. I wince too; the sounds of the phlegm being pulled from the nose, throat and lungs gives makes me feel ill. Not of feeling sick, but of being sick – of needing to drive the mucus out of my system. The smell and taste of my spit, of other people's spit, of my grandmother wiping my face clean with her spit.

But that was in 2009. In 2011 I think of the piece, I look at the words I threw away, and I think of the Joiner's Arms, a gay bar in East London. I think of a lover who motions me to strangle him there on the dance floor. His mouth wide open, trying to breath – my mouth hovering just before his. I spit in his mouth three times before I let him breath. His right hands fishes into my trousers then into my pants. I squeeze his neck as he squeezes my cock. We kiss and he pushes saliva into my mouth with his tongue, I spit it back. We go back and forth for a while until I realise my friend Jim is watching. I feel exposed, but cared for by his desiring gaze.

Mitch and Parry have unzipped their sweatshirts fully. Aiming now at bare chests, the spit is lessening in force but still spraying across the stage space. They switch sides again, getting closer but not producing as much saliva under the heat of the lamps, the constant spitting.

Parry continues to aim more forcefully at Mitch. Mitch groans, grunts, turns his head and winces more and more as he gets drenched. The piece is slowing down, or at least I sense a culmination. Parry gets another good full face spray onto Mitch; they're nearly touching full bodies now. A pause.

Clasping their arms around each other; they hug. Their slim bodies, slick with each other's spit, slide together.

INTERLUDE: SP(L)IT SCREEN

At one point during I HOST YOU (PART 2) my friend taps me on the knee; "Look at the shadows."

On the wall behind the audience, four pairs of shadow bodies are projected. Two outer, larger and distorted, and two, amplified but recognisable, bodies form in the centre. I watch the shapes dance across the wall. The spit flying between them, in two-dimensions.

The projected images of I HOST YOU (PART 2) render everything as a shadow-play. The choreography of silhouettes offers a slightly different performance than the fleshy phlegm fest from which it is cast. The spit, now just tiny two-dimensional dots, sails from one dark mass to the other. Back and forth. Never exploding or colliding, but seamlessly absorbing and being absorbed.

I imagine this cartoon projection as lover's discourse. Speech acting, aggressively. Fragments of words float, signifying too much, and collapse into the other body, heavy with symbolic weight.

I HOST YOU. NOW TONIGHT, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW – PART 3

We've entered another room. A projection screen with a live feed hangs over Mitch and Parry who are on the floor in front of it. Again the taped out marking of a stage offers a barrier; yet we are told to walk around the "installation." I sit, as do many, watching the scene as if it takes place on a thrust stage. A similar pool of liquid, as in Part 1, drools out from under Mitch who is lying naked in the arms of Parry. Parry, holding Mitch, as in the image of the Pieta, focuses only on Mitch who stares out at us.

Parry begins to drool and spit onto Mitch. Beginning with the chest, Parry's saliva is kneaded into Mitch's skin. Slowly and methodically the entire body is anointed. Arms, thighs, cock and balls, forehead, lips, hands, ears. All receive a drop, a dram, a drool of saliva which is carefully massaged into the skin. The entire time a cameraman films the process. Split screen again, live images, recorded/projected image, fighting for attention, never allowing for an arrested, or devouring gaze from the spectator. Parry's lips are bright red from the spitting. Mitch continues to stare out at us.

I find that I am drawn to watching Parry on the screen but watching Mitch in the flesh. This perverse bath, this queer ritual, might need this disjunctive mediated temporality. When Mitch's body is completely covered, Parry moves back, allowing Mitch's body to rest on the wet floor. The lights lower. They are gone.

TRASHING DESIRE

This chapter was initially drafted within the context of the Trashing Performance Salon, a platform for associated researchers of the three-year AHRC funded project “Performance Matters.” For this Salon we were asked to revisit something we have trashed in our performance or academic work. I have a weird relationship to the texts I write – to be honest it’s a loathsome relationship – and I tend to “trash” a majority of what I produce. Despite my own propensity towards trashing, I instantly knew what matter I wanted to dig up. In 2009 I saw multiple versions of I HOST YOU. NOW TONIGHT, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW by Mitch & Parry (Owen Parry and Andrew Mitchelson’s collaborative moniker). After each viewing I wrote about the performance. A lot. But the tone was off. The feeling wasn’t right. I was trying too hard to find “the answer.” The first time I saw the piece was at I’m With You, a quarterly event that I co-produce in Hackney. The second was at Duckie at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern. The third performance, and the longest, was at the 2009 Spill Platform down on the Cut in Waterloo. The piece, a spitting duet, was beautiful and sickening, sexy and queer.

And I loved it. It turned me on. It made me think. It made me want to *do* more in relation to it. I enjoyed the anti-sociality of it and how this act of spitting erotically collapsed in the public space of performance. It unsettled me. There was/is so much in the fetishistic pleasures of gob play or homosocial ritual of degradation and acceptance. However the queer-cultural and homosocial techniques of the body that screamed out to me, in my own identifications, were met with other choreographies – where gender danced away and language became movement and spit became

tears, rain, sustenance, refuse and so much more. I told the boys that I wanted to write about it. I emailed them asking about the hug at the end of the PART 1. They responded that the hug represented, for them, a ritual of acceptance that performed both a closure and a way of protecting both the audience and them from the violence of the piece (Parry, 2009a). We can extend this concern for protection to consider, as well, what constitutes “protection” when two bodies collide, affectively or literally; and for whom? This is potentially very useful in considering the way in which the piece operates beside (or perhaps, outside) of disciplinary boundaries. The piece eludes identification in and through actions which invert, collapse and blur, especially Western, social assumptions of public and private, gay or straight, disgust and desire.

The piece also contains an archival impulse that, perhaps, made it at once enticing to me and harder *to archive*. Part One is, indeed, a separate work entitled “Oceans Apart,” performed for camera and included in the live action (Parry, 2009b). This performance for camera is already a document of performance utilised as performance. I have already discussed the complexities of how documents performance in Chapter Three. It suffices to say here that the piece begins with documentation and continues to archive itself, in each of the subsequent sections. As I noted above, in what I termed the “Interlude,” the lighting effectively created a secondary, almost textual performance, that while non-diegetic, simultaneously documented the performance (queerly, perhaps). Reading this extra-performance, the question that Mitch and Parry set out in their collaborative practice is read: how might spit transmit? In my extension here, in this chapter, I ask: how might spit, as

object substance, as asocial practice, as queer archive of the body's it transgresses, be used in culture?

In Part Three we see active documentation, drawing the audience into and out of the live performance. Mediated by documentation – by the thrall of the archive – the piece addresses its own ability to be archived by staging it. It is as if the performance addresses me: watch as we archive this ritual, watch as we save each other on screen, before you – with you or without you.

RITUAL PRACTICES

The tricky thing with the term ritual is that it, like queer, has come to mean too much and require too little. The OED reminds me that the noun indicates a ritual act or ceremonial observance but also, an action or series of actions habitually repeated. Here the definition collapses the public and private, the ceremonial with the habitual. Dance ethnographer and film maker Maya Deren (1953), in her account of Haitian rituals, notes the danger this collapse of the public and private creates, a result of a move by many Western cultures to assume a psychoanalytic position. In this way rituals are seen or analysed as a release from repressed desires or private trauma, enacted for a social I in a purely subjective cathartic gesture (1953, 199). We attempt, in this way, to reveal the concealed and burdened symbols, charged, punitively if not symptomatically. The “charge” of symbols needs, Deren urges, to be registered in relation to the culture in which it is being produced. The public-ness of ritual also gets confused. Social rituals, as theatre scholar Richard Schechner reminds us, are a “showing of a doing” (1994, 456) which engages the participants (observers and performers) in an economy of exchanges which are material and symbolic.

As both of these theorists argue, often these symbolic exchanges are inverted: what was purification is defilement and vice versa. A tangible example: the Haitian Vodoun ritual *dessounin* is the ceremony of degradation (Deren, 1953). To degrade a body in Haitian parlance is to set it free of earthly demands and allow the spirit to re-join the gods. A body thus degraded is, in fact, within that culture's cosmology, saved. What one cultural system understands as degradation may be salvation for another.

Let me indulge in an etymological fallacy as a means to unpack why I mark this globalised mode of producing symbolic meaning as queer and thus move into a larger exploration of the deployment of queer as a theoretical device in the academy. The proto-Indo-European root for queer is "twerk-", so then to turn, twist or wind (OED). The verb "thwart" has this same root. Turning, as in ideology and performativity, is always already the basic movement, then, for queer. Queer performs by turning – always re-turning, buffering, combating, and re-encountering itself. Turning the symbolic weight of performative-social encounter on itself, we begin to see the ways in which these power structures have been put into play. I HOST YOU. NOW TONIGHT, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW, as ritual action, might be understood as queer in that it performs for us a limit of the intelligible. The actions performed may not (for some) index specific bodies, forms of relation or typical forms of exchange. The piece operates across identitarian boundaries in that it is not that "'anyone might be queer' but that 'something queer might happen to anyone'" (Britzman in Haver, 1997, 288).

William Haver has suggested that queer, as a research methodology, can be used to demarcates the limits of knowledge in that it “can never amount to an epistemological capture of an object by an understanding on behalf of knowledge” (1997, 283). Like Mauss’ use of technique, Haver’s deployment of queer functions to remind us what the body learns to “know.” The limits of what we know are bound by what we learn. The pedagogies of the social may predicate de-limitations but what occurs at the limits is an un-making of the subject. “Queer” figures this subject at the limit, that which has been spat out of the social, those who have survived the death of their own sociality (by phobic or viral trauma, perhaps). Performing the limit, Mitch & Parry show us an unmaking that is queerly productive in offering poly-valent forms of intimacy and knowledge which yield to no codified epistemological frame. Performing, as well, at the edge of the archive, documenting and looping back, returning to the practice, Mitch & Parry queer what is to be preserved.

Haver is one of a number of theorists in the late 1990’s who began to articulate the means by which queer, as theory, as methodology, might come to figure and thus re-configure modes of knowledge production and the limit(ation)s of our desire for knowledge. This moment in queer theoretical writings has been termed the anti-relational or anti-social turn in queer theory. In Chapter Three I argued how I wanted instead of “turn” to use the verb “move,” because turn seems to signal a different route. Here I will amend my own caveat slightly. I find myself in this work needing to, partially, adjust my earlier choice. I still want to imagine that the theoretical position scholars are taking when they note a “turn” is to conceive of a different path for queer theory. What these scholars attend to as a move of difference, I read as a

repetition. Derrida haunts my thoughts; deconstruction always seeks to refigure ruptures as repetitions. If we find the altogether different already the same, what do we make of the history of queer studies? If this turn is not onto a new path but a move back, a repetition of its polyvalent beginnings, what does that signal for the richness of queerness as a way of thinking? Does a queer future require a queer past?

Accounting for the repetitious turnings, it seems paradoxical that those theorising queerness, across disciplines, would require or create a totally new trajectory within queer or queer studies. I want to trace a genealogy of the always-already anti-social status of queer and queer studies. Not a turn, but a *return* to the mark of queer's ability to thwart restrictive codes of conduct – its (conscious) refusal then, to identify. This is not to mark, or perhaps descend, into an essentialist position within queerness. I am not attempting to rely on an etymological origin. I am, however arguing that the repetition of queer theory itself being thwarted then enables its *re-*turn to marking itself as reflexively repulsive.

QUEER: TO AND FRO

Queerness shares with performance a paradoxically intertwined relationship to ephemerality. The appearance of either seems to rely on its disappearance. As practices⁸⁷ which revel in highly coded sub-cultural semiotic systems, queerness and performance rely on a subject being practised in sensing what wasn't exactly there, what came and went, what will appear again, but always slightly differently. The

⁸⁷ We might say "non-normative" practices. Both queer and performance are entirely reiterative and as such may appear as normative, rely on hegemonic structures, or heckle normativity with a delicious outsider relation. Both practices attempt, at their best, to attend to the mythologization of normative codes through their deployment.

term “queer” in its relation to a system of thought intervenes in a number of spaces between hegemonic practices, yet responds to such practices as a haunting spirit, supporting and displacing the power dynamics of normative logics. Let’s begin with the question of how queer performs. Performance in its usage in this interrogative space is doing the double duty of attending to how *well* queer functions (metaphors of business, function, form, see McKenzie 2001) and how queer is *carried out* (in this way it seeks to understand, via Victor Turner, how queer has come to deliver a system of intelligibility, imperfectly, or not). Like “performance,” and its many and competing definitions, “queer” registers too much. I will begin my focus on the entrance into the academy of queer, tracing its move into what has been called the anti-social turn and considering, finally, where queer might have a future.

Queer, at least as some contemporary theorists would have it, is disembodied. Sara Ahmed posits that “queer does not have a relation of exteriority to that with which it comes into contact” (2006, 4); queer is all-encompassing and yet can hold nothing. Similarly, scholar Lee Edelman has argued “queerness can never define an identity: it can only disturb one” (17). In this way, queer begins to move within academia, at least, in the ways in which it was first mobilised, yet queer can never be about holding true to genealogies of thought. The very question of genealogy is necessary yet problematic within the realm of queer studies. Sue Ellen Case, in her 1990 essay “Tracking the Vampire,” states that as a queer theorist she “eschews generational models of history” (70). She rejects generational models, thus genealogical imperatives in the normal sense, because “queer sexual practice... impels one out of generational production of what has been called ‘life’ and history, and ultimately out

of the category of the living” (69). As socially living-dead, queers reject, or may be rejected, from hegemonic reproductive logics such as genealogy. I will address Case’s vampire figure more, in a moment. Attempting a genealogy of queer theory, I explore our relationship to such archives of academic thought (critical discourse), and any such device for disciplining bodies in and through their reproductive origin. The archive, especially for archivists, is first and foremost a tool of tracing origins,⁸⁸ and therefore usually about defining an identity. A paradoxical relationship arises between the spectral forces at play within such tracings and the object, or methodologies, of queerness and/or performance. How does one come to bear queerness, then? How is such an inquiry, such a perspective, such a practice, passed generationally? And given queer’s recent introduction into critical frameworks and its use and reception, can we even, at this time, categorise it? Why should we want to? And what of its future?

Within queer studies, and its associated disciplines (including Gender and Sexuality Studies, Feminism, GLBT studies, etc.) there is an origin story. I tell this origin story as such a narrative might assist us in attending to the balance sheet of debts paid and credit owed to critical frameworks which brought forth queerness and still support it in the space of critical cultural inquiry. However I do so following the critical model provided by Michel Foucault’s interventions into genealogy. In his 1971 “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault offers the inquiring body a model for attending to history and its desire for origin narratives that will be of benefit within this chapter.

⁸⁸ I might amend this to say that for modern archivists the archive is a site of fragmented origin stories. Post-modern archive studies and archival practice resists this slightly, but the financial and filial genealogical imperative of corporate and legal (read here the Law in relation to the Social, and not solely legal practice) is about tracing the creation of event and subjects by cited acts of union/disunion, production/reproduction, birth/death.

Foucault notes that the “genealogist needs history to dispel the chimeras of the origin” (1971, 144) so as “to study the beginnings – numberless beginnings whose faint traces and hints of colour are readily seen by an historical eye” (1971, 145). The path of the genealogist, according to Foucault, is one of descent, into the past and the layers of events that have proceeded. Yet this descent does not retroactively erect foundations, “on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously immobile; it fragments what was thought unified, it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself” (1971, 147). Or as Ramsey Burt has described this methodology in relation to dance studies: “Genealogy is thus the reappropriation of those archival records out of which the myths of traditional history have been created in order to find something altogether different” (1971, 31).

Genealogy is not history. It uses histories to provide alternatives to a present made of too-many pasts. “Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people” Foucault reminds us (146). So tracing the “hazardous play of dominations” (148) that inscribe themselves on bodies and bodies of thought is not going to be simply teleological. My work here is not to reinvent but to navigate a course through queer which exemplifies the way queer has been and may be carried further. First and foremost I chose to focus a genealogy which prohibits a traditional literary review. This is because queer theory resists the canonisation of disciplinary bibliographic bodies. The very theorists who have become emblematic as the forerunners of the field had begun those projects before any sort of galvanising discipline was in place. While the foundation these texts provided for queerness should never be dismissed, to assume these figures and texts

as origin is historical and not genealogical – it produces knowledge along lines of hegemonic practice that the theorists were working against. Secondly, framing my relation to queer theory, as a queer performer, individual and theorist, provides insight into the modes through which I address various subjects in this project. And, a third function of the following section: it demonstrates another archive. Not a new archive, perhaps – in that it draws from similar sources from a number of people who have already charted the movement of queer in the Western academy – but certainly subjective. My pleasures and confusions with queer theoretical usage and ends highlight the deflective quality of queerness. What follows is a performative encounter with an archive of queerness: the writing tracing a feature of the archive, its gaps and slippages, as I engage with a genealogy of thought.

Theorists date the inauguration of queer to a conference at the University of California, Santa Cruz in February 1990. The convenor of the conference, film scholar Teresa de Lauretis, was the first to move the term from pejorative slur into theoretical framework.⁸⁹ In mining this origin then, we will see its many deflections as site of origin, and see the prominence of queer theorists' desire that queer never operate without reflexively questioning itself as a centre. "Queer theory originally came into being as a joke" says humanities scholar David Halperin of de Lauretis' usage at this germinal conference (2003, 339). This potentially comic usage was meant to "unsettle the complacency of 'lesbian and gay studies'" (340). Her move was meant to both make theory queer and to queer theory – repositioning the

⁸⁹ Queer, as an adjective, is understood to mean strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric and was commonly applied to gay men, in the negative (OED).

scholarly relationship to epistemological frameworks. The term had been in play during the early AIDS crisis, and de Lauretis capitalised on its activist potential to disturb associations scholars had with the work they were already doing.⁹⁰

Yet as soon as we zero in on this moment as the physical and theoretical site of queer's beginning (already a re-deployment) we start to see the incongruities of such an origin. In their reflections on queer theory's advance into the academy both Halperin (2003) and English scholars Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1995) note that its speedy actualisation as a "thing" required invention after the fact. In both articles the work of Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler are cited as emblematic of the fashioning of queer theory, arising out of feminism, sexuality studies and gay and lesbian studies in particular. As Michael Warner writes in his more recent tracing of queer's past:

Those writers had already developed an analysis of sexuality that looked to relations of power rather than to individual psychology or 'orientation.' And they had already shown that sex, pleasure and the formation of sexual cultures posed deep challenges to the normative frameworks by which some kinds of sex are legitimated and institutionalized as the proper form of sexuality. (1995, 1)

While de Laurites, Sedgwick and Butler assist us in locating a motivation of "queer" within the academy, neither the conference nor the books can be seen as origins.

Here I am taking for granted a critical acceptance of queer theory by the academy.

Of course this is/was very much not the case. The non-entity queer theory, disembodied and rogue, poaching from various disciplines and usurping years of philosophical intervention was not so readily assumed by scholars. What was

⁹⁰ The term crystallises within in the movement in 1990, with the formation of QUEER NATION, an activist group formed out of ACT UP.

apparent was an interest in the radicalization that queer promised. Yet by 1994 even de Lauretis had disavowed queerness “complaining that the term had ‘very quickly become conceptually vacuous, created by the publishing industry’” (quoted in Warner, 2012, 2). And this is part of a larger concern. While many scholars may well have been wary of a new upstart non-discipline (Performance Studies scholars will recognize this sensibility from drama, theatre, English departments, among others) what occurred was a buzz-word which raced into the publishing sphere: it was marketable. “New” and “early career” scholars took up the mantle and ran with it. Some scholars, Sue-Ellen Case among them, felt that these new queer theorists were blind to earlier critical interventions made to enable such a model of scholarship possible.

Case was an early opponent of queer theory (following the foundational conference), who felt that the politics of queer were tepid, despite its mass appeal within the academy. Her anger, however, is seated in genealogical desire. Case feels that queer owes a debt to feminism, and lesbian feminism in particular. The move to queer theory produced, Case argues, a “violent break [that] made a community disappear” (2009, 9). The break was not the result of queer theory, exactly, but of what and how queer produced and reproduced itself as a method, a stance, a mode of (dis)union. And while queer did not drive a stake in gender and sexuality studies, at all, it shifted the focus away from identity structures that became viable within medical, legal and social systems and argued for a more fluid negotiation with these structures.

As with every component discussed so far, the issue here is political. Feminist, gay and lesbian activism fuelled their theoretical counterparts, and vice versa. Queer arrives on the scene and appears to thwart the political in taking no embodied stand. Of course, de Lauretis had used queer, in part, from a moment when queer was being politicized. Queer Nation, an activist group that came out of AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), had already begun doing work which, like ACT UP, rallied against shame and normalization. In the 1980's, AIDS activism produced alliances across sexualities that came to be understood as "queer." Before her rebuff of queer, Case cites the fecundity of these alliances as her desire to map some of what queer might do theoretically. She does so through the figure of the vampire, a living dead figure. The queer, considered unnatural in relation to the heterosexual's naturalness, revels, she says, in the "discourse of the loathsome" (2009, 68-69). Queer sexual practices, framed paradoxically as sterile (an inability to reproduce) and dangerous (infection metaphors abound in relation to queer sex and sexualities), mirrors the figure of the vampire's desires and embodied relation. Case posits that generationality, a project of the fecund (usually white, Western) heterosexual, is tied to racial, classed and gendered politics of bloodlines. Oppositionally framed by hegemonic blood rites, the queer assumes the vampiric position. As Case explains, this queer strikes back against a discourse of the social as pure-blood (living); she is "one who waits, strikes, and soils the living, pure blood" (2009, 72). The queer assumes, for Case and many others, agency in the marginalised, deadened night of assumed "abnormality." What queer theory realises is a relational set of practices which cannot untie desire from the political ramifications of desire. The political

interventions of lesbian and gay studies and lesbian and gay activism championed this struggle.⁹¹

The material relation between the living dead of the vampire and ACT UP et al's struggles with People Living with Aids (PLWA) is obvious. Case's argument hinges on a relationship to the un-mirrored lesbian. She cannot, like the vampire, be mirrored in the social, even at a time when visibility politics are forced to *see* gay male bodies – though of course, as living dead, a virulent cadaver. This is even more the case when queer, politically, seems to shroud gender from the discussion. The loss, in her terms, of feminism from the argument in the place of an umbrella term, even in this early article matches what will be de Lauretis' gripe four years later. And it is the spectre of AIDs and the morbid reality that the early 1990's offer that move queer theory, not forward necessarily but return it to the place of its ability to anger, confront and derail normative regimes.

The anti-social turn, as it has been called, begins perhaps most explicitly with the publication of Leo Bersani's *Homos* (1996). Instead of reclaiming the queer past – a task of mining and reading homosexuality and queerness back into a sociality that did not retain it include for various reasons (legal, semiotic, social) – Bersani requires us to think of the function of queer life practices, especially sexual ones, as “anti-communitarian, self-shattering and anti-identitarian” (Halberstam, 2008, 140).

Bersani argues for and with “relations of sameness, of homo relations” (1996, 7).

These relations are wrought with terror and comfort. The increase in self-identifying gay, lesbian, bi, trans and queer individuals, in Bersani's analysis, has prompted ever

⁹¹ It is important, I think, to note that Feminism provided a framework for much of how this type of work could be done.

more disciplinary social responses to such identifications – identifications which, while different, require others like them, the same sort of identities, to proliferate. As he notes, “the attempted stabilizing of identity is inherently a disciplinary project” (1996, 3).

The project of stabilizing gay and lesbian identities, in Bersani’s opinion, both politically and socially has worked too well ideologically. Gays and lesbians, he warns, have “erased [themselves] in the process of denaturalizing the epistemic and political regimes that have constructed [them]” (1996, 4). For gay men specifically these practices have been magnified by the AIDS pandemic. “No one can stop looking” he says, as AIDS presents the gay male body for inspection and figures the promise of invisibility of that self-same body (1996, 21). This is erasure at the height of visibility; how particularly queer.

Bersani positions the homo-subject as an “anti-identitarian identity” (1996, 101). From this position, the queer figures as a non-life; a socially inert subject. Queers, socially and sexually, are driven to and from death.⁹² Peggy Phelan makes a similar move in her 1997 *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*. “Queers are queer because we recognize that we have survived our own deaths” (1997, 16), she writes. As such, “queers ghost the cultural imagination and thereby foster the illusion that reality is non-phantasmic, that death is what happens later on and never now” (1997, 16). The queer body, its practices, politics and theory haunt the social imagination. This is not to say that queer bodies have a monopoly on spectropolitics,

⁹² Bersani makes much of gay male sex practices, specifically anal sex, as productively desiring waste. The anus produces life by means of expelling waste. Waste is fecund, life may be born from the after-effects of our bodies (1996, 179). Desire for the same, the wasted, marginalised body, is homo-sex; a non-identity.

more that haunting itself is queer as it thwarts a timeline that simply places things in the past, over there, away (in that “third” world).

Reclaiming a past of and for homosexual identities was the first drive of the gay and lesbian movement. In their edited collection *Hidden from History: reclaiming the gay and lesbian past, Volume 1*, published in 1990, George Chauncey, Jr., Martin Duberman and Martha Vicinus argue for the importance of historiography for the movement. Archiving instances of queer lifeworlds prior to the emergence of homosexual identities was a way of increasing visibility. Increasing visibility was the strongest form of representation that was available to give political traction at a time when so many gay men were dying. In championing the reclamation of a historical presence as a means to “[give gay communities] a tradition” they also caution against ascribing identitarian position anachronistically. One of the problems which arose then, and continues now, is the question of who and what get gets included in this archive. What canons are created? Indeed a problematic with this chapter, one that increases my own anxiety about my position in queer theory, is those who I have chosen. These scholars, both out of the material reality of how I came to engage with queer theory, and those who have been assigned germinal roles within the new history, become canonised and thus secure a disciplinarity where, perhaps, one should constantly be resisted.

Queer theory clearly has some problems with history. As we will see this problem extends both into the future and back into the past. The critique raised by Halberstam of Bersani is one of white male privilege and access too and critical leaning on a specific “gay male archive” which institutes specific disciplinary modes

of queerness and its anti-social status. Halberstam's desire, as with Case's critique, is to consider multiple modes of transmission, both from the academic archive from which we pull our analytic tools and methods, as well as the archives in the social from which we cultivate our projects. I wonder so much if, like the queer subject who foregoes repro-time and the genealogical injunctions of family and reproductivity, and thus forms a subject who cares less about those cathexes, we might see our queer scholastic heritage in this same light. Being indebted is social;⁹³ the academy and its networks are a form of sociality where citation breeds specific connections which we may want to do away with or may be forced to function with. Queer, in its disembodied praxis, can't do away with this but might offer multiple ways to thwart the reductivism of being indebted to what has come before.

QUEER PERFORMATIVITY

Before attending to queer negativity and the brunt of the anti-social turn, I want first to attend to the interventions of the two figures burdened with carrying queerness into the academy: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler. Both scholars were writing before and up to the foundational conference mentioned earlier. As Halperin writes, queer theory "had to be invented after the fact, to supply the demand it evoked" (2003, 341). As such it required a bibliographic shape where none exactly existed; Sedgwick's and Butler's bodies of work, as Berlant and Warner point out, became metonymic for queer theory, for good or for ill (1995, 344-345).

Read together, as they so often are within gender, sexuality and queer theory courses, the striking thing about both is their deployment of performativity. Each

⁹³ I will address this more specifically in Chapter Five.

utilises the performative in slightly different ways, but the outcome of both projects seeks to denaturalise assumptions about subjective propriety around our bodies and our desires of and for those bodies. Let's begin with Sedgwick, as I did in my first ever queer theory class back at Emerson College:

One of the things that 'queer' can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically. (1994, 8)

Sedgwick's definition of queer hinges on the ephemeral, on the too much, or the almost enough, of things that move us within cultures. For Sedgwick, queer is an epistemological framework, not, necessarily an ontological position. As such, queer may index a set of practices but doesn't qualify or quantify a categorical position like much of the earlier identity structures meted out in gender, sexuality and feminist studies.

Butler, in particular, is well known for her intervention in gender and sexuality studies by unmasking the constructedness of sex. Instead of the frustrating binary opposition of biological essentialism versus social constructionism, Butler's critical interventions offered a way of considering the constructedness of what we assumed both biological and essential to bodies.

Once 'sex' itself is understood in its normativity, the materiality of the body will not be thinkable apart from the materialization of that regulatory norm. 'Sex' is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the 'one' becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility. (1993, 236)

Butler built on lesbian feminist projects⁹⁴ from gender and sexuality studies.

Performativity, for Butler, is about the citational force of social embodiment – the normalised function of sex is a product of specific citational practices negotiating a boundary whereby such practices sustain a sense of given materiality. Butler’s contribution, then, to queer theory, via the performative, is her corruption of the concept of the normal; a laughing matter, she notes. “The loss of the sense of ‘the normal’, however, can be its own occasion for laughter, especially when ‘the normal’, ‘the original’ is revealed to be a copy, an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one *can* embody” (1990, 380, emphasis in original).

In her 2003 *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Sedgwick traces a lineage of thought to formulate her use of the term “queer performativity.” Queer performativity is “the name of a strategy for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma” (2003, 61). Specifically for Sedgwick, the way in which performativity functions as already queer and for self-identified queer subjects becomes the analytic focus. Sedgwick is careful to attend to the misinterpretations of performativity’s relationship to theatricality. In this way she seeks to reparate the critically queer confusion (to invoke Butler’s well known article (1993b)), that Butler’s move to utilise the deconstructive form of performativity puts in play. Butler’s gender performativity was often misinterpreted to mean that all gender is a performance – that it is highly theatrical and excessive as social play. Her utilisation of the parodic function of drag as a means to explicate the relationship between gender and sex within (usually Western) cultures found its

⁹⁴ Butler seems specifically to respond to Teresa De Lauretis’ 1987 *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction*. Reading de Lauretis’ text one can sense a blueprint for Butler’s project.

audience too willing to suspend their disbelief in the matter of materialism and not consider their own play in the disciplining force of somatic languages. Her *Gender Trouble* (1990) introduced these notions and it was her responsive project *Bodies that Matter* (1993a) that clarified the projects' social aims.

Sedgwick spatialises the performative so as to see the regions where theater and speech and theory along with deconstruction make use of the term and its functions. This will result in her adding to the taxonomy of performativity the term *periperformative*. The periperformative seeks to index a class of utterances which are “*about* performatives, and, more properly, that [...] cluster *around* performatives (2003, 68, emphasis in original). “I dare you” is Sedgwick’s primary example. “To dare is an explicit performative; to not be dared, to un-dare oneself or another, is likelier to take the form of a periperformative: I won’t take you up on it” (2003, 69-70). This disinterpellation (a term Sedgwick uses)⁹⁵ from a performative scene (highly social, highly coded, and then highly disciplinary) cannot function, she argues, with the utterance of a new explicit performative or its negation but through the “referential act of a periperformative.... To have my dare greeted with a periperformative witness’ chorus of ‘Don’t accept the dare on our account’ would radically alter the social, the political, the interlocutory (I-you-they) space of our encounter” (2003, 69-70). Being near to and disengaging from an interpellative scene isn’t without effect. In fact the effect of such an encounter, Sedgwick argues,

⁹⁵ Sedgwick utilizes “disinterpellation” to signal the move of a subject to respond to the hail of the Law of the Social by refusing it. She draws on Althusser’s notions of interpellation in relation to ideology (1969/1971), as well as Franz Fanon’s in *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952/1967). Disinterpellation is similar to the work of disidentification that is given critical purchase in José Muñoz’s book *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999). As Muñoz defines: “disidentification is a performative mode of tactical recognition that various minoritarian subjects employ in an effort to resist the oppressive and normalizing discourse of dominant ideology... It is a reformatting of self within the social” (1999, 97).

produces, often, a shame response, affectively tangling the subject in the scene. This shame response “offers some psychological, phenomenological, thematic density and motivation to ... the ‘torsions’ or aberrances between reference and performativity, or indeed between queerness and other ways of experiencing identity and desire” (2003, 63). Shame is not negative, but structural to identity and negotiations (perhaps, also, negations) of the social.

If we recall that queer for Sedgwick does not signal a sexual identity as we have come to know it prior to the scholarly intervention into queer theory – it is not a sexed and sexualised body required to promise itself to an identitarian position; it is an “open mesh of possibilities” (Sedgwick 1990, 236). As she notes, “persons who self-identify as queer will be those whose subjectivity is lodged in refusals or deflects of (or by) the logic of the heterosexual supplement” (2003, 71). The refusal may be socially coded as a shameful response – a desire to disengage. One such shameful scene that Sedgwick unpacks is that of the marriage ritual. Austin promotes the “I do” of the marriage scene as the performative utterance par excellence. The use of the “I” in “I do” requires an “I” that performs under an injunction of the State to have a “you” that is cross-gendered to the speaking “I”, in the presence of a “they” that silently witnesses and concedes to such a promise. That the promise may well be infelicitious is one matter, but the other matter, that of the witness, a queer witness let’s say, who “struggles to explicate the relations on the thither side of ‘I do’” (Sedgwick and Parker, 1995, 10).

“Like the most conventional definition of a play, marriage is constituted as a spectacle that denies its audience the ability either to look away from it or equally to

intervene in it" (1995, 11). Sedgwick suggests that it may even be in and by the presence of those whom marriage "defines itself by excluding" (2003, 72) that actualise the privilege of marriage. Queer performativity unmasks here the sovereignty of the speaking subject who in seeming to reproduce the state usurps its power. This is even more the case for the queer subject who could and may very well want to respond to "I do" with "That's all very good, but I can't," or, even more powerfully a queer subject who staunchly says "I won't."

The theatricality of this performance and performativity became all too real recently for me, when I was civil partnered in Camden Town Hall in May. Saying "I do" meant that I would care for my partner, that he would care for me, that I would have legal sanction to remain in a country I found to be and called home. My "I do" felt more like "I might" in the presence of a queer family, because of the infelicity of the utterance. Our "I do" fails in the eyes of the country of my origin, so any rights afforded to me because of my relationship to a state, the UK State, a state this is very much right now not one but more than one state, are false. Further, in the presence of my silent witnesses I felt a burning desire to encourage them to speak, to yell, to cry, anything when the rhetorical question was posed to them: or forever hold your peace. Looking out at them, smirking, I saw some in the room who shared my anxiety and others for whom the theatricality of the marriage proscenium had performed too well – tears streamed down the face of my friend's date (a friend of a friend, barely aware of the bonds between my partner and me).

And of course, we were married under a different sign, a lesser than but equal to in financial and legal sign. Civil partnership is not marriage (and to be honest I would

have it that way) but its second best. And in that moment of “I do” I felt the shame of being second best. Not a destructive shame, but shame nonetheless. This shame had everything to do with status, my privileged status as a queer white male and an American. The visibility of my shame was not registered, per se, on my face in the flush and lowered gaze of typical social shame, but there signed on the certificate of civil partnership and visa applications where I stood out as “not, but” – the burden of the performativity and its periperformative structures like a mirror to my own declarations.

Sedgwick is leaning on an open question posed by Foucault’s concept of “reverse discourse” – a move in the 19th century wherein (homo)sexuality begin to “speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ [sic] be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified” (1990, 101). The scandal of speaking sexuality is that while progressively making space in the social it may undergird long held hegemonic structures, tacitly. The silent queer witness to the spectacle of heterosexual union discussed above is dumbfounded by the permutations of State. This sensory loss is similar to the blinding power of homosexuality that English scholar Diana Fuss describes in her interrogation of Freudian concepts of (markedly female) homosexuality. In fact, Fuss reads Freud’s relation to the question of homosexuality (in women) as a “blinding and deafening spectacle” which at once permits psychoanalytic operations and causes their disquiet. Fuss notes that homosexuality

for psychoanalysis retains the status of “repressed excess” (1995, 60) in that homosexuality is

‘Inessential’ in [a] double sense, positioned within psychoanalysis as an essential waste ingredient: the child’s homosexual desire for the parent of the same sex, essential to the subject’s formation as sexed, is nonetheless simultaneously figures as nonessential, a dispensable component of desire that ultimately must be repudiated and repressed. (1995, 60)

Fuss sees this queer origin story of an essential inessentiality whose condition for appearance (visual and sonic) as a relation to psychoanalysis’ own powers of negation and acceptance – its “status as law” (1995, 61). Homosexuality is an origin story, descended into only to be shamed out of. These genealogical pathways remind us, as Halberstam notes, that “only some of [the contemporary lesbian/gay/transgender movements] overlap with other radical projects and alternative politics and many [...] dovetail with a politics of decency, racialised projects and masculinist enterprises committed to buttressing state power and emphasising distinctions between public and private” (2008, 143). The project of psychoanalysis, to establish a discourse of sexuality as structural to the social, produces and subjugates the queer body in multivalent and, often, shamefully painful (negative) ways.

QUEER NEGATIVITY

Halberstam notes that anti-sociality “does not spring from nowhere” (2008, 143) and that it has been the product of sexuality studies since the 19th century that has marked homosexuality and all non-reproductive sexual practices as “norm-resisters” at odds with “respectability, decency and domesticity” (2008, 143). Lee Edelman’s

No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive means to excavate the very groundwork on which queer lives and queer theory itself can be unrespectable, indecent and anti-domestic. His polemical project has been lusted after and denounced, usually simultaneously, by scholars. In my primary read of the book I feel completely in the thrall of Edelman's call to negativity. Upon a second read I hated the text. The pretension of its language and its basis on specifically gay white middle-class masculinities seemed to hold up a very ugly mirror to me and my own project. What of my privilege as that very identity position and my privilege as scholar who, in setting right/write the queer history I was so passionate about, kept finding other gay white males to talk about?

Yet I keep coming back to Edelman and his stance on negativity. I will sketch out two important structures of his polemic and address, as few others (except perhaps Halberstam (2008) and Heather Love (2007)) seem to do, the very aside in the theatrics of Edelman's polemic that points to a different potential for his work. I want to take a macro look at the project before highlighting the structures of sinthomosexuality and reproductive futurity within the text. It was at the University of Manchester in the summer of 2010 that I felt that I had hit on a relationship to Edelman's project that could make the problematic relationship to race and gender more palatable and thereby useful. My thoughts were clarified by a panel on *No Future* which included scholar Dominic Johnson. Johnson spoke of the relation of the work to performance, and specifically as a performance itself. Edelman's language is dense and biting and yet resolves in itself these very deflective measures. As a queer project, these sorts of deflections save the body of work from attack, and as such

perform a specific type of queer performative writing. Further, in keeping with his analysis of the Lacanian structure of the sinthome, a knot around the order of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, the project is engaged in performing the very writing process that the sinthome is said to be always taking part in. To write the sinthome, a figure “inscribed in a writing process” (Lacan in Evans, 1996, 188) which refuses analysis in its singularity, “immune to the efficacy of the symbolic,” is to attempt to write that which is beyond meaning. If Edelman is true to this structure of writing, this form of inscribing the unintelligible then this performative practice, in writing, is one of constant dissolution and deflection – queerly setting right in writing that which cannot be known or fully inscribed.

Let us first read the theatre of Edelman’s neologism:

Sinthomosexuality ... denying the appeal of fantasy, refusing the promise of futurity that mends each tear, however mean, in reality’s dress with threads of meaning (attached as they are to the eye-catching lure we might see as the sequins of sequence, which dazzle our vision by producing the constant illusion of consequence) – offers us fantasy turned inside out, the seams of its costume exposing reality’s seamlessness as mere seeming, the fraying knots that hold each sequin in place now usurping that place. (2004, 35)

In this dazzling spectacle history is unthreaded from the tempting recourse to the future. By combining the archaic French with English, invoking Lacan’s later turn of phrase synth-homme into sinthomo, what occurs? The sinthome is an archaic way of writing symptom. Symptoms, in Lacanian parlance, are formations of the unconscious which reveal themselves in phenomena or acts. Lacanian analysis does not attempt to “cure” symptoms, but instead to bear the truth of the clinical structure of the patient (neurosis, psychosis or perversion) (Evans, 1996, 203). Lacan,

through his career, structures symptoms like language, until the late 60's when he begins to conceive of symptoms as pure *jouissance*. In this way the sinthome figures the desire of the subject to break through pleasure (past the genital, perhaps) and to face death. As Edelman elaborates, the sinthome operates "as the knot that holds the subject together, that ties or binds the subject to its constitutive libidinal career, and assures that no subject, try as it may, can ever 'get over' itself – 'get over', that is, the fixation of the drive that determines its *jouissance*" (2004, 35-36).

Sinthomosexuality, then is "the site where the fantasy of futurism confronts the insistence of a *jouissance* that rends it precisely by *rendering* it in relation to [the death] drive" (2004, 38). Homosexuality figures a site in culture whereby reproduction ceases. The homosexual does not (necessarily) reproduce offspring; it yields itself towards *jouissance* purely for *jouissance* and not in the reproduction of culture via new subjects. Following Lacan, Edelman is "invent[ing] a new way of using language to organise enjoyment" (Thurston in Evans, 1996, 190). This enjoyment is self-creating and cannot be signified monolithically – it is beyond logics of fantasy and desire; "something far greater than what we do with our genitals" (Edelman, 2004, 47). It is purely negative, in fact: the queer figures the site at which culture ceases to reproduce itself. The queer, Edelman argues, insists that "the future stops here" (2004, 31).

The queer, for Edelman, figures "the negativity opposed to every form of social viability" (2004, 9) in that it will not accede to forms of reproductive futurism and paternalistic historicism. In his construction reproductive futurism is the political tactic by which heteronormative culture "propels itself," as Halberstam glosses, into

space/time through the figure or image of the child (a positive union of a hetero-dyad), and “project[s] itself” (2008, 141) back through the figure of the hetero-parent. And this is where he really gets us. The desire to engage with these figures is alarming. Or at least it was and continues to be, really, for me. As the sole child of my parents’ union, and the last in the long line of men in my family, I was expected to carry on the family (and thus the name, the inscription of the Law of our family, the very sociality of *us*) by producing a child (ideally a male child who could do the same thing legally that I could do). And in this over-identification with both the thrall to reproductive futurism and the strident position that Edelman offers (by way of an identification) I find myself back staring in the mirror of (gay) white maleness.

Edelman wants us to, though. His language pulls us this way; it does more than it says, perhaps. And this language and what it contains is part of the problem, for many, with conceiving of anti-social queerness as either a new turn, or in my argument, a repetitious re-turn. In footnote 19 from Chapter One “The Future is Kid Stuff” Edelman negotiates, un-anxiously, how critics will assail him for his polemic prose. He notes that first, there will be a “rejection of what some will read as an ‘apolitical’ formalism” (2004, 157) and this he notes has something to do with history. I might recast that as something to do with the archive. Halberstam critiques Bersani and Edelman for only touching on the gay male archive – and both rely on something that could be called that, surely. Secondly, Edelman addresses the question of bourgeois privilege that determines his argument (the terms white, middle class and gay male pop up here). Thirdly, he notes that his language and the formalism through which he attends to such question of queerness will be taken to

task. Halberstam responds to this aside by arguing that where Edelman really misses out is in his lack of a punk attitude or a punk stance. I wonder more about this theatrical aside – this snotty direct address at his audience in footnote – and what it does. First consider the audience, already one which will be littered with highly literate, political and ostensibly gay people (among them a lot of white guys). Does this aside alleviate the tension of an already always nagging anti-sociality to their position in the social given how Edelman and I have cast them and secondly the terrifying anti-sociality that Edelman calls forth in them as a political stance?

Theatrically this aside is a knowing wink. Or it functions as a fuck you. Either way its direct address acts as a deflection, one which flirts with a desire to be understood. Queerness may never define an identity, as Edelman says, it only disturbs one – and this disturbance has everything to do, despite the theoretical intervention of unintelligibility – with the legibility of the other's desire (even, and especially at the expense of the heteronormative). Edelman's focus is on the future. His form of queer negativity stands in opposition to it, yes, but this anti-sociality is focused on a distant 'to be'. I am indebted to Heather Love's *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007) for offering us the space "not to be."

Love picks up a strain of Edelman (and of Bersani and others not mentioned herein) and moves it, differently. As she says, "I am ultimately less interested in accounts of same-sex desire as antisocial or asocial than I am in stances of ruined or failed sociality" (2007, 22). Instead of finding heroes in subjects of the past for whom queer, lesbian, gay, homosexual or any number of modern sexualised identity positions did not exist, she seeks out those individuals and moments when a back

was turned – when the dare was not taken and when someone may have stood up in church to say, “no.” In response to Edelman’s future destroying polemic, Love is interested “in trying to imagine a future apart from the reproductive imperative, optimism, and the promise of redemption” (2007, 147).

Love’s project is indebted to gender and sexuality studies and the desire there to re-map homosexuality onto the past. Mining queer pasts was a way to make visible the struggles and efforts of individuals who lived and thrived contra to the norm of the given period, or who perished painfully at the hands of such politics. And her project does make a turn: it turns its back to this methodology. Acknowledging that “they were, weren’t they?” feeling of reading queerness backwards is necessary for structuring identity and feeling viable, she utilises the lens of anti-sociality to index subjects who refused the social or were refused the social to provide queer futures with the productive power of negativity. In Chapter Two I described a similar trope in the work of Kara Walker. Walker’s black on white cut-outs repurpose the anti-sociality of post-slavery (in politic if not in feeling) America producing negative affects through grotesque images of plantation life. These images remind the contemporary viewer of the costs of the lived experience of the Other.

My desire to attend to the anti-sociality of queerness was truly first piqued by José Muñoz in his book *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999). His analysis of performer Vaginal Creme Davis, of her “reformatting of [her]self within the social” via a “performative mode of tactical recognition” (1999, 97), disidentifying, was exactly the type of queer performative intervention that I

was interested in. His project considered the way in which minoritarian⁹⁶ subjects could feel queerness and might utilise queer as a theoretical paradigm to create life-worlds. The desire of the minoritarian, Muñoz argues is desire for the other (ideal, perhaps) but desiring with a difference (1999, 15).

QUEER FUTURE(S)

“Queerness is not here yet”, begins José Muñoz’s most recent publication *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009, 1). Muñoz’s argument centres on a notion that queerness cannot exist in the present, but is always only a possibility, a displacement of potential realised through the quotidian gestures of minoritarian subjects who have full access to neither their pasts nor their present. Muñoz takes seriously the utopic quality of queerness urging a reading of a “*then* that disrupts the tyranny of the *now*” that is “both past and future” (2009, 29, emphasis in original). In conceiving of queerness as always futural, Muñoz jettisons the theoretical model of queerness beyond the here and now to a then and there which is inclusive of charged pasts and presents but that thwarts linearity or hegemonic historical “time” – something he calls, after Judith Halberstam, “straight-time” (2009, 22).⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Muñoz defines his usage of the term minoritarian as “citizen-subjects who, due to antagonisms within the social such as race, class, and sex, are debased within the majoritarian public sphere” (2009, 56).

⁹⁷ Halberstam uses the term reproductive time, or repo-time. Reproductive time is a temporal logic of late capitalism “ruled by a biological clock for women and by strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples” (2005, 5). Halberstam is clear that not all “straight” individuals will feel or manage reproductive time similarly – some may not have children for instance – but that the Social is built around a temporality which invests itself futurally in the notion of the future figured by the child and its imagined needs. Disciplining temporality in this way invests individuals with a need for activity, indeed productive and reproductive activity, child or not.

Straight-time, he defines, “tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life. The only futurity promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality, the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction” (2009, 22). We can see here Muñoz invoking the work of Edelman. Indeed, multiple chapters of this text respond to Edelman’s *No Future*. The utopic potential of queerness is, for Muñoz, a way of thinking asociality within and of a social that, mired in a present, refuses affective realities outside of reproductive normativity and its child-focused futurity. Following Muñoz and Sue-Ellen Case’s productive engagement with queer utopias, the archival, especially in its post-modern deployment should be considered a tool *for* the future.⁹⁸ By capturing fragments of the past it displaces potential in a then and there that the now of the inquiring body can re-animate, resuscitate, and unmoor. This negotiation with archives and archival holdings is less interested in what is said in the archive – systems of identifications which suture subjects to hegemonic State practice – but more interested in what is done in the archive, what is made from the archive by the inquiring body.

DAUGHTERS OF EVE

I end this chapter with review of Chapter Five of *Cruising Utopia*, entitled “Cruising the Toilet, LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Radical Black Traditions, and Queer Futurity” to return us to my descriptive work in recounting the performance of Mitch and Parry’s

⁹⁸ Like Muñoz, Case engages with Ernst Bloch to engage with a potential future for queer theory. Jill Dolan has also, famously, engaged with performance and utopian constructions in her *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (2005). In each case, following Bloch, hope is seen as “a critical methodology” that can be “best described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision” (Muñoz, 2009, 4) with the logic of the historical case study thwarted by an associative mode of analysis, dancing across historical sites and the present. My own methodological impulse, as a response to archival injunctions, follows such a logic.

that began this chapter. In this chapter Muñoz directly engages with his critique of Edelman and considers the way in which anti-relational or anti-social queerness might meet with Muñoz's own politics of queer futurity. As well, this chapter picks up threads that I began in chapters one and two wherein I have dealt explicitly with themes or texts which inform this chapter. Muñoz responds to Fred Moten's dense read of Amiri Baraka's queerness and his little known play *The Toilet* as a way to consider a violent choreography of hope. As well, this chapter steps into the toilet. In Chapter Three, I too stepped into the toilet which became a periperformative archival space, wherein cruising gestures animated a lifeworld for the libidinal nature of research and the lost life of performance artist John Sex. As I argue in that chapter, the toilet is an archival site as a space of transmission where embodied knowledge practices are disciplined.

There is another, genealogical, impetus for Muñoz's position here as well. As my MA thesis advisor at New York University, Muñoz was pivotal in shaping the way in which I engaged with queer commentary. While certainly not my first professor of queer theory, Muñoz's attention to the gestural capacity of the quotidian as a means to mine the social for the unexpected, the ephemeral and the beautiful political potential has always been inspiring. While not a dance scholar, by any means, Muñoz's reliance on the choreographic – usually in club spaces, but very much also in the obliquely coded stages of family, classroom and toilet – is in keeping with an associative methodology I have employed in this chapter whereby scholars like Maya Deren and Marcel Mauss inform how I understand my critical project. Muñoz, as a

student of Eve Sedgwick, has a charged relationship to the genealogies I am tracing and that I inherit.

Why this genealogy? I've titled this subsection "Daughters of Eve" because the lineage of queer thought retroactively ascribed to Sedgwick is intricately tied to the modes of queer reception within and from the academy. The affective relationship scholars have to other theorists and/or their texts shapes the way in which critical reception gets deployed. This type of archival deployment, this type of relational practice of research is far more complicated than there is space for in this chapter, but such conditions of engagement are interestingly structural. Muñoz's projects are indebted to a certain Sedgwickian modality. I remember very vividly reading Sedgwick as my first piece of "queer theory" and being terrified at the beauty of a language that was not my own, yet that I understood. The resonances of these types of projects spoke to my privilege and my pain. As a student at an extremely expensive private college for the performing arts, I had a vantage point from the academy that so many queer children do not have. Yet at the same time, growing up queer, in a country town in Maine, the phobic reality that Sedgwick and her progeny have sought to address and strive to change was overwhelming material for me. While queer may have been a "joke" at its outset, the critical space upon which it intervenes is anything but.

AGGRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS

LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, a playwright and poet from New Jersey who rose to fame in the 1960's in Greenwich Village, wrote *The Toilet* around 1964, when it was first produced. Muñoz mines *The Toilet* for its queerness not in and of any necessary

homosexuality but for the way the play may enable scholars to engage with a “futurity that resists the various violent asymmetries that dominate the present” (2009, 84). The “is her or isn’t he” question which underpins the play itself is engaged, by Muñoz, in relation to an open acceptance of a critical queerness by Jones/Baraka at a time when he was living and working within a queer community of artists and writers.

Thus Muñoz is engaged in discussing a “mode of queer performativity – that is, not the fact of a queer identity but the force of a kind of queer doing” (2009, 84). The way in which aggressive speech acts and violent gestures feature in the play performs a lifeworld that alter our perspectives, for Muñoz this perspective is one wherein phobic utterances and painful punches may propel us into a “better life world” without rendering the space of these performatives felicitous. We might also read, here, Judith Halberstam’s injunction for queerness as a way to “make everyone a little less happy” (2008, 154).

I will rehearse, briefly, the plot of *The Toilet* so as to give purchase to Muñoz’s read of Edleman, who he finally fully critiques in this chapter. As the play begins, in a toilet in a school, we learn that two boys, Ray (known as Footh) and Jerry Karolis, are due to have a fight. Before these boys enter the scene, Donald Farrell enters and learns from Ora, a seemingly dominant figure in the boys’ group, what will happen. Farrell and Ora verbally spar and then Ora punches and floors Farrell; Farrell is aware, it would seem, of events that have transpired to incite the fight. As Farrell lies on the floor, Karolis is dragged in. Already bloody and badly beaten he is taunted by other boys – sexual innuendo is at a height. Footh finally enters and sees the beaten

Karolis. He goes to him and, kneeling he “threatens to stay too long” (quoted in Muñoz, 2009, 88), a gesture indicating that he may want to assist the boy.

Foots attempts to disperse the boys and end the proposed fight because his would-be opponent is already too beaten. Farrell attempts to leave at this point, offering to take Karolis. Ora reveals a letter written to Foots by Karolis, noting Foots’ beauty and Karolis’ desire to blow him. Farrell is ejected by Ora as the information begins to make clear a deeper connection between Foots and Karolis. As Farrell leave, Karolis rises and urges that he wants to fight Foots. The fight begins with Karolis rushing at Foots. Foots is overtaken by Karolis and it is not until the other boys intervene that Karolis is beaten back to the floor.

All the boys leave Karolis, bloodied on the floor. He struggles to rise and crumples on the floor, alone. Moments later, Foots enters gingerly. He goes to Karolis’s body and after checking to see they are alone, kneels and cradles him in his arms, weeping.

As with my desire not to apply too much critical pressure to the actions in *I HOST YOU. NOW TONIGHT, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW*, Muñoz is quick to dispense with any consideration of redemption in the final scene. Instead of “cleansing the violence that saturates almost every utterance and move in the play” he instead wants to invest energy in the “wounded recognition” (2009, 90) that is shared and indicates a potential for something that has yet to come. This is not an end, nor simply a beginning, it is a utopic gesture which queerly unhinges itself from the straight time in its form of relational endurance and support between subjects subjugated by and to hegemonic normativity.

Edelman's project is centred on the notion that queers (usually, in his case, as I've noted, this means white gay men) must engage with the negativity of their social position. If the social has spit us out, Edelman wants us to spit back, especially in the face of futural gestures. These gestures, in his work, are figured by the figure of the child. Yet, what Muñoz begins to mobilise is a way of gesturing which captures the ludic possibility of queer futures, not a negation of futurity but the mobile capacity of queerness to evade straight time even in the face of extreme violence. The gesture at the end of *The Toilet*, while seemingly social, performs a type of asociality, queerly. Karolis' body has suffered extreme violence at the hands of not only a seemingly homophobic crowd of young boys but also his supposed lover. Fouts' gesture at the end cannot redeem him, or ease the pain that Karolis now suffers, yet for Muñoz this gesture points to a queer possibility shaped in the space of negativity. It is another type of aggressive speech act – one functioning as periperformative: I will not abide. By no means is this a way of forgiving such violence – be it kid stuff or not – but in the arena of such trauma Fouts' gesture is a means of pointing to another space, another time.

Following Edelman, Muñoz calls this “an ethics of embracing one's constituting negation” (2009, 92) – something not dissimilar to his earlier work on disidentification and the productive potential of contra-assimilation tactics. This is an accommodation of Edelman's position. Muñoz describes his desire to agree with Edelman for nearly four pages. Yet what he can't get away from is his desire, following Ernst Bloch, to find hope in “wounded recognition” (2009, 93). The practice of recognition, or to invoke Mauss again – the technique – is “a brutal choreography

scored to the discordant sounds of desire and hate” (2009, 93). These discordant sounds are sonic trace patterns of a history of class and race violence, shaped by the phobic ear of queer fear and love. Muñoz’s critique of Edelman is not entirely different to Halberstam’s, for example. Both pick apart the privilege. Halberstam embraces the ludic in his “silly archives” – though I fear such a reductive strain whereby notions of the archive are employed simply to give purchase to a category of personal academic preference – and Muñoz profits from not dissociating from the “kid stuff” but by squarely believing in politics as a space for hope to shape the queer lifeworlds of gays of any race or class and especially of any age.

A KIND OF QUEER DOING

Just before his reading of Edelman, Muñoz offers this definition that I think is emblematic of a queer choreography of the social which should be read beside *I HOST YOU. NOW TONIGHT, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW*:

The queerness of queer futurity, like the blackness of a black radical tradition, is a relational and collective modality of endurance and support. The gesture of cradling the head of one’s lover, a lover one has betrayed, is therefore not an act of redemption that mitigates violence; it is instead a future being within the present that is both a utopian kernel and an anticipatory illumination. It is a being in, toward, and for futurity (2009, 91).

I do not want to relegate the hug at the end of part one, or the pieta-like cradle at the end of part three of *I HOST YOU. NOW TONIGHT, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW*, to a supplicative gesture or an erasure of the sexual, violent or tender exchange (however an audience member may have felt the experience). I am engaging with Muñoz’s theorization to consider the action (and all the actions within the piece) as a “relational and collective modality of endurance and support” (2009, 91) whereby

the audience is as complicit and engaged in the transmission, exchanges, and consumptions of affect and potential (political, for when is it not) of what has transpired. Enduring and supporting the quotidian present that the audience shares with the performers, drenched in the spittle of anti-sociality, the performance gestures towards a future, a queer future wherein care and violence, pain and pleasure will not be so easily relegated to binaries – where the traumas of the past waver in the present of actions too densely weighted to float into signification.

CARING FOR QUEERNESS

Two promises were set out at the beginning of this chapter, many pages ago. Both promises, I said, were in response to the Archive. Contributing to and mining the archive of queerness has meant addressing a performance of queerness and how queerness performs. Focusing on the asocial qualities of queerness, via Mitch & Parry's spit piece and queer theories insistence on being contra to normative sociality, opens up new possibilities for the way in which we archive queerness and how we use queer archives. My desire to archive their work meant I needed to consider the archive of queerness itself.

The end of this chapter relates Muñoz current work on modes of care for queer lifeworlds. Endurance – how the object is able to stay material in some form – and support – how we care for it once it's there – mirrors the moves into and out of the archive that I have performed within this chapter. Put another way; preservation as a form of care, as I explored in Chapter One, is wrought with subjective desires, the ability of the object to endure preservation and the conditions available to support the use of the object, for the future. In securing, through my writing, a place for

Mitch & Parry's performance in an archive of scholarship, I have attempted to conserve the interplay between performance and spectator. I have been less interested in more standardized modes of archiving, as discussed in Chapter One. Instead, I have promised the object and not proven it. Archiving their work is not to socially redeem the abject nature of their body art performance, but to conserve the queer potential of it. Similarly, questioning the archive of queer studies provides a space for queer theory to go further. What more can be done with and for queerness? In the next Chapter I will continue to explore how we might conserve the past instead of redeeming it through questions of inheritance – that which comes to us from our pasts, and drives us to do something else.

CHAPTER FIVE: WHAT'S THE USE IN WONDERING? QUEER DEBTS

“An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself.”
Jacques Derrida (1993, 18)

“Here they meet those others who dwell in a different compulsion, in the same
debt, a distance, forgetting, remembered again but only after.”
Fred Moten & Stefano Harvey (2010, 4)

“To write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities is to write ghost stories.”
Avery Gordon (1997, 17)

THE GHOST BEHIND THE CURTAIN

What follows is the story of a haunting that changed the way I was thinking about the archive. This haunting begins to set the stage for a hauntological engagement, later, with theatre artist Taylor Mac’s play *Young Ladies Of*. To move through this haunted scene, we will be able to begin to conceive of ways to speak to our ghosts and to engage with our debts. What some subjects inherit, by “right” or by “coincidence” may not follow normative logics of exchange, including credit due and debt owed.

This story was recounted on February 2008 in the context of performer Justin Bond’s (now Mx. Justin Vivian Bond, who utilises the gender neutral pronoun V, as herein) then on-going show at Performance Space 122 (PS122) in downtown Manhattan.

Having won the, locally, prestigious Ethyl Eichelberger award,⁹⁹ Bond had created what V called, in the show's subtitle "A Midwinter Trans-fest." The story goes something like this:

Many years before Bond had come to New York, V was performing in San Francisco doing the gender-bending work only V can do and had no idea who Ethyl Eichelberger was. After a, let's say, stunning set the curtains opened behind V to reveal a massive mural of the aforementioned, but unknown to V, artist's face. There, just behind the curtain, haunting the stage with his presence, was none other than the artist, Ethyl, under whose name Bond would be given an award stipend and month long performance opportunity in V's new found performance home, the lower east side of Manhattan.

Out of sight, Bond performed under the blinded-watchful face of a hero of what would come to be understood as post-drag performance movement. This unseen presence, this haunting drag queen, who, on many occasions people have likened Bond to, struck me as queerly *archival*. Not an archive: the physical repository of remains of a body of work. Not archivic: of a body producing the archive. But archival: a genealogical trace pattern formed in the site of a relation to records, indeed the record of performance.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ The Ethyl Eichelberger Award (in honor of seminal performer, landmark and legend Ethyl Eichelberger) is given to an artist or group that exemplifies Ethyl's larger-than-life style and generosity of spirit; who embodies Ethyl's multi-talented artistic virtuosity, bridging worlds and vitalizing those around them. The 2008 Ethyl Eichelberger Award will be announced following Lustre's performance on Thursday, March 6 with a reception to follow. Past winners are Taylor Mac (2005) and Julie Atlas Muz (2006). (<http://ps122.org/performances/eichelberger.html>, 23/5/2012)

¹⁰⁰ As I will describe, and has been often the case throughout this project, performance carries with it here a meaning of the anthropological as well as the theatrical; how a subject performs within and of ideological constructs and how performance occurs to intervene in culture.

The mural metonymically charges the space with an archival representation and a haunting occurs. Certainly, for Bond, the spectre of this body returns if not in image then by name upon moving to Manhattan and learning who and what came before. Performing, at least twice, under the sign of this figure, this disembodied body, Bond senses that something is different. In both moments a spirit of Eichelberger emerges to charge the space differently. In both instances the spectre signals the loss of the full body (Eichelberger killed himself in Brooklyn as his HIV infection worsened in 1990). But in this case the loss triggers associations with other bodies silenced by an infection they carry. Eichelberger's return marks the multiple losses of bodies to AIDS and the silences that, as I discuss in Chapter Three, may change the ways in which stories can be told.

Sociologist Avery Gordon proposes that during a haunting, a ghost must be "alive, so to speak" (1997, 64).¹⁰¹ This spectre is alive, I think, in and through the archival injunction of Bond's performance. Citing, without the instructed knowledge of such citation, V's drag performance gestures to a genealogy of drag performance which V is entirely indebted to. This debt is social. It is bad debt, a term I will explore later – queer and moving. It is what Performance Studies scholar David Román calls "archival drag." Román utilises the notion of archival drag or "a performance that sets out to reembody and revive a performance from the past" (2005, 140) to consider the way in which performance is a means of archiving. What I find most useful in this is the way in which a performance may be so haunted as to not yet know of how and why it takes shape. Bond did not yet know of the haunting spectre

¹⁰¹ Gordon describes three components of haunting. The final of these is the live-ness of the ghost. I will discuss each of these components later on.

of Eichelberger. Yet the archival drag – literally the lag between discursive knowledge and embodied practice – upon catching up, produced a different type of interaction with the ghost – one which spoke back to it and perhaps where nothing was required in return.

I will be speaking to ghosts more in this chapter.¹⁰² And the question of how one addresses and is addressed by ghosts, and what to do with such hauntings will continue to operate. This first ghost story presents us with an archival moment which produces sociality, which makes connections. A debt is paid in and through the space of relation to “what came before” and, again, in that space of performance. This type of payment, this exchange, is not to set right, perhaps. It is not about balance; it is about seeking connection in a moment of haunted possibility. This debt is paid in and through inquiry, through a *coming to know* of a body haunted by what they have found and what will forever shape them after such experience.

I have unpacked a ghost story, above. I have begun to theorise the haunted experience of *coming to know* someone or something that you couldn’t have known before. This is archival. I said that Bond’s performance changed my thinking about the archive. And that is true. Instead of focusing on the body as archive, I shifted to thinking about bodily relations to the archive, and to how bodies come-to-know through archival things. The role of the inquiring body, differently perhaps than its place with desire (Chapter Three) or its role in curating (Chapter One), becomes a

¹⁰² I have spoken of ghosts already in this project. Kara Walker’s silhouettes in Chapter Two are phantom projections of a racialised history. The remains of John Sex haunted me and spurred my conjuring of him here in this dissertation, not unlike Taylor’s ghostly father, as I discuss later on.

complicated set of negotiations. More than one body is often engaged in shaping what is found in archival journeys. As I will discuss, often the figure of the scholar is charged with a capacity to shape such an archival experience. Clearly in the space of this project I am charged with such a position – to negotiate for you the archival experience as a way to understand, differently perhaps, how the archive, and it's metaphorical twin the Archive, operate. I didn't always know what I was looking for. Like Bond, often I wasn't looking for anything. Or I was, but then something happened. And that something charged me with the desire to consider how we set to write the stories that come before; how we make use of what we find and what comes to find us.

DEAR DAD

Smoke has filled the stage and blue light barely illuminates the sparse set. Swelling carousel music is heard. In walks Taylor Mac with a ukulele in hand. His makeup is clown white, with red sequined lips. His eyes are surrounded by silver glitter. Huge red cheeks are painted on. A baby-doll wig sits atop his head. His arms are haphazardly whitened with make-up; he begins to move centre stage in his tattered white dress. He is like a kewpie doll, thrown to the gutter. He steps up onto a ladder situated centre stage. A spot light hits his face: "Dear Dad."¹⁰³

Quickly he corrects himself. "No."

Looking to the audience, he says "Hi." Stage and house lights come up. He chides that it's ok to say hi back. Cheekily he notes that we must have thought it was one of

¹⁰³ All quotes from the show have been transcribed by me from a viewing of the New York Public Library's Theater on Film and Tape Archive (TOFTA) recording of the 28 July, 2008 show at HERE Arts Center. I originally saw the show in October of 2007 during its first full run. (Mac, 2008).

those shows, you know “a real play.” The lights change to blue background and spotlight again. “Dear Dad, this is my last letter to you: a singing telegram.”

Young Ladies Of (2008) is a post-drag performance wherein Taylor¹⁰⁴ narrates his own (queer) childhood. His childhood is marked by the loss of his father, Lt. Robert Mac, a Vietnam War veteran. As the copy on the first promotional postcard states: “In 1968, while stationed in Vietnam, Lt. Robert Mac (Taylor’s father) placed an ad asking ‘young ladies’ to write him. Hundreds replied” (HERE Arts Centre, postcard, 2008).

Taylor is given the collection of letters years after his father’s death. This private collection offers Taylor a fragmented view of a part of his father’s life. From the glimpse into the personal effects of his father Taylor hopes to structure a new identity for the father he never knew. When I first saw the show I considered this collection an “archive” and it is certainly a part of what would constitute Taylor’s father’s personal archive. However, the collection must be seen as a fragmentary portion of a larger mass of effects. Others come into the play: family pictures, birth and work records, home and favourite movie clips. Taylor will make use of this collection *as* archive but, like all the haunted remains of past lives and the traumas associated with their passing, he will transfer the archival potential into and onto his body, thus moving the collection from that of an archival holding to an archivic injunction – one wherein the genealogy of remains does not re-structure the lost parent, but instead reforms the inquiring body. Taylor’s identification is found in

¹⁰⁴ I will refer to Mac as Taylor so as not to confuse the reader when I discuss both he and his father Robert.

these papers as a means to finally mete out who he is not (or will never have been) with or without his father.

A few minutes into the show, Taylor notes that he didn't really want to do "yet another father play" where someone mourns the absented figure from their childhood. Much of what Taylor will come to know of his father and we, as the audience, will learn, is pieced together by Taylor from the archival records (presented dramaturgically by him and director Tracy Trevett). Taylor signals moments where something has been learned but not necessarily verified by pausing and saying "assumption." For example, he notes that he has learned that his father's favourite movie was the musical *Carousel* by Rodgers and Hammerstein. "My favourite character was the daughter – like the daughter I never knew my father," says Taylor. Taylor chooses for Robert the character of Bill Bigelow: "Assumption: my father's favourite character was the wife beater, Bill." The performance is filled with the assumptive asides: assumption, my father likes blondes; assumption, Robert liked writing letters; assumption, assumption, assumption. Maybe "father" is a metaphor; "we'll see," says Taylor. But assuredly, "father is not assumption alone."

There are a lot of fathers in this chapter. There is more than one father in Taylor's performance: Robert and Bill Bigelow. There is definitely more than one that informs how I came to Taylor's performance and how, herein, I theorise a set of (familial, perhaps) relations to archival commandments. In 2006 having finally gotten around to reading Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995), it led me, rather swiftly to his *Spectres Of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (1993/2006). Reading these two books together, I hit upon the

kernels of what would become this project: an exploration of the relation between queer performance and the archive.

Because of these two texts, I began to consider a link between debt and inheritance.

The debt we owe to those who came before us, in the optimistic position, might be understood as that which we've inherited – what has been passed down to us that we must carry, shape and in turn pass on. This notion of a cultural product reproduced over time, passed, carried and re-passed, is one caught up in heavily loaded systems of exchange built in and around the structures of family. This is problematic for queerness but, of course, impossibly integral to the question of queerness. Queer subjects don't simply appear; they are born into and exist in relation to heterosexual imperatives.¹⁰⁵ One way to deal with the issue of family is to attend to it directly. But we have a missing element, or perhaps more than one missing element. Despite the patriarchal imperative that drove Freud to install the Father as the lynchpin in the Oedipal drama, this chapter attends to the absent presence of both Fathers and Mothers – their haunting force and how one deals with what is left behind, what comes back to us, and what that does to us. But family isn't exactly so simply defined. The dense lineage of scholarship in critical race, sexuality and gender studies as well as feminism has already called into question structures of kinship¹⁰⁶ – both destroying and affirming affective bonds in and

¹⁰⁵ As I noted in Chapter Two and discuss in Chapter Four, this is something like what Judith Halberstam would call “repo-“ or “straight-time” – a temporality constrained by the reproductive imperative of hegemonic straight cultures (2005, 5).

¹⁰⁶ Kinship as I am using it here is in its anthropological sense: “the recognized ties of relationship, by descent, marriage, or ritual that forms the basis of social organization” (OED). This is following Kath Weston's work, as described in note 8. Family also designates a relation of descent but tends to be more about the way in which a group of kin or non-kin live together.

through the metaphors of family.¹⁰⁷ I was also struck, in reading both of Derrida's texts, how they were basically stories about father figures. The father, especially in psychoanalysis, is a key character. Herein, he will take the guise of Freud, of Derrida, of Marx, and already he has appeared as a father dancing in the South Pacific and of a gruff carousel barker, come back to right his wrongs.

Before I continue with Mac's performance I want to turn to focus on some of these other fathers, who ghost my reading of *Young Ladies Of* and can assist us in thinking through the archival in performance, and for queerness. First let's turn to Marx; Marx himself in the first instance, and his work on credit, debt, and art, before turning to an earlier Marx and a Marx already passed, eulogised and deconstructed in Derrida. I want to include Marx's voice for in so many ways it is silenced in Derrida's deconstruction, and by this reanimation I can consider modes of sociality tied intrinsically to an economics of exchange.

TIED TO THAT STORE

Let's make a substitution, now, not a comparison. Not "like" but "is." I want to substitute my feelings of good debt for "bad debt." We'll now carry forward my desire to see connections from and with the past, perhaps only ever accessible through something like the archive, though very directly in and through the body, as

¹⁰⁷ The pioneering work of Kath Weston in *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (1991) has already charted a course, now being ever re-tooled, to consider 'families of choice.' In her study, lesbian and gay bodies were shown to be resisting 'procreative assumptions' of family and confirming new types of affective relationships. Those bodies who do not find space within normative strictures of heterosexual dyads were promoting various forms of relationality. Judith Butler's evocative response to the question of kinship, in her "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" (2002), argues for a critical engagement with kinship structures which resists seeing *any* such structure as normative. Kinship structures, for Butler, are emergent 'forms of human dependency, which may include birth, child-rearing, relations of emotional dependency and support, generational ties, illness, dying and death' (2002, 15). Butler argues to queer our assumptions about any such set of relational practices. To queer kinship is also to offer a queer kinship.

bad debt; as a structure of sociality and of a different kind of re-membering (Harney & Moten, 2010). In this bad debt, peoples and places, performances and events, come back to *do* differently and, often, receive little credit for their place in the present. This is spectral, ephemeral and this is undoubtedly sexual.

My debt is bad. Trust me. I went to two of the most costly institutions in the United States to begin my academic career, racking up over \$130,000 in student loans. My desire to learn with and of that which came before me has me indebted to a financial institution fractured at its core with no potential recourse to payment. I am forever with debt. I am forever indebted. This is bad, because I can't actually pay it back. And that might be good. Debt exists in relation to credit, a system necessary for capital to function. Debt is necessary, and if we are to follow Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2010), debt is, inherently, *social*.¹⁰⁸ We might recall here Marx's footnote in the introduction to the *Grundrisse* about the English labourers' system of credit, always in debt to each other, always tied to that store.¹⁰⁹ Without their mutual system of credit – that which separates them – they could not have their debt relation. Their exchanges require a debt to be in place. Harney and Moten posit that “debt is mutual. Credit runs only one way. Debt runs in every direction, scattering, escaping, seeking refuge” (2010, 1). In their words, debt is fugitive to capital, specifically bad debt – that which cannot be repaid – is not even able to “be perceived by the senses of capital” (2010, 3). But I'm comparing here, I'm making

¹⁰⁸ In David Graeber's recent *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (2011) he says the same thing, in slightly different language. Graeber insists that “all human relations involve debt” (12). His axiom, that debt is “just an exchange that has not been brought to completion” (121), maps directly onto Harney and Moten's argument. The “tacit calculus”(123) of debt put in these terms follows with my argument here that what some subjects inherit is never as obvious or as simply exchanged as we might assume.

¹⁰⁹ Karl Marx (1903/1986) *Grundrisse*, Collected Works, Vol 28: International Publishers: New York. no. 3, p. 144.

violent associations between at least two types of debt, Harney and Moten's types, debt and bad debt. Bad debt is social because it is "debt broken from credit, debt as its own principle" (2010, 1). This type of debt is social in its largess; it is not the electric bill, per se, which functions as a type of credit system. Monthly usage is permitted (indebted) for use prior to an exchange of credit for continued usage. Bad debt cannot be repaid, cannot function within capital's – and in this case we might add the ideation of the State, of a State's capital, of the estate – system of checks and balances. Or at least the one presumed to be there; the myth of capital, the myth of democracy.

Bad debt, Harney and Moten argue, "cannot be forgiven, it can only be forgotten and remembered" (2010, 2). To be credited, bad debt would have to be made right, to be justified in expenditure. Bodies dead and gone, bodies lost, bodies un-enumerated cannot be set right. Time, here, is then, unjustly out of joint. Justice, putting time right, or fulfilling a credit stamp of a received payment, is not within limits of bad debt. Harney and Moten write in their "Debt and Study" of bad debt's justice, of its conservation instead of its restoration (wherein more debt, a different 'good debt', could be re-instated, could be made available). Conservation of bad debt is a remembering, a re-remembering. It is a process of piecing together the losses, the owed, and the desired. "You can't pay me back, give me credit, get free of me, and I can't let you go when you're gone" (2010, 2).

"Having left without getting out" (2010, 2) is the movement of the bad debtor. And bad debt moves, in Harney and Moten's article at least, from a nurses' room to a squat and to an embrace. The jaunty hips of bad debt, the impatient fingers of bad

debt, the licked lip of bad debt, are those of a student – a student not simply of the American university system which sets in motion a dual tradition of debt through the credit of education – time slips back to past deeds, to what came before as, in advance, your loans tower and soar beyond the future you might even have in store. But you’re tied to that store, and that store-house of what has come before, the Archive that is the university: the academy.¹¹⁰

Bad debt, in Harney and Moten’s construction, and in my substitution, is a queer debt. It is odd, and at odds with capital. Its “senselessness,” as they would have it, is productive, making credit possible and allowing “credit to rule” (2010, 3). The formulating and sustaining function of bad debt is queer: it reproduces cultures, off-sides, outside, under and within. Queerness is fugitive, it acts “covertly” as José Muñoz has described (1996, 6), yet also forms and sustains a series of social structures which often retain the white heteronormative as centre. The history of “queer” contains the discursive construction of homosexuality which required the formulation of heterosexuality. This formulation, of a normative contra to a primary perversity, makes “queer” and “queerness” useful and dangerous. I have discussed queer theory more specifically in Chapter Four. Debt’s queerness unhinges it from some of the strict economic associations which would keep it too close to the

¹¹⁰ Harney and Moten’s work is tied, as well, to the black radical tradition. Moten, in another context, has described the performative tradition of black radicalism, of a blackness moving and, to use a language close to his, sounding from and with a traumatic past, as a “refusal of closure” (*In the Break*, 2003, 85). This “refusal of closure is not a rejection but an ongoing reconstructive improvisation of ensemble” (2003, 85); the black radical tradition invokes, very much *calls*, a debt that will not be justified (closed) but must be re-animated, re-membered. Harney and Moten posit the term “undercommons” as a site of the most active work of bad debt. The undercommons can be understood as “the production and organization of those who labor beneath the university’s perceived purpose, inherently, though complicatedly, antagonize the administered university and direct our attention toward a possible alternative to it” (<http://digitalmanagementtheory.wordpress.com/category/the-undercommons/>). Where Marx focused on the factory, Harney and Moten draw attention to the University.

Market; we might find purchase in the unequal exchanges which debt and its close relative inheritance both tend.

Marx discusses credit most succinctly in relation to labour-power and consumption. In *Capital 1* Marx considers payment structures whereby labourers produce work and are paid for said work at a later time. This state of abeyance for the labourer creates the necessity for exchange to work through credit structures. Because there will not be enough circulating cash flow for the labourer, he will purchase on credit to sustain his ability to produce goods for circulation. Of course, the labourer is one of many in various levels of production of goods. So any producer of goods who operates on a credit system is furnishing goods and, as Marx succinctly puts it, “allows the buyer to consume it before he receives payment of the price” (1903, 144).

In an extended footnote (1903, 144 n.3) Marx describes the British bread makers’ custom of providing bread on credit. Because payment of wages is received anywhere from fortnightly to monthly, the “agricultural labourer is obliged to buy on credit” (1903, 144 n.3). This credit system produces higher prices for the goods, so that when payment is received the producer of the goods can sustain the system. In this way the subject utilising credit “is in fact tied to the shop which gives him credit” (1903, 144 n.3).

This knot is, of course, more complex than Marx’s declaration makes apparent. As he goes on to discuss on the macro level, labour-power itself is “at one and the same time the production of commodities and of surplus-value. The consumption of labour-power is completed, as in the case of every other commodity, outside the

limits of the market or of the sphere of circulation” (1903, 145). For Marx, as he describes quickly in the *Grundrisse*, the state economic balance sheet of debt and credit is meant to equal itself out. Marx did not foresee the crushing reality of the credit system in its monetary function as much as he was able to discern the bodily techniques whereby labour and value began to fall into a debt crisis.

Marx doesn't discuss credit extensively in either the *Grundrisse* or in *Capital*, nor does he discuss debt explicitly. However, in a passage very famous for art and performance scholars, Marx does remark on a certain debt of aesthetics, whereby the feeling of art transgresses the material conditions of its production and shines ever fully in future settings, often outside its sociological constructions. John Elster notes in his *Karl Marx: A Reader* that the introduction to the *Grundrisse* offers Marx's most cogent remarks on art.¹¹¹ As Marx primes his reader for what will be an extensive consideration of “production” (1903, 45-48), he moves from considerations of war and historiography to art. In these first early writings of the *Grundrisse*, Marx is setting up the ways in which he will attempt to make material the social conditions of production inherent in capital's investment in value and the exchange of objects (including, and especially bodies).

Production influences and is influenced by modes of consumption, distribution and exchange (1903, 36-7). Artistic production would seem to work differently, in an “unequal development of material production” (1903, 46). Goods and services once required for a people to work and live shift with the conditions of their industrial and economic reality. However, artistic production and its objects (as well as the time

¹¹¹ Elster calls this Marx's *dicta* on the topics (1986/2006, 3).

and space in which artistic production is made by its labourers, and thus their labour-value) seem to outlive their potential contemporary use-value, they transgress the historical materialism that Marx's theory of economy seeks to de-naturalise via what he calls a "scientific method." In these last introductory notes, Marx seeks to explain away the problematic of art's exception to the materialist progression of historical production.

Marx makes a series of comparisons, across time, to achieve his re-working of the tenuousness of the art object in capital:

What is Vulcan compared with Roberts and Co., Jupiter compared with the lightening conductor, and Hermes compared with the Crédit Mobilier?...is Achilles possible when powder and shot have been invented?... Does not the press bar inevitably spell the ending of singing and reciting and the muses, that is, do not the conditions necessary for epic poetry disappear? (1903, 47)

Marx makes these comparisons to awaken us to an understanding of how a culture comes to create work of artistic expression that can be consumed within, and thus for, its culture. As he argues, artistic production "presupposes *a* mythology" that is culturally situated (e.g. "Egyptian mythology could never become the basis or material womb of Greek art" (1903, 47)). Yet, "the difficulty is that [these art works] still give us aesthetic pleasure and are in certain respects regarded as a standard and unattainable model" (1903, 47).

That these works, despite their connection to a certain situated cultural mythos, retain allure in the present confounds the dynamic of capital. Like his Egyptian example noted above, Marx moves to a violent essentialism and infantilism of culture to open the door to an explanation of art's mobility within capital, outside

and yet underpinning much of the same cycles of production. Rhetorically, Marx asks “Does not the specific character of every epoch come to life again in its natural veracity in the child’s nature?” (1903, 48) Marx names the pre-classic, classical, and early modern works of art that continue to inspire and sustain appreciation as childlike. The charm of these works resides, for Marx, in the “immature” stage of their creation in societal progression; that we can never revert to this ludic state of creation confirms their ability to transcend time.

The maturation narrative Marx has set up essentialises an “other” culture, situated in history as that which has been built upon, has grown up and away from these things. The wonders of the modern world cannot fully outshine these relics because they remind us, at least for Marx, of a time before, which he regards as simpler, easier, less than the contemporary. This harsh reductionism is a function of the scientific method Marx is sketching here in the *Grundrisse*. We must remind ourselves that these are working notes; a draft of a larger work that will undergo tumultuous changes. Yet this infantilisation of the past and cultural reductionism (Marx speaks of “unbred” and “precocious” children that these “ancient peoples belong to” (1903, 48)) hints at a much more fecund theoretical proposition, that of a cultural inheritance; in Marx’s language, couldn’t we understand these objects which sit contra to capital’s system as existing in a state of debt? How are we indebted to this work, then, in his awkward teleological construction? Further what does the fall into immaturity signal for us? Could this fall, as Diana Fuss has argued with regards to psychoanalytic discourse, into a space/time of “pre” also “contain a spectre of a ‘re’” (1995, 64)?

For Derrida, inheritance is always violent (*Spectres of Marx*). We might, following a strain of Derrida's argument in *Spectres of Marx*, consider the indebtedness of our critical scholarship to a "certain Marxism" or a "certain Marx." And thus his production of an episteme of the economic forces at work in and through the body (cultural and singular) violently disassembles and, lucidly (in his terms) continues to ignite artistic and scholarly creation. I'm most interested in the way in which Marx's comparisons might be re-written in reverse, might those questions heard backwards also insight/incite some sort of social science? What is powder and shot without Achilles? What is the lightening conductor without Jupiter? Or from Derrida, what is Marx(ism) without Hamlet?

REPLIES

A telegram falls from above. It lands outside of a spot-light on the floor – where it should have landed. Taylor slides the telegram into the light with his foot, giggles, and bends to retrieve it. Holding it to his head he "reads" the note. It's his mother. She's found letters of his father's. She's sending them. Taylor, who has been writing his father for years, waits to receive the bounty. A rucksack falls from above. A cascade of letters also falls; Taylor smiles. The sounds of a carousel begin again. Taylor rushes around the wings of the stage and pulls out piles of boxes, bags and suitcases full of letters. He pours many on the floor in front of the ladder.

After filling the entire stage with letters, the music pauses, and Taylor picks up a letter. Holding it to his head he magically reads "2nd Lt. Robert Mac Boyer;" he pauses. "Second? I was told he was a first!" He grabs another letter, holds it to his head, and then another then another repeating this first lines: I'm writing you, I'm

writing to you, I'm responding to your ad. Not letters from his father, but letters to his father.

In the lobby before the show the audience is asked to respond to the original ad Taylor's father placed. Paper, envelopes and a collection box are available to create contemporary responses to a man now gone, prior to the show wherein we will catch a glimpse of who he was. These letters are later used to litter the stage. As the show progressed through various venues the entire stage would be filled turning the stage into inside of a vast mail bag, with Taylor the sole figure swimming, like some gorgeous Beckettian character, amongst the letters.

The staging of newer and ever more letters, opened or unopened, not only offers a queerness to the collection but also highlights the shift from reconstituting the lost body of Robert to actually forming a picture of who Taylor is. While the play is, as Taylor has noted in interviews (Feldman, 2007), a "daddy play," the relationship is always spectral – there can be no simple dialogue with the ghosted father. He has been writing to him for years, there has been no reply. Thus, this final letter – a singing telegram. Instead the inquiring body must speak to the remains that have come back, in this case the letters, old and new. The act of acquiring new letters, again, performs the inaccessibility of the collection *as corpus* because it is in pieces and never the simply the voice of the now lost object. In fact others' voices dominate and their responses yield momentary highlights of a young Robert searching for a dance in the South Pacific.

At one point Taylor recounts a letter *he* wrote to this father:

Are you messy like me? Did you want to have children? Have you fallen in love? Why did you like the sea? . . . Would you be proud of me? Would you like my job? Would you even be someone worth wanting?

These are questions to a ghost. Speak to it. This is research – grasping into the ether for no-Thing which resides nowhere, despite the paper trail. In his final question Taylor exposes a plurality of the memorialisation that any archive might offer the inquiring body. The haunted Father returns. Taylor speaks to it, nay sings to it; sings with and from these archival remains, to set right a relationship that could never have been but exists, within systems of cultural intelligibility. He is his father's son; or is he? What has been inherited?

(RE-)ENTER THE GHOST

Derrida makes much of the entrance of the ghost in *Spectres* as it sets into play the play of inheritance and the violent associations which he will tease out of Hamlet's relationship to the state (his state of affairs, his estate and the state of his own ontology). Yet the entrance of the ghost (seemingly Hamlet's father) is, for Derrida, not a singular arrival but an auspicious return. He gives the term "revenant" to the haunting figure – that which comes back, again. For Derrida, the arrival of a ghost (already a return of the once living) always signals to the occasion of the next si(gh)ting of the ghost. It will return again, though perhaps differently. I inscribe the visuality (sight) of such a haunting within the space (site) of its occurrence because the location and experience of seeing there are tied. This is true for Derrida's argument as well as Avery Gordon's relationship to haunting. Further, I regard this inscribed action as something like what takes place within the haunted space of the

archive or in the archival site of performative gestures which open up a possibility for some form of sociality to be enacted. Any si(gh)ting of the ghost, at least in the case of Hamlet's interaction with a ghost, raises problems of identification. Is it his father's ghost? The ghosts' presence, seen but yet to be heard, cannot be easily identified as *a* body. It is not, of course, a body at all, in that it is a spectre (immaterial remains, perhaps, but not a body and certainly not just anybody). As well, it arrives shrouded in armour. The body which is not a body comes so well-armoured that one cannot perceive which body has come. So the armoured non-body returns (again) setting a relationship to time "out of joint."

The no-bodied spectre wears a helmet. Upon this helmet is a visor. It may be up, it may be down (Horatio will remark – a doubled inscription – that the visor was up) but what is important, at least to Derrida is the effect of this visor. This visor effect allows the spectre to see out but not necessarily be seen. This becomes, without being voiced again, the basis for the entire project of *Spectres* as a means of distinguishing what is spectral from what is spiritual. This effect of seeing without being seen is, in Derrida's argumentation, the force of Law:

To feel ourselves seen by a look which will always be impossible to cross, that is the *visor effect* on the basis of which we inherit from the law. Since we do not see the one who sees us, and who makes the law, who delivers the injunction. (1993, 7)

And it is this ghost (that ghost?) this (that) "tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of *someone* as *someone* other" (1993, 6, emphasis in

original) that comes back to injure¹¹² the audience (not just Hamlet) to set time right, to make *just* that which has gone awry.

Derrida stresses the *one* in someone to indicate the unnerving presence of the unknown returned. There is more than one *and* something other than one which returns when a haunting is recalled. “Would there be more than one of them?” (1993, 2), asks Derrida, in regards to the spirit of Marxism. And as he will attempt to show, there have to be more than one and something other than a singularity that is regarded as the corpus of Marx, as well as the haunting of Hamlet. This potential is marked by a slippage in translation. Peggy Kamuf details this slippage in her “The Ghosts of Critique and Deconstruction” (1998). She explains:

In French, there is an expression that says at the same time more than one and other than one: *plus d’un*. Depending on whether or not one pronounces the “s”: “plus/plus,” the expression shifts its register from that of counting by ones to that of counting without number one, or of taking account of the other than one. In French, then, it is possible to say all that at once, or rather to write it, because this pluralisation of the same time has its effect only if the voice itself is muted so as to suspend the final “s” of “plus/plus” between its two possibilities. (1998, 1)

From this translative pluralisation comes the possibility of deconstruction as one of the best means to further the spirit, if not the spectre, of Marx(ism). It is the scholar who is called on to speak to the ghost, the scholar who will have to identify the remains. Kamuf recasts the Act 1., sc. ii of *Hamlet* with Derrida playing both director (analyst) and actor (analysand). This move by Kamuf, reminiscent of psychoanalytic dream interpretation, opens up another important relationship that Tom Lewis

¹¹² Derrida makes use of the verb “injure” which I also deploy here. The verb connotes an injury done to another. Derrida invokes this use of the verb to indicate the violence of inheritance that the return of the spectre heralds.

argues in his response to *Spectres* (1999, 134-167): namely Derrida's stake in criticism. At the *Whither Marxism?: Global Crisis in International Perspective* conference where Derrida gave the paper that would become *Spectres*, he offers not simply his (and thus deconstruction's) most detailed analysis of the role of Marxism, Marxist critique and of Marx, but also situates deconstruction as the best tool for taking this multiple bodied Marx into the future. Like Lewis, I read *Spectres*, and (importantly) *Archive Fever*, as moves to claim a critical inheritance and move what has been inherited forward in the name of the father as the father/son. As Ann Pellegrini puts this retroactive process: "son fathers parent(s); pre- is heir to post-" (1997,69). The primary identification with Marx(ism) becomes, in these works, a realisation of deconstruction (and identification with Derrida) as the critical hinge point.

Derrida may be making a move here as a becoming-father within a critical juncture. Where Marx(ism) and Psychoanalysis (Freud) may have failed, or where their progeny may have failed, deconstruction comes along to pick up a new critical mantle. I could cast this retroaction as simply psychoanalytic, as with my gesture above via Pellegrini. Derrida's desire may well be to retroactively (through deconstructive analysis) take on the place of the Father. (Spivak calls *Spectres* "a how-to-mourn-your-father book" (1995, 66)). What is interestingly queer, then, is that his primary identification would seem to be split (at least in these two works that I am addressing) between more than one father. The proper name, the paternal sign, promises meaning. One father begets a son who bears his name. This is the

linguistic function of Pelligrini's construction, paternal inheritance through the sign of a proper name. As Shoshana Felman argues:

the promise of paternal meaning, the promise of the act of begetting itself, is that of a relation of consistency and of resemblance of son to father, of sign to its referent. The paternal promise is, in other words, a promise of metaphor: of metaphor as a basis for the principle of identity, that is, as promise of a *proper* meaning and a *proper name*. (1980, 24)

Too many men join the scene, and desire is not so singly paternalised as the Oedipal complex would require.

“ONLY IF VOICE ITSELF IS MUTED” : AGAINST ORIGINS

Only if voice itself is muted can the effect of pluralisation be felt, Kamuf theorises.

Derrida, she explains, makes much of this effect on his reader, to the great terror of his translators. In the scene of translation the female body of Kamuf is the one who must speak to the silenced spectre of Derrida (whose words mark the page) and speak them to us, unsounded, in her translation we English readers finally get to see the figure who is missing in both *Spectres* and *Archive Fever* – the (m)Other. To read Kamuf as the mother is a sloppy analytic move, I know. But I urge my reader to stick with me.

Let us first say that Kamuf and Derrida produce a body through their literary union.

That Derrida is the “father” of deconstruction is well and good. Both book projects that I attend to here seek to show just what a good Oedipal subject Derrida is –

desiring and becoming the Father in place of that which came before.¹¹³ If Derrida is

the Father, there must be a Mother, or the legacy of deconstruction cannot be fully

¹¹³ I hear “The King is dead. Long live Derrida,” not exactly the surrogation that Joseph Roach describes (Roach, 1996, 38-41). In the original, the new King replaces the old King, but under the same sign. Derrida shifts the address, but through a surrogative move.

enacted, at least in the repo-time that Derrida is inheriting. Kamuf's translation enacts a type of reproduction – reproducing the text across language – the body of deconstruction has been received in the union of these two acts of production. But only one voice is given to the muted plurality of voices there on the page – that of the Father. The Other, the m(Other) voice is left muted – save for footnotes perhaps, and even then do we *hear* Kamuf?

When we do hear Kamuf, in her own words, we begin to see the project of deconstruction and the haunting spectral (multiple) fathers (or we might begin to say bodies) that it is heir to, not as pinpointing origins but displacing the facticity of any origin. Marx and Freud become totemic for projects far beyond them, and as such covertly displace a huge array of genealogical narratives of those other bodies whose contributions before and after will have shaped the theoretical paradigms.¹¹⁴ According to Foucault, genealogy “must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality” and as such it “opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’” (1971, 139-140).

If we say that Derrida is playing his deconstructive hand at genealogy, then he is certainly making an archival intervention. He produces a new archive from the material present. And he does so as a scholar. Derrida plays another role, then, in his version of Hamlet, (Kamuf notes in this philosophical dream, Derrida plays every role) that of Horatio, the scholar. This has everything to do with ownership. Derrida

¹¹⁴ Avery Gordon's second chapter in *Ghostly Matters* (1997) is all about a missing body – that of a female, Sabina Spielrein – whose assistance in certain strains of psychoanalytic thought are covered over and/or left out. Gordon traces the haunted space left behind by her absence in a place she should have been, both literally and metaphorically in relation to psychoanalytic history. This is not an origin story, but a ghost story; sexual and genealogical and in-debted.

seeks to lay claim to a critical inheritance in *Spectres* from Marx and *Archive Fever* from Freud. He notes in the Exordium to *Spectres* that being with ghosts is to learn “to live otherwise, and better” (1993, xviii). “Better” is replaced with “justly,” a violent substitution. Being with ghosts requires a “politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations” (1993, xviii), because the spectral moment is “not docile to time” (xix). Yet in the (translative non-)singularity of his voice, Derrida attempts to speak *for* the ghost and not exactly to it. He fails, as Horatio, in enjoining the ghost to *do* something, upon command. Ghosts are not subjects, exactly (The King, Derrida suggest, returns as no-body so perhaps is better a Thing) but have a lot to show us about propriety.

Derrida is correct, I think, in noting that spectral moments – like those in the archive or the site of performance – are not docile to time. Repo-time (clearly genealogically related to Hegelian time) attempts to make bodies docile through a biological essentialism. And that’s why my Derrida/Kamuf parental unit is not exactly a fit union to analyse. However the queer relation of production and reproduction, of Derrida returning and thus appearing in another voice (language) via the unsounded multiple voice of his translator, Kamuf, affords us a sense of the authorial spectre and how a commerce of ideas is being exchanged here. Derrida wants to inherit the critical space of Marxism and psychoanalysis and does so through the ephemeral notions of ghosts and fevers – non-bodied sensations which pass over us, destabilise us and require us to make moves. I wonder if in mining the performance of Derrida as too many characters in play, we can start to feel some of the use-value of his desired inheritance. There in the site of performance he *does* something instead of

blindly commanding no-body to do *for* him; failing like so many to set right the way he wants to right/write his own history.

HAUNTOLOGIES

If haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is taking place. The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as transformative recognition. (Gordon 1997, 8)

Avery Gordon's 1997 *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, from which the long quote above is taken, asks us to think critically about what we understand knowledge to be. "Life is complicated" (1997, 3) she offers and we need to mine how the complicated interrelations of the bodies before us, behind us and perhaps not all the way here or there, affect us and have an effect on us. She charts three characteristic features of haunting. First the ghost makes strange the nature of the space in which it haunts, specifically with regard to systems of ownership. This ownership might be bodily or epistemological – the ghost destabilises any notion of what has been attested to materially. Second the ghost is "primarily a symptom of what is missing" (1997, 63) that signals a future possibility. A life or a thing is gone, and the ghost represents this loss by giving notice to itself. Finally, the ghost is "alive, so to speak" (1997, 64). In this way, the ghost, as with Derrida, has a specific

ontology which requires intervention on the haunted beings to make just something that has gone awry. Making just, or making adjustments, needn't be as grandiose as setting Denmark right, but recognising the losses made along the path to a future for those bodies haunted.

Gordon agrees with Derrida's hauntology only in so far as ghostly matters require of those who have felt it to make right what was wrong – to make space for a future littered with the past's omissions as well as inclusions. When the spectre arrives, and a haunting has taken place, what does one do? Gordon suggests, via Benjamin, that the ghost offers "itself as a sign to the thinker that there is a *chance in the fight for the oppressed past*" (1997, 65, emphasis in original). The King (Thing) is dead; now what? For Gordon the figure of the thinker is the sociologist presented with the seemingly immaterial (ephemeral) evidence of a ghost. This is bad for the sociologist, whose human science is already wrought with the fear of fictions.¹¹⁵ As she notes, sociology "must continually police and expel its margin – the margin of error – which is the fictive" (1997, 26). And this is where haunting can take us (and sociology) forward – by setting right, in writing, through an apprehension and reformation of what might be changed. Writing to set right, we conjure the haunted spaces, the real of what was there and the unreal of what we desired – of what was felt, if not what happened.

¹¹⁵ This is why psychoanalysis is shunted from Sociology and Marxism (and Marx himself) was not. Marx is considered a sociologist because of his empirical research into the social workings of man in and through (bodily) economy. The playground of psychoanalysis, the unconscious, is far too fictive for the discipline to grasp. Symbolic interactionism, a methodology founded much later than the earlier functionalist who respond to Marx, will have found a lot of grounding in the linguistic and somatic interventions of psychoanalysis but will never have declared that inheritance as disciplinary debt.

In both instances of haunting I've engaged with so far, Gordon's and Derrida's, the figure of the ghost must be met with an inquiring body – a scholar – who will speak to it and thus speak *for* it. And this is the true terror of the archive, for it is the inquiring body who will speak *for* the remains, in place of the entity which has passed. To be haunted, in the archive, is to have felt and be moved to set right – to write – the future of what may have occurred. We write fictions from “facts”, which come to us as half-truths, hearsay, material fragments and memories traced. Imperatively, the haunted figure in the archive, the inquiring body, may very well be searching out certain kinds of bodies or acts – especially when it comes to queer bodies and queer histories. The scholar has to be mindful, if not transparent, about the ethics of its setting right/write of those that have moved us there in the haunted spaces.¹¹⁶ Put another way, the inquiring body must be mindful that the archives are “not sites of knowledge retrieval but of knowledge production” (Stoler in Román, 2005, 138).

Haunting, as both Gordon and Derrida put forward, is as much an ontological possibility as it is an epistemology. Such a relation to the past and to an injunction to set right, to clear debts, is, following Moten and Harney's argument, queer. Haunting then proposes a relation to queerness in and through its relation to both the onto- and epistemo-logical relation to the social. This relation has been put most clearly by José Muñoz:

¹¹⁶ My thinking on the ethics of reanimation, reclamation and reproduction from the archive is indebted to the moving work of Heather Love's *Feeling Backwards* (2004) where subjects from the past, who could have never affirmed a queer position are given purchase in the present for queer work. Love is careful to negotiate the specific modes of production of the bodies she animates to consider the productive work of anti-social queer theory.

The double ontology of ghosts and ghostliness, the manner in which ghosts exist inside and out and traverse categorical distinctions seems especially useful for a queer criticism that attempts to understand communal mourning, group psychologies, and the need for a politics that 'carries' our dead with us into battles for the present and the future. (1996b, 369)

Questioning what is right about what is written is of course an open question, a postmodern spectre which haunts any academic project but even more so those that attend to the archive and to the lives of queer individuals. That scholars (but not just scholars, perhaps, as we've seen, though they are often called on to attempt such a feat) must speak to the dead, speak of the dead, and speak for the dead, isn't necessarily queer in and of itself, but it requires a sensitivity to the social that is contra to hegemonic structures of history, of fact, of evidence. "To see these ghosts we must certainly read the 'specific dealings, specific rhythms' that bring to life a lost experience, a temporally situated picture of social experience, that needs to be read in photo images, gaps, auras, residues and negations" (Muñoz, 1996b, 367).

The mural of Eichelberger and Robert's letters are not, exactly, a body, returned. The inherent materiality of this figure seems to displace its hauntological capacity.

However, if we turn to Richard Halpern's critique of Derrida here, we might find that the material remains (the archival, perhaps) can, and may, be in a more "purely impure" spirit of Marx (Halpern 2001, 39). Combining Halpern's materialist hauntological intervention with Gordon's haunting in the archive, we may begin to see, finally, the modes through which the haunted injunction to set right, maybe differ for and defer us from archival objects found and collected.

Halpern critiques the "way that Derrida interrogates Marxism at the hands of deconstruction without really bothering to interrogate deconstructions

at the hands of Marxism” (2001, 45). Halpern wants to require Derrida to attend to the history of socialism, and thus Marx’s Marxism, more adeptly. Yorick’s skull and not the King’s ghost becomes the spectral matter on which this critique hinges. The skull “is the rotting or putrescence of that part of the body – bone – which otherwise seems incorruptible or permanent” (2001, 46). The matter of bones, in fact the materiality of the bone, has already come into question within my project in relation to Rebecca Schneider’s usage of it in “Performance Remains” (2001) as a way to consider the ideology of the archive. Halpern’s bone, the skull, acts as an inversion of the armoured ghost as analysed by Derrida. Having escaped its resting place, the skull returns to act as a near-father (Yorick, Halpern notes, was a “supplementary father to the child Hamlet” (2001, 45)). Like spectres, skulls (especially for Hamlet) drive time out of joint – they are material signifiers of a disembodied past which reveal the future state of every-body. Halpern notes the importance, especially for Hamlet, of the classed relations of the skulls that are in place within the play, Hamlet’s and the Gravediggers’. Hamlet is affected by their brute sorting of and casting out of the “spiritual” matter. The Gravediggers labour at their task without such philosophical horrors. This affectation shifts from spiritual horror, in Hamlet, to physical revolt when another spectral inversion takes place. The wafting odour of decay hits his nose and he also thrusts away this matter at hand.

This classed relation, as Halpern argues, should be read in a spirit of Marx. As well, however, I would add that it should be read via a Foucauldian inheritance of Marx, one made explicit by Joseph Roach in his use of Foucauldian counter-memory. Roach argues that performance, especially social performances – the kind at work in the

class relations evidenced by the Gravediggers and Hamlet – operate under the definition of the verb in the sense of bringing forth, making manifest and transmission (Roach, 1996, xi). Roach’s construction of genealogies of performance, then, “attend to ‘counter-memories,’ or the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publically enacted by the *bodies that bear its consequences*” (1996, 25, emphasis mine). The spectro-politics of these bodies bringing forth Things have consequences. The weight of these consequences may vary depending on the inquiring bodies’ position (class, gendered, racial, etc.). The bodies’ performance is what I am most interested in – the repertoire of techniques which shape the relation to the Thing, which may or may not haunt them. There are “specific dealings, specific rhythms” which shift the way the body attends to, or apprehends, the Things which come into our quotidian experience.

Roach considers the way in which performance genealogies

Draw on the idea of expressive movements as mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies, residual movements retained implicitly in images or words (or in the silences between them)... a psychic rehearsal for physical actions drawn from a repertoire that culture provides. (1996, 26)

Bodies may not know the Thing which haunts them. As we’ve seen it’s never simply *one* Thing that returns to shift the time out of joint. (And perhaps something may return and set things right. I wonder if we have to search for rupture or if we might be sometimes very happy with the pure joy of discovery, of many Things, of a taxonomy upon which we stumble – a discovery, but one which settles).¹¹⁷ It is through a combination of the embodied mnemonic reserve that Roach discusses,

¹¹⁷ I have discussed this in Chapter One.

operating so differently in the scene Halpern deconstructs, and that of Gordon's hauntology that I argue Bond approaches Ethyl's haunting presence and how Taylor may approach Robert.

HE IS SHE

Taylor asks in his letter: Would you even be someone worth wanting? He speaks to the ghost. He, like Horatio, addresses the Thing, the multi-voiced archival collection, that gives him clues to who his father was, and what his relationship to him may be. Taylor's letter acts as a soliloquy, of sorts. Unlike Hamlet's ontology monologue, Taylor's haunted inquiry asks the ghost to set right some of what has been laid to rest, and returned. His letter is juxtaposed in the play with another soliloquy, this time in the form of Robert's favourite musical, Rogers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*. Billy Bigelow's epic operatic solo "Soliloquy" becomes the hinge point through which Taylor attempts to dramatise his relationship to his father, a highly gendered and fantastic drama at that. "Soliloquy." Bigelow's big number sees him dreaming of his future child and the father he will be to him. In this projected fantasy, the child is male and Bigelow imagines that he will make a man out of his-boy-Bill, and won't let his "mother make a sissy out of him."

Half way through the song Bill pauses:

Wait a minute!
Could it be?
What the hell!
What if he is a girl?

Bill's fantasy abruptly turns on this queer assumption of gender. Suddenly the song does not imagine simply the future of the child as a better-Subject-Bill, but how

Bigelow himself will need to change to support and care for his beautiful daughter. The gender politics are, of course, steeped in patriarchy, yet the interrogative “what if he *is* a she” produces an interesting inversion of the Oedipal complex and its assumption of gender. Psychoanalysis casts the pre-Oedipal stage (the immature and precocious moment, before the Law of the Father is instituted, and thus history inaugurated in the Subject) as the narcissistic and, indeed, feminine period. Son may be the heir apparent in the promise of the proper Oedipal outcome but Oedipality hinges on a feminine sexuality that has nothing whatsoever to do with biological gender. The primary narcissism of pre-Oedipality is the realm of the female – all children must pass through the female stage before adjusting (setting right) their Oedipal desires.

Bigelow assumes that, if he can appropriate the proper capital then she-Bill will grow to be a proper young lady and desire him above all else.

She has a few
Pink and white young fellers of two or three
But my little girl
Gets hungry ev'ry night and she comes home to me!

Her inheritance, instead of being focused on techniques of the body and a name which signifies her ties to patriarchy (of course, *she* remains unnamed, marked only by the pronoun, a substitution) requires actual capital, this case in the form of fiat. His future daughter’s “hunger” for him is a function of the capital he will need to learn to earn. His desire for a future, figured by that of a male child, shifts to a desire *for* desire. But what of their desire?

The daughter that is born to Bigelow, Louise, becomes an outcast – desiring to run away to become (gasp) an actress. Patriarchy be damned, she desires performance. When her father returns, as a ghost, to offer his help (to make amends for dying in attempting to steal her monetary support), she rebuffs him. He slaps her (it felt like a kiss; cue *The Motels*). This spectral act sets in motion a type of socialisation that is still contra to the norm; Bill’s return does not set things “right,” it only instantiates a possibility for something *other* to occur.

At her graduation the town physician Dr. Sheldon makes a speech telling the students not to rest on their parents’ successes or failures (queerly freeing them from repo-time and its filial weight). Louise finds her outcast status melts way in the finale, as she makes friends with another girl. Bigelow’s ascension into heaven at this point is directly connected to “setting right” the course of his daughter’s future. Her future is found in the (social) comfort of another woman. While I am not reading Louise as essentially “gay” I am interested in the asociality that Louise is marked for and the way in which her desire does not rest, finally, on a male body to set the scene “right.”

MAKE A SISSY OUT OF HIM

Louise’s queer form of sociality enacts not a refusal, exactly, of an inheritance (slapped in her face) to live a life in and for the father. She does not succumb to the injunction to be the body that was imagined for her. The transaction of debt here, like for Bond earlier, is not repayment of past deeds wrought in a life not lived by the one in the present, but the gift of another form of living in the present. In *Young*

Ladies Of a similar form of refusal takes place; a debt that could never be enjoined is conjured from the archival remains and forces Taylor, as inquiring body, to access the viability of finding resolution in the debts left unpaid between father and son.

All of the men in Taylor's family bear the middle name Mac. As Taylor describes, the naming isn't the only performative gesture¹¹⁸ through which the boys of the family are entered into the homosocial kinship structure of Mac masculinity. The Mac men have a unique two-part tradition within their family. Taylor pulls down a screen centre stage then moves to sing a song: "My Family of Texan Soldiers." The screen shows images of various Mac men while Taylor sings, describing these rituals of masculinisation.

First part: "When a new baby boy is born, fulfilling their namesake, they dress the boy up in girly dresses" he speak-sings. Photos are staged to be pulled out later in life, to mock, to chide and as Taylor sings "to feminize." In an aside, Taylor notes: "I have taken this one step further," gesturing to his costume. He adds: "Well actually, even though every single boy has been dressed up in drag as a baby, I cannot find a photo of myself." While there is no baby-drag record of Taylor, there is record of the second step. Each year the boy child is given gifts deemed inappropriate for a boy. Upon opening the gifts the boy is meant to recoil, cry and, in the words of Taylor "become a professional mourner" at the loss of his gender appropriate gifts.

¹¹⁸ Such a naming resolves itself as performative in that the naming, pronounced by one of the Mac kin, effectively sutures the child to the family through the act of naming. This is akin to Judith Butler's extension of performativity from J.L. Austin when she describes the force of the naming of the sex of a child before or at birth. Such a naming instantiates a whole set of scripts by which that child will be expected to mature – to, as Taylor says in the show, "fulfil" (Mac 2008) the force of the iteration (Butler, 1990).

This response is met by the grown men with laughter: “Jeering fathers, knee slapping codgers, you’re baptized in laughter from being feminized,” sings Taylor, in the chorus of the song. The record of Taylor’s feminising “girl-gift” on his fourth birthday – a huge pink stuffed dog – was received by Taylor with hugs, squeals and dancing. The rifle, pulled out after the joke gift, is left to the side in the image of Taylor proudly hugging his fluffy pink toy. At this point in the show Taylor begins to juxtapose images from his father’s collection of images – family and wartime photos – with images from Taylor’s life. Images of his father in fatigues flick by between images of Taylor in army-themed bikini and monstrous drag makeup parading against the Bush administration in Manhattan. A family photo of the Mac boys (his uncles, father and grandfather) pop up, followed by images of Taylor with his family – gender queers, burlesque starlets and go-go boys.¹¹⁹

Taylor produces his archival collection next to and between his father’s not to gesture to some sort of essential quality of Taylor’s queerness. That he was not paraded around in boy-drag and that the feminising present misfired is not to say

¹¹⁹ Mac performs for us a blinding spectacle. This blinding figuratively and literally realises what Diana Fuss has articulated of the psychoanalytic “essential inessentiality” of homosexuality in subject formation. She locates in the blind-spot of Oedipality’s construction of itself, only as retroactively (always already) pre-oedipally homosexual, a glaring excessive presence of homosexuality. The presence blinds us to the atemporal construction of the subject (we only properly form as subjects due to a retroactive process of sexual cathexes onto the (always straight and partnered parent) and, in her argument explicitly, female homosexuality (Fuss 1995, 61).

To play dangerously with the inversion metaphor here, the Mac family men enacting a “de-masculinizing” of the son, the Oedipal heir, through an exercise in child drag, proffers up the spectre of homosexuality while at the same time performing a pre-oedipal fantasy in reverse. The men protect their son’s sexuality by masquerading their “boy” as a “girl” and allowing for a transference of sexual identifications which take the form of a parodic joke. This joke, like all jokes in the triangulation of the psychoanalytic realm, is always about the female, yet relies on the (near) presence of another male. Ann Pellegrini cogently argues this point via Freud’s *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) in her “(Laughter),” (2001). *Psychoanalysis and Performance*, ed. Adrian Kear and Patrick Campbell, London: Routledge, 179-93. In this case, the joke is on the child, and only functions through the (assumed) “normative” object choice of the young boy to rehearse its preoedipal fantasies there with his “father(s)” at the expense of his own inverted (now costumed, or potentially extroverted (and ideally expunged)) feminine sexuality.

that Taylor's "inherent" queerness thwarted such rituals' activity or efficacy. Instead, the intermingled collection seeks to speak to the ghost of his father, and the man that Taylor maybe wouldn't have ever really wanted to be. The letters *to* his father, not *from* his father, stage a different modality of the visor effect articulated by Derrida's visor. Taylor meets this seeing ghost who cannot be seen, exactly, clothed in his own armour. And the thick false lashes on his eyes peer upon the disembodied spectre produced by these letters, by memories barely remembered, and by the many stories told but never shared, with a different type of archival drag - an eye-lash effect, perhaps - which may just protect Taylor, as inquiring body, from having to make right anything that has gone before.

Second part: On 24, August 1973 Robert Mac attends the thirteenth birthday of his younger brother Bill. As is customary in the Mac family, when a boy turns thirteen, the men in the family purchase for him a prostitute to usher him into manhood. Bill enters the room with the older woman. Something transpires. Taylor says at first "She tells him what a tremendous job he has done." He pauses. "Assumption. And the young ladies sing – what's the use in wondering?" All the men get a turn with the prostitute. It's customary. Since all the men save Bill have died, what transpired that day in that bedroom is anyone's guess. Perhaps Robert also engaged with this ritual. What is clear is that at the party Robert got a message, his wife went into premature labour with their baby boy: Taylor.

"Perhaps he did fuck her. Or not," says Taylor; "what's the use in wondering?"

This devirginization ritual ¹²⁰restages the masculinity stripped from them through a homosocial heterosexual act, whereby the boy takes on his heteronormative role in sight of (at least in the liminal sense of having passed through the threshold of the bedroom door) other men. That the men often would share the prostitute after only adds to a rather terrifying homosociality which constantly requires the scopic affirmation of the other men to assert their sexed and gendered position within the Social.

Taylor sings that the young Mac men are meant to become professional mourners. They mourn, in this way, for things they will not have yet fully come to understand: a relationship to other men, masculinity, sex, etc. Taylor ends the song by stating that with him this “lineage of masculine dysfunction would end.” Taylor hopes to end a form of traumatic haunting which has plagued his family, one that he, happily, does not mourn having taken part in. Taylor speaks back to the ghost. He refuses the masculinist inheritance which, under the sign of his middle name, he carries: in the name of the Father. Horatio is asked to speak to the ghost to identify it, to make it knowable. Taylor realises perhaps such identifications, and the debts that may be required therein, aren’t worthy of such engagement. “I have to pull myself,” he says, “of this desire to know and to be known.” The desire for identification, the desire to resemble our ancestors, the metaphor of the paternal promise that I noted above via Felman, is a promise unfulfilled. Taylor breaks with this desire, though this is the debt Taylor felt owed: identification there from the haunting machinery of the archival record.

¹²⁰ Whether the boy is already a virgin or not is not of real interest here, or I would assume for the Mac men – the ritual enacts devirginisation as a social process. The performance of devirginisation is more important than the physical reality of said virginity.

Taylor, like Derrida, has had to perform many roles in this play – to channel the ghosts and converse with them. There is still one more role to play.

HINGE POINTS

At the end of the show, a trunk containing a pile of letters is opened. Taylor reaches in and pulls out what appears, at first, to be some letters but what suddenly forms into a headless body in a dress made entirely of letters. This creation, by puppeteer Basil Twist, dances with Taylor. It is a mass of hinged metal joints with letters fastened to it. At this point in the show, Taylor has stripped to just a self-fashioned (he notes) bra-as-jockstrap outfit.

After waltzing with the dis-embodied letter-woman/dress Taylor rips his wig off. The blue light from the beginning of the show returns. He begins to move the hinged components of the letter-woman. He opens the dress of the figure and wraps it around his body. The arms fold over his shoulders, like a halter-top. The letter-woman/dress opens up to become a costume which is worn, like armour, over Taylor's nearly naked body. Suddenly, in a new drag, Taylor is at once the dancing female of his father's dreams, the spectral waltz of these letters across space and time, and the many voices (muted by letters, and years and never-having-been-met) of the *Young Ladies Of* to which the play's title refers. Importantly in the becoming-female of this specific drag, Taylor becomes something more like himself. "... the 'end' of the ghost dance – if once can speak of such a thing – is to make the past a future, as it were – the future anterior, not a future present" (Spivak 1995, 70).

WHAT'S THE USE IN WONDR'IN?

Taylor speaks to his father: "I have created this for you so we could hate each other a little less. So you could have your one day to come back and fix it. To make up for the letters I've written to you." He wants to have set right, through writing this show, through the performance and from the archival objects he received, what could never have happened.

Bad debt "cannot be forgiven, it can only be forgotten and remembered"

(Moten & Harney, 2010, 2). Taylor, like Bond, makes use of the unequal exchange proffered by the haunting inheritance of archival remains. What's the use?

Forgiveness, for the losses and traumas associated with debt, is not an option. But we can choose to forget. Just before Taylor states his reasoning he has led the audience in a chorus of Julie's (Bigelow's battered wife) famous song "What's the use in wondr'in?" We join him in an interrogation of the scene of desire – the desire to know, or not. "I can't let you go when you're gone." Moten and Harney understand that conservation is key to the social, key to the indebtedness that binds us together. We can choose to re-member. The Things that are saved and return to us, return us to forms of inquisition – allowing us to speak for them, to set them right. So we write songs, or plays or essays to re-member the fragments of our losses, in debt or to give credit. Taylor peers up from the pile of letters that he has now become a part of. The same spot light from the beginning of the show returns:

“This is my last letter to you.

Love me

P.S. ...”

[BLACKOUT.]

RE-MEMBERING

A central tenet of this project is that any negotiation with and of the archival is violent. The documents we find in the archive, and those we add to it, are placed there as inheritance – as the remains left for another.¹²¹ As this concluding chapter has sought to argue, the inquiring body in the archive must deal with the bad debt of what has come before: remains inherited, whether there in the archive (as in Chapters One and Two and Three) or there at the site of performance (Chapters Four and Five). Bad debt here spurs the inquiring body to the social; it socializes. (For Derrida this inheritance, in the haunting scene of Shakespeare’s play, moves Hamlet to set time right, and requires of Derrida to set into writing his relation to what has come before – what he has critically inherited). In this relation to the social, the inquiring body operates to change not simply the social’s relation to the archival material – the records haunting the present from the past – but to change themselves.

The end of this project, like Taylor’s (and Spivak’s) ending, is not exactly an end; there is *more* to say, more to *have* said. I have negotiated the practical professionalization of the archive, the arrival of the digital as a future tool (and open

¹²¹ Again, inheritance here, as in Derrida (1993), is understood more generally as any property, quality, or immaterial possession inherited from ancestors or previous generations (OED online, 2012).

question for) the archive (Chapter One). As well, I have argued for the use-value of documents in the archive to produce new materials (Chapter Two) and the erotic dimension of research in the archive (Chapter Three). I addressed the abject material that is hard purchase for archiving, and tracked the genealogy of a strand of the queer scholarly archive itself, theoretically (Chapter Four). And, finally, I attempted to speak to the ghosts who haunt me, and haunt us all as we practice in the wavering present of inquiring demands (Chapter Five). Conservation, Harney and Moten's (2010) term for preserving the social relations from the debts owed, means not *restoring*, but subjectively *assembling* what's before us – that which was behind us. As Taylor learns in *Young Ladies Of*, speaking to ghosts doesn't mean ever materialising that body, it means managing the distance between what has been found, what has been heard and what has been felt. The archive is promising more, other, different. Even gone it cannot be done away with, completely. We begin again, here at the ending.

CONCLUSION: P.S...; OR PRACTISING SCHOLARSHIP

Taylor Mac ends *The Young Ladies Of* with “P.S...” In the blackout that follows we are left suspended between what has been said and what more there is to say.

Foucault defined the Archive as “the general system of the formation and transformation of statements” (1969, 146). (We end with this same beginning.) What is sayable is a relation to the said; the Archive entails a practice of mining the said to say more. Foucault calls the practice archaeology, wherein one does not search for origins but “questions the already-said at the level of its existence” (1969, 148). It is not to historicise, then, but a practice based on opening up what has been said to new forms of saying.

The original title for this dissertation was the last line of Audre Lorde’s poem that I discuss in Chapter Three: “I am come home.” At the outset of this project I was interested in conceiving a notion of a mobile archive as a sort of home for queerness. Performance was always intended to be the analytic through which we might come to address such a location. As I have noted, the verbal construction of “I am come home” continues the story, allows us to say more about this location, this space from which we may speak.

Chapters One, Two and Three all address the archive as a site from which to speak. The site is never fixed. We may speak of our community (as evidenced by the work of Christa Holka and Martha Wilson), of our given histories (Kara Walker and Catherine Opie), and we may speak from our desires (melancholic, or fetishised; as mine with John Sex). Further, the archival operates between the registers of

institutional archives and the ideologies of the Archives. While mining these sites, the figure of the inquiring body came to me. Perhaps it was my body – pulled into and out of the research by demands met in daily life – which realised that the process of carrying these archival bodies somewhere had to take a different shape than the archival project I had imagined. The inquiring body became a central figure and it offered a way to move into and out of archives, showing how the space and the term can mobilize other forms of inquiry.

And yet, this inquiring body does collect archival material in its technique of carrying and presents some of the research *as* an archive. Chapters Four and Five focus on queer acts and consider how to archive queerness. Unlike Chapter Two, which works from the archive to reanimate John Sex, these chapters look at contemporary artists (Justin Bond, Taylor Mac and Mitch & Parry) and inscribe them within the archive formed by my inquiry. As I've noted, the project shifted from one seeking solely to archive, to one which analyses, further, our relation to inquiry. These artists are people who have carried me in various ways, and whom I turn to here to find ways to care for them. These chapters enact a sociality in and through queerness. In effect, I am archiving our lifeworlds (the community inscribed through practising scholarship, through queer performance).

Our lifeworlds, the space we come to inhabit, are haunted. Returning to Avery Gordon's haunted spaces I want to think again about the relationship this project has to knowledge. Gordon says that "being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we

come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as transformative recognition“ (1997, 8).

Knowledge production in this dissertation is not tied to the empirical. “Cold knowledge” or the stress of the factual gives way, as with Gordon’s haunted spaces, to a process of transformative re-cognition. I highlight the “re” to pry open a space where identification is an option, but not a requirement. I have in this project re-purposed certain forms of knowledge that may be re-purposed again by particular users. Through my usage, and in theirs, we can think (cognise) again about the ways in which we construct our lifeworlds; how we care for the world we craft through our various practices.

I have written for a queer audience while trying to open the work to a readership who can find the queer in their everyday. As I noted in the introduction, “Carrying Queerness” is a technique of inquiry which forcefully cares for bodies, across space and time. I am most interested in the affective work of this technique. As Gordon argues above, the queer feeling of difference (hauntedness, trauma, happiness, sickness, desire) draws us into a set of relations which *come* to define the body in its present situation. Like Lorde’s subject we *are come* to a moment, through a structure of affective relation. So then, my technique of inquiry forms out of what Raymond Williams has called a “structure of feeling” (1977). For Williams, a structure of feeling recognises the “thought as felt and the feeling as thought” (1977, 132). This structure assists in “defining a social experience which is still in process” (1977, 132). The scholarship practised in this dissertation is still moving. It has not attempted to fix ideas into empirical modes of classification, necessarily. It seeks to

keep enjoining the inherited wisdom of the scholars and performers that came before it, offering to transform their work through re-cognition.

One form of my contribution to knowledge is the promise to carry on, to provide strategies for inquiry in the archive in ways that are new and that require a care of the work that has passed. This contribution to knowledge is also a limitation imposed on the work. So much scholarship has come before and in forming the structures of the chapters that precede these concluding remarks, much was left out.

I want to discuss a few ways in which I see the future of this project operating. In my discussion of debt in Chapter Five a relation to gift economies arises. The rich work by Marcel Mauss, Jacques Derrida and Lewis Hyde (among others) warrants further critical exploration with relation to debt as I've begun to analyse it here. In my work thus far, I have argued, via Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, for the queerness of debt and its sociality. Justin Bond and Taylor Mac both feel the weight of the debt, yet do not take on such debt in an economy of exchange that requires repayment. Considering the form and function of "gifts," I think, will carry this work forward in new ways.

Work by Harney and Moten, as well as Hyde, on the "the commons" (a current critical space of inquiry) is an important new critical source to mine. Exploring this work, more, is an exciting space to add to the work I've already done in Chapter Five but also in expanding the work on the Archive's future, in Chapter One. Public access to archives through digital means requires new theorisation on how we proceed with transmission of knowledge. Further critical analysis of the roles of copyright, data

protection and intellectual property can add to the work I have done in Chapter One. Brief Magazine, while a useful example of a digital lifeworld where queer ephemera operates *like* an archive, could be analysed along the lines that Toni Sant has begun on Franklin Furnace (2011) and as Philip Auslander (1999) has done with regard to the legal right to performance.

In each of these cases, described in the paragraph above, there is a shift from performance's disappearance to its incessant appearance, in and through remains.

This is akin to Rebecca Schneider's argument in her 2011 *Performing Remains: Art and war in times of theatrical re-enactment*. Schneider argues that performance remains; it is not a project of disappearance, but of negotiating the ephemeral as indelible materiality. I have taken a similar stance to Schneider, in this project.

However, I have not engaged with the ever-forming critical work around re-enactment. Martha Wilson of Franklin Furnace has stated that she feels that re-enactment is not a form of archiving (Sant 2011). I am inclined to agree with Wilson. The debate is a fecund site to add to my research. Thus, further research is required in the field of performance and live art re-enactment to enliven new critical moves from this dissertation project.

Another future critical focus I would like to take is on notions of abjection. In Chapter Four I discuss the queer as abjected. The case study in that chapter focuses on spit. Spit is considered, especially in the West, as abject material. While I proposed not to take an analytic stance in response to the performance by Mitch & Parry, I am interested in exploring the abject as it relates to queer performance practices. As well, I would like to marry some of my earlier work on psychological issues relating

to eating disorders and the performing body with notions of the Archive. My work for my Master's degree explored the relation of body dysmorphia to the female body in dance. Scholar Patrick Anderson's evocative book *So Much Wasted: Hunger, Performance and the Morbidity of Existence* (2010) provides a perfect example of the ways in which my project might grow to include that earlier work. Anderson argues for the performative force of the anorectic male body. How this body remains unarchived is Anderson's spur to engage with modes of the anorectic in culture through performance.

Finally the brilliant work done in trauma studies, which I have identified in my research on the Archive, must be mined further. More research in this field will elaborate points I have made in chapters One, Two and Five where the body is subject to the violent forces of ideology and responds either by creating or intervening in the archive.

There is so much to say about the Archive. So much *is* being said. What I have attempted to do in this project is situate the relation of bodies to institutional archives and the Western mythos of the Archive so that when we critically address "the archive" we have a sense of what that word, that place, that idea, is *doing*. As I have shown, archives are contested sites of power whose investments, curatorial or not, can discipline bodies in various ways. Responding to such power requires a careful regard for the terms being used. A recent example, that I touch on only briefly in Chapter Two, is Judith Halberstam's use of the "silly archives" (2008, 2011). While I appreciate the ludic gesture as a queer mode of address to the archive, I am uncertain that such constructions make critical use of the archive. While queer may

have been a “laughing matter” at its outset, it has found purchase in being a stridently serious analytic tool.¹²² The drive to mobilise the Archive in scholarship requires analytic pressure. This may seem counter to what I have said in the introduction in my urge to “promise rather than prove.” However in engaging with the promise of the archive, I have engaged a scholarship that is critical about such promises. It is in this reflexive gesture that I am able to move with the promise, back to begin again and transform the social through the practice of scholarship.

THIS END PROMISES A BEGINNING

Performance allows us a space to begin again, over and over again. The inquiring body performs scholarship; it seeks to begin again. It does not search for origins, but promises to carry with it the differences it encounters, the differences it enacts in its search. There is so much said. The Archive, as Foucault posited, is unsayable in its totality, but “its presence is unavoidable” (1969, 147). We relate to it – to the immensity of all the things present for us when we make the move to inquiry. All of these things, the archival records, the performances, the theory, was here already, here before we arrived. But there is something at stake now in how it remains depending on how we learn to care for it.¹²³

¹²² As on-going work by Gavin Butt (on the serious) and Paul Clinton (on stupidity) is showing, the drive to the serious or the ludic provides complex problems for sociality, especially in and through queerness. However I am still cautious of the “silly archive” as a construction. Both Butt’s and Clinton’s work is forthcoming.

¹²³ I am forever indebted to Professor Joe Kelleher for negotiating these final words with me.

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