CONTAGIOUS HISTORY:
AFFECT AND IDENTIFICATION IN QUEER PUBLIC HISTORY EXHIBITIONS

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Abstract

For LGBTQ people, history is never simply the past, what has passed, or what is dead and gone. Uncovering neglected LGBTQ pasts has been heralded not only as a project for historians but as an explicitly political endeavour. Histories that document LGBTQ lives and cultures have not traditionally been included in school curricula, collected in government archives, or passed down through family narration. Instead, their development and dissemination have been taken on primarily by LGBTQ individuals and communities themselves. This dissertation examines how community-based LGBTQ archives and public history projects reach out to broad publics. It focuses on the role of affect, feeling, and emotion in fostering interest in and connection to these histories.

This dissertation explores three sites: the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History (Brooklyn, New York), the GLBT History Museum (San Francisco, California), and the site-specific art exhibition, Land|Slide Possible Futures, which was exhibited at the Markham Museum and Heritage Village in 2013 (Markham, Ontario). Research at these sites involved analyzing exhibits in terms of both content and form, interviewing curators and others involved in creating the exhibits, and writing reflective field notes. These three sites speak to a contagious public history that is necessarily critical. This is because contagious public history questions dominant historical narratives, demonstrates the construction of historical narratives and public history exhibitions, and questions traditional forms of expertise. This work highlights three factors that enable this form of public history: the encouragement of amateur historians; the use of objects in relationship-formation; and the creation of affective atmospheres.

As a whole, this dissertation argues that there is much we can learn from community-based LGBTQ archives and public history projects. It insists that considerations of affect and emotion are central, not incidental, to a critical public history project. Though this work focuses primarily on representations of LGBTQ history, its contributions can reach into other areas because affect and emotion are central to all public history, whether or not they are recognized explicitly. History is political, but it is also emotional.

Dedication

For those who made me love history.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all of my interview participants for sharing your stories with me. Thank you too to all those who I did not interview – those who work in the off-hours to bring history to life and those who have burnt out and can no longer do this work.

Thank you to Marc Stein who stuck with me through my MA and most of my PhD, before abandoning me for the slightly warmer climate of San Francisco. I have learned so much from you – about history, academia, and, of course, grammar. I am a much better scholar because of your guidance.

Thank you Allyson Mitchell for being a role model in so many ways. You were one of my first examples of the kind of teacher I am still working to become. I am so grateful for the generative community space you have created in your home for QuAT, our independent reading course, and our group dissertation meetings. I'm sorry about all those dreams I had where you were mean to me… you've never been anything but an incredible supervisor.

Thank you, Karen Stanworth, for your thoughtful questions and comments. I especially enjoyed your funny notes that obviously came from your experience working as curator at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, where I am currently trying to make my mark.

Through my time in graduate school, I have surrounded myself with the most wonderful work companions and brilliant thinkers, without whom I never would have persisted through these years.

In the early days, groups such as the Queer Affect Theory (QuAT) reading group provided me inspiration, confidence, and support. Jen McHugh helped me wade through the piles of graduate school readings when I was just starting out. Brianna Hersey taught me so much about theory and about life. Cait McKinney was a wonderful companion through the post-comps proposal process. Tae Hart provided so much emotional support, guidance, and levity from the perspective of a professor who still remembered vividly the challenges of grad school.

Early writing circles took place around my kitchen table, thanks to my then-roommate Julia Sinclair-Palm. Jules would go on to be one of my most long standing work buddies, giving me reason to leave the house on some of the hardest days. Upon moving to Kingston last year, I needed help avoiding isolation and completing the editing process. Andrea Choi and Robin McDonald really came through for me.

I need to especially thank my final stretch writing group – Daria, Nael, and Nomi. You all pushed me across that finish line when every part of me was too tired to keep running and I was sausaging on the ground. Daria and Nael, you had better believe that I'm going to make sure to pull you two across in the coming months. To stickers, to tomatoes, to trots – the silliest tactics were some of the most effective.

My cats provided more support than anyone could possibly know. They have also cost me many hours of work, but it was worth it. Nini and Hammy's fur has caught many of my tears.

Dolly Mae, the tiniest pup who we lost along the way, didn't much like my feelings but was there for me anyway. I will never forget the day I was so anxious at a dissertation meeting and Dolly hopped up on my lap just when she knew I needed someone to hide behind. She let me hug her for a half hour while I recounted my failings and then left my lap as soon as I finished.

2018 marks fifteen years of friendship with Rebecca Wood and Jessica MacLeod. The only reason I took my very first Women's Studies course because I wanted to hang out with you two. How different an adult I would have been if it hadn't been for the love you have given me in my formative years.

My parents have always been so supportive of the many random projects I have taken up. Thanks, dad, for encouraging my lifelong love of learning and for reminding me that a career isn't everything. Thanks, mum, for consistently turning down the radio in the car to encourage me to be a more confident singer when I was a kid. You've always tried to make me a more confident person through your loving praise and support.

My sister, Nomi, has been with me through it all – except for those first twenty-three months. From our twin blunt bangs to our twin doctorates, I am so lucky to have you with me every step of the way. Thank you for giving me so much of your time, energy, and love, even when you had none left to give.

Lee, we got together in the first year of my doctorate. Our relationship started in utter chaos and was fed by the desire brought by two sexy brains grappling with an ocean of new ideas. During our most pretentious conversations and our most asinine, you have been one of my most important and inspiring interlocutors. We have learned so much about ourselves, each other, and our relationship in the process of completing our doctorates. What an incredible gift to have found someone about whom I have faith that things will only continue to get better over time. Since this dissertation is ultimately about my love of history, I want to quote a piece from our archive:

I want to tell you about how the ordinary with you eases so many of my insecurities. It is in the ordinary that I feel most sure, stable, swoony. It is the ordinary that I desire the most.

(2011)

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Introduction:
Affective Archives

> And she is a good archivist, has a willingness to navigate history, to consider its blank pages. But history is tricky. Jane thinks it is a buffer, a static place that sits obediently between now and then – something she can pass through, the way people walk through the natural history hall or the upper galleries of the Chester Museum. But we know she is wrong, and we feel bad about that. History is shifty; it looks out for itself, moves when you least expect it.
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> - Aislinn Hunter, *The World Before Us*[1]

I have identified as historically inclined for almost as long as I have identified as queer. As is the case for my queerness, if I reach back into my past I can find many early indications of this particular historical orientation. Also like my queer path, my road to history ran through my post-secondary education. After my stereotypical second-year transformation — I declared a Women's Studies major and began to identify as queer — I took a course on the history of sexuality. Some of my fondest (academic) memories from that period of time are spending endless hours in the library amongst the HQ 75-6's. History books and coffee cups piled up in my study carrel over the time I spent in that class and the two subsequent readings courses I created on topics related to the history of sexuality in 20th century North America. I loved reading these stories of people

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[1] Aislinn Hunter, *The World Before Us* (Toronto, ON: Anchor Canada, 2015), 33.

in the past and I longed for the connections that these books forged for me between communities past and present.

At the time, I did not fully appreciate that I was not simply reading transparent stories of people in the past. As in the epigraph to this chapter, "History is shifty; it looks out for itself, moves when you least expect it." By invoking this passage, I want to draw attention to two approaches to history to which my work and I both subscribe. The first is what social and cultural historians have been arguing about since the 1970s, that "history is not purely referential but is rather constructed by historians" and that it "both reflects and creates relations of power."[2] The second is what many historians have acknowledged but what rarely gets sustained analysis in the discipline: that history is created and interpreted in relation to people today, whether they are historians, readers, curators, or visitors, and that these relations are often affective or emotional.

Over the years and degrees that followed my second-year foray into LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer)[3] history, I developed an interest in the larger historiography of sexuality and gender and a fascination with critical archival studies, devouring the work that questioned how histories were researched, written, and concretized. I read historians' debates about identifying LGBTQ people in the past and claims about how "homosexual" identity only came into being in the 19th century. I thought about the problems of finding "evidence" of same-sex sexual desire and/or acts in archival documents. I contemplated the ways that history and archives have been used in colonization and nation-building projects to

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[2] Joan Wallach Scott, "History in Crisis: The Others' Side of the Story," *American Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (June 1989): 681.
[3] I use this acronym both to respect the naming choices of the archives that make up my study sites (many are "Lesbian and Gay" or "LGBT") and to recognize the "queer" nature of many of these archives (some of which are not necessarily "LGBT" archives).

restrict and shape knowledge. I went to museums, considering the ways that movement was directed and information was presented. Still, I longed for those queer people in history even though I had been taught to be cautious about and critical of those impulses.

My critical training has come into conflict with my desire for queer lineages on multiple occasions, including in 2010, when I traveled to Vienna to attend the first (and, I suspect, only) family reunion of relatives of my paternal grandmother. Moving backward four generations, all of the attendees had one relative in common, Theodor Taussig, who had had twelve children. In preparation for the reunion, artefacts and stories from twelve family archives were gathered into one space to create a material representation of a large family scattered across the world by the Holocaust.

A temporary archive space was constructed for the occasion. A long family tree extended across one wall of the room, clearly demarcating the different branches that originated from Theodor's children. My own familial point of origin, Georg, was nestled above my own name. Around the room were collections of objects associated with each of the twelve branches of the family. Instead of feeling particularly drawn to Georg's designated archival area, however, I was more attracted to the small collection of items under the name Helene. Georg's sister Helene's branch of the family tree ended directly below her name and she had no name next to hers. She had been an artist in a time when women were not encouraged to work and had lived with a female "friend" in an art studio for many years. Helene, I suspected, had been queer.

I still have digital images of a small number of old photographs from the reunion stored on my cellular phone. Only a few photographs of Helene remain and I look to them for evidence of her sexuality. Historian Sally Newman explains her own process, during her archival research on author Vernon Lee, of searching for material objects that can come to represent the immaterial

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– in her case, desire between two women.[4] She references the prioritization of certain recognizable traces that can be used in historical research on sexuality with the goal of recovering the lost lesbian in history such as evidence of same-sex sexual contact or romantic language in letters. However, as Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon warn, the search for these types of evidence can harmfully reify certain static and universalizing ideas about sexuality and sexual identities. The sorts of present-day assumptions that are required to identify figures in the past cannot possibly account for the multiplicity of desires and experiences that constitute queer subjectivities in the past or present.[5]

Figure 1 Cellphone pictures of old photographs of Helene Taussig

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[4] Sally Newman, "The Archival Traces of Desire: Vernon Lee's Failed Sexuality and the Interpretation of Letters in Lesbian History," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1 (2005): 53.
[5] Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, "Queering History," *PMLA* 120, no. 5 (2005): 1608–1617.

I look into a photograph of Helene for evidence. I search Helene's face for some indication of queerness. I cannot believe that anyone would think, as many of my extended family members do, that she was not, in some way, queer. But what am I looking at in this image? I speculate about the caption on one of the photographs: "Helene von Taussig (right) with her friend Maria Cyrenius." Is it her proximity, her perceived comfort with and bodily awareness of Maria? Why, in this photograph, is her relation to Maria specified when, in a different photograph, the woman standing next to Helene is simply referred to by name? What is the content of this excess, this additional information? I imagine a curator struggling with their own insecurities and homophobias about the women's relationship. I imagine a curator who wants to implant a queer code into an otherwise vague exhibit.

So how is it that I come to adopt Helene as queer (broadly defined) through these photographs? Is it because I read her as a masculine woman and gender non-normativity is so often seen as indicative of non-normative sexuality? What does this assumption imply for how I think about female queerness today as well as in the 1930s? If I believe that Helene is indeed partnered to her "friend," do I define this relationship through an assumed sexual intimacy? Do I define it through a romantic partnership? Do I distinctly value a relationship that is long and lasting? Perhaps I was drawn to Helene because as was the case for my sister and me, Helene's intimate family formations were not fully recognized at the reunion. My sister and I, both queer, had left our partners at home and avoided talking about them much around this new and unknown extended family. We spent most of our time with our estranged female cousins, both there with their male partners. Another relative, there with her wife, stood off to the side of the group whenever we all gathered. I do not think I had even one extended conversation with her; there was a palpable tension dividing her from the rest of the family. I missed my queer world

back home and I tried to situate Helene in my queer world making; I tried to recover Helene as "one of us." This sort of "recovery history" frequently fulfills emotional needs for people today, just as it has in the past.[6] As Jack Halberstam writes of archival research, "despite all the theories of archives that force us to see them as a set of relations between presence and absence, being and unbeing, we still … enter the archive looking for something, hoping to find something, wanting to be redeemed, found, remembered, and saved through the pieces we find, through the lives we reconstruct, and through the memories we uncover."[7] These emotional needs that keep us searching indefinitely are worthy of attention. These emotional needs are the topic of this dissertation.

Framing This Project

> History is not merely a project of fact-retrieval … but also a set of complex processes of selection, interpretation, and even creative invention – processes set in motion by, among other things, one's personal encounter with the archives, the history of the archive itself, and the pressure of the contemporary moment on one's reading of what is to be found there.
> - Antoinette Burton[8]

For LGBTQ people, history is never simply the past, what has passed, or what is dead and gone. Uncovering neglected gay pasts has been heralded not only as a project for historians but as an explicitly political endeavor. History has been used as a tool to show the pervasiveness of same-sex sexuality, as a form of mourning and commemoration, as a remedy for mainstream

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[6] Laura Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 71.
[7] J. Jack Halberstam, "Unfound," in *Cruising the Archive: Queer Art and Culture in Los Angeles, 1945-1980* (ONE Archives, n.d.).
[8] Antoinette M. Burton, "Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories," in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 8.

disregard, and as a way of giving LGBTQ people a sense of lineage. LGBTQ people for many years have had what Joan Nestle refers to as a "will to remember."[9]

Histories that document LGBTQ lives and cultures have not traditionally been included in school curricula, collected in government archives, or passed down through family narration. Instead, their development and dissemination have been taken on primarily by LGBTQ individuals and communities themselves. One aspect of this process has been the creation of community-based LGBTQ archives, which have been established across North America over the past decades. In these archives, many historians find the materials they need to write important accounts of queer pasts. However, LGBTQ archives are also committed to serving and educating broader communities more directly. My dissertation examines how these archives as well as more recent public history projects reach out to the public. It focuses on the role of affect, feeling, and emotion in the fostering of interest in and connection to LGBTQ histories.

This project relies on the decades of work done by gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer historians who have made it clear that researching, preserving, and writing histories about marginalized people is a labour of love, a project imbued with emotional and affective importance and intensity. These historians have taken on this project not only from within the academy but also as community members who are not paid for their work.[10] In many ways, this relates to the root topic of this dissertation: why and how people *care about* or are *moved by* queer histories.

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[9] Joan Nestle, "The Will to Remember: The Lesbian Herstory Archives of New York," *Feminist Review*, no. 34 (1990): 86–94.

[10] For example, Joan Nestle, "Who Were We to Do Such a Thing? Grassroots Necessities, Grassroots Dreaming The LHA in Its Early Years," *Radical History Review*, no. 122 (2015): 233–242; Allan Bérubé, *My Desire for History: Essays in Gay, Community, and Labor History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

Many historians have faced and continue to face adversity in doing historical work on the subject of sexually marginalized people and yet they have maintained that this history is important to preserve and learn.[11] Furthermore, many have had to insist on the significance of social history – or the study of ordinary people and events – and cultural history – or the study of discourse, representation, and meaning. These histories have been undertaken through oral history as well as archival work that investigates ordinary people's experiences of themselves and their communities.[12] Though my research will consider how people relate to larger-scale events, special attention will be given to the ordinary rather than the cataclysmic and the "representational" rather than "the real." How can ordinary people today be drawn into history through evidence of people and events in the past? This ordinariness has drawn many historians into their own research through unexceptional, though affectively rich letters, objects, or documents in archives.[13]

This project also builds on the work of theorists and historians who have shown that archives are not only repositories of historical documents but also spaces in which history is generated, maintained, developed, communicated, learned, and felt. A number of historians, for example, have written about their affective relationships with(in) archives, describing how they have become captivated by certain objects during their research processes. This has intensified their interest in history and influenced the histories they write. Through these experiences, scholars are affectively drawn into an historical engagement often unavailable to others because

[11] Lisa Duggan, "The Discipline Problem: Queer Theory Meets Lesbian and Gay History," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 3 (1995): 179–191.

[12] For example, George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic, 1994); Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[13] For example, Newman, "The Archival Traces of Desire"; Estelle B. Freedman, "'The Burning of Letters Continues': Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality," *Journal of Women's History* 9, no. 4 (1998): 181–200.

archives are primarily used by those with an already-established interest in the past. These affective connections, however, are not often considered in relation to archival outreach and the generation and development of public interest in queer history. Those who have been *affected* by archives in this way – whether they are historians, archivists, or others – are also invested in creating the conditions for others to be caught up in these affective relations. This re-framing is a key goal of my dissertation.

As several LGBTQ archives have endeavoured to increase community outreach by curating public exhibitions (for example, by mounting art shows, creating museums, and digitizing holdings), archival objects have become accessible to a wider population of non-researchers. In addition to these public exhibits tied directly to community-run archives, other community organizations have created temporary public history exhibits that engage LGBTQ history in an effort to create connections between the present and the past. These exhibitions, both tied to and independent of archives, are the sites of my dissertation research, which examines how archivists and curators stage encounters between publics and histories.

Specifically, I read a set of queer exhibitions in ways that examine how they are structured to cultivate identificatory relations. I contend that these exhibitions work to generate identifications – whether a viewer is queer or not – and that these identifications are *affective*, or grounded in feeling and emotion as much as in language and analysis. While these sorts of affective relationships are not new in (queer) archives, I argue that they are becoming more accessible to broader viewing publics through public exhibitions, which work to invite the public into these histories and to allow them direct access to historical materials. I argue that in staging sites of affective encounters, public archival initiatives open up new possibilities for historical interest, engagement, and education.

Literature Review: A Historical Trajectory and Two Turns

The History of Community-Run LGBTQ Archives

> In a sense, retrospection is a condition of homosexual agency. If, as Foucault suggests, the homosexual was "born" out of the conjunction of particular cultural factors, at a distinct historical moment, then s/he was born yearning for a genealogy with which to transcend that moment.
> - Laura Doan & Sarah Waters[14]

LGBTQ people have long been collectors of historical stories and documents. Unlike many other marginalized groups, those who are non-normative in relation to sexuality or gender rarely receive histories of this non-normativity from their biological families of origin. As was true in the case of Helene in my own family tree, queer historical artefacts and stories rarely make their way through biological family lineages.[15] Many traditional archives would not collect LGBTQ materials intentionally, though social historians did put pressure on archives to collect more diverse materials beginning in the 1970s.[16] While evidence of LGBTQ lives, experiences, and cultures have always existed in traditional archives, they have not always been easy to find.

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[14] Laura Doan and Sarah Waters, "Making Up Lost Time: Contemporary Lesbian Writing and the Invention of History'," in *Territories of Desire in Queer Culture: Refiguring Contemporary Boundaries*, ed. David Alderson and Linda R. Anderson (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), 12.

[15] Of course, there are exceptions to this. Some people do have LGBTQ relatives in their families who can be a source of knowledge about LGBTQ pasts. As it becomes easier to become an LGBTQ parent, this will become more common. LGBTQ people also have a long history of creating families based on choice rather than biology. The building of choice families that share LGBTQ identities might facilitate the transmission of queer knowledges across generations.

[16] Anne Clark and Geoffrey Wexler, "Queer Collections Appear: Oregon's Wedding Album," *Museums & Social Issues* 3, no. 1 (2008): 116. It is important to note that the development of public archives in Canada is different than many other countries. Canadian public archives have a history of so-called "total archives," which collect materials related to "all Canadian society, not just the elite." This history begins with the first public archives in the nineteenth-century. While it does not mean that these archives collected all people's stories or were immune to bias in collecting, this history does mean that Canadian archives have been better positioned to preserve the materials of ordinary people. Rebecka Sheffield, "Total Archives: A Brief History," http://www.rebeckasheffield.com/total-archives/.

As a number of historians of sexuality and gender have reported, even when they have attempted

research within traditional archives on LGBTQ subjects, they have faced reluctant archivists,

hidden materials, and other challenges.[17] This has not stopped historians from doing their work,

but it has made their task harder.

 In this context, LGBTQ people have done the work of "queer world making": imagining

histories that they cannot find, searching for histories that do not leave behind voluminous

documents, and preserving and/or teaching the histories they are able to find.[18] One prominent

way of doing this work has been through the creation of, care for, and research in community-run

LGBTQ archives.

Community-run LGBTQ archives began to thrive in North America in the 1970s, though

there are some earlier predecessors worth noting.[19] For example, we might consider research

centers as predecessors, such as Alfred Kinsey's Institute for Sex Research, which was founded

in 1947, and in personal collections that are now relatively unknown.[20] Some homophile groups

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[17] Steven Maynard, "Police/Archives," *Archivaria* 68, no. 68 (2010): 159–182; Freedman, "'The Burning of Letters Continues'"; Martin B. Duberman, "'Writhing Bedfellows': 1826-Two Young Men From Antebellum South Carolina's Ruling Elite Share 'Extravagant Delight,'" *Journal of Homosexuality* 6, no. 1–2 (1981): 85–101.
[18] Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 547–566.
[19] Clark and Wexler, "Queer Collections Appear"; Bill Lukenbill, "Modern Gay and Lesbian Libraries and Archives in North America: A Study in Community Identity and Affirmation," *Library Management* 23, no. 1/2 (2002): 93–100.
[20] Earlier research institutes existed in Europe, perhaps most notably, Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science, founded in 1919 in Berlin. This institute included a museum devoted to displaying sexual diversity. The collections at Hirschfeld's institute were destroyed by Nazis in 1933: See Gerard Koskovich, "Displaying the Queer Past: Purposes, Publics, and Possibilities at the GLBT History Museum," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1, no. 2 (2014): 61–78; Aimee Brown, "How Queer 'Pack Rats' and Activists Archivists Saved Our History: An Overview of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Archives, 1970-2008," in *Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archives Users: Essays on Outreach, Service*, ed. Ellen Greenblatt (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 121–135; Clark and Wexler, "Queer Collections Appear"; Brenda J. Marston, "History Projects, Libraries, and Archives," in *Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History in America*, ed. Marc Stein (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), 43–48.

of the 1950s and 1960s had also already begun to create LGBTQ archives. An important earlier

example, now the longest continuously running and largest LGBTQ archive in the world, is the

ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles. The ONE Archives grew out of a long

history of conflict and collaboration that originated in two collections: that of Jim Kepner, who

began a personal collection in the 1940s that grew into the Western Gay Archives (also named

the National Gay Archives and the International Gay and Lesbian Archives), and the collections

of the "ONE Institute" (a homophile organization) and its publication *ONE*.[21] These collections

merged in 1995, becoming the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives.[22]

Like the ONE Archives, other community-run archives grew out of LGBT publications.

The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, for instance, grew out of the gay liberation publication

The Body Politic, which began publication in Toronto in 1973. Other archives grew out of

political or social groups. For example, the New Alexandria Lesbian Library, now the Sexual

Minorities Archive, was founded in 1974 by a lesbian-feminist organization in Chicago.[23] Others

grew out of personal collections like Kepner's; one example being the Lesbian Herstory

Archives, which originated in the apartment of Joan Nestle and Deb Edel in 1972.[24]

These archives continued to spread and expand in the 1980s, at least in part due to the

North American AIDS epidemic. As Aimee Brown states, "during the 1980s, the AIDS Epidemic

created a new urgency to document the lives of gay men who were dying and to preserve their

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[21] For a longer history of the ONE archives, see Chapter 1. See also Leah DeVun and Michael Jay McClure, "Archives Behaving Badly," *Radical History Review* 2014, no. 120 (2014): 121–130; Diana K. Wakimoto, Christine Bruce, and Helen Partridge, "Archivist as Activist: Lessons from Three Queer Community Archives in California," *Archival Science* 13, no. 4 (March 2013): 293–316.
[22] Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge, "Archivist as Activist," 301.
[23] K. J. Rawson, "Archival Justice: An Interview with Ben Power Alwin," *Radical History Review* 2015, no. 122 (May 1, 2015): 177.
[24] Nestle, "Who Were We to Do Such a Thing?"

papers."[25] Les Archives Gaies du Québec in Montreal opened in 1983, the GLBT Historical

Society Archives in San Francisco in 1985, and the June Mazer Archives (originally the West

Coast Lesbian Collections) in 1981.[26] Some archives focused on particular geographic areas,

such as the GLBT Historical Society Archives in the San Francisco Bay Area, while others

focused on particular identities that had thus far been inadequately represented, such as the focus

on lesbians by the Mazer Archives.

Community-run LGBTQ archives have continued to proliferate. Because many North

American archives were founded by, and thus were most representative of, white cisgender gay

men and, to a lesser extent, lesbians, many transgender people and people of colour have not

been adequately represented or included in LGBTQ archives. From unwelcoming spaces to

absent materials, LGBTQ archives act to further marginalize many people whom they claim to

represent.[27] While some older archives have worked to diversify collections through new

acquisitions or invitations to artists to contribute to exhibitions that address diverse LGBTQ

communities, newer archives have developed that are exclusively devoted to queer people of

colour or transgender people, amongst other marginalized groups.[28] Some notable examples of

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[25] Brown, "How Queer 'Pack Rats' and Activists Saved Our History," 127.

[26] Koskovich, "Displaying the Queer Past," 63; Jacques Prince, "Du placard à l'institution : l'histoire des Archives gaies du Québec (AGQ)," *Archivaria* 68 (2009): 296; Marston, "History Projects, Libraries, and Archives," 44.

[27] Syrus Marcus Ware, "All Power to All People? Black LGBTTI2QQ Activism, Remembrance, and Archiving in Toronto," *TSQ* 4, no. 2 (2017): 170–180; Amy Stone and Jaime Cantrell, "Introduction: Something Queer at the Archive," in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*, ed. Amy Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015), 1–22; K. J. Rawson, "Accessing Transgender//Desiring Queer (Er?) Archival Logics," *Archivaria* 68, no. 68 (2010): 123–140.

[28] Elspeth H. Brown, "Trans/Feminist Oral History: Current Projects," *TSQ* 2, no. 4 (2015): 666–672; Maxe Crandall and Selby Wynn Schwartz, "Moving Transgender Histories: Sean Dorsey's Trans Archival Practice," *TSQ* 2, no. 4 (2015): 565–577; Don Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past: A Case for the GLBT History Museum," *Radical History Review* 2014, no. 120 (October 2014): 131–144; David Frantz and Mia Locks, eds., *Cruising the Archive: Queer Art and Culture in Los Angeles, 1945-1980* (Los Angeles, CA: ONE National Lesbian & Gay Archives, 2011).

archives devoted to further marginalized LGBTQ people include the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, the Black LGBT Archivists Society of Philadelphia, the Bisexual Archives at the Lambda Archives of San Diego, and the Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Spaces in Toronto, an online initiative.[29]

While this dissertation focuses exclusively on Canadian and American examples, it is important to acknowledge that community-run LGBTQ archives are certainly not limited to North American contexts and never have been. In 1997, shortly after South Africa became the first country in the world to include sexual orientation as a protected classification in its Constitution, Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action of South Africa (GALA) was founded in Johannesburg.[30] Earlier international examples include the IHLIA LGBT Heritage in Amsterdam and the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Melborne, both founded in 1978.[31] Many others exist across Europe, including in Vienna, Rome, Budapest, Dublin, and Berlin.

Although community archives are defined as being created and maintained, at least in part, by members of the communities that are represented in the archive, LGBTQ archival materials are now also intentionally collected and preserved in non-community-based spaces and institutions. In 2003, literary and sexuality studies scholar Ann Cvetkovich worried that the institutionalization of LGBTQ archival collections would endanger their activist nature and, in

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[29] Ware, "All Power to All People?"; Aaron H. Devor, "Preserving the Footprints of Transgender Activism: The Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1, no. 2 (2014): 200–204; "About Us," Black LGBT Archivists Society of Philadelphia, accessed November 23, 2017, https://archivistssociety.wordpress.com/about/; "Bisexual Archives," Lambda Archives of San Diego, accessed November 23, 2017, http://www.mcarronwebdesign.com/lambdaarchives/bisexual-archives.htm.

[30] April Sizemore-Barber, "Archival Movements: South Africa's Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action," *Safundi* 18, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 117–130.

[31] "History of IHLIA," IHLIA LGBT Heritage, accessed November 19, 2017, http://www.ihlia.nl/information-desk/history-of-ihlia/?lang=en; "About Us," Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, accessed November 17, 2017, http://alga.org.au/about-us.

competing with community-run archives, might signal the demise of community-based projects.[32] Media studies scholar Kate Eichhorn, ten years later, argues that these concerns turned out to be largely unfounded, as university-based and other institutional archives have become very important repositories for marginalized histories but have not replaced community-based projects.[33] In 2015, Cvetkovich herself acknowledges "the rich array of archival collections now available for LGBT research" and writes, "grassroots and community-based archives … remain valuable resources, but they have been joined by university collections."[34] While some university collections did not originate in community-run archives, other institutions have created partnerships directly with community-run archives, such as the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archive at the University of Southern California Libraries or the June L. Mazer Archive at the University of California, Los Angeles.[35] While Stevens et al. claim that community-based collections should be controlled on the community's "own terms," many community-based archives have chosen to create partnerships with larger institutions for financial reasons, in order to provide better preservation for their collections, and to provide extended accessibility. While these partnerships have sometimes required a forfeit of some control over community-based collections, others include provisions that require ongoing community consultation and control.

Finally, it is important to recognize the proliferation of spaces, institutions, and projects that are not officially archives at all, but that perform similar functions to community-run LGBTQ archives. Here we might consider a host of digital LGBTQ history sites including

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[32] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
[33] Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*: *Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 155–156.
[34] Ann Cvetkovich, "Foreword," in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*, ed. Amy Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015), xv–xvi.
[35] Cvetkovich, "Foreword"; Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*.

OutHistory.org (founded by Jonathan Ned Katz in 2008) and the ACT UP Oral History Project

(co-founded by Sarah Schulman and Jim Hubbard in 2003), mobile apps such as the QUIST

LGBTQ mobile history (founded by Sarah Prager in 2013), or the transgender history podcast,

One from the Vaults (created by Morgan M. Page in 2016).[36] We might also consider art-based

initiatives such as the experimental Museum of Transgender History and Art (MOTHA), created

by artist Chris E. Vargas.[37] These types of projects take up many of the same impulses and

priorities as community-run archives, such as historical preservation, education, and

dissemination.

The Archive as Metaphor in the Archival Turn

> There is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory.
> -   Jacques Derrida[38]

> The pursuit of knowledge in the archive is a highly individualized task, but it's not
> lonely. The researcher surrounds herself with the whispering souls she conjures
> from the materials she reads. If she's a good reader, she listens, too, for silences
> and omissions. She ponders the apparent order of thoughts and texts. … It is the
> historian's engagement with what she finds there that makes the archive a
> dynamic, social place, one in which the objects of her desire also have something
> of a life of their own.
> -   Joan Scott[39]

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[36] Lauren J. Gutterman, "OutHistory.Org: Fostering Community-Created LGBTQ Histories," in *Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archives Users: Essays on Outreach Service Collections and Access*, ed. Ellen Greenblatt (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2013): 1–3; Sarah Prager, "How to Make the Most of Our Quistory," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1, no. 2 (2014): 111–114; Morgan M. Page, "One From The Vaults Podcast," *SoundCloud*, accessed November 24, 2017, https://soundcloud.com/onefromthevaultspodcast.

[37] Crandall and Schwartz, "Moving Transgender Histories," 575.

[38] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

[39] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 145.

Archives of various kinds (institutional, governmental, and community-based) hold vast amounts of materials that document the past. It is from these documents that many historians craft the histories they write. Because of this, archival and historical theorists have analyzed the complex ways that archives have shaped stories of the past through examinations of archival holdings and exclusions, the governance of archives, and archives' affective importance in preserving evidence of marginalized people and communities.[40] Since the 1990s, a somewhat different line of thought has engaged the archives as a site of study – what has been called the archival turn in cultural studies.[41] Arguably beginning with the 1995 publication of *Archive Fever* by Jacques Derrida and influenced by Michel Foucault's 1969 *Archaeology of Knowledge*, the archive has become a metaphor for what is knowable and what is repressed by society, for collections of ideas, or for the desire to find origins.[42] As Stoler describes, for cultural theorists the archive sometimes seems to be "a metaphoric invocation for any corpus of selective collections and the longings that the acquisitive quests for the primary, originary, and untouched entail."[43] Different than the collections held by physical or even online archives, the metaphorical archive can, for instance, be used to describe the sources that a scholar consults in creating a study, or the cumulative popular media representations of a person or event – the metaphorical archive can be used to describe any collection of documents, discourses, or thoughts. Stoler explains that while this makes it seem as though there are two distinct types of archives – physical and metaphorical – that are being invoked by scholars in recent decades, she

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[40] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Maynard, "Police/Archives"; Nestle, "The Will to Remember."

[41] Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah, "General Editors' Introduction," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (2015): 539–543.

[42] Derrida, *Archive Fever*; Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

[43] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 45.

finds use for theorizations of the latter in her studies about the former. Like Stoler, I do not think of these two forms of archives as mutually exclusive. In the work that follows, I remain committed to both the "actual existing archive" – the brick and mortar buildings as a space in which research is done, exhibits are mounted, and events are held. I also consider the archive as determining what can be easily known through its organization and exclusions, as a structure of political power, and as a space that promotes affective experience.

What I take from this work is the importance of archives as a rich site of historical research and interpretation, where history is both created and learned. Additionally, archive scholars have signaled the importance of a close reading of archives – they have shown the importance of "small" details, from the spatial layout of the archival spaces, through the organization of finding aids, to the tactile nature of archival objects.[44] Finally, I use the work of queer archive theorists who explore the deep affective importance of community-based archives. In addition to preserving histories that are in danger of being lost, these archives provide recognition of the importance of ordinary people and of ephemeral objects, while offering a form of memorialization and witnessing for groups of people who are often deeply affected by traumatic pasts.[45] They often come to stand in for the histories they represent and signal a form of recognition and legitimation of both the material and affective lives of marginalized people and communities.[46]

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[44] Marika Cifor, "Presence, Absence, and Victoria's Hair: Examining Affect and Embodiment in Trans Archives," *TSQ* 2, no. 4 (2015): 645–649; Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and Its Limits," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 19–27; Carolyn Kay Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

[45] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings.*

[46] Kate Eichhorn, "DIY Collectors, Archiving Scholars, and Activist Librarians: Legitimizing Feminist Knowledge and Cultural Production Since 1990," *Women's Studies* 39, no. 6 (2010): 622–646.

While, in the epigraph that begins this section, Joan Scott describes archival research as lonely, queer scholars have also shown the importance of community-run LGBTQ archives as spaces of community and sociality.[47] Whether communing with others through objects that are stored in the archive or communicating with archive volunteers or fellow visitors at events, these spaces have focused on the social since their founding, as they have been so closely linked with social movements – whether the homophile movement, gay liberation, lesbian feminism, AIDS activism, queer politics, or trans activism. This sociality is related to "actual, existing archives" and yet their social dimensions are not necessarily grounded in their holdings. The value of community-run archives comes from much more than their holdings, whether that "more" encompasses the physical, the affective, or the metaphorical.

The Affective Turn

Over the past two decades there has been what some have called an "affective turn" in the humanities and social sciences.[48] Though scholarly works in affect studies address myriad topics, three strands of the theory could be drawn, although not easily.[49] The first, based in psychoanalysis, conceives of affects as originating within individuals and often ascribes names to the affects. For Silvan Tomkins, often considered the originator of this line of thinking, there are

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[47] Rawson, "Archival Justice"; Halberstam, "Unfound"; Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*.

[48] Many people have challenged the idea of the "affective turn," claiming that theorizing of feelings, affects, and emotions has been happening for many decades. Further, some claim this actually writes over the work done by feminists and postcolonial scholars. Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Clare Hemmings, "Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn," *Cultural Studies* 19, no. 5 (2005): 548–567.

[49] Of course, there are other strains of affect theory as well as many approaches that merge multiple strains. Gregg and Seigworth, for instance, name eight different strains. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–25.

nine primary affects, which include "distress-anguish," "interest-excitement," and "shame-humiliation."[50] In contrast, Deleuzo-Guattarian affect theory decenters the individual, claiming instead that affect is autonomous, pre-linguistic, and a vector of potentiality. As affect theorist Kathleen Stewart describes, "Pre-personal intensities lodge in bodies. Events, relations, and impacts accumulate as the capacities to affect and be affected."[51] This thinking differentiates affect sharply from emotion, defining affect as intensity and emotions as affect that has met and been interpreted by ideology and language.[52] Finally, many queer and cultural studies scholars have taken up a version of affect theory that borrows from each of these traditions, although in ways that are sometimes not recognized by those who subscribe to the previous two forms. Sometimes linked to the work of a group of scholars organized around "Public Feelings," this strain is where I primarily locate the work included in this dissertation. "Public Feelings" groups attempt to address the "emotional dynamics" of social issues that are often considered in primarily political, economic, or social terms.[53] These scholars challenge the idea that feelings and emotion affect us only in private, challenge the reason/emotion dichotomy, and contest the individualism that is so prevalent in neoliberal times, including the idea that feelings belong only to the individual. Throughout my life, I have been affected by histories; affect theory has allowed me a way to address the feelings related to the histories of marginalized peoples that I have observed in myself and in those around me. This academic legitimation of the role of affect is a

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[50] Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
[51] Kathleen Stewart, "Afterword: Worlding Refrains," in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 339.
[52] Jennifer Harding and E. Deidre Pribram, "Losing Our Cool? Following Williams and Grossberg on Emotions," *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 6 (2004): 875–876.
[53] Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 1.

key component of my work, which follows a sense, or feeling, of *identification* in and through queer public history projects.

Considerations of affect, according to sociologist Deborah Gould, "preserve a space for human motivation that is nonconscious, noncognitive, nonlinguistic, noncoherent, nonrational, and unpredetermined."[54] Within academic writing, much of which focuses on the conscious, the linguistic, and the rational, exploring affect can encourage attention to movement, motivation, and action that does not come about because of or through words, but rather because of or through feelings that are difficult to describe or understand. Gould explains the importance of this when she writes that affect is "a key factor in social change. Ideas about the need for change and movement toward bringing it about often begin with an inarticulate and inarticulable sensation that something in the established order is not quite right."[55] Affect can be the spark igniting political movements, a factor in sustaining them, and also a cause of their demise.[56]

In her description of affect's role in social change, Gould aligns herself with other scholars who examine feelings that are shared among groups of people.[57] Though affect has been differently theorized through psychoanalytic and phenomenological frameworks, I focus my affective research on the work of those who treat affect as social. In many respects affect is social – affects circulate between people, bringing groups of people together, even if only briefly.[58] In considering the social aspects of affect, Jasbir Puar sees the formation of

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[54] Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 23.
[55] Ibid., 26.
[56] Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovich, and Ann Reynolds, eds., *Political Emotions* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010); Gould, *Moving Politics*.
[57] Cvetkovich, *Depression*; Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Gould, *Moving Politics*.
[58] Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

"communities of belonging" as based around affect rather than identity.[59] Similarly, Cvetkovich

claims that "affective experience can provide the basis for new cultures."[60] Through shared

feelings (about or toward something), people often develop a sense of group belonging.[61] This

aspect of affect studies allows me to think through the ways that queer history can be an object of

feelings around which communities of belonging can form.

Finally, affect studies have also allowed for attention to the ordinary.[62] Many affect

theorists insist on the importance of events and experiences that might initially seem

insignificant and unimportant because of their very ordinary nature. However, according to

Raymond Williams, Kathleen Stewart, and others, ordinary and everyday feelings, which often

go unnoticed, often also lead to important shifts in the social that are only recognizable and

analyzable after the fact.[63] Though large-scale events in queer history (such as the Stonewall

Riots of 1969) are undoubtedly objects of feeling around which communities form and have been

studied as such, small-scale events have been given less scholarly attention.[64] The ordinary is a

recurring theme in my dissertation work as I look at the ways that people form relationships with

queer history around large-scale events but also around archival objects that document ordinary

lives and experiences.

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[59] Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 208.
[60] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 7.
[61] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 34; Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 118.
[62] Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).
[63] Raymond Williams, "Structures of Feeling," *Marxism and Literature* (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977): 128–135.
[64] Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Affect theory has also been taken up by cultural theorists who examine LGBTQ histories. Perhaps most useful for my own work has been the theorization of connections between time periods or "touch across time."[65] A number of theorists address this through an attention to the resonances that many people feel with figures from the past, which can create emotional or even erotic bonds between time periods.[66] Others use this approach to stress the impact that painful histories have on people today who did not experience those histories firsthand.[67] When focusing on these past/present connections, it does not matter if sexually non-normative people in the past are recognizably "like" or "unlike" those of today. Instead, queer temporality scholars among others, have drawn attention to the role of similarities, proximities, and identifications, in contrast to the "sameness" of identity, in bringing together people from different periods through affective means.[68] This scholarly shift is key for my work, which looks for multiple points of identification within historical objects, historical representations, and historical accounts.

My research takes these fields – LGBTQ history, archives studies, and affect theory – to the places where they meet broad publics. By looking at public history projects that draw on archival material and community histories, I examine the ways that these archival connections can be brought to life through non-archival spaces. Though my case studies are not all tied directly to community-based archives, my work remains informed by models utilized by LGBTQ archives. Further, my research shows that as LGBTQ history becomes more integrated into the mainstream, we do not have to lose the grassroots and affect-based tactics that have been used by

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[65] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

[66] Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2010); Carla Freccero, "Queer Spectrality: Haunting the Past," in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, ed. George E. Haggerty and Molly McGarry (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 194–213.

[67] Love, *Feeling Backward*.

[68] Goldberg and Menon, "Queering History," 1609.

community-run LGBTQ archives for many decades. The sites I study resist monolithic master narratives of LGBTQ history, work to de-professionalize knowledge and promote diverse forms of expertise, value the important work done by material objects, and centralize the importance of affective experience and atmosphere in *feeling* history. The public history sites that I examine here provide conditions that allow history to reach out to the present and form different relationships with people living today. These efforts, which I argue work to make history "contagious," are based on identification, desire, and affective pull.

Methods and Methodologies

This dissertation revolves around three primary case studies. Building from the much longer lineage of community-run LGBTQ archives, these sites have all developed in recent years. The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, examined in Chapter 2, held its first exhibition in 2011. The GLBT History Museum, the subject of Chapter 3, first held a temporary exhibit in 2008 and then entered a more permanent space in 2011. Land|Slide Possible Futures, which is the focus of Chapter 4, ran for six weeks in 2013.[69] These three sites are not based in community-run LGBTQ archives. They do, however, all take up themes related to the public history work done by these archives. In order to illustrate these connections, my first chapter briefly addresses three examples of community-run LGBTQ archives: the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto, the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, and the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles.

The methods undertaken at each of these six sites vary depending on a host of factors including geographic location, the time I was able to spend in each city, and my relationship with

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[69] In depth descriptions of each site are offered in the chapters in which each is analyzed.

the organization. For instance, I traveled from Toronto to access the Pop-Up Museum of Queer

History in New York and the GLBT History Museum in San Francisco. Because I had limited

time in each location, I relied on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key informants

involved in the organizations I visited. At Land|Slide Possible Futures, in contrast, I was a docent

and used my own experiences of the exhibit in tandem with my interactions with hundreds of

visitors over the span of six weeks. For the three sites included in the first chapter, I analyze my

experiences as a visitor at each archive location. In these latter spaces, I engaged (auto-

)ethnographic methods while remaining attuned to affect. At all locations, I analyzed my own

experiences as an important component of my work and offer descriptions of both the spaces I

explored and of my experiences there.

Affect as Methodology: Close Reading, Insignificant Details, and Description

Through an affect theory lens, I have analyzed each exhibition's or event's textual

descriptions, social lives, and physical atmosphere, looking at how affective relationships are

staged through structure and content.[70] To do this, I provide rich and thick descriptions of the

exhibitions. More specifically, I engage cultural theorist Elizabeth Freeman's version of a "close

reading" methodology, taken out of its original context of literary studies.[71] For Freeman, "to

close read is to linger, to dally, to take pleasure in tarrying, and to hold out that these activities

can allow us to look both hard and askance at the norm."[72] In addition to drawing broader

connections and making large-scale observations, I pay attention to, and spend time with, what

Freeman says are often considered "insignificant details." Gould echoes the importance of close

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[70] Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*; Ahmed, "Affective Economies"; Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).
[71] Freeman, *Time Binds*.
[72] Ibid., xvi–xvii.

reading when looking for affect because, she claims, affect is often found in unusual places where we are not used to looking; because I read for affect, it was necessary to look to the small-scale in addition to the large-scale.[73] This might mean spending time with the worn-down surface of Harvey Milk's kitchen table at the GLBT History Museum or devoting time to observing visitors' visceral reactions to a taxidermied cat at Land|Slide Possible Futures. Gould engages a reading practice "attuned to the silences, to the inarticulable, to the inchoate, to the less-than-fully-conscious."[74] This is how I have read the archival exhibitions, knowing that this sort of reading will never be fully representative or concrete. Instead, I have attempted to motion toward spaces of potential and possibility in the archives and exhibitions. These readings make their appearances throughout the dissertation, but especially in the italicized interstitial descriptions that can be found in each chapter.

Interviews

In addition to providing close readings of the exhibition sites, I conducted semi-structured interviews with three to five key informants involved in the genesis and operation of each of the two American exhibitions: the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History and the GLBT History Museum. These narrators were curators, organizers, and artists involved in the events and exhibitions. Though my project looks for possibilities in how public history exhibitions function to encourage connections between broad publics and queer histories, the publics themselves are somewhat ghostly in the interviews. I did not interview exhibit visitors but focused instead on those who envision and enable public engagement with the exhibits. This does not mean that visitors are entirely absent, however. The narrators who I have interviewed reflect on their

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[73] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 29.
[74] Ibid., 30.

impressions of public interaction with the exhibitions, either through their own personal

experiences of interacting with visitors or their knowledge of reviews and statistics collected by

the exhibition space. For instance, curators of the GLBT History Museum's exhibit recount

watching people repeatedly pressing their fingers or noses to the glass of one display, trying to

see the detail of a collection of matchbooks. One of the organizers of the Pop-Up Museum of

Queer History, who is tasked with the organization's social media, tells me about the various

comments that he has seen from visitors to the Pop-Up's exhibits. The narrators are also archive

and exhibit visitors themselves. The narrators act as gateways – they are figures who have

already been affected by history and the archives and, having been affected, are attempting to

create similar conditions for broader publics to enter into these relations with history. It is

primarily in using the frameworks put forth by these narrators as to how these affective

connections are formed that I imagine potentials for broader public outreach. The experiences of

these narrators will also allow me to ask questions about the staging of these exhibitions; my

dissertation is as invested in how archivists, curators, and artists *envision* this connection being

made with publics as in the connections themselves.

The interviews will not be the main source of my research data. Rather, in using a post-

structuralist approach to interviewing, my goal is to supplement my own close reading of the

exhibitions with narratives of encounter between myself and the narrators in which I can discern

moments of affective intensity generated by discussions of the archival exhibitions.[75] A key

aspect of post-structuralist methodologies is the recognition that positivist models of research are

not always sufficient in addressing varied topics; this approach might include critiques of

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[75] Patti Lather, *Getting Lost: Feminist Efforts Toward a Double(d) Science* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007); Deborah Britzman, "Is There a Queer Pedagogy? Or, Stop Reading Straight," *Educational Theory* 45, no. 2 (1995): 151–165.

universalizing and progress narratives, "absolute knowledge," and complete or accurate representation.[76] In the face of these critiques there are many unexpected paths that open up. Patti Lather, for example, advocates a method of "getting lost," which demands an acceptance of a position of unknowing and an embrace of finding oneself in "unexpected places."[77] Throughout my research process, I worked to remain open to the unexpected, to the excesses, silences, and experiences I might not have been expecting. This included the time I spent in interviews with narrators.

Because of the post-structuralist approach to my interviews, they were only semi-structured. While I had some questions prepared in advance and some themes that I wanted to discuss, such as each narrator's role in the organization and their experiences in creating each exhibit, it was important that the interview process allowed for the discussions to move in unanticipated directions. This happened many times when the conversation veered into narrators' personal relationships and life histories, which came to influence their work. I rarely opened the notebook where my questions were recorded. I digitally recorded the interviews, which allowed me to revisit interviews multiple times, listening for nuances in communication such as pauses, stutters, nervous laughter, as well as other sounds, such as shifting bodies. These sounds very much informed my analysis of feeling and affect.

As many historians engaging in queer oral history methods as well as other queer interview methods have acknowledged, these kinds of interviews can create intense connections and interactions between researcher and narrator that are often unacknowledged in published

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[76] Lather, *Getting Lost*, 3–5.
[77] Ibid., 7.

works.[78] As I mentioned above, the interviews veered into personal interactions that were less obviously about the topic at hand. I treated the interviews as places of encounter and, at times, have commented on and made visible these interactions when I have incorporated the interviews into my dissertation. Though I have made connections and drawn out themes from my interviews, my goal in writing this dissertation was not to make broad claims or obtain generalizable results; I have also highlighted moments of complexity, unknowability, and contradiction through these encounters.

Chapter Outlines

This dissertation works its way from community-run LGBTQ archives to their more distant relatives in public history exhibitions. In Chapter 1, "Contagious History," I outline this dissertation's theoretical orientation toward LGBTQ public history and the affective relationships it promotes between people today and the queer past. Through the metaphor of contagion, I propose three methods by which community-run archives have promoted these identificatory relationships: by bringing visitors into direct contact with histories and historical objects; by creating a sense of community and sense of responsibility through the use of identity categories; and by promoting complex identifications that can transcend identity categories. In using my experiences at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, the Lesbian Herstory Archives, and the ONE National Lesbian and Gay Archives as models, I argue that the work done by these

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[78] Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, eds., *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA, 2012), 2, 9; Michael Connors Jackman, "The Trouble with Fieldwork: Queering Methodologies," in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, ed. Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (London, U.K.: Ashgate, 2010), 113–128.

community-based spaces can spread to other sites of LGBTQ public history. Some examples of these initiatives make up the focus of the following three chapters.

In the second chapter, "Queer Ancestral Longings," I move to the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, based in Brooklyn, New York. There I forward an approach to LGBTQ history that I title queer ancestral genealogies, borrowing from the work of Laura Doan. This model, which I argue the Pop-Up Museum deftly engages, validates the affective longing for queer forbearers that many LGBTQ people desire. However, as I show through Pop-Up Museum exhibitions, these identifications with figures in the past do not rely on simple conceptions of identity-based sameness but on complex forms of recognition. The Pop-Up Museum encourages the affective dimensions of histories through their empowerment of "amateur" historians in telling the stories that comprise each of their exhibitions.

The third chapter, "The Romance of Objects," focuses specifically on the role of archival objects in forging relationships with history. In the chapter, I follow archival objects from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society (GLBTHS) Archives, where archival objects are primarily accessed by researchers, to the stand-alone GLBT History Museum, which grew out of the GLBTHS archives and targets broad publics. There I argue that the museum's exhibition, "Our Vast Queer Past," allows visitors to experience unexpected encounters with histories by presenting visitors with a plethora of objects that are not organized into a cohesive narrative. In presenting a multitude of objects, "Our Vast Queer Past" offers an LGBTQ history that is less focused on well-known people and events, displaying a more diverse and mundane set of stories with which broad publics can find connection.

Finally, in Chapter Four, "Imagined Histories in the Heritage Museum," I move away from exhibitions that focus specifically on LGBTQ histories. Here I look to the ways that

dominant historical narratives about lesbians, sexual assault, and Indigenous people can be destabilized through atmospheres of shock and surprise staged by art interventions in a Toronto suburban heritage village. A number of the artists involved in the massive-scale art exhibition, "Land|Slide Possible Futures," brought attention to the constructed and curated nature of museums through their insertion of alternate histories into the Markham Museum space, using art to create fictions that wrote often-ignored types of events and marginalized figures back into the story. In encountering these fictional histories, visitors can be shocked into questioning the truth-claims that often act as the foundation of traditional museums.

Taken together, these three sites speak to my formulation of contagious history. Each works to bring visitors into an affective relationship with history, whether that relationship is based on feelings of resonance and identification, or dissonance and surprise. Each functions to encourage critical approaches to history: to both its telling and its significance in the present. Each works to meld desire and critique, insisting on complexity and resisting a single narrative.

As a whole, this dissertation argues that there is much we can learn from community-based LGBTQ archives and public history projects. More specifically, it insists that considerations of affect and emotion are central, not incidental, to a critical public history project. Though this work focuses primarily on representations of LGBTQ history, its contributions can reach much further because affect and emotion are central to all public history, whether or not the affective qualities of this history are recognized explicitly. History is political but it is also emotional.

[1]

Contagious History:
Identifications, Affect, and Community Engagement

U.S. cultural theorist Ann Pellegrini, in a roundtable discussion published in the *Journal of the History of Sexuality* in 2001, makes an offhand and lighthearted comment: "It seems that some kinds of knowledge are contagious. Another term for this is 'pedagogy.'"[79] Pellegrini is referring to an event described in Carolyn Dinshaw's 1999 book, *Getting Medieval,* when academic medievalists were accused by U.S. Republican Party leaders, in the midst of a debate on funding for the arts and humanities, of "infecting" American society and education by exposing the public to studies of non-normative genders and sexualities. In her book, Dinshaw uses the metaphor of contagion to highlight conservative anxieties about links between sexuality and AIDS in the early 1990s, when the epidemic was ravaging North American gay (and other marginalized) communities while many refused to recognize the problem. Dinshaw tracks instances of words like "contagion" and "infection" that were used by conservatives when

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[79] Ann Pellegrini, "Touching the Past; or, Hanging Chad," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 2 (2001): 190.

talking about the dangers of sexual discourse in education and other venues.[80] While HIV/AIDS

and literal viral contagion may have infected their thoughts on sexuality, these instances suggest

a real fear of something else – something supposedly dangerous and debilitating – that was

circulating and contaminating the public sphere. Of course, the idea of sexuality itself, and

homosexuality in particular, as contagious was nothing new and thus the idea that education

about sexuality might also contaminate young minds was not a leap to make. Indeed,

homosexuality has been considered contagious for over a century by conservatives within the

realms of religion, politics, psychology, and medicine.[81] As literary scholar Valerie Rohy argues,

because LGBTQ people are not created through biological reproduction (queer people do not

often birth queer people), society instead creates "the fantasy of proliferation through seduction,

influence, recruitment, pedagogy, predation, and contagion."[82] Homosexuality itself is seen as a

disease that infects heterosexuals, children, the family, and society as a whole.

    In this chapter, I suggest that the community engagement work of LGBTQ archives can

be likened, in a deliberately recuperative gesture, to forms of contagion that play on fears like

those highlighted by Pellegrini, Dinshaw, and Rohy. I argue that LGBTQ archives provide an

example of community engagement that works with this sort of pedagogy – where attempts are

made by archivists and archives volunteers to create sites of exchange where historical subjects

and archival artifacts might come to affect and infect those who come in contact with them. This

occurs through complex relationships based on identities and identifications, which are based on

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[80] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 288.
[81] Valerie Rohy, *Lost Causes: Narrative, Etiology, and Queer Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Simon Watney, "The Spectacle of AIDS," *October* 43 (1987): 71–86; Cindy Patton, *Sex and Germs: The Politics of AIDS* (Montreal, QC: Black Rose, 1986).
[82] Rohy, *Lost Causes*, 2.

the creation of affective connections – felt relationships that lead to care and action. I claim that those working in LGBTQ archives attempt to spread this contamination to broad publics that might not have much pre-existing interest in the histories with which they come into contact. In this model, those organizing archival exhibitions encourage visitors to care about, and care for, queer pasts and the remnants of these pasts that have been left behind in archives. Those who work in LGBTQ archives, after all, are not primarily interested in having visitors learn the "facts" or the dominant narratives of history – they do not or do not only want them to be able to recite names and dates from the past. Instead they are trying to affect visitors, trying to make them feel something, trying to make them care *about* and care *for* this history. The goal is to infect the public with these desires, thus making LGBTQ history contagious.[83]

Contagion as a form of pedagogy and engagement is like this second kind of learning. After all, contagion, so often linked with queer communities, especially in discussions of HIV/AIDS, is not just understood as the circulation of a virus but is also conceptualized as the virus' effect on the body – it enters and changes the person through contact. In other words, a virus affects. It operates on this small scale – on the individual, through personal experience – as well as operating on a broad scale, spreading across vast populations. Bridging these two scales, contagion blurs the lines between the personal and the social, between the individual's experience of the world and the world's effects on the individual.

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[83] The orientation toward history that I am proposing here is related to, though distinct from, theorizations of historical consciousness. Historical consciousness, largely theorized in relation to history education in schools, proposes a critical approach to historical education. Instead of learning the topics of history, students are encouraged to think about historical methods, contexts, and relationships to the present. I am proposing a similar critical approach to history in the venues of public history, but I want to explicitly emphasize with the role that affect, emotion, and identification can play in this form of critical learning. See Peter Seixas, "A Model of Historical Thinking," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49, no. 6 (2017): 593–605.

In this conceptual chapter, my aim is to explore the metaphor of contagion with respect to archival community engagement in order to introduce several key concepts that will frame the way I read the public history exhibitions in the following chapters. Specifically, I use contagion as metaphor to address the following four methods of community engagement efforts that I have observed in archives: (1) **Exposure** to LGBTQ histories through archival objects and the social realms created by events within archives; (2) **"Risk" groups** invoked through identity politics in order to create a sense of belonging and a call to action; (3) **Symptoms** of change within and beyond LGBTQ communities; and (4) **Contagious** circulation of these histories as they make their way beyond community-based LGBTQ archives to newer spaces of LGBTQ public history. I explore these methods in four corresponding sections. Each section introduces an aspect of contagious history through the metaphor of the AIDS crisis and relates this to the study of LGBTQ archives. Finally, at the end of each section, I illustrate the method, using descriptions of experiences that I have had in LGBTQ archives.[84] In the following chapters, I use the important contributions made by community-run LGBTQ archives to this contagious history and follow them to other venues of public history: the pop-up museum, the history museum, and the public art exhibition. This chapter serves as a foundation for in-depth chapter-based analyses of the ways that affective history can spread beyond the archival venues built by LGBTQ communities during the past fifty years.

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[84] I do not claim that my experiences in LGBTQ archives are representative of the diverse people who make use of these spaces. As a cisgender, white, queer-identified woman, I am in many ways part of the communities that are better represented in many LGBTQ archives. I also recognize that many people who identify as non-heterosexual do *not* make use of these spaces. As I describe later in this chapter, the use of identity politics and the history of many archives means that transgender people and people of colour, among many others, often do not feel as though the histories contained in LGBTQ archives represent them or their communities.

Utilizing aspects of the mainstream hysteria around the early North American AIDS crisis, this chapter primarily considers early activist writings since, as Deborah Gould claims, "understandings of the epidemic have never focused solely on its medical aspects; as others have noted, discourses about AIDS have consistently overflowed with metaphors and moralizing stories."[85] As Gould acknowledges, analyzing HIV/AIDS as a cultural and representational crisis has been a strategy taken up by AIDS activists since the early years of the crisis. The stories and metaphors that influenced the interpretation of the AIDS crisis comprise what American AIDS theorist Paula Treichler in 1987 called "an epidemic of meanings or signification" where "the social dimension [of disease] is far more pervasive and central than we are accustomed to believing."[86] As American art historian and AIDS activist Douglas Crimp wrote in the same year, "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."[87] While Crimp acknowledges that viruses and suffering are indeed very real, with very real consequences and impacts, the cultural and political representations of the AIDS crisis prevents any attempt to see AIDS as a strictly medical issue. Similarly, British art historian and AIDS activist Simon Watney, again in 1987, claimed that "it is impossible to separate individual perceptions of risk, and endlessly amplified fears concerning the 'threat' of 'spread', from the drastically miniaturized 'truth' of AIDS, which has remained impervious to challenge or correction since the syndrome was first identified in the ideologically constitutive and immensely significant name GRID (gay-related immunodeficiency) in 1981."[88] Watney speaks specifically to the ways in which HIV/AIDS and

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[85] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 60.
[86] Paula A. Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse: An Epidemic of Signification," *October* 43 (1987): 264–265.
[87] Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 28.
[88] Watney, "The Spectacle of AIDS," 203.

"contagion" as metaphor were already, and inseparably, linked to the slippery categories of gay identity, gay sexual acts, and gay communities in ways long used to silence, dismiss, and shame LGBTQ people. Due to this early link, any representation of or response to HIV/AIDS in this period cannot be separated from representations of and responses to homosexuality. Finally, as historian Robert Padgug explained in 1986, "Patterns of disease are as much the product of social, political, and historical processes as of 'natural history,'" proclaiming the AIDS epidemic as "socially constructed."[89] Padgug stressed the importance of social and historical contributions to the AIDS crisis because these very factors "define the meaning and treatment of AIDS."[90] In other words, homophobia and long-established representational violence against LGBTQ communities actively limited and directed the response to HIV/AIDS with devastating effects.[91] As I will argue in the dissertation's conclusion, as the early response to HIV/AIDS was determined by social and historical factors relating to gay men, LGBTQ communities today continue to be affected by these early representations of AIDS. The social world, through its cultural representations, linguistic metaphors, social constructions, and moralizing stories, has material consequences, whether in times of crisis or during ordinary life.

What Gould terms the "metaphors" and "moralizing stories" of HIV/AIDS, which often linked the epidemic to LGBTQ identities and practices, make the HIV/AIDS epidemic a rich site to work with as I develop my model of contagion by twisting these harmful cultural fears into

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[89] Robert A. Padgug, "Gay Villain, Gay Hero: Homosexuality and the Social Construction of AIDS," in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, eds. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1989), 293.
[90] Padgug presented a version of this essay in 1986, though the published version was released in 1989; Padgug, "Gay Villain, Gay Hero," 293.
[91] Cindy Patton, *Inventing AIDS* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

usable concepts.[92] As many early AIDS activists and theorists took aim at these social

constructions in order to challenge and destabilize them, they also made use of many of the same

constructions that were used against them in order to organize more effectively. In this chapter, I

use this dual focus on cultural representations used against marginalized communities affected

by AIDS and the reclamation of similar concepts by AIDS activists in the early days of the crisis.

Using this particular segment of LGBTQ history as a metaphor is distinctly appropriate

for a conversation about LGBTQ archives and engagements with LGBTQ history; the North

American AIDS epidemic has special significance to many Canadian and American community-

run LGBTQ archives. As I addressed in the introduction, many LGBTQ community-based

archives emerged out of, or expanded during, a historical moment when HIV/AIDS was taking

many lives and was thus limiting historical memory within LGBTQ communities. As community

members and their materials were destroyed by the epidemic and by homophobic families,

employers, and landlords, many others recognized the importance of preserving their histories

and cultures.[93] Additionally, as I will elaborate in the conclusion of this dissertation, the North

American AIDS epidemic continues to weigh heavily on contemporary popular culture, art, and

activism. In looking at how archivists and their audiences have been affected by ideas such as

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[92] In this chapter I do not want to glorify or simplify a period in LGBTQ history that was unquestionably
devastating and painful. I also certainly do not want to claim the extremely damaging representations of
people with AIDS as some sort of positive occurrence. The North American AIDS epidemic was an
incredibly important moment in LGBTQ histories and continues to affect LGBTQ communities – both in
its continued discursive presence and in the absence of many community organizers who died because of
government neglect and is thus important to continuously remember. Here, I want to honour the important
work done by AIDS activists to challenge, appropriate, and reclaim the offensive representations thrown
at them when the crisis began.
[93] Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley, CA:
University of California Press, 2012); Gerard Koskovich, Interview by Tamara de Szegheo Lang,
February 12, 2014.

identity, community, and belonging, I show how a model of contagion, to which I will return in my conclusion, might apply to the desires that exist in community-based LGBTQ archives.

Exposure: Community Archives as Contact Zones

> The idea that AIDS is transmitted by a germ, a tiny microscopic agent, complicates both social and political reactions to the illness. Germphobia is triggered whether or not there is an "AIDS germ," producing irrational, visceral responses when least expected. Germphobic panic appears despite rational understanding of the etiology and communicability of AIDS.
>
> – Cindy Patton[94]

As Martin Pernick explains in his study of the relationship between cultural and medical conceptions of contagion, the term originates from the same Latin root as the word "touching"; contagion spreads via exposure or contact.[95] He explains that before the twentieth century, medical practitioners commonly believed that contagious diseases were transmitted "from person to person by touch."[96] In the case of HIV/AIDS, which was first recognized in 1981, touch alone would not transmit the virus, and yet paranoia around contact persisted, especially in the epidemic's first decade. From fears about sitting next to strangers on the bus to refusals to share toilets and bathrooms, "a generalized panic was in full swing."[97] As Susan Sontag wrote in 1989, "infectious diseases to which sexual fault is attached always inspire fears of easy contagion and bizarre fantasies of transmission by nonvenereal means in public places."[98] These fears and

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[94] Patton, *Sex and Germs*, 51.

[95] Martin S. Pernick, "Contagion and Culture," *American Literary History* 14, no. 4 (2002): 858.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, & Modern Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 46; Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse," 265.

[98] Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (1989: London: Penguin UK, 2013), 115.

fantasies even touched those who were not seen to be sexual at all – "innocent" children who had

primarily acquired HIV through blood donations. As historian Jennifer Brier shows, many people

tried to keep children with AIDS from attending school, despite the fact that they would

presumably not be engaging in sexual acts with other children; parents feared transmission

through casual touch.[99]

A study published in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* in 1990 showed that people who

feared that HIV/AIDS could be transmitted by casual touch were more likely to refuse any form

of medical treatment if they knew or suspected that their physician was living with AIDS.[100] A

1988 American telephone survey found that over half of 2,000 respondents who had visited a

physician in the previous five years would change physicians if they knew the physician were

HIV positive, while over one quarter would change if their physician were treating patients who

were HIV positive.[101] Many people living in this time were afraid not only of contagion through

"nonveneral" physical contact with those who were positive, but through second order contact:

through those who had touched someone who had been affected by HIV/AIDS.

Even those with ties to science and access to medical education shared similar irrational

fears of people who were HIV positive or living with AIDS. Especially in the early days of the

crisis, some medical doctors rejected their professional mandate and refused to treat patients with

AIDS, while others insisted on testing patients prior to agreeing to treatment.[102] The haunting

images of police using rubber gloves at AIDS activist rallies and demonstrations visually

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[99] Jennifer Brier, "'Save Our Kids, Keep AIDS Out': Anti-AIDS Activism and the Legacy of Community Control in Queens, New York," *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 4 (2006): 965–987.
[100] Patricia A. Marshall, J. Paul O'Keefe, and Susan Gross Fisher, "Touch and Contamination: Patients' Fear of AIDS," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (1990): 129–144.
[101] Barbara Gerbert et al., "Physicians and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome: What Patients Think About Human Immunodeficiency Virus in Medical Practice," *JAMA* 262, no. 14 (1989): 1969–1972.
[102] Marshall, O'Keefe, and Fisher, "Touch and Contamination," 139.

demonstrate the persistent fear of contact with those seen to be affected by HIV/AIDS, which often translated into a generalized fear of contact with gay men and other members of LGBTQ communities.[103] In addressing anxieties about the transmission of HIV/AIDS and the spread of ideas about sexuality, Dinshaw writes, "There's always someone who is going to say no to the queer, 'don't touch me.' Don't touch me because you're sick and you'll contaminate me."[104] Seemingly any contact with LGBTQ people and ideas, whether sexual or not, is deemed dangerous by homophobic and transphobic populations.

The fear that acceptance, or worse yet recruitment, could come from contact with LGBTQ people and exposure to narratives of happy queer lives has long driven Christian fundamentalists and other sexual conservatives to denounce even basic sex education and LGBTQ education. In 1987, North Carolina U.S. Senator Jesse Helms contested funding from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for any "AIDS education, information, or prevention materials and activities that promote, encourage, or condone homosexual sexual activities or the intravenous use of illegal drugs."[105] This came after Helms saw a safer sex comic created by Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), which he disparaged because it did not discourage "any of the perverted behavior," in this case oral sex between two men, and promoted "sodomy and the homosexual lifestyle as an acceptable alternative in American society."[106] In his criticism, Helms equated representations of gay sex with its promotion, while demonstrating his fear that public contact with information about homosexuality might be the cause of homosexuality spreading in "American Society." The so-called Helms Amendment passed the U.S. Senate and House of

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[103] Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 225.
[104] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 173.
[105] Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, 70.
[106] Ibid.

Representatives with two minor changes put in place to protect children and IV drug users; the

changed funding legislation read: "None of the funds made available under this Act to the

Centers for Disease Control shall be used to provide AIDS education, information, or prevention

materials and activities that promote or encourage, *directly or indirectly*, homosexual sexual

activities [emphasis mine]."[107] For Helms and many others, contact, whether direct or indirect, is

dangerous.

This same fear at the height of the North American HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s drove

some conservatives, including Helms, to demand quarantine or isolation of people with

HIV/AIDS from the rest of the population.[108] From demands for children with AIDS to be barred

from schools to postal workers refusing to deliver mail to gay couples, it seemed that if LGBTQ

people, as representatives of AIDS, would just keep their distance, heteronormative people and

values would be safe.[109] This separation was violently policed, as homophobic physical attacks,

in addition to discursive attacks, increased during the crisis.[110] Contact with people who might be

infected, with either HIV/AIDS or a sexuality deemed non-normative, was seen as too big a risk

to take.

Using this fear of contact to destabilize mainstream thinking, AIDS activists sought to

bring the "general public" into direct contact with both the people and ideas that they were so

desperately trying to avoid; they did so in order to create contagious pathways for social change.

One obvious manifestation of this contact was the presence of direct action politics through

political groups such as AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). Direct-action politics

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[107] Ninety-four senators voted in favour of Helm's amendment, while only two voted against it; Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, 75. Meaningless by itself, since the House also has to pass all legislation.
[108] See Gould, *Moving Politics*, 61.
[109] See Brier, "'Save Our Kids, Keep AIDS Out'"; Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*.
[110] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 49.

insisted on the physical presence of people living with AIDS and their allies by gathering large numbers of bodies in public space, thus contaminating the spaces used by those who would rather keep their distance. Whether in the offices of the CDC, in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, or at the White House, these protests refused conservative calls for exclusion, separation, and quarantine.

While organized political rallies were a visible form of contact, the creation of "dangerous" information that infected the public with alternative ideas was also an incredibly important strategy. Indeed, in the epidemic's first official decade, most of the crucial information necessary for those at risk of contracting HIV and those who were living with AIDS was circulated by the gay press and AIDS activists.[111] With people like Helms attempting to curtail federal funding for comprehensive sexual health education, the mainstream media spreading misinformation and paranoia, and scientific experts developing rapidly changing knowledge about the cause of AIDS, community-based education work was ever more important. The "safer sex" publications that Helms so vehemently rejected recognized that any attempt to preach abstinence would ultimately fail, and in failing would lead to increased infection rates. Through their experience in gay liberation movements, gay activists knew that keeping people apart physically would not lead to less sexual activity, and would thus only lead to increased HIV infection.[112] Instead, safer sex materials created by GMHC, for instance, recognized the importance of sexuality and desire in any pedagogical strategy and used these factors as well as specific knowledges about and within affected communities to "help save thousands of lives."[113]

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[111] Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, 44, 63.

[112] A number of scholars have argued that gay communities had previous knowledge that helped them to "invent safe sex" due to activism about STIs in previous decades; see, for example, Jennifer Brier, *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*.

[113] Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, 76.

Through the circulation of these knowledges, gay publications and AIDS activist organizations aimed for wide-ranging contagious sexual health education.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Community-run LGBTQ archives also work to circulate "dangerous" knowledges in what could be considered a contagious model. They do this in part through the contact they make between the contents of archives and the publics who donate to and visit the archives; there can be no contagion without exposure. This is not the vision of archives that is commonly upheld. Archives are often considered repositories of historical documents and objects, places where professionals carefully care for and preserve artefacts for future generations of historians and other researchers. Many scholars, however, have sought to complicate a view of archives as just repositories, proposing instead that they are also places of encounter, knowledge, and power.[114] Community-run archives, such as those created by and for LGBTQ people, further complicate strict conservation-based models of archives. Because LGBTQ archives have direct ties to the communities they claim to represent, community interaction and transmission are typically more crucial aspects of their functioning than is the case for traditional archives, which largely focus on serving the interests of specialized researchers. Because of this relationship between LGBTQ archives and their communities, the community engagement work of these archives can be understood as a form of contact, or exposure, between community and history.

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[114] Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Antoinette M. Burton, *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*.

Since their early days, LGBTQ archives have fulfilled a function for LGTBQ

communities far beyond preserving documents. As places of encounter and community-building,

these archives have always had a sense of responsibility to the communities for which they are

named. Beyond the definition presented by archival studies scholar Andrew Flinn of community

archives as spaces where "community participation, control and ownership of the project is

essential," they also allow for encounters between those directly concerned with historical

preservation – archivists and archives volunteers – and the audiences, publics, and communities

they claim to represent.[115] One aspect of this encounter can be viewed as a form of contagious

pedagogy whereby the histories that are created through the archives are shared with the

communities from which the archival materials originated, as well as with broader audiences.[116]

This form of encounter can be seen in events such as the book launches, public lectures, and

historical exhibitions that are organized by and held in many LGBTQ archives across North

America. The pedagogical aspect of LGBTQ archives is undoubtedly an important one. After all,

histories of non-heteronormative people have been left out of many venues of formal education

such as public schools, informal education such as familial storytelling, and institutional

preservation such as government archives. This erasure is partially due to the types of fears that

Helms expressed at the beginning of the AIDS crisis. Incorporating LGBTQ content into sex

education curricula or curricula in general is still met with much resistance in North America.[117]

Because of these absences, LGBTQ archives often become places of education as well as

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[115] Andrew Flinn, "Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no. 2 (2007): 154.

[116] Ibid., 161.

[117] For a more recent example, see the 2010 debate about sexual education in the context of the proposed changes to the Ontario curriculum. During this debate, the Institute for Canadian Values and others argued that teaching young children about gender diversity, for instance, would "confuse" the children about their own gender identity. In other words, they feared that contact with knowledge of gender non-normative people has the power to change the children's gender.

preservation. If fear of contagion as I am using it here is essentially a fear of pedagogy – a fear of being changed through knowledge as Pellegrini suggests – then archives become a space of education through exposure and contamination.

There is also an affective dimension to the social aspect of the archives that can be overlooked in simplistic accounts of the process of "educating communities." As Diana Wakimoto, Christine Bruce, and Helen Partridge explain, "The community archives marked a space for queer community members to come together and remember their past. As a result, community archives sponsor many forms of public programming related to issues surrounding identity and pride."[118] This public programming incorporates both the interactive and the affective ways that these archives depend on their communities and vice versa.[119] While Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd claim that archival theory and practice have grappled much less with questions of community engagement than have museums and heritage sites, I want to take seriously the significant work that LGBTQ community-based archives are doing through outreach and engagement with the publics they claim to represent.[120] Here, I argue that community engagement is often staged through affective appeals to community members' sense of belonging to and in the histories that the archives preserve and teach. Through their public programming, archives encourage these affective appeals by bringing publics into contact with history. This is necessary for effective contagious spread.

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[118] Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge, "Archivist as Activist," 13.
[119] The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA), for instance, includes a "Community Engagement Committee" as one aspect of its operations. This committee is responsible for activities such as local history walking tours, tours of the archives, and special events at the archives.
[120] Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archive Sector: From Handing Over to Handing on," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, no. 1 (2010): 59.

The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) in Toronto, for example, is the largest

independent LGBTQ archives in the world.[121] The CLGA was founded in 1973 by members of

the Toronto-based gay and lesbian liberation publication, *The Body Politic*, commonly

recognized as one of the most important North American gay liberation periodicals of the 1970s

and 1980s.[122] The CLGA currently holds a complete run of *The Body Politic* alongside many

other periodicals, documents, and artefacts, including vertical files, photographs, posters, and t-

shirts.[123] In 2016, the CLGA employed three staff members but was primarily supported by the

work of volunteers; that year saw the greatest number of new volunteers recorded by the CLGA

and volunteer hours that totalled 12,540.[124] In bringing in these many new volunteers, the CLGA

makes contact between them and the histories represented in the archives. The work conducted

by volunteers also helps the organization to reach outward; volunteers, for instance, digitize

archival holdings that can then expose much broader publics to the content of the archives.

As CLGA archivist Don McLeod says, "without public interaction, the CLGA would not

exist." While McLeod lists public funding and donation of materials as two important

components of this interaction, he also says, "Of course, we exist not only to collect and preserve

materials, but to make them available for research: to independent researchers, students, and

professors."[125] Though the archives have always existed to enable this sort of interaction with the

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[121] The CLGA is the second largest LGBTQ archives in the world, following the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. However, due to ONE's university affiliation, the CLGA is the world's largest independent LGBTQ archives. Kate Zieman, "Youth Outreach Initiatives at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives," *Archivaria* 68, no. 68 (2009): 312.

[122] "About Us," Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, accessed May 9, 2017, http://www.clga.ca/about-us.

[123] Zieman, "Youth Outreach Initiatives at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives," 312.

[124] "CLGA 2016 Annual Report" (Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, 2016), 10.

[125] Donald W. McLeod, "The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, Research, and the Public," ActiveHistory.com, accessed 2013, http://activehistory.ca/2012/11/the-canadian-lesbian-and-gay-archives-research-and-the-public/.

public on the level of research, after the CLGA's move to a new and larger space in 2009, interaction with the public has extended beyond researchers. In commenting on this move, the CLGA's website boasts, "Our house … has been extensively renovated for improved public engagement and we can now offer a large reading room, an art gallery, and a meeting room that can be rented by other community groups. We're finding that having this larger home base has already made a big difference in the kinds of outreach work we can do."[126] Long-time volunteer Kate Zieman also comments on the social aspect of this move in saying, "When I joined the archives in 2006, we were housed in the second-floor office space at Church and Wellesley. Despite the best efforts of the volunteers, I always got the sense the visitors felt a little inhibited, or as though they needed to have an official reason for being there. The biggest benefit of the house on Isabella is that it's a more welcoming space."[127] With expanded outreach potential facilitated by the space available to invite the community *into* the archives, the CLGA's described user base also expanded to include "students, filmmakers, lawyers, journalists, professors, and artists" along with "anyone with an interest in LGBT history."[128] Zieman explains that the new space "has occasioned a new emphasis on outreach and public programming, particularly for younger people seeking information about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) history," which she ties to the importance of outreach and education to schools in Toronto.[129] In securing a space that can accommodate increased public engagement, the CLGA became a place where contact between different groups of people and exposure of people to history could grow beyond the realm of volunteers and researchers, who are often considered the primary users of archives. In this way, the archives can serve as a "contact zone,"

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[126] "About Us," *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives*.
[127] "CLGA 2016 Annual Report," 29.
[128] About Us," *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives*.
[129] Zieman, "Youth Outreach Initiatives at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives," 311–312.

a space that enables these sorts of contagious relations amongst groups of people and representations of history.

The contact zone in LGBTQ archives, as I am using the concept, is in important ways different from the concept of the contact zone put forward by James Clifford in the context of museums.[130] His use of the term, taken from the work of anthropologist Mary Louise Pratt, describes interactions in a primarily colonial context that occur within museums between those who exhibit the content of other cultures and members of those other cultures themselves. Clifford claims that, rather than simply supporting the power dynamic where those who display hold power over the displayed, there is a chance in these spaces for dialogue and resistance. In the case of LGBTQ archives, however, there is not a presumed "external audience" with whom those who are represented come into contact.[131] In these spaces, there is an assumption that those who create the archives – members of LGBTQ communities – are also the primary users. However, as Clifford explains, "few communities, even the most 'local', are homogenous."[132] For instance, while many long-time volunteers at the CLGA tend to be older white men, many of the newer volunteers and the visitors Zieman mentions tend to be younger and more diverse in age and cultural background – different groups within "the LGBTQ community" have the chance to come into contact with one another, though not always in a simple or peaceful way. Similarly, not all LGBTQ communities have been represented equally (or even proportionally) within many North American community-based archives. Because of this lack of representation, some groups such as transgender people and people of colour have created separate archives to ensure and

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[130] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
[131] Ibid., 218.
[132] Ibid., 208.

maximize their own representation.[133] At the same time, some of the marginalized voices in

LGBTQ archives have insisted on their presence within more dominant spaces during events, as

part of exhibitions, and through art interventions, as discussed in the examples below. In the

space of LGBTQ archives, with their heightened focus on community engagement, different

voices from within queer communities can come into contact, making sense of the archival

objects and the histories they represent in the context of their diverse histories, cultures, and

politics. This is not a model where static historical knowledge is simply passed from "experts" to

publics, but one where history is co-created and *felt* through discussion, dialogue, and

disagreement.

Teresa Brennan writes of atmospheres of affect in her 2004 book, *The Transmission of

Affect*.[134] Brennan questions the assumption that people live their emotional lives strictly

individually and instead claims that they are often social and psychological in origin or "that we

are not self-contained in terms of our energies." She continues, "There is no secure distinction

between the 'individual' and the 'environment.'"[135] In outlining her theory of the transmission of

affect, she explains how one's affective state, apart from apparent emotions, words, or narratives,

has the potential to spread to others. These adopted affective states often have a very real impact

on the body.[136] Of course, she explains that the ways that these affective states will be interpreted

and narrated is indeed individual.[137] She outlines "a phenomenon that suggests that the affects

may, at least in some instances, find thoughts that suit them, not the other way around."[138] In

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133 Ware, "All Power to All People?"; Rawson, "Accessing Transgender//Desiring Queer (Er?) Archival
Logics."
134 Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).
135 Ibid., 6.
136 Ibid., 3.
137 Ibid., 7.
138 Ibid.

other words, affect can be contagious. During the North American AIDS crisis, people feared

that gay people and dangerous ideas might infect "ordinary" people through contact or

proximity; affect, whether positive or negative, can spread amongst groups of people through

contact and proximity. In the space of community-run LGBTQ archives, these contagious

affective atmospheres are often present.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In June 2015, I arrived at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) in Toronto with my partner, Lee, to attend an event entitled "Lesbian Making History." The event brought together a panel of women who had been involved in the Lesbians Making History Collective (LMH), a 1980s oral history project that documented the aging lesbian community of 1950s and 1960s Toronto, and people who are currently involved in making these histories public through the space – both physical and digital – of the CLGA.[139]

The CLGA, now housed in a historic home, hosts most of its events and exhibitions on the second floor of the building in a large, open room. On this cool Sunday afternoon, the room was packed, with people spilling out into the hallway and up the stairs to the third floor. Even with the windows open, it did not take long for the crowded space to heat up, bodies emanating the warmth of proximity. The excitement felt contagious.

The crowd of 143 people was varied. While there were only sprinklings of people of colour and cisgender men, in age the crowd was incredibly mixed - some in attendance well into their eighties and others looking as though they were barely out of their teenage years. It seemed as though this particular history appealed to people of many different generations, gender presentations, and identity categories, most of whom were united through the feeling of a shared past, common ancestors.

As each speaker told personal stories of the founding and evolution of the Lesbians Making History project, the tightly packed crowd swelled and retracted, private feelings made public through body language, audible changes in breathing, and laughter. The atmosphere in the room was palpable, the evidence of affective contamination spreading among the attendees.

Didi Khayatt and Amy Gottlieb were both speakers on the panel and pointed to a conference in Toronto as the inspiration for starting the project. Khayatt described standing in awe as well-known lesbian writers Joan Nestle and Jewelle Gomez spoke while sitting on the lawn outside

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[139] This event marked the launch of The Lesbians Making History digitized collection on the CLGA website. This project was part of the multi-project LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory, created through a partnership between the CLGA and the Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimony (ALOT), an online archive based at Simon Fraser University.

the conference. She described wanting so badly to go and talk to them, but she did not; she just watched. When she said this, the room let out a long sigh and my partner turned to look at me with excitement. A desire for this seminal moment in lesbian history and a desire for these women, now cemented as important figures in the history of sexuality and gender, was tangible.

Khayatt and Gottlieb both talked about attending a panel with Joan Nestle, as well as Madeline Davis and Elizabeth Kennedy, who were discussing their oral history work in Buffalo, which would become the now-famous book, Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold. *Again, a collective sigh went up in the room, like pleasure, or something a little more… longing for a time now passed.* Boots of Leather *was an important entry point into the history of gender and sexuality for many of the younger people in attendance, and this moment in time would have been remembered first-hand by many of the older people in attendance. It was this work that inspired the Lesbians Making History collective and that sense of possibility and desire that flowed over the room like a wave.*

At the event, the members of the LMH collective joked about needing to get the interviews out of Maureen Fitzgerald's office at the University of Toronto. It was this office that I had visited as a timid Master's student to obtain interview transcripts for my Master's Thesis. Her office was tucked into the attic of University College, a building that has often served as a filming location for movies that are set at Ivy League universities. I felt like I was in an academic dream - speaking to an older generation of lesbians, historians, and academics. As Maureen read quotations from some of the original interviews at the CLGA, the characters and words were familiar. I had poured over those transcripts during my work on my M.A., while I felt lost and stupid; the only thing I knew was that I loved the history I got to read.

During Fitzgerald's quoting of oral history narrators, the space came alive with those who wanted to contribute to the historical record being created in the reading out loud of the oral history transcripts. As the interviewers spoke of the debates that occurred in the interviews about butch/femme identity in the climate of the 1980s, community members with personal experiences of the era became loud, adding to the stories being told or disagreeing with the statements being made. Sometimes friendly, sometimes uncomfortable, these insertions created a dynamic historical narrative that did not conform to a single story. These multiple histories do not bend to universal truth but are always open to reinterpretation and to the whims of memory.

At the event, I was very aware of the fact that the swelling of the crowd might have washed over people who did not feel a sense of affiliation or commonality with these largely white, largely female histories. Others in attendance might not have felt communal desire at all. They might have felt like what Sarah Ahmed describes as an "affect alien," someone who does not "experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are attributed as being good." [140] *And yet, whether people were identifying or disidentifying, the event did seem to transgress strict ideas of identitarian sameness. In this moment of queerness, of distance from identity categories and politics, this event brought into contact generations that often conceive of their sexualities and genders in such different ways. And yet these different people could be infected with these histories, whether seamlessly or with discomfort, of lesbians and of gay women, somewhat*

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[140] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 41.

similar to and somewhat different from themselves.

Risk Groups: Identity and Affectional Communities

> To get AIDS is precisely to be revealed, in the majority of cases so far, as a
> member of a certain 'risk group', a community of pariahs.
> – Susan Sontag[141]

Contagions are often seen to hit certain populations particularly hard. These "risk

groups," however, can be as much a product of social and medical discourse as of disease

distribution. As Padgug states directly, "AIDS in the United States has been constructed largely

in the image of male homosexuality," a group already so entwined in social meanings and

cultural assumptions, a group whose sexuality was already depicted as contagious.[142] Despite the

fact that certain *acts* create more risk of HIV infection, the focus of mainstream society from the

beginning of the epidemic has been on groups of people, rather than acts, as particularly "risky."

This has had devastating consequences for both gay people (assumed to be at risk) and for

straight people (assumed to be safe).

Many scholars have implicated the medical establishment in the construction of specific

groups of people, especially gay men, as "risk groups" for AIDS.[143] Though as early as 1981, the

U.S. Centers for Disease Control acknowledged AIDS as affecting the "4-H" groups –

homosexuals, hemophiliacs, heroin users, and Haitians – AIDS was quickly characterized as a

"gay cancer."[144] Medical research supported this characterization. Epstein recounts the ridicule

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[141] Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, 113.
[142] Padgug, "Gay Villain, Gay Hero," 294.
[143] Gould, *Moving Politics*; Epstein, *Impure Science*; Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse."
[144] Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents*, 46.

that one physician faced in 1981, after explaining that he had observed children with similar symptoms to gay patients.[145] Treichler gives the example of people living with AIDS who were men who had sex with men and *also* used IV drugs. In 1985, the CDC counted people who took part in multiple acts that were deemed "high risk" in the "homosexual and bisexual men" category, thus reifying the focus on identities rather than acts; homosexuality overwrote IV drug use and became the assumed cause of infection.[146] These methods of information collection and research created distortions in knowledge about how and in whom HIV infection occurred. The focus on selected constructed categories also had implications for those who were *not* often depicted as part of any of the four categories, such as women. Furthermore, this method made assumptions about the commonalities amongst people in each of these categories, treating gay men, for example, as a homogenous group.

Epstein outlines the ways that epidemiology can serve to construct and delimit the boundaries around certain groups of people affected by an illness. He explains that "when a mysterious illness appears in a specific social group, it makes eminent sense to ask what distinguishes that group from others not affected, or less affected, by the illness."[147] However, in trying to mark these differences in the case of AIDS, epidemiologists, many of whom had no knowledge of gay communities, adopted the characterizations found in sensationalist media accounts of gay promiscuity, while ignoring accounts that did not fit within this narrative. Epstein explains, "Epidemiology is inevitably a 'normalizing' science, employing—and reinforcing—unexamined notions of normality to measure and classify deviations from the norm."[148] In this way, medical science and the media worked in tandem to create the harmful

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[145] Epstein, *Impure Science*, 50.
[146] Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse," 270.
[147] Epstein, *Impure Science*, 49.
[148] Ibid., 49.

equation of gay with AIDS and of gay people as a homogenous group about whom one could easily generalize.

Mainstream media claimed that the sexual acts that men engaged in with one another (often vaguely described, but sometimes specified as anal or oral sex acts) made them particularly vulnerable.[149] Religious fundamentalists claimed that the disease was punishment for a lifestyle of sin. Others, including some within gay communities, blamed a gay male culture of promiscuity.[150] The media repeated hyperbolic claims that some of the men who had contracted AIDS had had sex with over 1,000 men, emphasizing the dangerous trope of gay excess that would inflate discursive distinctions between gay men and "normal people."[151] This created a group that, through their own moral failings, could be blamed for their deaths. Watney claims that this view of AIDS "resolutely insists that the point of emergence of the virus should be identified as its *cause*," thereby claiming that the appearance of HIV/AIDS within gay communities marks homosexuality as the cause of HIV/AIDS.[152] These early discursive representations of gay male sexuality, tied to gay male identity, seemed inescapable in the early years of HIV/AIDS. Despite much scientific research that suggested otherwise, Helms declared to the U.S. Senate in 1987 that "every case of AIDS can be traced back to a homosexual act."[153] By linking AIDS to gay identity, the New Right could create an identifiable group of people to fight against, using fear and paranoia to drive straight people – defined in contrast to those affected – away from sexual acts and identities that social conservatives had long despised.[154]

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[149] Cindy Patton, "Tremble, Hetero Swine!," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), 56–57.
[150] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 75–76.
[151] Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse," 269.
[152] Watney, "The Spectacle of AIDS," 204.
[153] Epstein, *Impure Science*, 52.
[154] Patton, "Tremble, Hetero Swine!," 156.

Through these different tracks, AIDS came to define both what it meant to be gay – the media equation of "homosexuality and homosexuals with disease and perversion" – and a marker of inclusion in the gay community – "regardless of how you contracted the virus, you become nominally queer."[155] Gould explains that the early characterization of AIDS as identity-bound, as a "gay" disease, rather than as a syndrome that affected many men who had sex with men and many other people, had grave consequences for reaching and educating diverse communities, some of whom did not believe that they were at risk or did not want to be linked with the primary publicly-identified risk group: homosexuals.[156]

Within mainstream media and medical reports, the affected gay communities were also generally depicted as white and middle-class, which contributed to low rates of diagnosis and led to the rapid spread of HIV in communities of colour, amongst other marginalized groups.[157] Cathy Cohen, for instance, investigates the response to AIDS within African American communities. She explains that the conflation of AIDS with white gay men limited the funding for AIDS care within racialized communities. It also affected the ability of HIV positive people to gain community and familial support for fear of being associated with the whiteness and homosexuality that was so often depicted.[158] Gould comments on the ways in which the focus on white gay men also limited who was included in drug trials and defined which infections were privileged in medical definitions of AIDS. This particularly affected women, people of colour, and poor people.[159]

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[155] Gould, *Moving Politics*; Patton, "Tremble, Hetero Swine!," 154.
[156] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 60.
[157] Marina Levina, *Pandemics and the Media* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), 43.
[158] Cathy J. Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[159] Deborah B. Gould, "ACT UP, Racism, and the Question of How to Use History," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 1 (2012): 59.

AIDS as a "gay disease" drew false boundaries around a diverse constituency of people living with AIDS, while falsely excluding others from perceived risks of infection. This had devastating effects, but at the same time AIDS activists used this characterization of a "gay disease" to their benefit. Crimp describes the early links made between AIDS and gay people as creating "two interconnected conditions in the United States: that AIDS would be an epidemic of stigmatization rooted in homophobia and that the response to AIDS would depend in very large measure on the … gay movement."[160] Whether those affected by AIDS were alike or not in certain defining ways, a sort of "provisional unity" was enabled through the use of identity groups for affective or political ends.[161]

Though early activists contested the depiction of gay men as particularly contagious, this depiction was also used strategically by those same activists. Early medical and media constructions of the "gay cancer" and "Gay-Related Immune Disorder," repeated by many gay community publications, served as a direct way to alert men who identified as gay to a new danger.[162] This linkage to gay identity also facilitated the use of gay community resources to address the epidemic. After all, as Padgug describes, the gay community had been politically active for decades and could thus build on previous activist experience in order to help various groups affected by HIV/AIDS.[163]

LGBTQ people were very involved in fighting AIDS, from providing care for friends and strangers with AIDS to lobbying the government and consulting with doctors and the CDC. Crimp draws special attention to one of the first and largest AIDS Service Organizations (ASO)

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[160] Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, 60.
[161] See Lisa Duggan, "Making It Perfectly Queer," *Socialist Review* 22, no. 1 (1992): 27.
[162] Epstein, *Impure Science*, 53.
[163] Padgug, "Gay Villain, Gay Hero," 299.

in the United States, Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC).[164] The name of the ASO, at first quite

controversial, immediately signaled an identitarian orientation. The founders of GMHC were

gay-identified men themselves, and this also brought with it useful community knowledge that

aided in creating programming that could respond to specific acts, habits, and histories specific

to gay male communities. This also called gay men into the organization as people whom the

organization served as well as those who should join in its efforts. As Patton explains of

identities, "There is a pragmatic, temporal aspect to identities, whether we believe in them or not:

the requirement to *act* implicit in even transient identities means that those who inhabit them feel

they must do something and do it now."[165] In the case of the North American AIDS crisis, the

links to gay male identity made many gay men feel as though they must act and must act

immediately, as their communities were the targets of a contagious disease *and* of an epidemic of

signification. As many scholars contend, the involvement of targeted communities was one of

the definitive factors in the advancements – both medical and social – in responding to the AIDS

crisis.[166]

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The notion of risk groups, particularly prone to the effects of contagion, can also be seen

in community-based LGBTQ archives. In many of these archives, invoking identity has been one

method of fostering interest in the histories the archives construct and spreading affective

engagements with them. Most obviously, many archives use identity categories in their names –

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[164] Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, 60.
[165] Patton, "Tremble, Hetero Swine!," 147.
[166] Padgug, "Gay Villain, Gay Hero," 298.

the Lesbian Herstory Archives (located in Brooklyn), the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives,[167] the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society (in San Francisco), the online Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimony (based in Vancouver), the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries (in Los Angeles), and so on. These names signal to the archive visitor both what they might find in the archive – historical remnants of lives that can be imagined as lesbian or gay or linked to contemporary gay or lesbian identities – but also who might be the main users of the archives – lesbian and gay visitors. Of course, just as the idea of AIDS risk groups drew false boundaries around a diverse group of people, so too do the identity categories invoked in the names of LGBT archives. The terms "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," and "transgender" do not represent many archives visitors who might not identify with those terms, or many of the histories within the archives, including those which might have occurred before these identitarian terms and concepts even existed. Queer theorists have drawn attention to the ways in which LGBTQ identity politics can serve to create as many exclusions as they do inclusions.[168] They have also shown how identity politics can work to normalize particular appearances, behaviours, and politics, which alienate or exclude some people, especially racialized people and others who are further marginalized, will never be able to attain.[169] While queer theorists have raised important criticisms of gay and lesbian identity politics, identity

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[167] The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives has been critiqued widely for only including gay and lesbian identity markers in its name despite having more diverse holdings and more diverse volunteers and visitors. The CLGA is currently undergoing a process to change the name of the organization.

[168] David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Jose Muñoz, "Introduction: What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?," *Social Text* 23, no. 3–4 (2005): 1–17; Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ* 1 (1993): 17–32; Michael Warner, "Introduction," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), vii–xxxi; Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, David Halperin, and Michele Aina Barale (New York City, NY, 1993), 3–44.

[169] Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, ed. Dana Nelson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 175–194; Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," *Cultural Politics* 11 (1997): 374–380.

politics are also the basis of relationships that I see as promising vehicles for contagion. These relationships are built on contact with and contamination of others, even if the others are contained within the archival materials. This is the strength of identity categories at their best, when they bring people together around real or imagined commonalities, when people can find something in another person that resonates.

While many queer theorists have called for a rethinking or rejection of identity categories, many have also recognized their utility.[170] This ambivalence is often overlooked in histories of queer theory. A significant number of queer studies scholars have advocated for the strategic use of identity in creating legible groups on whose behalf legal and social rights can be claimed. Others have drawn attention to the affective importance of social identity and group belonging, which is what I am more interested in here. For example, Heather Love claims that social identities and communal ties have been, for some people, important for their very survival.[171] As Sharon Holland explains in the context of race and sexuality, identifying with other people offers a sense of belonging. As she notes, "Given the slipperiness of identity, identifying with others can be a fictitious and fantastic undertaking. Fantasy, of course, can oscillate between delusion and creative hope."[172] Even if, as many argue, identities are based on defining principles that are largely fictitious or "slippery," they still have very real implications for how people live their lives. In her work on lesbian history, Lisa Duggan contests essentialist conceptions of identity as

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[170] In this chapter, I do not want to make an easy critique of identity categories - that they are too restrictive, that they create rigid boundaries around their constituencies, that they leave many people unrecognizable and unsupported, that they do not address desires and practices that are not based on identities. This critique has been made by many and it is an important critique to make. However, by simply dismissing identity categories because of these failures, we lose out on the potentially productive aspects of LGBT and queer identities.

[171] Heather Love, "Queers _____ This," in *After Sex? on Writing Since Queer Theory*, ed. Andrew Parker and Janet Halley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 183.

[172] Sharon Patricia Holland, *The Erotic Life of Racism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 4.

biological and defines identity instead as "a narrative of a subject's location within social structure." She explains, "As stories rather than mere labels, identities traverse the space between the social world and subjective experience. … Individual identities, usually multiple and often contradictory, structure and give meaning to personal experience."[173] For Duggan, identities "forge connections among individuals and provide links between past and present, becoming the basis for cultural representation and political action." In this claim, Duggan charts a relationship between the naming of a personal identity and the connections that come from it in creating community and community belonging. These fantasies, methods of survival, experiences of self, and connections between time periods are affective and effective applications of strategic identitarian practices. For Duggan, these connections also extend across time, which is a crucial aspect of my work in the following chapters.

I use identity and community here as strongly linked concepts. While community can exist independently of identity – and I will talk about this more later – I believe that invocations of identity categories typically work alongside invocations of group belonging – identity is social. John D'Emilio, in 1983, made a plea to gay rights activists for recognizing the importance of this kind of identity. He claimed that the "building of an 'affectional community'" was as important to gay activism as were the rights that were being fought for.[174] Not simply about keeping company, these affectional communities are imbued with feeling – desire, anger, fear, belonging – that pull members into communities and affect how people operate within them. LGBTQ archives, I think, play an important role in the building of affectional communities,

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[173] Lisa Duggan, "The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology, and the Lesbian Subject in Turn-of-the-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18, no. 4 (1993): 793.
[174] John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, eds. Ann B. Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 111.

especially affectional communities that exist across time. These communities create possibilities for affective contamination and contagion.

In LGBTQ archives, the connection between identity and community extends beyond the names of the archives. There is also the discursive and affective construction of a community that these identity categories come to represent – LGBTQ archives create a sense of a shared history that encompasses the content of the archives and the archives visitors themselves. For example, the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives uses the slogan "preserving *our* histories." Similarly, a semi-permanent exhibit at the GLBT History Museum, which is a project of the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco, is entitled "*Our* Vast Queer Past." The invocation of "our" history and "our" past attempts to welcome the archives visitor into a community in the present that is united by a shared past, but also a community that includes people, places, and events in the past. This rich "community across time," to use Dinshaw's term, gives visitors not only a sense of kinship, but also a sense of lineage or ancestry.[175] The use of "our" is one way to form an affectional community. Of course, we could question exactly who this "our" is and, perhaps more importantly, who this "our" is not. For some visitors, "our" might be perceived as distinguishable from "your." These are important concerns. However, for the time being, I am more interested in what this "our" might do through its invocation of queer lineage.

While affectional communities serve an important role in supporting their members and providing a sense of belonging for those who fit in with their constituting principles, I want to focus on a different aspect of these affectional communities. Not only do these communities allow members to feel a sense of belonging to the group, but they also allow for a sense that the group and its history belong to the members, creating a sense of responsibility for research and

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[175] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 28.

preservation. As perceived risk groups called gay men into AIDS activism, the invocation of community can call members into a shared sense of accountability to and love of LGBTQ history.

As outlined above in the context of AIDS activism, Patton argues that to be part of an identity category is not an attempt to be, but instead to do; identity serves as a demand to act. She writes, "More than standing for the discovery of a self, identities suture those who take them up to specific moral duties. Identities carry with them a requirement to act, which is felt as 'what a person like me does.'"[176] Patton fully recognizes the socially constructed and temporally shifting nature of identities. This does not, however, mean that they are void of political utility – in fact, in her formulation, it is the performativity of identities that are their very strength. Identities, and what it means to claim them, can shift and change depending on various factors. They do not have to be truth-statements but instead can be calls to action.

Patton's vision of identity politics is an explicitly and legibly political one – invoking identity as a way to fight for rights in a political playing field that includes oppositional parties – the New Right in her case – who want to see the demise or discrediting of sexually marginalized groups. In the chapters that follow, I am more interested in affectively-inspired actions of historical interest, preservation, and education that come from identifications with the queer past, which I would argue is a form of politics, too. In evoking a sense of our history, archives are prescribing what a queer person, or "a person like me," as Patton says, "does," or as I might say, "feels." LGBTQ archives, in promoting a particular sense of belonging, can pique LGBTQ people's interests in certain topics. In the process, specific histories and historical artifacts come to be cared about and cared for.

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[176] Patton, "Tremble, Hetero Swine!," 147.

Indeed, much of early gay and lesbian history was about this sort of identification with, and related sense of responsibility to, figures from the past. In their early study of lesbian subcultures in Buffalo, Kennedy and Davis write, "Recovering our hidden history was a labor of love, and restoring this history to our community was a political responsibility."[177] They see their own belonging to a lesbian community as creating a sense of responsibility for the political work of making history, though we could just as easily say that this was for the political work of learning history, preserving history, or loving history. In identifying with a "risk group" comprised of lesbians in the past and present, Kennedy and Davis see themselves reflected in the history that they are trying to recuperate and preserve. This identification and feeling of belonging to the risk group constructed under the rubric "lesbian" both instructs a sense of "what a person like me feels" – a sense of belonging and recognition – and "what a person like me does" – learning or recovering community history.

Many community-run LGBTQ archives have been founded on this sense of political responsibility based on identifications with people in the past. The Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA), for instance, was established in 1974 in the apartment of Joan Nestle and Deb Edel. Archival objects filled the apartment as the lovers' private home became "a people's public space."[178] Nestle offered up her apartment for this work of memory because, in her words, "we wanted our story to be told by us, shared by us and preserved by us."[179] Very much tied to lesbian identity, the LHA encourages lesbians to both donate their own materials as well as care for the materials of others. Nestle writes that "the lives of all lesbians are worthy of being documented" and thus, as Cvetkovich explains, "it is LHA's policy … not to refuse any donation

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[177] Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*.
[178] Nestle, "Who Were We to Do Such a Thing?," 237.
[179] Nestle, "The Will to Remember," 87.

of materials that a lesbian considers critical in her life and actively to encourage ordinary lesbians to collect and donate the archival evidence of their everyday lives."[180] This care work for history grew out of the relationships felt by Nestle with others who were brought together by the identity category lesbian. She writes that "for me, part of that passionate commitment to lesbian archiving is to say thank you to a generation of women who gave me love and showed me my first portraits of lesbian courage."[181] The affective care given to Nestle by these women was reciprocated through Nestle's grassroots archiving practice, which refused institutionalization and instead focused on teaching archiving skills to interested lesbians; the tools needed to share in the care of lesbian history were created and spread by a community created through shared love of this history within the LHA.[182]

The LHA quickly outgrew its home of origin and the community that fostered the archives was quick to take responsibility for its continued existence. In 1993, the archives moved to a brownstone in Brooklyn's Park Slope neighbourhood.[183] This move was enabled by many monetary donations given by individuals; the move was enabled by the group the archives serves rather than by external powers such as government agencies, educational institutions, or business corporations. The community created and gave sustenance to the histories held within the archives. In reflecting recently on the early days of the LHA, Nestle writes:

> Forty years later, the uniqueness of the LHA still stands: its grassroots base; its refusal of governmental funds; its demystifying of the archives profession; its determination to keep *lesbian* as the all-inclusive noun; the collective ownership of its building, which functions as a community cultural center, funded through

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[180] Nestle, "The Will to Remember," 88; Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 243.
[181] Nestle, "The Will to Remember," 93.
[182] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 250.
[183] Ibid., 241.

small donations from many; its collective structure where consensus still rules—thus the building, the means of organization, its lesbian centeredness, makes the LHA its own kind of artifact.[184]

While the LHA undoubtedly serves an important role in preserving historical artifacts that aid in the writing of histories and historical research more generally, it also importantly encourages affectional communities across time, which we might conceptualize as "risk groups," by making the emotional aspects of archival work contagious.[185]

In *Dust*, Carolyn Steedman responds to Derrida's *Archive Fever* by talking about the dust that many researchers encounter in archives, contrasting the metaphorical "archiving fever" that Derrida proposes with the literal illness that archives might bring out in researchers.[186] She follows a long history of the manufacture of books and book binding to make a somewhat humourous case for the way that doing archival research with potentially harmful materials, like anthrax in historical leather bindings, can actually infect the researcher, changing the way they interact with the texts and the histories they are drawing from them. While I would shift this reading from a physical reaction to an affective one, this sort of change through infection would be the kind of symptom I would like to read into archival engagement – that, on one level, LGBTQ archives like the LHA want visitors to feel changed by the histories they preserve and present, but also want them to demonstrate this change through action. The use of identity categories, similar to the social construction of risk groups in the early days of the North American AIDS crisis, perform affective work to bring individuals to this change and action.

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[184] Nestle, "Who Were We to Do Such a Thing?," 236.
[185] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 250.
[186] Steedman, *Dust*.

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In February 2011, I visited the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, New York, looking to force a connection. I was curious about my own desires in learning queer history and about my own attachments to personal narratives from the past when written by queer people. I was uneasy at my assumption that a lesbian writer would speak to me more than others, but nonetheless wanted to experiment.

Though I wanted to find a set of letters or journals written by someone whom I knew nothing about, I was immediately drawn to the biographical boxes of Joan Nestle. Inside the first box I found a folder marked "Correspondence – Lee Lightning" and inside the folder came upon a letter. The letter expressed the author's disbelief at the deep connection she felt with Joan, even though the two had never met, and expressed an intense desire to meet in person. I searched the archives for more evidence of Lee Lightning.

I approached this process with fervent obsession, infected with a certain archive fever, creating an entire alternate narrative for Joan's life.[187] I saw the name 'Lee' repeated over and over and decided on a long, drawn out relationship between the two. I ignored evidence that there were actually three separate people named Lee who touched down on Joan's life in different capacities. I ignored the subtle differences in handwriting. I ignored the different surnames. I became rabid. I had created a complex lie, a search for origins – my own and Joan's.

I wondered about my own investments in creating a timeline for Joan and Lee's relationship. I wondered why it was that I wanted so badly to know whether they ever met in person, whether they ever had sex or a relationship. I was using Lee Lynch to extend the timeline of Lee Lightning. I was using Lee Hudson to provide evidence of sexual realization, of sexual climax. I used all three of these figures to tell me about my own Lee, my own lover. I was looking to the past to try to know the future of my new, intense and incredibly complicated love. Somehow if I knew what happened to Joan and Lee, then my own process, my own feelings, would be recognized and validated.

The final piece of evidence I found of Lee Lightning, wedged at the bottom of a thin file folder, was a long handwritten letter, resting alongside a small photograph of a child – "Lee Lightning at age 6." I look to this object as a representation of productive plurality. People connect with objects or stories in a multitude of ways. Different people will recognize images or texts in the queer archive as differently meaningful. Though the photograph is not of someone well-known and would not likely be considered significant by a more traditional historian, the picture becomes significant to Lee, to Joan, and to me on an affective level, linked to our experiences of personal memory, cultural narrative, and individual fantasy.

Lee is looking to her own origins, rereading and resignifying her personal history as a form of recognition of who she was at the time of writing the letter and a way of explaining her life trajectory. In the letter, she writes, "Even now when I look at pictures of myself at 10 years old

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[187] Derrida, *Archive Fever*.

I'm amazed at what an out there butch I was." Lee is reaching backward, creating a temporal fold, connecting the six-year old with the thirty-seven-year old through gender and sexual identity. As a queer adult, she rewrites herself as a queer child. She experiences a newfound relationship with herself as a child, not through memory proper but through the rereading of a mnemonic device – rereading the childhood photograph from the perspective of identity and identification in the present.

However, she is not only reflecting on this by herself. She shares herself as a child with Joan. The picture, and what it means to a queer life, becomes a representation of queer history more generally. Lee can stand in for many other queer figures who lived through the same mid-twentieth-century era that Joan did. Lee and Joan experienced the formation of a relationship, romantically and erotically charged, based on the familiarity brought out by the photograph.

Having been left at the LHA, this photograph is resignified once again by me, the stranger, the researcher, the fan. From these tiny fragments of a story about Joan and Lee, I create an elaborate fantasy. I look for a history of desire, of intense recognition, their recognition like mine, their romantic and erotic desire, like mine. I look for a validation of the connection I feel with my lover through the experience of a connection I feel with Joan and with Lee Lightning. They had never physically met each other. I have never met them. I experience an affair, a romance with and through this object, not with the "real" people whose story I write. On important levels, my story infects theirs, and theirs mine.

Though different relationships are formed, perhaps all of these gestures are similar. I see them all as reflecting a desire to find recognition, whether that is the recognition of an uncanny familiarity, or for validation of experience through others' recognition. As Joan tells me later, "Lee Lynch and I never had an affair of the body--but we did have one of history--the butch-fem history of the late 50s. And it all took place in the archives."[188] I see my own viewing of the archive as clouded by my desire, my lust, my need to discover another relationship based on a sense of uncanny familiarity. Connections made in archives through objects – letters, photographs, and more – are part of the work of researching history.

Joan identifies as a lesbian, I identify as queer. My Lee is non-binary and her Lee is butch. Our sexual identities and desires are similar but not the same, though they were an initial point of identification on my part. However, while some aspects of Joan's sexual identity and gender identity did resonate, it was the evidence of desire, regret, pain, and loss that infected my thoughts, bringing me into the story of Joan and her three Lees.

Infection: From Identity Politics to Universalizing Narratives

Infection is an invasion; a breaching of boundaries. Infection is an event; a becoming with. Infection is a 'fluctuation' in the present order of things.

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[188] Joan Nestle, email message to the author, August 23, 2013.

Marker of both individual and social vulnerabilities. The virus invades the body; the disease (or in the newer version, the fear of the disease) is described as invading the whole society.

- Susan Sontag[190]

In the early days of the North American AIDS epidemic, the borders around "risk groups" were hotly contested. Fears of contagion simultaneously marked queer bodies and the whole population as "at risk" of contracting the syndrome. While many news sources linked gay men with AIDS and magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* made unreasonable claims that women were not at great risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, another fear lingered that the "gay disease" would spread across North America, no longer affecting only those whom mainstream media had deemed "deserving" of the punishment of disease.[191] Treichler marks December 1986 as a turning point when mainstream magazine coverage of AIDS presented HIV as also invading "the so-called 'general population.'"[192] In this context, "the so-called 'general population'" was generally depicted as "young, white urban heterosexuals," the very opposite image of the gay, the racialized, or the drug addicted.[193] AIDS was no longer seen as a problem that could be easily attributed to an identifiable group.

Judith Butler comments on the paranoia around AIDS with regard to the penetrability of both bodies and groups of people, suggesting that boundaries, or margins, are always sites of fear and discomfort, especially when they are not fixed. In the context of AIDS hysteria, mainstream

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[189] Celia Lowe, "Infection," *Environmental Humanities* 5 (2014): 301.
[190] Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, 154.
[191] Paula A. Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic* (Durham, NC Duke University Press, 1999), 236.
[192] Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse," 273.
[193] Ibid.

fears suggested that the boundaries around risk groups were being pushed out from within, contributing to paranoia about gay and bisexual men acting as an "HIV bridge" into heterosexual communities.[194] Though bisexual men (seen to be concealed gays) and gay men were no longer seen as the only group to be affected by AIDS, they were still being blamed for its spread.[195]

This was not a new idea. The concern that homosexuality itself might spread to straight children or adults has long been used against LGBTQ people to decry their sexuality. From narratives of recruitment to discourses of seduction, queer people and queer lives have often been seen as contagious. These well-rehearsed stereotypes primed society to respond in inflated ways to a literal virus that could be transmitted to so-called innocents.

Susan Sontag, in *AIDS and its Metaphors*, reflects on the concept of "plague," which has often been used to describe the AIDS crisis. She claims that the diseases that are most feared, the ones mostly likely to be named a "plague," are those that "transform the body into something alienating."[196] In some ways, however, a virus like HIV always transforms, always changes a body at the levels of the cellular, the biological, and the social. In analyzing New Right media during the early AIDS crisis, Patton notices a narrative construction whereby descriptions of the ways that the "AIDS virus" replicates inside the body, changing the functioning of healthy cells, is discursively linked to the notion of homosexuals invading a "healthy" society and changing traditional values.[197] According to the discursive constructions that Patton analyzes, while "'germs' like spies can sneak unseen into the body and can only be discovered through special

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[194] Patton, "Tremble, Hetero Swine!," 159.
[195] Bisexual men, often assumed to be hiding their homosexuality, were seen as a particular threat as their sexual orientation could not be detected by their female partners or the rest of society. This fear and stigma disproportionately affected racialized men and others who did not identify as gay or bisexual but rather as men who sometimes had sex with men.
[196] Patton, "Tremble, Hetero Swine!," 133.
[197] Ibid., 156.

intelligence," "homosexuals, according to the New Right, have ascended to power largely because they can recognize each other when ordinary citizens (and especially the homosexuals' own wives) cannot."[198] The undetectable nature of both HIV and homosexuality is depicted as a threat to heteronormativity, and especially to those seen as innocent: wives and children. Fear of the unknown resulted in many calls to mark the bodies of people with AIDS with tattoos or by insisting on identifying people who tested positive for HIV, forcing them to "come out," no matter how they identified or how they contracted the virus.

In contrast, the work of radical gay liberationists in the 1970s and beyond was to show that "we are everywhere," whether or not heteronormative members of society could detect "us." Appropriating, reclaiming, and resignifying the long history of negative discourses of contagious sexualities, gay liberationists claimed that contact with gay people would be a powerful way to combat homophobia. If more gay people came out and publicly declared their sexual identity, those who knew them, who were in close contact with them, would be changed by their proximity. Tolerance of homosexuality would increase and society would be changed.[199] Psychological and sociological studies add further credence to this notion, suggesting that there is a correlation between encounters with LGBTQ people, even if only on television, and support for LGBTQ rights.[200]

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[198] Patton, *Sex and Germs*, 11; Patton, "Tremble, Hetero Swine!," 148.
[199] Marc Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 84.
[200] Jill M. Chonody, Phillip S. Kavanagh, and Michael R. Woodford, "Does Closeness to Someone Who Is Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Influence Etiology Beliefs About Homosexuality?," *Journal of Homosexuality* 63, no. 12 (2016): 1726–1748; Bradley J. Bond and Benjamin L. Compton, "Gay On-Screen: The Relationship Between Exposure to Gay Characters on Television and Heterosexual Audiences' Endorsement of Gay Equality," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 59, no. 4 (2015): 717–732,; Gregory M. Herek and Eric K. Glunt, "Interpersonal Contact and Heterosexuals' Attitudes toward Gay Men: Results from a National Survey," *The Journal of Sex Research* 30, no. 3 (1993): 239–244.

This thinking extended beyond non-LGBTQ people's opinions being changed by contact with LGBTQ people. As historian Marc Stein explains, "Gay liberationists also wanted *everyone* to come out. They joined homophiles in referring to gay people as a minority group, but simultaneously believed that all people could transcend the constraints that society placed on same-sex sexual expression."[201] This inclination can be seen in the 1970 "Woman-Identified Woman" manifesto, where Radicalesbians claimed that feminists should consider same-sex relationships in order to release themselves from patriarchal oppression and use their energy to support other women instead of men.[202] The early 1970s song "Every Woman Can Be a Lesbian" by Alix Dobkin echoed this sentiment by proclaiming, "She's chosen to be a dyke like me." Similarly, while some liberationists stressed divisions between men and women, others wanted to do away with sexual *and* gender norms, ultimately fighting for a society free of binary identities.[203]

LGBTQ movements have engaged the fear of queer contagion in more explicit ways over the past five decades as well. The Lesbian Avengers, many of whom had been active in AIDS organizing, fought mainstream silence and stereotypes about lesbians. Taking aim at mainstream fears that LGBTQ people were particularly contagious when it came to children, the Lesbian Avengers' first action supported the "Rainbow Curriculum" proposed for the Board of Education in New York. The curriculum was strongly contested as it included LGBTQ people, as well as diverse cultures and races, as topics that should be addressed with children. Using tactics that

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[201] Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement*, 84.

[202] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1–29. Similar arguments have been made by many others, including Adrienne Rich in 1980. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631–660.

[203] Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement*, 84.

would appeal to children such as a marching band and lavender balloons that read "Ask about lesbian lives," the Lesbian Avengers marched to a Queens, New York, elementary school, bringing gay people into close proximity with children, an action that made many people, even within the Lesbian Avengers, uncomfortable. Continuing with this messaging, during the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation, Lesbian Avengers chanted, "Ten percent is not enough. Recruit! Recruit! Recruit!"[204]

LGBTQ artists also embraced fears of gay contagion, while satirizing these fears. In 1997, Lori Millan and Shawna Dempsey created the site-specific performance "The Lesbian National Park Rangers" within Canada's oldest national park in Banff.[205] The humourous performance presented Millan and Dempsey in convincing park ranger attire, roaming the streets of the town of Banff and its adjacent trails and rivers, handing out pamphlets to unsuspecting tourists. Playing on fears of gay recruitment of children often tied to homosocial organizations such as the Boy Scouts, the Lesbian Park Rangers organized a campaign featuring posters and a recruitment booth that boldly claimed: "Lesbian National Parks and Services wants YOU!" Additionally, in their "Final Report," they promoted the introduction of "homosexual species" into the park, which could result in "exponential multiplication."[206] Whether these actions tried to convince everyone to identify as gay, support the notion that gay recruitment should be acceptable, or promote the idea that education about diversity is important, they sought to push the boundaries between gay and not-gay, inserting explicit queer content into spaces seen as otherwise void of sexual diversity.

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[204] Kelly J. Cogswell, *Eating Fire: My Life as a Lesbian Avenger* (Minneapolis, MN: University Of Minnesota Press, 2014).

[205] bj wray, "The Elephant, the Mouse, and the Lesbian National Park Rangers," in *In a Queer Country: Gay and Lesbian Studies in the Canadian Context*, ed. Terry Goldie (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp, 2001), 170.

[206] Ibid., 171.

The long tradition of LGBTQ people blurring boundaries – geographic and sexual – was another factor that AIDS activists mobilized to their own advantage. While testing positive for HIV initially meant that a person would be associated with gay communities, whether or not they identified with them, as the disease spread the lines between gay and not-gay became partially blurred. For instance, despite the explicit links to gay male identity through its name and founding members, GMHC grew, partly because of pressure from people who did not identify as gay men, to include organizers and volunteers who identified as gay and straight, men and women.[207] The programming of GMHC also expanded to provide targeted support to people with AIDS who did not identify as gay men, including women, IV drug users, sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM), and infants. Organizations such as the GMHC worked to take the knowledge and tactics developed within the gay community's response to AIDS and extend them to the specific needs of other communities. Importantly, Brier explains that these extensions were not always easy; some activist organizations found that the tactics that had been applied to gay men were not effective for people who did not identify in this way.[208] However, the groups not initially included in organizations similar to GMHC, such as women and people of colour, many of whom had extensive experience in feminist and civil rights movements, also brought their specific knowledge and experience into these forms of AIDS activism. Knowledge about AIDS and activism leaked through the boundaries set around the disease's most visible group, infecting from within and without.

Similarly, ACT UP – though certainly tied to queerness and LGBTQ communities – included more than just gay men and addressed the needs of more than just gay men. ACT UP's actions included needle exchanges, health care for people living in poverty, medical research into

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[207] Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, 61.
[208] Brier, *Infectious Ideas*.

women's experiences of AIDS, and rights for HIV positive Haitians being held in the Guantanamo Naval Base.[209] Many lesbians were also involved in ACT UP organizing, despite relatively low numbers of lesbians directly affected by HIV/AIDS. Unlike the 1970s, when many political organizations involving gay men and lesbians were predominantly or exclusively male or female, AIDS activism brought the two groups together through a common emotional orientation and political cause.[210] As former ACT UP member Zoe Leonard recounted of her experiences at ACT UP New York meetings, "I didn't come into that room because I was involved in a certain college, and I didn't come into that room because I was queer. I met people in that room who were older than me, younger than me, who had different backgrounds from me, because we had this one, other thing in common: that someone we knew or loved was either dead or dying of AIDS."[211] While the shared experience invoked by Leonard was an event – the death of a loved one – it was also an emotion – grief or anger. While identity played a vital role in ACT UP, many members have commented on the emotional aspect of group belonging as well. Perhaps most evident in the statement read at the beginning of each ACT UP New York meeting, the group's members were not united in identity; they were "united in anger." As Cvetkovich explains, ACT UP "was forged out of the emotional crucible of anger and grief created by homophobic neglect and an escalating number of deaths."[212] Former ACT UP member Amy Bauer describes the meetings as cathartic; ACT UP "gave people a place to be with other people

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[209] Gould, "ACT UP, Racism"; Karma R. Chávez, "ACT UP, Haitian Migrants, and Alternative Memories of HIV/AIDS," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 1 (2012): 63–68.
[210] Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement*, 148; Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 158; Padgug, "Gay Villain, Gay Hero," 200.
[211] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 177.
[212] Ibid., 157.

who were as angry as they were."[213] The social aspects of emotions were tremendously

important in the success of ACT UP as a political organization.

As a group that was formed out of anger and grief, ACT UP was created and maintained

by emotion; emotion was infectious. ACT UP Chicago member and sociologist Deborah Gould

studies ACT UP's changing "emotional habitus," or the "emotional disposition" shared by the

group, providing members with "a template for what to and how to feel."[214] Within the context

of ACT UP, the collectively emotional experiences of anger, pride, and desire, among other

feelings, contributed to the creation, sustenance, and ultimate demise of the group. Affective

infection brought together diverse people.

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In the context of archival engagement, this sort of contagious spread beyond the

boundaries of identity groups and toward infectious experience is desirable. Though community-

run LGBTQ archives primarily serve the communities that they represent – LGBTQ people – the

archives are also trying to demonstrate their relevance to broader populations. In this way, the

image of the contagious queer, or the spread of interest and education beyond the borders of

LGBTQ communities, might be a useful way of framing the work that is being performed in

these community spaces.

While LGBTQ archives were never used exclusively by LGBTQ people, some of these

institutions, while they are predominantly used by "community members," are increasingly

reaching out to publics beyond the confines of these communities. Historians and archivists have

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[213] Ibid., 169.
[214] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 34.

long been advocating for the importance of queer histories for all people and now LGBTQ

archives are finding themselves in the position of queer history educators for diverse

audiences.[215] For example, the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives has been asked by high

school teachers to teach queer history to student groups and the archives sees itself taking on this

role more in the future.[216] The GLBT History Museum conducts tours for school groups as well

as to San Francisco tourists, most of whom are not LGBTQ-identified.[217] Visitors who come into

contact with LGBTQ archival artifacts are not all queer themselves, and yet there is still the

possibility for these visitors to come to care about the histories with which they are presented.

The ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the University of Southern California

Libraries has North America's longest history of a continuously running LGBTQ archives,

although its history is complicated and plagued with conflict.[218] With its roots in the homophile

publication *ONE* magazine, ONE, Incorporated, began to offer library and educational

programming in the 1950s and developed into a library and then archives over the following

decades.[219] At the same time, the International Lesbian and Gay Archives (ILGA) was

developing out of the personal collections of Jim Kepner, an early member of the homophile

group the Mattachine Society and ONE, Inc. Kepner's collection, which he started in the 1940s,

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[215] For some of the ways that historians have emphasized the importance of LGBTQ histories for non-LGBTQ people, see Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement*; George Chauncey, "'What Gay Studies Taught the Court,'" *GLQ* 10, no. 3 (2004): 509–538; Martin B. Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr., eds., *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York, NY: Signet, 1989).

[216] Zieman, "Youth Outreach Initiatives at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives," 315–316.

[217] Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past."

[218] The history of the organization that I offer here is necessarily simplified. For a more detailed history, see Rebecka Sheffield, "The Emergence, Development and Survival of Four Lesbian and Gay Archives" (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2015).

[219] ONE Magazine began publication in 1953 and ended in 1967. In 1956, ONE created an "Institute for Homophile Studies," which would later become the first educational institution in the U.S. to grant Masters and Ph.D. degrees in "Homophile Studies"; "History," ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries, accessed October 13, 2017, http://one.usc.edu/about/history/.

grew into the ILGA. After both faced financial hardships and difficulty finding space for their

archives, ONE, Inc. merged with the ILGA and decided to partner with the University of

Southern California (USC) to ensure the sustainability of the organizations and the preservation

of the collections. The ONE International Lesbian and Gay Archives opened in 2000 and now

occupies two locations – the ONE Gallery in West Hollywood, within the "Gay Village," and the

ONE Archives, located in a former fraternity house near the USC Campus.[220]

Currently the largest LGBTQ archives in the world, ONE is a national archives with a

primary focus on Los Angeles history.[221] Since 2010, the ONE Archives has been part of the

USC libraries system. The two archives that merged were both created and maintained to

primarily serve LGBTQ communities. While ONE maintains its commitment to LGBTQ

communities, it also, in its new university-based residence, appeals to a broader group of

students and researchers, both LGBTQ and not.[222] This means providing access to its large

library and archival materials but also activating those materials through the various exhibits and

events that ONE creates.

The Director of the ONE Archives, Joseph Hawkins, describes an expansive mission in

the organization's 2015 Annual Report. He writes, "ONE has relationships with queer groups

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[220] Sheffield, "Four Lesbian and Gay Archives," 116–117.
[221] "ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries," accessed October 9, 2017, http://one.usc.edu/.
[222] The institutionalization of collections like these is very much contested among community-run organizations. While larger institutions can provide funding, space, and proper conservation methods, they can also limit access to community members who, for instance, are not affiliated with the institution. This is particularly relevant in the case of USC, a private university. Institutionalization of collections can also mean that communities must cede some control over what is collected and how it is collected. For more on these issues, see Tamara de Szegheo Lang, "Democratizing LGBTQ History Online: Digitizing Public History in 'US Homophile Internationalism,'" *Journal of Homosexuality* 64, no. 7 (2017): 850–869; Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream," *Archival Science* 9, no. 1–2 (2009): 71–86.

and archives across the globe and we seek to inform the world of our community's achievements

and our aspirations. Each year we add new collections to the archives, making vital resources

available to scholars, students, artists, filmmakers, and the general public. The work of these

researchers influences trends in education, public policy, politics, popular culture, the arts, and

the humanities."[223] Not only does this statement express a global communications network

amongst queer groups, but it also signals a desire to influence realms beyond the strictly

LGBTQ: "education, public policy, politics, popular culture, the arts, and the humanities."

Fulfilling Falwell's fears of undetectable queers and undetectable viruses, ONE insists on its

global spread, as well as its contamination of non-LGBTQ spaces.

While many have suggested that teaching LGBTQ histories to varied audiences can shape

public opinion about LGBTQ communities, thereby increasing the acceptance of people

marginalized on the basis of gender and sexuality, I would like to propose that something else

happens when this contact is made: there are increased possibilities for affective identifications,

or emotional infections, to form in encounters between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ people.

Steedman claims that processes of identification with people in the past are often at play

when she writes, "Through the processes of historical identification, the past is searched for

something (someone, some group, some series of events) that confirms the searcher in his or her

sense of self."[224] It is easy to narrate this search as a search for similarity based on identity. We

have a sense of what we might be looking for in this case; certain features will make people in

the past recognizable as "like" a modern queer person – certain sexual acts, romances with

people of the "same gender," or gender-crossing experiences, for example. These features do

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[223] "2015 ONE Archives Annual Report," 2015, 2, http://one.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015-ONE-Archives-Annual-Report.pdf.
[224] Steedman, *Dust*, 77.

enable identifications and resonances based on identity. However, also at play are events, feelings, and experiences that might have little or nothing to do with identity but might still resonate with visitors. For instance, the experience of social marginalization or family rejection is shared by many groups of people, not only LGBTQ people. Similarly, trying to negotiate two seemingly incompatible identities or communities can be experienced by bisexual or gay people living intersectional identities, but also by those participating in multiple political movements or by biracial and mixed-race people. Although identities help us to make sense of our place in the world, and, I would say, our place in history, we are, in the end, more than these identities alone.

In addition to identity, we might look to a model similar to that of ACT UP operating within archives; this model brings people, both in the present and past, into a relationship through shared orientations and emotions. Cvetkovich explains that as queer studies explores formations beyond recent and popular gay and lesbian identities, interrogating historically and geographically disparate sexualities, "what counts as (homo)sexuality is unpredictable and requires new vocabularies; affect may be present when overt forms of sexualities are not."[225] An attention to affect allows theorists to take seriously the work that feeling, intensities, and resonances do in affecting, inspiring, or influencing people – making people act, making them form bonds, bringing them together. It is in considering the social aspects of affect that Cvetkovich claims that "affective experience can provide the basis for new cultures."[226] It is through shared feelings about or toward something that people often feel a sense of group belonging.[227] In the case of ACT UP, diverse groups of people were brought together through shared experiences of anger and grief. Contagious affect leaked across the borders of those

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[225] Ann Cvetkovich, "Public Feelings," in *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory*, eds. Andrew Parker and Janet Halley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 173.
[226] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 7.
[227] Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 118; Gould, *Moving Politics*, 34.

deemed "at-risk" and those not. In the case of community-run LGBTQ archives, people, whether

LGBTQ-identified or not, might be brought together through many complex feelings, including a

shared love of history, a similar relationship to power and marginalization, or a mutual sense of

responsibility to preserve artifacts from the past. These shared affective orientations can make

LGBTQ history contagious beyond the community borders.

<center>***</center>

In February 2015, Los Angeles was hot – much hotter than the icy Toronto landscape that I had left days earlier. Lee had a campus visit for a position at UCLA and I was left to my own devices, trying to find pieces of L.A. that I could make into my own in case of a successful job interview and an eventual move. I wandered into the ONE Archives on the University of Southern California campus, feeling timid and insecure about what moving to the United States might mean for my own career and social life. I had recently started a volunteer position on the Curatorial Committee at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto and tried to use this to bolster my confidence when I spoke to the volunteers at the ONE Archives. My initial reading of the space felt familiar – the predominance of white people, the scarce staff presence due to its limited volunteer resources, and the older white gay men making sex jokes in the corner. I asked where I could find their exhibition, "FUCK! Loss, Desire, Pleasure," and a volunteer led me to a small room off the library and switched on the lights, bringing to life the slumbering art works.

The room was small and, left alone inside, I felt a sense of both relief and loneliness. The faint sounds and subtle movements of the works felt amplified, surrounding me in my isolation. An old projector sat on the floor in the center of the room, humming and splashing one long wall with bright colour. Red light bouncing off the wall and onto the floor painted the whole room in its aura, a marbled red colour of lights and darks. Blood, magnified, danced across the wall. Blood, the source of so much fear, but not attached to a person, to human suffering, or to any identifiable identity categories. Blood, something we all share. This work by Jordan Eagles, entitled Blood Illumination, created layers of blood preserved in UV resin that was then projected on the walls. The blood itself was collected from nine gay men as a response to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's ban on blood donations by gay and bisexual men, a policy that has been the subject of much critique. In "Blood Illumination," the blood of the nine men blurs together, questioning bodily boundaries and asking whether membership in an identity group necessarily places one's blood at more risk of infection.

Across another wall, the words "Bodies Are Not Archival" were repeated in four panels. Unlike many institutional archives, the body makes its presence known in many community-run LGBTQ archives. From amateur pornography and erotic images to worn T-shirts and bloody underwear,

the body makes its imprints in archives that are organized around erotic identity and desire. However, for Dominic Quagliozzi, the creator of "Bodies Are Not Archival," bodies will always deteriorate, whether in the archives or outside. This work was an engagement with Quagliozzi's own experience with cystic fibrosis and with a body that is in the process of deterioration. Echoing this process, Quagliozzi's prints are not created on archival paper – they, too, will deteriorate, as will we all, eventually.

The body was a theme of all the art pieces and, standing in the room, my body felt overwhelmed. Many of the art works removed any markers of individual gender, racial, or sexual identity from their embodied subjects and the complicated relationships to the body's deterioration were highlighted. Though the temporality of the body was a theme of the exhibit, the reasons for the body's deterioration varied – HIV, cystic fibrosis, cancer.

A focus on bodies was shared by the club that was the exhibit's namesake and this focus was echoed in the artifacts related to FUCK! that lined the archive's upper floor. FUCK! was a Los Angeles nightclub that existed from 1989 to 1993, providing a space that did not shy away from extreme engagements with bodies, including performances of BDSM, piercing, and body modifications, "confronting fears of contagion while revealing the temporality of the body during the height of the AIDS crisis."[228] The patrons of FUCK!, "punks, outcasts, and the art-damaged," claimed many sexual and gender identities and were brought together by "collective rage about government indifference to AIDS."[229] Recognizing the diversity of people affected by AIDS, which mainstream culture rarely did, the patrons of FUCK! created "close and familial friendships" around themes of blood, bodies, and death, and around loss, desire, and pleasure.

Through the exhibition, Eagles and Quagliozzi are brought into relation with the people who attended FUCK! The exhibition also urges visitors to enter into a relationship with the past through FUCK!, a relationship with the present through the artists and their artworks, and a relationship with their own bodies in considering their own mortality. The club reaches across time, infecting the present. The art reaches backwards through time, infecting the past. Both reach toward the visitor, invading their body and bringing them into affective relation with the exhibit.

Contagion: From Archives to Public History

In this chapter, I argue that in trying to promote public engagement with LGBTQ history, we might *want* to cultivate a culture of contagion. We might *want* to encourage the infection of individuals who will be changed by their contact with LGBTQ archival artifacts and stories. We

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[228] "FUCK! Loss, Desire, Pleasure," ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries, accessed October 17, 2017, http://one.usc.edu/fuck-loss-desire-pleasure/.
[229] Ibid.

might *want* to stimulate the spread of interest in LGBTQ history across broad publics that may or may not identify as LGBTQ. This very form of contagious history might affect, inspire, and drive action to preserve, learn, and love queer histories and we might consider LGBTQ archives as sites of this contagious transmission. At the same time, we might think of the archives themselves as being contagious; the affective work that has been conducted in community-based LGBTQ archives for decades has inspired and spread to other spaces of public history. In the following chapters, I will follow this contagious history, imbued with affect and emotional needs, as it occurs in three spaces related to, but distinct from, LGBTQ community-based archives.

In this chapter, I have theorized "exposure" as the work that LGBTQ archives have performed to bring the public into contact with various queer histories. I also claim that through contact with archives visitors, LGBTQ history is created through the contributions, conflicts, and interpretations that occur in archives. These forms of public programming, oral history collection, and tours within the space of the archives have been a major aspect of the work done by many North American LGBTQ archives. I follow this work to a space that does not easily fit into conventional definitions of an archive or museum: the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, which originated in Brooklyn in 2009. In Chapter 2, I outline the ways that the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History encourages people to perform their own research and exhibition practices, often without professional training, in order to create a complex, contested, and incomplete history of people included in a broad interpretation of the categories lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.

In this chapter's section on "Risk Groups," I outline the strategic use of identity categories by AIDS activists and by community-run LGBTQ archives. This use of identity

categories has allowed for the transmission of information, political organizing, grassroots historical preservation, and the building of affectional communities. In Chapter 3, I turn to the role of objects in creating affectional relationships between museum visitors and LGBTQ history that might begin with but also transcend identifications based on identity. In this chapter, I turn to the GLBT History Museum in San Francisco, which grew out of the GLBT Historical Society Archives.

Finally, in this chapter's consideration of "infection," I argue that it was not only gay men who created change during the AIDS crisis but also groups such as ACT UP, which formed coalitions of people brought together by shared experience of emotion in addition to or rather than identity. Similarly, LGBTQ archives attract non-LGBTQ people as both volunteers and as researchers; identifications can take place where identities are not shared. In Chapter 4, I analyze a large-scale art exhibition that did not take up LGBTQ identity explicitly. The exhibition, "Land|Slide Possible Futures," was staged at the Markham Museum and included a number of pieces that engaged with marginalized experiences and histories. In creating invented affective atmospheres, these pieces brought visitors and broader marginalized communities together through shared unexpected experiences.

To conclude, I will return to the passage from Ann Pellegrini that I used at the beginning of my chapter. What I am trying to do here is to promote the reclamation of the stigmatized concept of queers as contagious and claim that we – LGBTQ people, archivists, historians – do indeed want to recruit non-LGBTQ people. This recruitment, in my formulation, does not aim to have others assume a particular sexual identity, but rather encourages love for or connection to queer histories. When the queer infects the non-queer, it insists on its relevance. When the past infects the present, it insists on its relevance.

Queer Ancestral Longings:
The Affective Work of Amateur Historians
at the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History

In May 2016, the New School for Social Research in New York City hosted the "Gay American

History at 40" conference. Celebrating historian Jonathan Ned Katz's groundbreaking 1976

book, *Gay American History*, the conference gathered together LGBTQ historians of various

generations, research interests, and institutional statuses. As a presenter at the conference, I was

particularly moved by one of the closing plenaries, which brought together four established

scholars who influenced much of my own work on the history of sexuality. The scholars, John

D'Emilio, Esther Newton, Carol Vance, and Katz himself, all shared reminiscences about a time

before LGBTQ histories were an accepted part of the academy.

D'Emilio opened the panel with his memories of being inculcated into research on the

history of sexuality when he was a young graduate student in the 1970s. He described meeting

Katz at a meeting of people who would later establish New York's Gay Academic Union.

Though the eleven people in attendance were meeting to "discuss how [their] research and

writing skills might contribute to the gay liberation movement," Katz himself was not a

professional historian, nor was he based in an academic institution.[230] He was not pursuing history to further his career but because of personal need and political interest. At the same time, Katz was already deeply embedded in his historical research on gay and lesbian history, a task that was not being undertaken in significant ways within the academy.

As D'Emilio explained, despite not pursuing gay and lesbian history to advance his career, Katz was always very invested in "the doing and sharing of history," in conversation with those within *and* outside the academy. The first public presentation of his research was his 1972 play, "Coming Out!," which employed theatre as a venue for history that could reach audiences that books might not.[231] The play also provided what D'Emilio describes as a "collective" and "emotionally immediate" experience for a group of people who were desperate to learn these kinds of histories. The success of "Coming Out!" secured Katz a book deal for what would become the iconic *Gay American History*.

Gay American History provided readers with hundreds of primary documents that Katz had collected over his years of research.[232] Grouped into categories such as "Trouble: 1566-1966," "Resistance: 1859-1972," and "Treatment: 1884-1974," these primary documents included reports prepared by medical doctors and psychiatrists, personal letters, and reviews of theatre and films, among other types of documents. D'Emilio spoke about the strength of Katz's

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[230] For more on Katz' history, see the chapter "*Gay American History*" in Jim Downs, *Stand by Me: The Forgotten History of Gay Liberation* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2016).

[231] "Coming Out!" was an agitation-propaganda piece created by the Gay Activists Alliance Arts Committee in New York and performed by non-professional actors. In 1972, it was mounted at the Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse and the Washington Square Methodist Church. In 1973, it was performed at a small theatre, The Nighthouse. The performances were reviewed in publications such as the *Advocate*, the *Village Voice*, and the *New York Times*. See Jonathan Ned Katz, "'Coming Out!' A Documentary Play," outhistory.org, accessed November 30, 2017, http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/coming-out.

[232] Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York, NY: Crowell, 1976).

choice to provide primary documents to readers instead of a complete, narrative history that he very well could have crafted out of his collection of documents. According to D'Emilio, this gave others the tools to pursue history outside the academy, providing them with sources to work with and a model on which they could create their own history projects. These tools were certainly used, and D'Emilio pointed to well-known community-based historian Allan Bérubé and himself as examples of historians who used Katz's sources.[233] D'Emilio explained that "Jonathan's scholarship was always an activist-oriented and committed scholarship that was aiming for audiences and influences beyond the world of the academy … from the beginning. And that is still true."

While according to D'Emilio, Katz's work "continues to model being grounded in a world outside the academy," Katz was not the sole panelist to appeal to audiences outside of academia or to have their research be greatly affected by their lives, loves, and desires outside of academia. All of the panelists spoke in depth about how their non-professional lives – shaped by being gay or lesbian in an intolerant society – informed their research; their research was born out of personal needs and desires, rooted in their identities, their interests, and their activism. This is not the traditional view of the professional researcher who should remain objective and distant from their area of study. Indeed, like other fields of research that are rooted in socially marginalized communities, LGBTQ history has pushed hard against the boundaries between the professional and the amateur.[234] From community-based historians to volunteer archivists,

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[233] See, for example Bérubé, *My Desire for History*; Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1990).
[234] For works that comment on the work of non-academic historians and on the blurring of boundaries between amateur and professional in LGBTQ history, see Gerard Koskovich, "The History of Queer History: One Hundred Years of the Search for a Shared Heritage," in *LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*, ed. Megan E. Springate (Washington, DC: National Park Foundation, 2016); Marc Stein, "Canonizing Homophile Sexual Respectability: Archives,

LGBTQ history has long relied on supposed "amateurs" to collect, protect, and transmit its stories. In this chapter, I extend this long history to the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, a recent queer public history initiative, arguing that it both gives a venue for amateur historians to make their work public and encourages new amateur historians to pursue their interests. In this context, the histories being created are not necessarily comprehensive and might not meet the standards of academic histories. They are instead based on the interests, desires, and whims of those who pursue them.

Since its first iteration in Brooklyn in 2011, the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History has grown and mounted six temporary, multi-week shows in various locations, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Bloomington, Indiana. Housed in galleries or other exhibition spaces, each of these shows has encouraged a range of artists, historians, and community members to take part in researching and staging queer history, and this has allowed them to pursue the histories that matter most to them for a variety of personal and political reasons.

Using Carolyn Dinshaw's concept of the "amateur reader," this chapter explores the work done by the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History in encouraging the work of "amateur historians."[235] In Dinshaw's formulation, an amateur is driven by passion and affective attachment to the object of study, an aspect of research that is often written out of scholarly accounts by professionals who are invested in gaining and conveying expertise. This chapter examines the affective dimensions of some of the pieces produced for the museum, looking at

History, and Memory," *Radical History Review* 2014, no. 120 (2014): 53–73; Brown, "How Queer 'Pack Rats' and Activists Saved Our History"; Marston, "History Projects, Libraries, and Archives"; Duggan, "Discipline Problem"; Lisa Duggan, "History's Gay Ghetto: The Contradictions of Growth in Lesbian and Gay History," in *Presenting The Past : Essays on History and the Public*, ed. Roy Rosenzweig, Susan Porter Benson, and Stephen Brier (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), 281–292.
[235] Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

the social identifications, personal connections, and passionate desires that drive "amateurs" to tell diverse queer histories. It then focuses on one particular affective relationship – that of a sense of lineage or ancestral genealogy – as a theme in several of these works. In particular, it argues that a queer ancestral genealogical approach to history is especially adept at addressing the affective needs of people in the present to identify with the queer past. These identifications, however, do not rely on assumptions of sameness with those in the past but on subtle and complex forms of recognition. The identifications that are depicted in the artworks at the Pop-Up Museum depict recognition based on orientations to dominant culture, LGBTQ communities, or social marginalization; they depict affinities based on emotional experience. Overall, the chapter argues that the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History encourages broad publics – including those who contribute to the museum and those who visit the museum – to engage with queer histories in ways that are personal, intimate, and emotional.

Amateur Historians in LGBTQ History

> I suspect that amateurs have something to teach the experts: namely, … that some kind of desire for the past motivates all our work, regardless of how sharp-edged our researches eventually become: love and knowledge are as inextricable as the links in chain mail.
>
> - Carolyn Dinshaw[236]

Medievalist literary critic Carolyn Dinshaw, in her book *How Soon Is Now?*, develops the concept of the amateur medievalist as a way to describe people who study medieval history, literature, and culture but are "by definition nonprofessional, non-'scientific', and thus

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[236] Ibid., xiv.

nonmodern in a modern world defined by 'scientific' professional expertise."[237] In the neoliberal present in which we live, Dinshaw argues that time is valued in capitalist terms of production, income, and getting ahead.[238] Sociologists Bronwyn Davies and Peter Bansel argue that neoliberalism demands a strictly linear approach to time – people must work toward developing their expertise and must work toward a future goal at the expense of time outside this trajectory.[239] Refrains like "time is getting faster" or "there just isn't enough time in a day" are now abundant. According to many political economists and temporality scholars, this sense of accelerated time can be attributed in part to the rapid development of new technologies and forms of communication, the move to a service economy, and the transnationalization of production.[240] The rapidly changing global context has created an economy of speed where people are expected to do more and do so more quickly. Disability theorist Susan Wendell, in her explanation of the social construction of disability, similarly points to the power imbued in our conceptions of time. She points to "pace of life" as a factor that comes to define disability; as capitalist expectations for performance increase, many people cannot keep up.[241] Within the context, it is not the expectations that are deemed unrealistic; it is instead the workers who are seen as deficient. This seeming deficiency comes to determine one's ability or, in this case,

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[237] Ibid., 6.

[238] Earlier scholars have theorized time in similar ways in relation to capitalism and gendered labour; Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (New York, NY: Holt, 1997); E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present*, no. 38 (1967): 56–97.

[239] Bronwyn Davies and Peter Bansel, "The Time of Their Lives? Academic Workers in Neoliberal Time(s)," *Health Sociology Review* 14, no. 1 (2005): 47.

[240] Sarah Sharma, *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2005); Melissa Gregg, *Work's Intimacy* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013).

[241] Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 36–37.

disability. As cultural theorist Sarah Sharma argues, time is a political tool: those with certain, "acceptable" relationships to time are praised and given privilege, while others are punished.[242]

Davies and Bansel study this phenomenon in the context of academic workers.[243] Within a university setting, they found many academics who felt that if they could just find more time, they would be able to meet the demands of their employment, which include teaching, research, service, and remaining competitive with others in their field in order to obtain the grants that sustain their work and validate their professional worth. They explain, "Time is construed as the enemy here, rather than the neoliberal system that generates the impossible workload and expectations."[244] Yet expectations are such that increasing levels of production and therefore time are needed to show one's professional standing and expertise. Dinshaw argues that in these neoliberal frameworks "like money, [time] is to be saved budgeted, and spent" – in other words, time is a very valuable commodity.[245]

In the neoliberal context in which these scholars write, when time is treated as money, why do amateurs still labour when time comes at such a high cost?[246] Though Davies and Bansel

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[242] Sharma, *In the Meantime*.
[243] Davies and Bansel, "The Time of Their Lives?"
[244] Ibid., 49.
[245] Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, 21.
[246] Of course, many people cannot afford – in time or money – the labour of the amateur. Many people who do not make a living wage or who must work multiple jobs in order to survive cannot undertake these sorts of volunteer or amateur ventures. In the neoliberal context of which I speak, the precarity of labour can exacerbate these conditions. Because poverty lays much more heavily on racialized and transgender people, people with disabilities, and other marginalized people, the amateurs and volunteers who are visible in many organizations tend to be white and more privileged. Similarly, in the neoliberal context of which I speak, many forms of labour are devalued, especially those that address the needs of marginalized people. In these areas, including the world of LGBTQ archives, the undervaluing and underfunding of labour means that organizations rely on volunteer labour. As I addressed in the previous chapter, people within marginalized groups are often willing to (over)commit themselves to these volunteer labours due to a feeling of protection of or duty to the communities with which they identify. While this labour allows for services that might not otherwise exist, it can also support a system that does not want to commit monetary resources to the needs of marginalized peoples. Finally, while I make an

identify "non-compulsory" activities that are "not tied to immediate production" as those that are often the first victims of a neoliberal temporality, the amateur willingly spends their "spare" time on tasks that might be similar to those that professionals undertake. They do this, though, in a different relationship to time: in Dinshaw's words, "amateur temporality starts and stops at will; tinkerers and dabblers can linger at moments of pleasure when the professionals must soldier duly onward."[247] Amateurs can engage in this sort of wandering research because, unlike the professional, they are not spending their valuable time in order to gain professional recognition, achieve workplace promotions, or even earn an hourly wage. The answer to Dinshaw's rhetorical question of what amateurs gain as a product of their labour is contained within this section's epigraph: pleasure. In contrast to the model of time-as-money, Dinshaw explains that "the time outside of those normative spheres [paid work, taking care of home] is a different kind of time in which one labors, but labors for love. … Amateurs, these fans and lovers of laboring in the off-hours – take their own sweet time, and operating outside of regimes of detachments governed by uniform, measured temporality, these uses of time are queer."[248] Indeed, what I am most interested in here is not the actual financial dimensions of the distinction between amateur and professional but in her formulation of this answer. For Dinshaw, the amateur functions from a place of affective and emotional attachment to the object being studied. Rather than exuding detachment and pursuing objective study of the object, the amateur is very invested in their own interests in and the pleasures they take from the object. Rather than claiming mastery over the subject and ensuring a good understanding of the whole of the subject and its context, the

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argument here for pleasure as driving the amateur, these unpaid labours can also lead to emotional "burnout," where people are no longer able to commit so much time and energy to this work that they feel they should love.

[247] Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, 22.
[248] Ibid., 5.

amateur pursues the aspects of history that interests them and leaves the rest behind for someone else to take up... or not. As Dinshaw elucidates, "amateurs, with their passions on their sleeves, have not yet achieved – and never wanted to, so never would – full detachment from the objects of their study, which was the goal and hallmark of the professional."[249]

Professional historians, like many professionals, have a complicated relationship to amateurs and perhaps especially with their unapologetic connections to and desires for the histories they investigate.[250] Historian Peter Novick begins his influential 1988 book, *That Noble Dream,* by claiming, "At the very centre of the professional historical venture is the idea and ideal of 'objectivity' … It has been the key term in defining progress in historical scholarship: moving ever closer to the objective truth about the past."[251] In *That Noble Dream*, Novick offers a critique of a traditional academic history that has tended to search records of the past for "what really happened" and, in doing so, has often placed an insistence on strict forms of objectivity. Of course, no discipline is a monolith and Novick shows the ways in which the discipline of history has had to change with the influence of social movements such as feminism and civil rights and of post-modern and post-structuralist theory in other humanities and social science disciplines. This trajectory of influences shows that there are many ways of doing history, perhaps most notably in the fields of social and cultural history, which arose through the pressures put on the discipline by those involved in social movements including gay liberation of the 1960s and 1970s, as I outline below.[252] Still, as historian Renée Sentilles explains of more

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[249] Ibid., 26.

[250] Here I include in the category of amateur professionals in other fields who do not have the training in historical methods that professional historians have.

[251] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1.

[252] Doan importantly notes that scholars outside of history tend to present history as a monolithic discipline with values that have not changed during and after the cultural turn. I do not wish to depict

traditional historians, "Despite the impact of post-structural theory, the guiding force among professional historians remains objective truth. However cynical the scholar, the goal is always to reveal truth, which historians do through their use of 'facts', 'evidence', and 'mastery'."[253] Sentilles contrasts the professional historian with the amateur, who does not try to gain "'mastery' of secondary writing" or understand the whole context for their topic. Where the professional creates research that "contributes to a larger body of knowledge," amateurs feel "the story they tell is inherently interesting, and that is enough."[254] However, while Sentilles seems to use the term "interesting" rather dismissively, I would like to focus on the important and generative aspects of interest in one's area of study.

The (false) binary between professional and amateur historians becomes interesting in the context of LGBTQ history.[255] As the history of sexuality becomes more accepted in the academy, it adheres more and more to this model of professionalization. At the same time, as both Dinshaw and historian Laura Doan explain, the development of the field of the history of sexuality is owed primarily to amateurs both outside and within academia – outside with figures like Jonathan Ned Katz, Joan Nestle, and Allan Berubé and inside with the countless scholars

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history in this way here. Rather, I aim to show the parts of the discipline that have resisted some of its more traditional urges. I argue below that the history of sexuality is one such field within the discipline of history. Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 39.

[253] Renée M. Sentilles, "Toiling in the Archives of Cyberspace," in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette M. Burton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 140.

[254] Ibid.

[255] I do not want to imply that LGBTQ history is the only field that has faced this false binary. Many studies of marginalized groups, including women and people of colour, have faced similar situations. The development of social history in the 1970s was partially in response to hegemonic histories that strictly delineated the boundaries around what was deemed proper historical research. See, for example, Scott, "History in Crisis."

who had to carve a space for the history of sexuality from within history departments, take up historical topics within other departments, or fight to get into academic institutions.[256]

After all, during the panel with which I began this chapter, historian Carol Vance explained that, in the early days of research on the history of sexuality, "It was very much like growing African violets. Or playing tennis. It was a hobby that you did, certainly I did, in addition to my *real* job. … You wouldn't even put it on your C.V. because that would be ridiculous and where would you publish anyway?" In the first two decades of academic work on sexuality, it was difficult to have that work recognized at all. Many historians who were working on topics related to sexuality were tenured prior to beginning this work and studies of sexuality were seen, as Vance explains, as secondary or outside their "real" work.[257] In the 1989 edited volume *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, editors Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey explain that "repression and marginalization have often been the lot of historians of homosexuality as well as of homosexuals themselves."[258] They name the government and academia as two sites in which this repression and marginalization have occurred. This charge rings true with accounts given by other historians in the field, even those speaking later in the 1990s.

While in the 1990s, queer theory began to influence some humanities disciplines, many North American history departments seemed to remain hostile or indifferent to the work done by scholars of sexuality. Cultural historian Henry Abelove, in 1995, notes that he moved from the

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[256] Doan, *Disturbing Practices*; Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?,* 39; Marc Stein, "Committee on Lesbian and Gay History Survey on LGBTQ History Careers," *Perspectives on History*, 2001, https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2001/committee-on-lesbian-and-gay-history-survey-on-lgbtq-history-careers.
[257] Duggan, "The Discipline Problem," 180.
[258] Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey, *Hidden from History*, 1.

History Department to the English Department at Wesleyan University because, "in the United States, English is often friendlier to lesbian/gay history than History is."[259] Historian of sexuality Marc Stein, in an article on his own struggles securing academic employment in the 1990s, was asked during multiple job interviews about why his research belonged in a history department, rather than in one focused on psychology or anthropology.[260] Lisa Duggan's 1995 essay "The Discipline Problem" presents a double-bind experienced by those working in the field of the history of sexuality: "largely hostile" history departments, which reject those who work on topics of sexuality, and the field of gay and lesbian studies, which is predominantly focused in English, Cultural Studies, or Psychology.[261] This double bind was not conducive to growth in work on the history of sexuality that could be done in the academy. As Duggan explains, "for both academic and public intellectuals, isolation leads to material as well as to cultural impoverishment and decline."[262] While the experiences of historians of sexuality within academic history departments has undoubtedly improved in the twenty-first century, they still face inadequate numbers of hires to tenure-track appointments, additional supervisory roles for the increasing numbers of graduate students interested in the topic, and discrimination in funding awards.[263] Teaching in a variety of departments, many historians of sexuality have experienced major setbacks in doing their work over the past five decades.

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[259] Henry Abelove, "The Queering of Lesbian/Gay History," *Radical History Review*, no. 62 (1995): 54.
[260] Marc Stein, "Crossing Borders: Memories, Dreams, Fantasies, and Nightmares of the History Job Market," *Left History* 9, no. 2 (2004): 124.
[261] Ibid., 180–81.
[262] Ibid., 179.
[263] Marc Stein, "Post-Tenure Lavender Blues," *History News Network,* January 1, 2006, http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/19941; Stein, "Committee on Lesbian and Gay History Survey on LGBTQ History Careers."

To repeat Dinshaw's question in the specific context of LGBTQ history: "If amateurs are not paid – and defined as such they are not renumerated for work – what do they get at the end of their efforts?"[264] Why has LGBTQ history as a field, both academic and popular, prospered in the past five decades, despite institutional challenges? Why have historians such as Henry Abelove, Marc Stein, and Lisa Duggan continued in their studies of LGBTQ history amidst threats to their funding and status? What is the remuneration for the hard work done?

Ironically, one of the reasons that academic hiring was challenging for those studying sexuality and history was one of the reasons that those same scholars felt this work was so important: personal and political connection to the object of study. As Novick explains, "The objective historian's role is that of a neutral, or disinterested, judge … Objectivity is held to be at grave risk when history is written for utilitarian purposes. One corollary of all of this is that historians, as historians, must purge themselves of external loyalties: the historian's primary allegiance is to 'the objective historical truth'."[265] This critique of the work of scholars studying sexualities did occur. Stein explains that one of his job applications was critiqued by a prominent faculty member as being about "politics, not history."[266] In a 1988 article, historian Martin Duberman recounts the "undiluted horror" expressed by the City University of New York Graduate Center in 1977 at Duberman's suggestion of offering a course about "sexual history."[267] As he explains, during the discussions about the course, "it was implied I had become a mere polemicist and had surrendered my right to be called an 'objective' social scientist."[268] The dismissal of the work done by these historians was fueled by the fact that these

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[264] Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, 22.
[265] Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 2.
[266] Stein, "Crossing Borders," 124.
[267] Martin B. Duberman, "Reclaiming the Gay Past," *Reviews in American History* 16, no. 4 (May 1988): 515.
[268] Ibid.

historians shared a non-normative sexuality with those about whom they wrote; personal investment and subjectivity in their studies was seen as detrimental to their credibility as historians. In traditional approaches to history, as Novick explains, there is supposed to be a "sharp separation between knower and known."[269]

However, the hostility of certain departments was not always one-sided. Many of the scholars studying sexualities did not desire a strict separation from their objects of study and did indeed desire a utilitarian history. With these priorities, many were hesitant about working within an institution that was resistant, if not entirely hostile, to their work. In reflecting on the early institutionalization of LGBTQ history, D'Emilio remembers the worries he had: "Would even a modicum of acceptance tear the guts out of our work? … Would we have to tame the passion that the movement fanned in us?"[270] He worried that he would have to appear less invested in the politics that had, thus far, inspired his work in order to advance in his university career. After all, for D'Emilio, his "primary allegiance" was not to the "the objective historical truth." In his words, his "allegiance to the academic world was, at best, tenuous."[271] D'Emilio instead explains that he was sustained more by the political community he helped to establish in New York's Gay Academic Union.[272] As the editors of *Hidden from History* explain, "Much of the first wave of historical research was undertaken by people with backgrounds in the movement."[273] Similarly, Vance was inspired and sustained by political movements that surrounded gay liberation and feminism. She explains, these movements "raised many questions that led to my work." Further,

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[269] Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 1.
[270] Stein, "Canonizing Homophile Sexual Respectability," 65.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey, *Hidden From History*, 2.

she reflects on study groups comprised of academics and non-academics that offered support to her "hobby" when her university home offered little to none.

Of course, there are many sites of history that are not rooted in academia at all. There is an even longer tradition of community-based history making and historic preservation and one important site for the development of LGTBQ histories has been archives. Community-based LGBTQ archives have straddled and negotiated the false boundary between the professional and the amateur in this realm. For one, archives have largely provided the materials on which academic and non-academic historians have based their research. Additionally, as Aimee Brown has explained, many community-run LGBTQ archives have started from personal collections – from the work of amateur archivists who have saved documents and objects that seemed relevant to their lives and to the historical period in which they were living. Wakimoto et al. claim that "personal collecting was vital to the saving of queer community history."[274] However, beyond the donors and those who formed the archives initially, the daily dynamics of community-run LGBTQ archives are also the space of the amateur. Many of these archives "are maintained by volunteer labors of love rather than state funding"; they are kept up by amateurs who earn their living outside of the walls of the archives.[275] Joan Nestle, in a recent reflection piece on the early days of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, which first existed in the apartment she shared with her mother and lover, remembers:

> Volunteers flooding the apartment on work nights, after long days of survival
> work, staying late, filing, talking, planning, welcoming, opening mail, preparing

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[274] Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge, "Archivist as Activist," 9.
[275] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 286. See also: Danielle Cooper, "House Proud: An Ethnography of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives," *Archival Science* 16, no. 3 (2015): 1–28; Cait McKinney, "Body, Sex, Interface: Reckoning with Images at the Lesbian Herstory Archives," *Radical History Review*, no. 122 (2015): 115–128.

mailings, pasting up exhibits to be loaned, logging in journals, shelving books, Deb Edel always finding more room just when the apartment said no more, and then after endless hours out into the night for long subway rides back to Brooklyn, Queens. … Artists bring their work, share their skills, always adding to the knowledges we need. The collection grows because of a community's appreciation of being seen, heard, housed.[276]

Nestle recounts the founding collective of the LHA as all "independent scholars," none of whom "were professionally trained archivists or librarians."[277] While she explains the relationships formed with "more professional gatherings" such as academic history and women's studies conferences, Nestle draws a distinction between the project undertaken to create the LHA and more professional forms of history and archiving.

While the job of the archivist has traditionally been considered as a "'neutral' custodian" or as "passive guardians of records whose role in a democratic society is both to inform the process of governance by preserving records for use by their originating institutions and, where possible, to make this material available to the public (or, more realistically, to scholars)," this does not hold true in the case of community archivists.[278] As in Dinshaw's formulation, the amateurs who have laboured in the archives – to build them and to keep them afloat – have often acknowledged the affective pull of the archives. While this pull, as I will later argue, goes beyond an affiliation with an LGBTQ identity group, it is a crucial aspect of the work of the amateur. Many of the volunteers who labour in archives do consider themselves part of broadly defined LGBTQ communities. As part of the communities whose history has faced years of lack

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[276] Nestle, "Who Were We to Do Such a Thing?," 238.
[277] Ibid., 236.
[278] Stevens, Flinn, and Shepherd, "New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archive Sector," 60.

of care and blatant erasure, many of those who work in the archives feel a responsibility to preserve *their* history.

However, the work of the archives, and of amateur archivists, goes beyond the daily work of preserving evidence of the histories of queer people. In bringing publics into the archive, amateurs who work in these spaces also attempt to inspire in the visitors the love that they have for, and the responsibility they feel to, figures from the past. Through community-based archives that often serve as social spaces, these amateur archivists inspire in others a drive *to do* their own work of historical preservation or, simply, their own work of caring for and about history.

The work of the history of sexuality has, in many ways, often been a social endeavor. Whether in study groups, volunteer-run archives, academic conferences, or social activism, this form of history has resisted (in some ways) academic isolation, individualism, and expertise. As Nestle remembers of early research on the history of sexuality, community historians were "helping one another without the possessive territoriality that so often marks academic endeavor. That was to come later, but now we laughed and worked and wondered at it all."[279] In this tradition of community and communal history projects, the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History emerges.

The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History

On a January night in 2011, over three hundred people flooded a Brooklyn apartment, all there to see the first iteration of the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History. For that one-night event, thirty-eight people had developed small exhibits in many media – from performance to baked

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[279] Nestle, "Who Were We to Do Such a Thing?," 239.

goods – which staged various aspects of queer history – from histories of police brutality to histories of suspected queer familial romance.[280] The show took place in Pop-Up Museum founder Hugh Ryan's apartment and was "all about creating this comfortable, home space," in the words of one of the first organizers, Buzz Slutzky.[281] Despite being shut down by the police due to concerns regarding the fire code, the show was deemed a massive success with much higher attendance than anticipated and so the Pop-Up Museum grew.

The original exhibition was part of QuORUM (Queers Organizing for Radical Unity and Mobilization) Forum 2011 in New York, which presented a set of workshops, screenings, performances, and parties in "queer homes around the city."[282] In the lead-up to this event, writer, speaker, and curator Ryan sent out a call for artists to contribute to the birth of the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History. Artist and curator Slutzky was immediately drawn to the project and wanted to be part of its creation. Whereas Ryan focused more on the historical aspects of the show, Slutzky brought experience in the art and curatorial fields. A third organizer, Graham Bridgeman, later brought his experience in non-profit organizations to become, as he says, the "logistics and money guy," or, more specifically, "the co-producer slash director of development."[283] For this chapter, I interviewed Ryan, Slutzky, and Bridgeman during the time when I was attending events and workshops that were part of the Pop-Up Museum's show, "On the Queer Waterfront: Brooklyn Histories," in 2013.

"On the Queer Waterfront" was the Pop-Up Museum's sixth show, with two previous shows occurring in Brooklyn, two in Manhattan, one in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and another

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[280] "Past Pop-Ups," The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, accessed August 28, 2017, http://www.queermuseum.com/past-pop-ups/.
[281] Buzz Slutzky, Interview by Tamara de Szegheo Lang, October 12, 2013.
[282] "Archive," QuORUM, December 14, 2010, https://quorumforum2011.wordpress.com/description-of-events/.
[283] Graham Bridgeman, Interview by Tamara de Szegheo Lang, October 11, 2013.

in Bloomington, Indiana. Since "On the Queer Waterfront," the Pop-Up Museum has yet to do another full exhibition, though several smaller events have occurred under its name. Throughout its numerous locations and various approaches to exhibiting queer history, the Pop-Up Museum's grassroots nature is consistent; as Bridgeman explains, "We're really small. I mean, it's volunteer run and it is not low rent but it is low budget."[284] The Pop-Up Museum has recently implemented modest artists' fees as part of their minimal budget after it was brought to the organizers' attention that supporting this marginalized community financially should be an important aspect of their work. However, the Pop-Up Museum still runs primarily on the hours and work of volunteers who labour in their off-hours to make these exhibitions happen. As Ryan explains, "We have a *below* shoestring budget. You know, no one's ever getting paid. … All of us are doing this with *at least* one other job. Some of us, like, six other jobs."[285] The Pop-Up is a project done alongside organizers' professional lives.

The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History's website describes the Pop-Up as "a grassroots organization that transforms spaces into temporary installations dedicated to celebrating the rich, long, and largely unknown histories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people."[286] It is certainly not a typical museum. Aside from the fact that they do not have a set location and their shows are only exhibited for a short time, their engagement with historical objects – or perhaps I should say their relative lack of engagement, as they do not hold any collections – and their method of telling histories – often through the visual and performative work of artists – creates a form of exhibition quite distinct from the usual work of more traditional museums. Finally, in

[284] Bridgeman, Interview.
[285] Hugh Ryan, Interview by Tamara de Szegheo Lang, October 10, 2013.
[286] "About," The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, accessed August 27, 2017, http://www.queermuseum.com/about/.

allowing dozens of mostly non-professional historians to choose and present the histories on which each show is based, the stories that emerge from the Pop-Up Museum offer a narrative that is often fragmented, sometimes imagined, and at times contradictory. In this chapter, I contend that these shows present a distinct kind of affective history, one based on the labour of the amateur, who creates these works out of love for the histories they decide to represent.

Where a field struggles to gain institutional support and there exists a strong sense of need or desire for an object of study, amateurs often step in, in their time outside of work hours, to gather resources and produce new knowledge. It was out of this context that the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History emerged – in a time when various mainstream museums were censoring, excluding, or marginalizing the artworks and histories of queer people. The first Pop-Up show in 2011 occurred shortly after the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery's censorship of its own exhibit "Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture." The exhibition, curated by David C. Ward and Jonathan D. Katz,[287] included a shortened version of the video *A Fire in My Belly* by David Wojnarowicz. This video, which includes a seconds-long clip of ants crawling over a crucifix, drew the attention of conservative journalists, right wing politicians, and Catholic organizations, leading to threats against the Smithsonian's government funding.[288] In the face of these threats, the Smithsonian removed Wojnarowicz's piece from the show. Though this is one of the more recent cases of censorship of queer materials, history is rife with similar examples of sexual censorship in government-funded programs and National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funding in particular.[289]

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[287] Not to be confused with Jonathan Ned Katz, about whom I speak in depth above.
[288] Lauren DeLand, "Live Fast, Die Young, Leave a Useful Corpse," *Performance Research* 19, no. 1 (2014): 38–39.
[289] Ibid., 38.

Similarly, government funding of academic work in sexuality studies has often been uncertain. Stein, for example, writes about his rejected application for NEH funding in 2003.[290] In his article, he discusses the apparent "flagging" of academic work that focuses on sexuality, race, and gender. Similarly, Carolyn Dinshaw and, subsequently, Ann Pellegrini, discuss the controversies that erupted in mid-1990s debates about NEH funding for topics such as "Sex and Gender in the Middle Ages," as discussed in the previous chapter.[291] However, even with threats of censorship and withdrawal of funding, these scholars, artists, and activists continue doing the work that is so important to them. In the shadow of the controversy at the Smithsonian, for instance, the volunteer-driven Pop-Up Museum of Queer History was created. As Ryan wrote in a description of that first exhibition, "Why should we wait for institutions like the Smithsonian to grace us with inclusion? Let's join together for an installation of our history, told for the queer community, by the queer community."[292] Adversity can at times inspire the amateur.

Those who represent the Pop-Up Museum often repeat a phrase: "We believe that our community – and especially our youth – deserve to know our history. If you don't know you have a past, how can you believe you have a future?"[293] Defining many of the goals of the organization, the phrase draws the reader or museum visitor into direct relation with queer histories, urging not a distant form of learning but one where people today are part of these histories, whether that is because they were literally a part – their memories constitute the history being told – or because they feel as though these pasts were precursors to their own lives – that the histories form a kind of genealogy. As I will elaborate further in the coming pages, these are

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[290] Stein, "Post-Tenure Lavender Blues."
[291] Pellegrini, "Touching the Past," 190.
[292] "Archive," QuORUM.
[293] "About," The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History.

related forms of affective connections with the past, and they are both connections that the Pop-Up Museum encourages and houses within its ephemeral spaces.

Historytellers at the Pop-Up Museum Museum of Queer History

> I think that the truth of queer history is that often it is folk history where and when it has been preserved it's been preserved by individuals who have felt passionate about it. Either because it's their personal history so, in a way, it's family history, or it's something they've stumbled across that they have never heard about somewhere else, or no one has talked about or no one has told them about and they've gone and gathered it.
>
> - Hugh Ryan[294]

> As much as the Pop-Up Museum is about knowing your history, it's kind of more about telling your history. … The valuing of everyone as a historyteller is important.
>
> - Graham Bridgeman[295]

The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History functions quite unlike most traditional museums. Instead of having professional curators in charge of presenting cohesive stories of the past, the Pop-Up Museum works to empower a diverse range of community members to do the historytelling. Encouraging a form of "folk history" through empowering LGBTQ people to recognize their own historical expertise is a repeated goal of the project. As Ryan explains, community members functioning as historytellers is important for two reasons: first, the historical knowledge and experiences that LGBTQ individuals have is rarely considered a valid *subject* of history; and second, LGBTQ people are rarely given the opportunity to be those *telling*

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[294] "The Importance of Queer History," *QueerMuseum* (YouTube channel), 12 July, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCUSTMoN4Zo.
[295] Bridgeman, Interview.

the histories. In the face of those realities the Pop-Up Museum functions to amplify rather than create LGBTQ histories. Just as Jonathan Ned Katz chose to make *Gay American History* into a resource from which others could interpret primary sources and create their own histories, the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History works to provide the resources, venues, and training that others can use to do the work of telling queer histories. In the words of Ryan, "We are not in and of ourselves creating histories or creating exhibits. We are working to give people within the queer community, and the broader community … the tools through which to see themselves both as a valid historical subject, so worthy of research *about* queer lives, a valid historical actor, so worthy of doing things that actually should be studied, and also worthy of being someone who transmits historical information."[296]

For each exhibition, the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History solicits exhibit proposals from anyone who is interested, whether they are artists, researchers, or people who are simply curious about a topic. For their first exhibition in Ryan's apartment, all those who applied were accepted. In subsequent shows, the exhibits have been accepted or rejected based on the decisions of a selection committee. Ryan acknowledges that this process means that though the content presented is created by a diverse group of largely amateurs, it is also curated.

For instance, Slutzky explains to me that one conversation that occurs frequently in meetings of the selection committee is about how history itself is defined. They tell me that people often apply to tell stories that are currently unfolding based on personal experiences. While the exhibits do not need to meet the oft-cited yet unofficial rule in the discipline of history that the most recent twenty years are off-limits, the committee considers an exhibit "historical" if its topic is in the past – for instance, a queer space that no longer exists or a person who is no

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[296] Ryan, Interview.

longer living. Slutzky explains that some successful exhibits have incorporated more current themes, but they do so in conversation with the past. Exhibits that highlight the relationship between past and present are valued within the Pop-Up Museum.

Those involved with the organization refer to contributors as historytellers, storytellers, lay-historians, and artists. Ryan prefers the term "exhibit-maker," as, in his words, "anyone can be an exhibit-maker, it is not like anyone already thinks they are or are not."[297] He offers this explanation in the context of another frequently used term, "artist," and its sometimes exclusionary associations with expertise, training, and/or inherent talent. He explains that many potential exhibit-makers are not artists and might feel as though their desire to share their histories would be hindered by the pressures that go along with professionalized notions of who can or should be an artist. Similarly, "exhibit-maker" evades the pressures created by a term such as historian to describe those same community members. As Ryan explains of the works created for the Pop-Up Museum, "It's sort of vernacular history, you know. It's not couched in the terms of traditional history or exhibit making. But it is history making."[298] While contributors might feel that they do not have the expertise required to merit the title of "historian," they might well feel empowered by a term that is not linked with an academic discipline. As Bridgeman explains in the epigraph to this section, "the valuing of everyone as a historyteller is important," whether or not they know the traditional methodologies and forms of research that go into the discipline of history. Echoing this sentiment, an early mission statement for the Pop-Up Museum encouraged this role in those reading it:

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[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.

The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History develops exhibitions and events that engage local communities in conversations about queer pasts as a way to imagine queer futures. We provide a forum to do what we've always done: tell our own stories. We are artists, historians, educators and activists and we believe you are too.[299]

In pointing toward a history of community members preserving and telling histories while also empowering new community-based historytellers, the Pop-Up Museum works to demystify and de-professionalize the role of historian.[300]

While the choice of terms that the organizers of the Pop-Up Museum use are carefully considered in an effort to empower amateur historians, the case of the Pop-Up Museum again complicates the false dichotomy between the amateur and the professional. After all, Ryan worries, with the important incorporation of LGBTQ histories into schools and museums, that amateur LGBTQ people might lose a sense of themselves as "historical experts."[301] So while few contributors to the museum are professional in the fields of history, art, or museum curation, the Pop-Up Museum works to redefine expertise and encourage a sense of expertise in these contributors: not academic expertise but historical expertise nonetheless.

The exhibits created by the historytellers at the Pop-Up Museum, and their associated research, would not be considered academically rigorous by many professional historians. The Pop-Up Museum is not a space that requires Sentilles' traditional historical dependence on "facts," "evidence," and "mastery."[302] While Ryan tells me that he does not want to create "urban legends" out of queer history through "terrible scholarship," he also does not want the Pop-Up

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[299] Hugh Ryan, "Making History Cool: The Pop-up Museum of Queer History," *History@Work* (blog), July 29, 2013, http://ncph.org/history-at-work/pop-up-museum-of-queer-history/.
[300] The Pop-Up also, as seen in these materials, demystifies and de-professionalizes other professions, such as artist and educator.
[301] Ryan, Interview.
[302] Sentilles, "Toiling in the Archives of Cyberspace," 140.

Museum to be a space that demands from its historytellers an excessive burden of demanding proof and evidence that many amateur historians would not know how to provide. He explains that partially due to the nature of the histories, often relegated to the realms of the private, and partially due to the desired empowerment of non-professionals, the Pop-Up Museum is not averse to accepting works that do not provide traditional forms of proof. He says, "I think most queer history is some amount of rumour, suspicion, innuendo, possibility. And so we're looking to explore that possibility. It's like that saying: 'when there's smoke, there's fire'."[303] In this context, Ryan says, "We try to say that we ask questions; we don't give answers. That's another difference between us and a traditional history museum." In the face of a discipline that demands proof of something that often does not leave behind tangible evidence – histories of sexuality, desire, and identity – concrete answers are often not available. Many have commented on the difficulty of researching such topics, whether because sexual acts and desires are rarely recorded, the evidence of sexuality has been destroyed by family members or the people themselves, or the lives of non-famous people or people seen as deviant have not been collected. This difficulty is recognized and embraced by organizers of the Pop-Up Museum.

Instead of seeking out a cohesive and refined historical narrative, the organizers hope to create, in Slutzky's words, a "complicated and nuanced" version of history created by "as many people as possible."[304] Ryan echoes this sentiment when he explains that some of the most interesting exhibits have been those that share a topic with others in the same show. In these cases, each historyteller brings their own personal interests and experiences to bear on the exhibit they create. While sometimes these varying perspectives can create conflicting messages, they can also create interesting conversations between exhibits about the history being displayed and

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[303] Ryan, Interview.
[304] Slutzky, Interview.

the ways that those histories become important to people today. Instead of creating a space where facts are checked and re-checked, Ryan hopes that "the aggregate would be better. It's like crowd sourcing."[305] This aggregate form of history can provide a complexity that is not always offered by only one researcher or author. These exhibits, however, also demand in the visitor an engagement with the practice of interpreting and creating history, rather than just accepting what is presented. Ryan describes the exhibits as "proposed thought activities and you can engage with them and you can walk away from them and say you don't agree."[306] In this way, the histories being presented are not neutral but always tied to the historyteller *and* the visitor's processes of interpretation.

However, there is another way in which the Pop-Up Museum's exhibits align with Dinshaw's theorizing of the amateur: the *emotional* connection between historyteller and history. Slutzky explains that the emotional dimensions of the exhibits are another reason why having a diversity of historytellers is crucial to the mission of the Pop-Up Museum:

> It's really just about opening it up to people and asking them to engage with it how they want to and us just kind of being excited with them about it. So, you know, I think that's why it's always about bringing in as many people as possible, is to kind of like, create as complicated and nuanced a view of history as we can.[307]

Excitement and encouraging excitement is a crucial aspect of the work of the Pop-Up. Similarly, in the epigraph to this section, Ryan describes those who have preserved LGBTQ histories as "individuals who have felt passionate" and so too are those who have chosen to create exhibits for the various incarnations of the Pop-Up Museum.

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[305] Ryan, Interview.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Slutzky, Interview.

Slutzky describes a set of past exhibits that engage emotional relationships between the historytellers and histories. They describe the difference that these emotional relationships made when they explain, "It's a different experience of making when you're documenting something that is so precious to you."[308] Whether histories are precious because they involve someone with whom the historyteller had a personal relationship or because the historyteller feels an affinity with that history, the emotional aspects of this work influence the products created and are often visible on those products.

On the Queer Waterfront: Brooklyn Histories

Down under the Manhattan Bridge overpass, or DUMBO, is not an easy place to get to. At least not for this Torontonian. We waited ages for the weekend train; I knew we would be late. We got off the subway with a few minutes to spare, but getting from the station to the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History's opening party for their show, "On the Queer Waterfront: Brooklyn Histories," was not so simple. We eventually found a large archway and decided this must be what the promotional materials were referencing. The archway was beautiful: immensely tall and made of stone. The ground was paved in cobblestones and for a moment you could forget you were in New York with thousands of cars passing on the bridge above.

Without much time to spare before a series of workshops began, we did not have the chance to explore the tables set up with information from local community groups, the food stands, or the performance art pieces that were underway. I quickly scanned the crowd for Hugh Ryan, with whom I had already been in contact. Without hesitation (a small miracle in my frazzled state), I walked up and introduced myself. He, in turn, introduced me to Graham Bridgeman, who was heading to the workshops and could show us the way.

The workshops took place in the studio space of a puppet theatre group, which was in an old warehouse building. The studio space was dimly lit and filled from floor to high-ceilings with shelving holding bins and bins of art supplies and puppets. Walking through the towering supplies, we got to the workshop space: a square table surrounded by about fifteen chairs, most of which were occupied. Large windows brought some beams of light into the dark space, interfering with the projector that was set up and ready to help facilitate the upcoming workshops.

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[308] Ibid.

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I travelled to Brooklyn in October 2013 to visit the Pop-Up Museum's newest show, "On the (Queer) Waterfront: Brooklyn Histories." Unlike most of their shows, this one did not have a gallery, apartment, or other stable space in which to exhibit a grouping of pieces. It was instead a "scatter-site" show, where a series of events and exhibits were sprinkled throughout the waterfront area of the New York borough.

Advertised as "a unique combination of history lab, art space, and teach-in," the opening day celebrations offered two workshops, both located in a puppet theatre group's studio space. [309] The workshops clearly aimed to encourage the work of amateur historians in a number of different settings. They encouraged the attendees to not only think about diverse queer histories but also to think of themselves as part of these histories. Whether presenting logistical considerations for preserving archival objects and documents from their own queer lives or encouraging participants to think about how they could make exhibits for the Pop-Up Museum and which stories they would choose to tell, the workshops did not think about history in a distant or professional way.

The first workshop of the day, "At-Home Archiving," was led by Carrie Hintz, a professional archivist who has worked at Columbia and Emory Universities.[310] The goal of the workshop was to instill in participants a sense that the materials they had collected throughout their lives – posters, letters, photographs – were an important part of queer history and to give amateur collectors the professional tools needed to preserve these historical materials. Amateur

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[309] "See You Tomorrow in DUMBO!!!," Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, October 4, 2013, http://queermuseum.tumblr.com/post/63107196289/see-you-tomorrow-in-dumbo-our-kickoff-event-is.
[310] Carrie Hintz, "At-Home Archiving" (Brooklyn, NY, October 5, 2013).

collectors have been instrumental in preserving histories of marginalized peoples.[311] As referenced above, many of the community-run archives that exist, LGBTQ and otherwise, would not have been established without collections stored in closets, basements, and attics by amateurs. These collections, sentimental to the collector, were often not considered to be part of an important history, either by the collector themselves or by institutional archives and museums. They have also often not been preserved in a way that ensures their longevity – whether kept in someone's home or in community-run archives, which rarely have sufficient resources or professional archival knowledge to ensure their ideal care.

The instructions given by Hintz during the workshop helped participants to gain tools employed primarily by professional archivists. The advice given ranged from the simple – light and water are "not your friend[s]" – to the more specific – use PAT (Photographic Activity Test) Passed containers and felt-tipped pens to store and label photographs. Hintz' workshop not only provided information for optimal storage techniques but also linked these processes with the eventual donation and/or interpretation of the historical materials. Hintz stressed the importance of labelling photographs, files, and boxes with very specific names, dates, and places so they could be identified by others. She also identified numerous community-run and institutional archives where participants might consider donating their materials. Throughout the workshop, Hintz facilitated the work of amateurs by providing them with the tools, considerations, and knowledge of professionals.

The second workshop, given by Buzz Slutzky, was titled "Choose Your Own Adventure: Making Art Out of Queer History."[312] As an artist who has sat on multiple selections committees

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[311] See, for example, Eichhorn, "DIY Collectors, Archiving Scholars, and Activist Librarians."
[312] Buzz Slutzky, "Choose Your Own Adventure: Making Art Out of Queer History" (Brooklyn, NY, October 5, 2013).

for the Pop-Up Museum, Slutzky urged participants to create their own exhibits for the Pop-Up, encouraging new amateur historians to become historytellers. Slutzky began the workshop by echoing many of the reasons for creating amateur histories that have already been explained in this chapter, including challenging dominant historical narratives, taking responsibility for the LGBTQ history that is not being adequately taught, teaching community-based histories, and valuing art as a method that creates emotional connection. Acknowledging the emotional connections that historytellers often feel with the histories they choose to exhibit was a recurring theme in the workshop. Though Slutzky cautioned participants not to only conduct "me-search," a term they use to describe exhibits that document the historyteller's own story, they encouraged projects that engage with the historyteller's past experiences as part of a community, for instance, or with the historyteller's relationship with a figure from the past. In giving advice about how to create a successful Pop-Up exhibit, Slutzky showcased numerous exhibits from previous Pop-Up Museum shows, including Slutzky's own work. The examples involved various topics in queer history: the well-documented, such as a gingerbread diorama of the 1969 Stonewall Riots; the ordinary, such as an exhibit documenting the everyday lives of a lesbian couple; the relatively old, such as a painting of Emily Dickinson; and the relatively recent, such as photographs from a collective living space that was active in the 1990s. Whether through form or content, however, most pieces showed the connection the historytellers felt with the content being displayed or the connection they hoped the visitors would make with these histories. This was accomplished through a number of techniques. Some exhibits were documenting people, places, or events with which the exhibit-maker was intimately familiar. Slutzky encouraged interactive pieces and many of their examples did just this through the creation of spaces for the visitor to enter or in which to sit, or through pieces that asked visitors to interact more directly with the work, for

example by typing on a typewriter or writing a letter. Whether for the historyteller or the visitor, emotional relationships with history played a significant role in the recommendations made in Slutzky's workshop.

Each of these two workshops spoke to the goal of the Pop-Up Museum as enabling the work of diverse amateur historians. Ryan talks about this in the context of "taking what is already existent in our communities and strengthening it and amplifying it."[313] He explains that the Pop-Up Museum asks community members to reflect on the knowledge they *already* have and to consider contributing it to the project. He says, "if you don't feel right now like you have the tools to teach someone, then we'll set up a workshop so that you can go and talk about how to archive, how to create an exhibit." These workshops are the manifestation of a desire to provide tools to the community while also providing the community the opportunity to see and participate in the work already done by others.

The opening party of the Waterfront show was in the DUMBO neighbourhood of Brooklyn, and the party literally took place Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass, under the arch of the bridge. The Pop-Up Museum invited community groups, LGBTQ archives, and food stands to congregate along the two walls that supported the arch. Between them was a space for the performance pieces that welcomed visitors to the opening of the show. Framing this activity, the organizers mounted four maps of Brooklyn on the walls. The maps invited visitors to, on sticky notes, write down their memories and experiences of the histories of queer Brooklyn. The historical notes varied from the very personal and very recent, such as "rim jobs on the first date," to the more communal and older, such as "1970s 'Broadway Club'."

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[313] Ryan, Interview.

This idea for the Brooklyn maps came from an earlier piece, created for the SoHo show in 2011, where the exhibit makers, Emily North and Sarah Sharp, created a map of separatist land projects across the United States that invited visitors to add to the story.[314] In weaving the experiences of visitors into those presented by Pop-Up Museum organizers, these pieces create a pluralistic and fragmented history representing the stories that matter to visitors, their own interests and personal memories guiding what is narrated and what is left out of the telling.
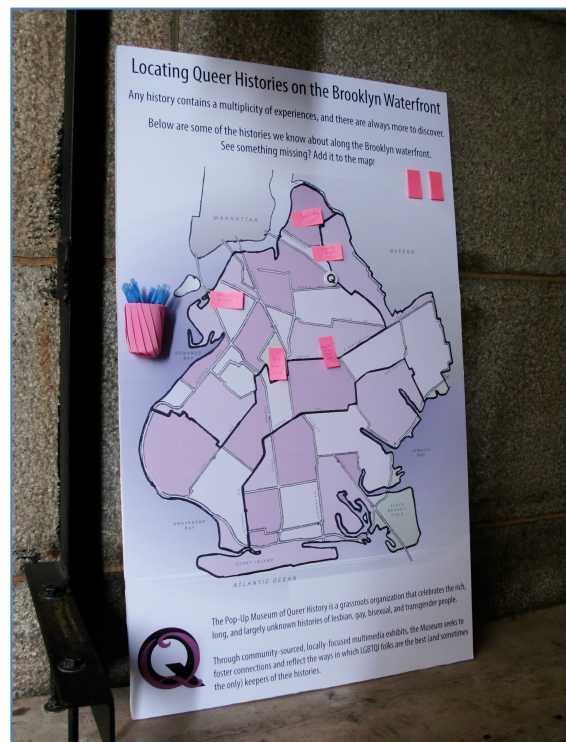
Figure 2 Map at the opening party of "On the Queer Waterfront: Brooklyn Histories"

While the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History's Waterfront Show certainly encouraged amateur historytellers to make and illustrate relationships with queer histories, both their own

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[314] Especially popular in the 1970s, the women's and lesbian separatist land movement saw women creating their own micro-societies through the group purchasing of rural land and collective living. Lesbian separatist movements were often based on strict ideas of binary gender and so "Mapping Utopia: Separatist Wimmin's Land" engaged multiple generations of feminists with different, and sometimes conflicting, views of gender.

and those of others, I want to focus in more closely on a certain type of affective relationship that amateurs form with queer histories. In looking back at some of the pieces created for previous shows, I use Laura Doan's concept of "ancestral genealogies" in the context of the amateur historians that the Pop-Up Museum helps to cultivate.

Similarity, Alterity, Genealogy

The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History has produced many successful exhibits. While Ryan describes the Pop-Up Museum as a happy accident, originally envisioned as a small party in his apartment, he quickly recognized a great desire for queer history from the hundreds of people who attended its inaugural one-night exhibition.[315] The five subsequent exhibits also garnered much enthusiasm, with packed openings, positive reviews, and hundreds, if not thousands, of attendees over the course of each short run. One of the founding members' favourite measure of success was when, at the 2011 SoHo show, influential Yale University gay historian George Chauncey told show organizers, "You're making history cool."[316]

While the rigorous academic work of Chauncey is not the same as the work done by the historytellers at the Pop-Up Museum, Chauncey references a different kind of work being performed in the exhibition space, a kind of work that is *also* valuable. In commenting on the Pop-Up Museum's work to make history *cool*, Chauncey is describing its role in animating the affective potential of making visitors *desire* history, and particularly queer history. As Ryan writes,

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[315] Ryan, "Making History Cool."
[316] Ibid.

> Much of historical education in this country seems intended to deaden history as a subject, and present it in the driest, dullest terms possible. Part of our work as public historians is not just teaching specific content, but also showing the public a different, livelier, more engaged way to approach history.[317]

The approach to public history that Ryan describes speaks to an idea of "usable pasts," or pasts that are in close conversation with the needs and contexts of the present.

In her recent work, *Disturbing Practices*, Doan outlines a debate within (and outside) the field of history between scholars who search the past for individuals who resemble modern LGBTQ people and scholars who seek to illuminate differences between sexually and gender non-normative people in the past and LGBTQ people in the present.[318] In trying to understand the different ways that histories of sexuality are conceptualized in relation to the present, Doan defines two terms – ancestral genealogies, which focus on the similarities, likenesses, and connections between sexually non-normative people today and in the past, and queer genealogies, which stress differences over time and the destabilization of identity categories.[319] Both approaches to LGBTQ history have been taken up by professional historians, amateur historians, and academics rooted in other disciplines.[320]

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[317] Ibid.

[318] Doan, *Disturbing Practices*.

[319] Ibid., 58.

[320] Here I am bracketing a heated debate between queer temporalities scholars, often based in literary and cultural studies, and disciplinary LGBTQ historians. While both sides of this debate have valid critiques to make of the other about essentialism, empiricism, periodization, and lack of consideration of work done in different disciplines, this debate is often presented as overly oppositional. The debate too often focuses on accusations directed at the other group and generalizations about heterogeneous fields. Instead, here I will focus on approaches to history taken by both camps, highlighting the ways that this thinking is enhanced by a diversity of disciplines and perspectives. For more on this debate, see Doan, *Disturbing Practices*; Valerie Traub, "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies," *PMLA* 128, no. 1 (January 2013): 21–39; "Game Of Thrones: The Queer Season By Jack Halberstam (House Of Nemo)," *Bully Bloggers* (blog), April 8, 2013, https://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2013/04/08/game-of-thrones-the-queer-season-by-jack-halberstam-house-of-nemo/; Carolyn Dinshaw et al., "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion," *GLQ* 13, no. 2 (2007): 177–195.

Ancestral genealogies posit a link that can be directly drawn between LGBTQ people in the present and past, who are seen to share common qualities. This has sometimes taken the form of gay heroes – famous people who either identified as gay or took part in, sometimes only rumoured, same-sex sexual relations.[321] As Duberman describes in a 1988 article about the evolution of academic history on the topic of homosexuality:

> It is understandable that in the beginning the urge to discover gay 'heroes' proved irresistible. Having grown up with few role models, it was with relief and with pardonable pride that gay scholars were able to add to the roster of predecessors such respected figures as Walt Whitman, Virginia Woolf, Willa Cather, and E. M. Forster."[322]

The claiming of famous people in the past as gay or lesbian, including those listed by Duberman, has been undertaken by homophiles, by early historians of sexuality, and by museum curators, among many others. This sort of recuperative history, however, has come under criticism for its tendency to overplay the similarities between homosexuality in the present and the sexual acts, desires, and identities of the past. At times, it tends to paint homosexuality as an essential identity or as an intrinsic aspect of a person's being, regardless of social or temporal location.

Essentialist ideas of sexuality, which posit homosexuality as innate and traceable throughout time and culture, have grown out of what historian Martha Umphrey calls "anti-homophobic history" or what historian John Boswell calls "minority history," in other words, "the effort to recover the histories of groups previously overlooked or excluded from mainstream

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[321] Valerie Traub, "The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography," in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, ed. George E. Haggerty and Molly McGarry (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 132.
[322] Duberman, "Reclaiming the Gay Past," 516.

historiography."[323] As already addressed, the development of the history of sexuality as a

scholarly field has closely followed the political needs of and inspirations from the LGBTQ

community. Investigations of this subject have often focused on finding evidence of

homosexuality in the past to justify LGBTQ rights in the present; homosexuals have always

existed and therefore should not be recognized as simply an aberrance but as a valid social group

worthy of rights. While this has been a political tactic in gay activism for many decades,

historians of sexuality have debated how historically accurate these claims to homosexuality in

the past truly are.

In a meditation on how to identify and study sexually non-normative people who lived

prior to the current taxonomies of sexual identity, Umphrey addresses the connections made

between historians and their subjects. In researching early-twentieth-century murderer Harry

Thaw, Umphrey was first enthralled by the rumours that Thaw might have been a homosexual.

She explains that those rumours inspired in her a recuperative goal. Despite being drawn to a

history of a person who might have had a similar sexual orientation to her, however, Umphrey

used the opportunity to reflect on the criteria for identifying past figures in this way at all,

arguing that depending too heavily on binary identity categories erases many aspects of Thaw's

history; Thaw did not fit comfortably in either homosexual or heterosexual category.

Historian Leila Rupp, in her 2002 "Toward a Global History of Same-Sex Sexuality"

problematizes the very terms she chooses to use, explaining that many global historical examples

that she invokes might not accurately be considered sexual or might not provide evidence of

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[323] Martha Umphrey, "The Trouble with Harry Thaw," *Radical History Review* 1995, no. 62 (1995): 13;
John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from
the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press,
1980), 17.

same-sex attraction.[324] The term sexuality might not actually describe different manifestations of desire and romance, or we might lack proof that figures from the past took part in sexual activities (and what is a sexual activity anyway?). The term same-sex implies that sex is the primary category that defines sexual attraction or sexual acts rather than factors such as age, class, or gender.[325] All of these complex factors, rooted in temporal and cultural specificities, combine to make sexuality at any point in history quite unique. The questions that Umphrey and Rupp pose of LGBTQ history reflect some of the concerns expressed by those who seek out queer genealogies: methodologies still tied to the present but in a different relation to the past.

An interrogation of queer genealogies grew out of Foucault's seminal 1976 *History of Sexuality* and, more recently, works such as David Halperin's 2004 *How to do the History of Sexuality*. Foucault's famous distinction between acts and identities set the stage for this field of inquiry. In stating that prior to the nineteenth century, sexual activities with people of the "same-sex" were seen as acts that constituted sin but not as reflective of an innate type of person, Foucault pointed to the impossibility of applying present categories of sexual identity to the past. In other words, Foucault presented scholars with a theory of sexuality as socially constructed, where sexual acts, desires, and identities are culturally and temporally specific. This, however, does not mean that sexual acts and identities past and present are entirely distinct. Foucault proposed the concept of genealogy as a method by which an examination of the past can trace the roots of present socially constructed concepts, including homosexuality. Through this method, the social construction of sexuality is also made clear.

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[324] Leila J. Rupp, "Toward a Global History of Same-Sex Sexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 2 (2001): 287–302.
[325] Ibid., 288.

This form of Foucauldian genealogy, or what Doan terms queer genealogy, has been taken up by many historians of sexuality. For instance, in 1990 Halperin released *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* which, among other arguments, called into question essentialist ideas of sexuality. In the words of Halperin himself, his goal in writing *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* "was to snip the thread that connected ancient Greek paederasty with modern homosexuality in the minds of modern historians."[326] While ancient Greeks have often been held up by gay activists as an example of the universality and unchanging nature of homosexual desire, Halperin attempted to stay this argument. Instead, in showing the differences between the two periods of time, Halperin called into question the dominance of the heterosexual/homosexual binary; Halperin's project was a deconstructionist one that sought to denaturalize sexual orientation itself. As he writes, "My response is to deidealize homosexuality, so as to return it to its cultural specificity and contingency."[327] Instead of looking for heterosexual and homosexual antecedents, he investigates the very terms and why they have come to define sexuality in the present day. History lends itself well to this form of deconstructionist project. Historian Henry Abelove recounts his experiences with students studying lesbian and gay history texts in the early 1990s.[328] Claiming distinct approaches to history by his queer-identified students in contrast to previous generations of gay- or lesbian-identified students, Abelove explains that the queer students sought to loosen ties to identity categories, while calling into question the categories themselves. The students were still interested in gay and lesbian histories, however. As Abelove explains, "the queer students were interested in destabilizing identity in the past as well

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[326] David M. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 4.
[327] Ibid., 108.
[328] Abelove, "The Queering of Lesbian/Gay History."

as in the present, and that they wanted the performance of that destabilization to be always

primary. What these works of history do … is to historicize identity. From historicizing to

destabilizing is arguably just a step."[329] Many historians have worked toward exactly these ends.

Chauncey, for example, delimits distinct ways that sexual relationships between men in

late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century New York were defined by sexual position and

gender presentation rather than the biological sex of a sexual partner. In describing men who

would have sex with men but who were not considered homosexual due to their acceptably

masculine appearance, Chauncey provides a strong argument for the ways that sexuality and

sexual identity are historically and socially constructed rather than essential or static. By offering

different taxonomies of sexual orientation, which include terms such as "fairies," "wolves," and

"rough trade" that would not easily be translated into present day sexual categories, he offers an

argument for the heterogeneity of queerness in both the past and the present.

While Halperin, in his work on queer genealogies, is committed to a history that is in

conversation with the present, he remains firmly rooted to the idea that the past is distinct from

the present. He writes, "To follow the disintegration of our own concepts as we trace them

backward in time can be the start of an inquiry into the alterity of the past."[330] As Valerie Traub

explains, in order to distance themselves from the ancestral projects that had been so critiqued by

historians, many historians turned to "period-based" studies, which have tended to stress

differences between the studied period and the present one.[331] Like many historians, Halperin

remains committed to a focus on this form of alterity. He even states that identification

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[329] Ibid., 55.
[330] Halperin, *How to Do*, 107.
[331] Traub, "The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography," 133.

performed by LGBTQ people today with figures in the past such as "gay heroes" "gives [him] the creeps."[332]

While attention to the alterity rather than the similarity of the past and present has been much more accepted by professional historians, this focus can overlook the often felt identifications that historians feel with the figures they research as well as the affective reasons why many people, professional and amateur, seek out a relationship with history. Dinshaw writes about the affective connection that she felt with the histories she was studying, which she describes as "a queer desire for history."[333] Dinshaw also felt that these desires were in conflict with her academic training. As she writes, "I have been concerned since day one of graduate school with the relationship of past to present. 'Obsessed' is more like it, really: I felt caught between the scholarly imperative, especially keen at Princeton, to view the past as other and my sense that present concerns could usefully illuminate the past for us now."[334] Similarly, in her critical article addressed above, Umphrey speaks to the utility of identification. She writes that her research was inspired by a "projection of desire on my part for a story lost to history, suppressed by the fragile propriety of other historians."[335] Even Halperin, who is seen as one of the defining members of the queer genealogical project, allows room for some of the concerns of the ancestral genealogists. Despite having "good reasons for wishing to find other things for gay men to do with the Greeks besides merely identify with them," Halperin writes:

> Identification gets at something, something important: it picks out resemblances,
> connections, echo effects. Identification is a form of cognition. And the ability to
> set aside historical differences in order to focus on historical continuities is no less

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[332] Halperin, *How to Do*, 16.
[333] Dinshaw et al., "Theorizing Queer Temporalities."
[334] Ibid., 178–179.
[335] Umphrey, "The Trouble with Harry Thaw," 13.

crucial to our personal, political, and cultural projects than is the ethical or ascetic determination to see in the documented experiences of other people something else besides self-confirming reflections or ourselves.[336]

I bring this long quotation to bear on this debate because many of these debates have lacked an acknowledgement of the spaces of compromise, overlap, and agreement between the two camps.

Though Doan claims that ancestral genealogy is "otherwise known as recovery history," I want to propose instead a form of history that incorporates ancestral longings with the critical approach of queer genealogists.[337] For ease of use, I will call these queer ancestral genealogies. Doan proposes an approach to history that she calls queer critical history. This approach tries to disconnect studies of sexuality in the past from our present conceptualizations. She makes clear that this different approach to history is not to dismiss or overwrite existing approaches. In a similar move, I want to propose queer ancestral genealogies as a method by which the emotional needs of ancestral projects are respected, while also recognizing that these projects need not reify presentist notions of sexual or gender identity. This is a method whereby both similarities and differences can be recognized concurrently. It also understands that the similarities people today feel with the past can be complex, subtle, and complicated; similarities need not be based on narrow assumptions about identity categories today or in the past.

It is through this frame that I move forward. In the remaining portion of this chapter I turn to the ways that queer ancestral genealogies can be seen playing out in the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History. In doing so, I do not want to imply that this approach is superior to others or the only approach that should be taken. Instead, I want to create a space that can accommodate *multiple* approaches to the history of sexuality, working in tandem. For instance, Ryan describes

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[336] Halperin, *How to Do*, 15–16.
[337] Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 58.

academic histories, which often subscribe to a queer genealogical method, as "so important and often so beautiful in their conceptions" and explains that the Pop-Up Museum works to remove them from the academic language and settings in which they are so often found. The works that grapple with questions such as those taken up by Halperin, Chauncey, Rupp, and Umphrey are absolutely fundamental in creating each exhibition. In other words, an approach to history that approximates a version of the truth of the past can still be useful when engaging with people's affective desires for the past and vice versa. As Dinshaw explains, "Pleasure can be taken in the assertion of historical difference as well as in the assertion of similarity, and any such pleasure should not be opposed to 'truth'."[338] In analyzing an affective approach to histories, such as that found at the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, there is space for both alterity and sameness, and both professional and amateur history working together.

Queer Ancestral Genealogies at the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History

> Ancestral genealogy's resilience, and its power to make same-sex love and desire thinkable, writable, and speakable and to celebrate what it perceives as a lost past, has not diminished. On the contrary, no matter how damaging or patronizing the queer critique waged on multiple fronts, the market for popular accounts of lesbian, gay, and queer ancestors endures and flourishes, as is evident both in academic crossover books and in popular histories.
> - Laura Doan[339]

Though Doan draws attention to the ways that ancestral genealogy, with its often ahistorical and universalizing assumptions about figures from the past, has been largely discredited in academic history contexts, she also notes that it is interesting how these sorts of

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[338] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 35.
[339] Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 70.

identifications with the past persist in popular history venues such as popular history texts, museums, conferences, and personal encounters with figures from the past.[340] Halperin speaks to this persistence in the context of his own attempts to challenge identificatory history when he writes, "What I soon discovered, however, is that identification is not so easily thwarted."[341] Doan explains the tenacity of identifications when she writes, "This is in part because ancestral narratives satisfy a hunger for a past" that neither professional historians nor queer genealogists are satisfying. Doan claims that this hunger is "just as worthy of investigation as the critique that dismisses recovery history as fatally flawed."[342] Ancestral genealogy, Doan claims, can be "foundational and enabling."[343] Doan gestures toward the affective implications of ancestral genealogy that were explicated by many early historians in this field – both those participating from the venue of academia as well as those in community settings. As the editors of the 1989 collection *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Lesbian and Gay Past* explain, for example, "Because the history of homosexuality has been denied or ignored, omitted in formal historical instruction and given no place in the family-centered oral traditions available to other disenfranchised groups, gay people's hunger for knowledge of their past is strong."[344] Nestle repeats this sense of hunger when she describes taking community members on tours of the LHA in her apartment in the 1970s. Her description drips with words that reference affective connection. She describes the contents of the archive as "desired resources" and her bedroom, which served as the audiovisual room of the archives, with her "bed heavy with bodies intent on studying the offered images, the erotics of it all, the fulfillment of want and longing for a

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[340] Ibid., 67, 70.
[341] Halperin, *How to Do*, 15.
[342] Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 71.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey, *Hidden From History*, 12.

touchable past."[345] As Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey explain, it is the complicated affective relationships to affirmation, tradition, and validation that LGBTQ people engage with on the levels of family, community, and society that leads to gay history's "unusual interest among people otherwise unconcerned about history."[346] This "unusual interest," or desire, creates the conditions necessary for the rise of amateur historians and amateur history to thrive. After all, according to Dinshaw, amateurism "bears on [the amateur's] affections, their intimacy with their materials, their desires. These readings clarify that intimate longings – desires for authenticity, for origins, for meaning, for connection – motivate all turning toward the past."[347] The desire that Dinshaw references led to "overflowing crowds" at the Lesbian Herstory Archives to see creations by "lesbian cultural workers" in the 1970s; so too did it lead to the thirty-eight pieces created for the first Pop-Up Museum of Queer History in 2011. This desire for ancestral genealogies, even if it has been discredited by many historians and queer theorists, is strong. This desire can also be credited, in part, with the success of the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History.

While the Pop-Up Museum does look at histories critically, at times taking part in a project that aligns itself more with a queer genealogical perspective, it also often takes part in the ancestral project that LGBTQ people today still desire so strongly. However, while we might assume that these ancestral projects are based on fairly static ideas of identity – for example, that lesbians look for lesbians in the past, transgender people look for transgender people in the past – the relationships and longings that emerge from the Pop-Up Museum pieces do not always rely on these sorts of identity-based identifications. Instead of a strictly ancestral project, I want to forward here a notion of a critical ancestral project, or a merging of the work of queer

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[345] Nestle, "Who Were We to Do Such a Thing?," 237.
[346] Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey, *Hidden from History*, 12.
[347] Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, 29.

genealogists and ancestral genealogists – a queer ancestral genealogy. A queer ancestral

genealogy does not normalize or essentialize LGBTQ identities across time or assume sameness

across time. Instead, it recognizes identifications that might be based on shared personal

experiences, orientations to mainstream culture, or affective bearings. Further, these

identifications are frequently based on the needs felt by people in the present.

To recognize the ways that history can be both deconstructionist and an affective tool for

creating community and a sense of imperfect lineage, a number of scholars who theorize queer

temporalities have proposed "likenesses," "approximations," or "identifications" instead of

identity, when considering how to perceive the affective connections that people maintain with

those from the past who do not hold the same identities as them.[348] As Halperin describes,

identification "is not dependent on identity. Identification is desire."[349] Dinshaw expands this

sense of desire to the level of communities across time that do not have to depend on sameness

but rather shared affective bonds.[350] She also speaks to the diversity of identificatory practices:

"Appropriation, misrecognition, disidentification: these terms that queer theory has highlighted

all point to the alterity within mimesis itself, the never-perfect aspect of identification. And they

suggest the desires that propel such engagements, the affects that drive relationality even across

time."[351] As I have already argued, the affective needs and desires of those in the present drive

many of the engagements with histories that are undertaken in academia and outside. Though he

describes identifications as "cheap thrills," even Halperin clarifies that "Historical analysis is no

argument against pleasure, least of all against the pleasure of identification, which even the most

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[348] Carla Freccero, "Queer Times," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (2010): 485–494; Love, *Feeling Backward*; Goldberg and Menon, "Queering History."
[349] Halperin, *How to Do*, 15.
[350] Dinshaw, Getting Medieval.
[351] Ibid., 35.

austere or the most self-aware historical scholar cannot resist for very long."[352] In identifying pleasure as even driving professional historians, Halperin again blurs the lines between amateur and professional but maintains the importance of desire and pleasure to much of historical work. The work created for the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History is no exception to this claim. I now want to turn briefly to a few of the pieces that, I would argue, demonstrate the kinds of queer ancestral longings that I have just described.

Queer Family Trees

According to Doan, the method of ancestral genealogy "more closely approximates a family tree, as evinced by an interest in continuities, resemblances, and similarities."[353] Given that LGBTQ people do not often share their identities with family members, the implications of searching out "ancestors" becomes very relevant. At best, most LGBTQ people do not receive LGBTQ histories through their family's oral traditions.[354] At worst, LGBTQ people are expelled from their families due to homophobia and transphobia.[355] With these complicated relationships to traditional notions of biological family, it is no wonder that many LGBTQ people have created non-traditional family structures, which include searching the past for ancestors, heroes, or predecessors. At the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, some pieces take up this model of the family quite literally.

Ro Garrido's 2012 piece, *Nuestro Amor* (our love) interrogated Garrido's own biological family history. For *Nuestro Amor*, Garrido searched their family archive for evidence of a

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[352] Halperin, *How to Do*, 15.
[353] Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 58.
[354] Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey, *Hidden from History*, 12.
[355] Robb Travers, Greta Bauer, and Jake Pyne, "Impacts of Strong Parental Support for Trans Youth: A Report Prepared for Children's Aid Society of Toronto and Delisle Youth Services" (Trans Pulse, 2012).

potential romance between their father and their mother's brother amongst the fragments and rumours left behind. Accompanied by a sound installation, family photographs and documents were cut into pieces and multiplied, pasted together in a busy collage. The collage consisted of a series of three images that were not clear or easy to decipher. Juxtaposing the photographs of events that often tell the story of heteronormative family life – the wedding, the baby, the home, and the legal documents – with mysterious blurred figures of Garrido's father and uncle standing close together in the middle of the first image, *Nuestro Amor* draws attention to the unfamiliarity that lurks in any familiar familial story. Through the collage format, which brings together the exceptional moments in family life with the quotidian, the images ask what is obscured by family photographs as they are often presented; the repetition of images speaks to the practiced narratives that produce a public image of a family while writing over the aspects that challenge heteronormativity.

In other pieces created for the Pop-Up Museum, the idea of imagined family extends across time. *Quilt of Ancestors* by Jason Bishop, prepared for the 2011 SoHo Pop-Up Museum show, takes up the sense of ancestors obviously in its title. The piece created by Bishop takes the form of a quilt with four squares, mounted on the wall. Each square depicts the face of a different "ancestor." The figures, however, though all "of Asian descent," vary in the time period and place of origin, as well as in their forms of queerness. The ancestors are identified as Chinese American, Korean, and Hawaiian in the artist statement.[356] They lived in the fourteenth century, the early-twentieth century, and the twenty-first century. The figures also represent a range of sexual and gender practices, including a man who had "public affairs" with younger men, the "reputed lover of Marlene Dietrich," and a "transgender elected official."

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[356] "'Quilt of Ancestors' - Jason Bishop, 2011," Queer Museum, accessed September 7, 2017, https://www.flickr.com/photos/qmuseum/6588577135/in/photostream/.

Laura Doan's characterization of ancestral genealogy as approximating "a family tree" would describe many pieces created for the Pop-Up Museum that present ideas of family, not based on blood but on other forms of kinship.[357] The familial implications of Bishop's work are clear, both through the use of the term ancestors, and through the progression through time, or, we could imagine, the generations that the figures from different time periods represent. The image of the family tree is interesting in this context, as traditional family trees based on biology also do not represent sameness among its members. While biological family members might share some commonalities such as physical characteristics, traditions, or mannerisms, they are just as likely to be ostracized, feel embarrassment, and disidentify with family members who are seemingly very different. Family identity, like queer ancestry, does not mean sameness. In *Quilt of Ancestors,* the descriptions of ancestors extend beyond only their distinct forms of queerness. Bishop feels many types of resonances with these figures. Through Bishop's description, each ancestor is not just queer but also a "fashion icon," "the greatest artist of his period," and "the highest ranking transgender elected official in the United States." In this piece, similarities do not conform to a traditional idea of a shared gender identity, sexual orientation, or race. Resonances occur around processes of racialization, sexuality and erotic desire, and social normalization and marginalization. Through the invocation of specificity, fluidity, and uncertainty, Bishop engages more with queer ancestral genealogical longings than with a genealogy based on strict ideas of identity categories.

Sometimes family was addressed more subtly at the Pop-Up Museum. Another piece at the SoHo show by Samantha Box and Alexis Handwerker, entitled *Invisible*, engaged far less with history than most others. A temporary structure made of cardboard boxes was constructed in

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[357] Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 58.

the Leslie Lohman Art Gallery and videos of oral histories of homeless youth played within the structure, inviting the audiences into the space. On the outside of the structure, pictures of Sylvia Rivera, well-known transgender and poverty activist, adorned the walls. Rivera was meant to symbolize a mother or grandmother figure to both the youth involved in the oral histories inside the structure and to the youth and others who were invited to write messages on the exterior of the structure. While more of a recovery, or traditional ancestral genealogical, project, *Invisible* again reflected a queered approach. The youth who participated in the project were very diverse in terms of identities and experiences. What united the youth with Rivera was a shared orientation to poverty and homelessness; Rivera represented not only a queer and transgender person who experienced similar social marginalization as the youth but also an activist who fought against that marginalization. Literary scholar Christopher Nealon analyzes the writings of Willa Cather who, through her novels, creates "affect-genealogies," not based on the bonds of biology or nation but instead on a shared orientation toward the heteronormative family, mainstream culture, and normative gender presentation.[358] In creating these commonalities between characters, Cather creates a "lineage of invisible kin."[359] *Invisible*, like the two pieces above, can be read as a similar effort to create these "affect-genealogies" through shared experiences but not identity-based sameness across time.

Past Life Regressions as History

My interview with Buzz Slutzky was like speaking to an old friend. We chatted easily for over two hours in their art studio at Parsons, just before I had to leave to catch my flight home. Our conversation meandered, taking time getting to the questions I thought I would ask. We took detours through our relationships, astrology, our shared love of history, and Judaism. Buzz and I

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[358] Christopher Shaun Nealon, *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion Before Stonewall* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 14.
[359] Ibid., 14.

are not too different in age and, though we live in different countries, it seems as though we were raised in similar queer communities. Buzz took me for a tour through their art, past and present, and I was honoured when they gifted me a photocopied version of their piece created for the Pop-Up Museum, "Suit Yrself." Alongside the drawn tarot cards that comprised "Suit Yrself," Buzz had created a performance piece that was part of the same Pop-Up Exhibition. They told me the backstory to this piece, the personal struggles, interpersonal relationships, confusion, love, desire, and anger that went into making the piece what it was. They told me about the frustration with how the performance was actualized, with how they lost control of the piece. I needed to see it and so was relieved when Buzz told me that they had recorded it.

After Buzz shared the videos with me, well after I had returned to Toronto, I wrote to them: "I finally got some time to watch the video (yes, that's my Friday night). Holy shit! It is really intense, especially knowing some of the back story – I was totally captivated. Listening to the audience is also so interesting, as they struggle to figure out what is going on with you two. Thank you so much for sharing it with me." The audience in the video giggles nervously, stays silent, laughs loudly at heartbreaking monologues. It is not often that such personal relationships play out so publicly.

At times, the identifications that occurred with figures in the past at the Pop-Up Museum did not take the form of generations or of ancestors – from parent to child, but rather of more direct sameness. Artist Slutzky had felt an affinity with nineteenth-century French novelist George Sand for years. In "Suit Yourself: The George Sand Story in C Major (Arcana)," Slutzky used tarot cards to tell the history of gender variant Sand. After extensive research, Slutzky created twenty-two five by seven inch cards based on the major arcana of tarot, using each to illustrate happenings and people important in Sand's history. The ink drawings were accompanied by written pieces that describe the place or person as related to both Sand and to the position in the tarot that they occupy.

This was certainly a piece that was well-researched and one that provided visitors with significant historical information, and yet it was still a project characterized by Dinshaw's amateurism – the figure of Sand and the stories told were all based on Slutzky's own desires and identifications. Though Slutzky was attracted to Sand's gender variance, during the process of research, Slutzky found other similarities, such as Sand's commitment to spirituality that they

echo in the context of their own interests during our interview.[360] Slutzky's work on Sand was

also informed by the events of their life at the time. Part of this influence included Slutzky's own

thinking about other figures such as Patti Smith. At the time, Slutzky was reading Smith's *Just

Kids* and biographies of the musician and Slutzky brings their thinking about Smith into Sand's

narrative, forcing connections across time that might not usually be made.

These connections were not always positive ones. Doan explains that ancestral

genealogies have tended to present celebratory and affirmative accounts of identifications with

the past.[361] In contrast, as she explains, are scholars such as Heather Love, who instead focus on

the negative aspects of queer identifications with the past, including those surrounding "the

wounds, the switchbacks, the false starts" of history and the "regret, despair, and loss but also …

the shame of identification."[362] Slutzky explains their inclusion of Patti Smith in "The Magician"

card because, "There's so many parallels between [Smith and Sand]. They both kind of have

these things they say about becoming a woman that feels very transgender."[363] However, the

parallels do not end with gender identity. Slutzky says that "they're also kind of misogynists at

different times." Umphrey, in the reflections on Thaw that I reference above, learned that Thaw

had been abusive to both men and women, which leads Umphrey to declare Thaw an "unsavoury

ancestor" who could be "easily erased (perhaps with relief)" from a lesbian and gay history

project.[364] After all, just like our biological families, we are bound to be embarrassed or angered

by some of the actions of those who appear in our family tree. While there is often a tendency to

eliminate unsavoury ancestors from accounts of LGBTQ history, Slutzky does not turn away

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[360] Slutzky, Interview.
[361] Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 72.
[362] Love, *Feeling Backward*, 32.
[363] Slutzky, Interview.
[364] Umphrey, "The Trouble with Harry Thaw," 11.

from the negative aspects of Sand's own history, instead bringing those aspects into the light through their artistic medium. Through the juxtaposition of Sand with more recent figures, Slutzky highlights trends that still exist within LGBTQ communities across time.

Finally, in perhaps the most ancestral *and* affective aspect of "Suit Yourself," Slutzky incorporated a performance piece in the space of the museum. During the performance, Slutzky and another artist, Chris Tyler, take part in a past life regression, morphing into the historical figures, George Sand and Frederic Chopin, who had been one of Sand's lovers. Sand, who wore men's clothes and used a male pen name, was famous for having affairs as well as for writing. Sand is rumoured to have had relationships with both men and women. Though it is not easy to classify Sand within the modern categories of transgender, lesbian, or gay, Sand and their ten-year relationship with Chopin was certainly not normative.
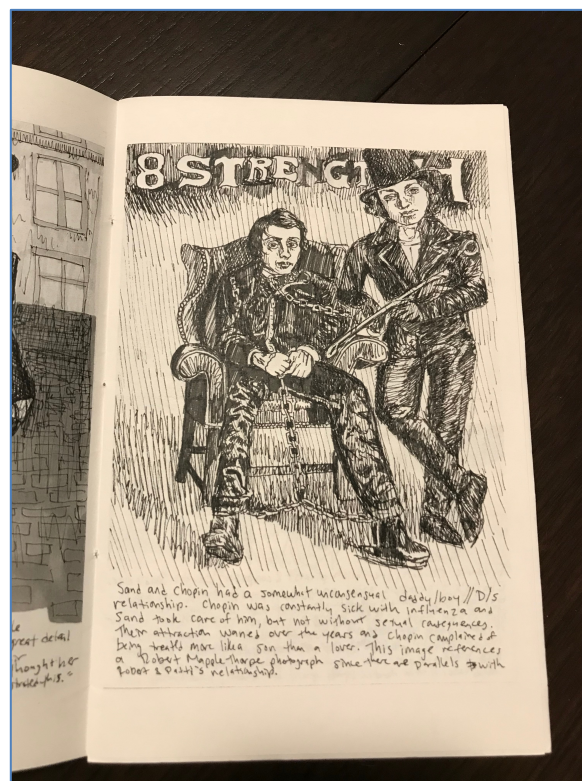

Figure 3 Detail of one tarot card produced by Buzz Slutzky as part of "Suit Yrself: The George Sand Story in C Major (Arcana)"

Slutzky and Tyler's relationship was also complicated. On stage, the performance quickly eroded as the audience became confused as to whether the argument on stage was between Sand and Chopin or between two artists. It is, at times, unclear whether the dialogue is scripted or not. Indeed, even Slutzky told me that the distinctions were not so clear to the actors on stage. Slutzky describes the scene:

> And then we put on these wigs and are interacting as them. And then at a certain point it breaks down and you don't really know whether or not we're still in character and doing these past lives or whether we're ourselves. And I think the interesting part was we really did have so many parallels between the kind of fucked up dynamics of Sand and Chopin and we were really playing out a lot of the stuff.

In this performance, Slutzky not only recognizes in Sand a forebearer, or ancestor, but blurs the lines between the two; Slutzky becomes Sand. The identifications that take place on stage between Slutzky and Sand, alongside Tyler and Chopin, are not easy to characterize as identity-based. While Sand and Chopin might be considered queer in an expansive use of the term, neither fit into easy LGBTQ identity-categories. The identifications that emerged from the performance were much more complex; not only did the actors recognize in themselves similar personality traits to those of Sand and Chopin but also similar dynamics playing out between the two actors as between the two historical figures. Slutzky identifies in this performance the felt experiences of jealousy, control and lack of control, and confusion. Instead of investigating Sand and Chopin through a lens of recovery history, which attempts to locate gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender figures in the past who have been "hidden from history," Slutzky provides Pop-Up Museum visitors with an embodied and affectively-evocative "touch across time" between complex individuals in the past and present.[365]

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[365] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 21.

Belonging in History: Engaging Visitors

> Part of our work as public historians is not just teaching specific content, but also showing the public a different, livelier, more engaged way to approach history. Our shows always begin with a kick-off party, featuring performances, food and drink, and at least some interactive history pieces for people to explore and take part in. We want our community to understand that this is our history, and it is amazing.
>
> - Hugh Ryan[366]

The work done by the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History emphasizes an engaged form of history that does not try to hide its "positions of affect and attachment," its "intimacy" with its subject matter, or its "desires for authenticity, for origins, for meaning, for connection."[367] As Dinshaw explains, "amateurism is everything the professional leaves behind on the modern train of forward progress."[368] The Pop-Up Museum embraces the affective experiences, the volunteer time of the off-hours, and the complex identifications that so many professionals are forced to leave behind in order to gain recognition as experts. The Pop-Up Museum, however, also does not emerge from a vacuum. As this chapter has shown, there is a long lineage of historians who cannot be easily placed in either category of professional or amateur, who are driven to their research for varied emotional and political reasons. As LGBTQ history becomes more entrenched within academic settings and more fully embraces the norms of professionalization, the Pop-Up Museum encourages the growth of amateur historians who might not feel qualified to take on the title of historian. By providing workshops, exhibiting interactive museum pieces, and modeling the relationships between people today and in the past, the Pop-Up Museum gives

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[366] Ryan, "Making History Cool."
[367] Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, 6, 29.
[368] Ibid., 20–21.

tools with which the amateur can work to create a multiplicity of interpretations of and engagements with the past.

This public history work can be contextualized by cultural theorist Heather Love's distinction between "effective history" and "affective history."[369] As Love describes them, effective history searches for LGBTQ people in the past while affective history investigates the reasons why people today care about the past, asking questions about "the identifications, the longings, and the love that structure the encounter with the queer past."[370] Though Love complicates these largely positive aspects of identifications with the past, the questions asked about the reasons for conducting historical research are relevant. The Pop-Up Museum joins the roles of "effective" and "affective" histories, encouraging amateurs to conserve, create, and engage with the histories of people in the past while also considering their own relationships to these histories. Specifically, the Pop-Up Museum encourages a queer ancestral method of creating genealogies. It gives space to affective longing, even centralizing this within the exhibits created. However, this longing is not based on simplistic ideas of identity categories; it instead recognizes the diverse resonances that people feel when engaging the past. I want to end by echoing Dinshaw's wishes with regard to her amateur medievalists: "What I want to imagine … here: a collective bound by ever-denser attachments on the basis of each member's singular knowledge, aspirations, desires, and capacities."[371] This is the sort of collective created at the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History.

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[369] Love, *Feeling Backward*, 31.
[370] Ibid..
[371] Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, 38.

The Romance of Objects:

**From Boxes to Public Exhibition
at the GLBT History Museum**

On September 27, 2014, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights opened to the public in

Winnipeg, Manitoba. With an explicit mission to "enhance the public's understanding of human

rights, to promote respect for others and to encourage reflection and dialogue," the museum

presents multiple stories about the evolution of LGBTQ rights and activism in Canadian and

global contexts.[372] The museum has thus far been heavily critiqued for its inclusions, exclusions,

and representations and it would be easy to similarly critique who and what are included,

excluded, and represented in the LGBTQ-specific content.[373] What interests me more in the

context of this chapter, however, is the question of how these stories come to be exhibited in the

space of the museum.

The museum has been lauded for its commitment to promoting "reflection and dialogue"

on human rights issues. As *National Post* reporter Joseph Brean claims, "few visitors are likely

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[372] "About the Museum," *Canadian Museum for Human Rights*, n.d., https://humanrights.ca/about.
[373] "Canadian Museum for Human Rights Opening Marked by Music, Speeches and Protests," *CBC News*, September 19, 2014, sec. Manitoba, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/canadian-museum-for-human-rights-opening-marked-by-music-speeches-and-protests-1.2771245.

to leave [the museum] with their preconceptions intact."[374] However, in trying to create a space of introspection, reflection, and critical thinking, the museum has tended to prioritize ideas over objects. This in turn relates to the fact that the museum presents sixty percent of its content through digital means. Digital content has increasingly been used as a way to promote the interactivity that many museums now promote and it is often viewed as a way to engage the visitor in ways that material objects no longer do.[375] However, the digital focus means that, according to Brean, "It is not a museum of beautiful things to look at.... It is not even a museum 'of' anything, preferring the activist focus of being a museum 'for' human rights. It is devoted to an idea, and as such, it seems unsure what exactly it is for."[376] While Brean does not necessarily intend this comment as a critique of the museum, his words echo the concerns of many scholars in the field of museum studies who worry that new museums devoted to social justice topics might be straying *too* far from the more traditional model of the museum, with its focus on the display of objects.

Writing in 1971, museum studies scholar Duncan Cameron claimed that museums were facing an "identity crisis," not clear about their evolving role in an ever-changing society.[377] He contrasted the traditional model of museum, which was envisioned as a "temple" for great stories and the great objects that represent them, with a new model, which saw museums as "forums"

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[374] Joseph Brean, "How the New Canadian Museum for Human Rights --- with All Its Problems --- Still Manages to Make It Work," *National Post*, September 21, 2014, sec. Canada, http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/how-the-new-canadian-museum-for-human-rights-with-all-its-problems-still-manages-to-make-it-work.

[375] For examples of the role of the digital in interactive exhibits, see Gwyneira Isaac, "Technology Becomes the Object," in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 2nd ed., ed. Bettina Carbonells (Chichester, UK: Blackwell, 2012), 533–545; Loic Tallon, ed., *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience: Handheld Guides and Other Media* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2008).

[376] Brean, "How the New Canadian Museum for Human Rights."

[377] Duncan Cameron, "The Museum: A Temple or the Forum," in *Reinventing the Museum*, ed. Gail Anderson (Oxford, UK: AltaMira, 2004), 61–73.

for discussion of contemporary social issues. In his 2009 book, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, historian Steven Conn contends that this typically comes at the expense of historical objects, with many museums displaying far fewer objects than they did in the past.[378] He argues, "The success of these museums does not depend on objects on display, because objects are largely secondary to the museums' strategies."[379] Education scholar Ann Chinnery expands on this argument when she writes:

> In the new museums of ideas, objects and artifacts have been replaced by photographic exhibitions, audiovisual installations, and interactive technologies. The traditional inward focus on collection-building and preservation, and museum education as contemplation, has given way to an outward focus on people and ideas, and museum education as discussion and dialogue.[380]

I do not want to diminish the role that interactive digital content can play in the engagement of visitors within museums. I want instead to argue that objects are often overlooked for their potential to *also* engage the visitor and promote critical discussion of social issues.

In this chapter, I argue that objects might be instrumental in a project that promotes the kind of contemplation and critical thinking that the Canadian Museum for Human Rights claims to value. Objects have the potential to present histories that have long been marginalized and to get away from formulaic, pre-packaged, and rehearsed narratives while also engaging the visitor through emotional connection – making the visitor care about the histories that are being presented. Here, I theorize these emotional connections as an embodied sense of being drawn

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[378] Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
[379] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, 46.
[380] Ann Chinnery, "Temple or Forum? On New Museology and Education for Social Change," in *Philosophy of Education 2012*, ed. Claudia Ruitenberg (Urbana-Champaign, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 2012), 272.

toward a history through one's interaction with an archival object, sometimes for reasons that are obvious and sometimes because of a pull that is more ambiguous and difficult to describe.

Through an exploration of the kinds of affective pull that various people experience in relation to archival objects, this chapter follows some of the holdings of the GLBT Historical Society (GLBTHS) Archives in San Francisco as they make their way from the space of the archives, through their public exhibition within the archives, to their most recent destination in the GLBT History Museum. I trace these evocative archival objects and the relationships they form with researchers, artists, and visitors as they travel from the space of the archives – generally set up for researchers – to the museum, where the target audience is broad publics of people without significant pre-existing knowledge of the histories being displayed. In looking specifically at the GLBT History Museum in San Francisco, with its roots in the pre-existing GLBT Historical Society Archives, I claim that new museums that grow out of community-based archives might provide new opportunities for promoting the kinds of critical and emotional engagements with objects that the national-scale museums are seen as lacking. I also argue that the GLBT History Museum's organization of objects, greatly influenced by its archival roots, gives viewers the opportunity for chance encounters with histories that come to matter to them.

Evocative Objects in the GLBT Historical Society Archives

> We find it familiar to consider objects as useful or aesthetic, as necessities or vain indulgences. We are on less familiar ground when we consider objects as companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought. The notion of evocative objects brings together these two less familiar ideas, underscoring the inseparability of thought and feeling in our relationship to things. We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with.

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To frame my case study of the GLBT Historical Society Archives and Museum, I provide a description of the role of affect and especially affective objects in community-run queer archives to demonstrate how this role might extend beyond the archives to more public exhibition in spaces like museums. Many scholars have now written on how queer institutions like the GLBTHS Archives become repositories of both traditional archival holdings, like manuscripts and letters, and unusual types of items that one would not normally find in institutional archives, like pornography, sex toys, and underwear with menstrual blood stains.[382] Like many other identity-based or activist archives, the GLBTHS Archives tend to prioritize objects that represent histories that are not often preserved in traditional institutional archives, including histories of "ordinary" or non-famous people, of emotionally-evocative experiences of community-formation and violent oppression, and of sexual acts and gender performances.[383] Cultural theorist Ann Cvetkovich, for instance, describes these archives as "often 'magical' collections … that represent far more than the literal value of the objects themselves."[384] For

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[381] Sherry Turkle, *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 5.

[382] Pornography (audio visual as well as photography) is commonly collected at LGBTQ archives in North America. Sex toys (dildos, vibrators, etc.) are part of the collections at the GLBT Historical Society Archives in San Francisco, among others. A pair of women's underwear with a menstrual blood stain, as well as a vial of menstrual blood, are in the collections of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn. For discussions of archival collections in LGBTQ archives, see Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*; Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past"; Jennifer K. Snapp-Cook, "Now on Exhibit: Bringing Out Materials from LGBTIQ Archives," in *Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archives Users: Essays on Outreach Service Collections and Access*, ed. Ellen Greenblatt (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 146–153.

[383] Steven Maynard, for example, traces the historical and archival focus on "ordinary people in everyday lives" to the emergence of social history in the 1960s and 1970s, which focused on those who had been left out of traditional political, diplomatic, and intellectual histories, including working class people, racial minorities, and women; see Steven Maynard, "'The Burning, Wilful Evidence': Lesbian/Gay History and Archival Research," *Archivaria* 1, no. 33 (1991): 196.

[384] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 268.

Cvetkovich, the "magic" lies both in the ways that objects are chosen for inclusion in archival

collections and in the ways they are interpreted within the archives. These processes are linked to

both personal memory and affective attachment on the part of donors, archivists, and archives

users.

Archives librarian Aimee Brown charts how many community LGBTQ archives have

relied on donations of personal collections preserved by, in her words, queer "pack rats."[385] The

remains of decades of queer personal, public, and political lives are chosen by these people

themselves, offering an emotional reading of what in life is worth preserving. In the face of

social stigma that has led to an underrepresentation of queerness in many sites of historical

conservation, in part because many families destroy the remnants of queer individuals' lives, this

collection process becomes even more significant.[386] For example, at the Lesbian Herstory

Archives the only collection criteria is that the donated material is significant to a "lesbian"; the

meaning of significance (and of lesbian) is defined and felt by the donor.[387] Because of these

methods of collection, many queer archival objects are not acquired and assessed for inclusion

by archivists using typical criteria of worth. As Cvetkovich explains, "their principles of

selection and inclusion are not the same as those of a public research archive that defines value

according to historical or research interests."[388] Instead, objects are deemed valuable because of

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[385] Brown, "How Queer 'Pack Rats' and Activist Archivists Saved Our History."
[386] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 241; Freedman, "'The Burning of Letters Continues'";
Duberman, "'Writhing Bedfellows'". Though queer archives may be similar to other community-based or
activist archives in their efforts to highlight the histories of lives that might not otherwise be preserved
and in their focus on "ordinary" people, the social stigma that accompanies this identity is quite distinct.
A similarity could perhaps be drawn to people who practice BDSM (bondage & discipline, domination &
submission, and sadism & masochism) and, in turn, to the Chicago-based Leather Archive and Museum.
On the Leather Archive and Museum, see Robert Ridinger, "Things Visible and Invisible," *Journal of
Homosexuality* 43, no. 1 (2002): 1–9.
[387] Nestle, "The Will to Remember," 87.
[388] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 243.

their personal relations to those who chose to donate them; some members of the LGBTQ community are able to represent themselves as opposed to being represented by archival professionals.[389] In this process of self-representation, as Cvetkovich explains, "sentimental value is taken seriously as a rationale for acquisition in the gay and lesbian archive."[390]

Because queer archival collections, like other social history collections, are accepted based on their significance to community members, they often include items that would not normally be housed in more traditional archives – due to either their relationship to "ordinary" people or their links to gender and sexuality. For example, the collections of the GLBTHS Archives in San Francisco include hundreds of matchbooks from gay bars, a twelve-foot neon sign from Finocchio's drag club, an antique vibrator that was donated by the owner's son, the suit Harvey Milk was wearing when he was assassinated (donated by his lover), and large panels from a mural that hung inside the Bulldog bathhouse.[391]

These objects, once in the archives, do not cease to be emotionally important but instead make the archives themselves affectively rich spaces for their visitors. Indeed, many archives users have recounted how they feel captivated by certain queer archival objects – because of beauty, strangeness, or back story – and how these affective experiences have influenced their relationships to queer histories. In stumbling (sometimes literally) over these emotional objects, researchers often experience chance encounters in the archives that can direct research toward new topics or frame research in new ways. As Turkle claims in the epigraph to this section, these

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[389] Ibid., 268. While this is largely due to the politics of the archival organizations, it should also be noted that most community-run LGBTQ archives rely heavily on volunteer labour and thus might not have professional archivists working with them.

[390] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 253.

[391] Snapp-Cook, "Now on Exhibit," 148; Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge, "Archivist as Activist," 13–14; Gerard Koskovich, "La GLBT Historical Society de San Francisco," *Triangul'ère* 6 (2006): 48–63.

objects can highlight "the inseparability of thought and feeling in our relationship to things."[392]

Though emotional accounts of archival research rarely make it into published historical works, the romance of the archive is a story often shared among historians.[393]

As many people who have done research in archives will acknowledge, the material conditions of both the space of the archives and the archival materials themselves are often intense factors in the research process. As historian Jacqueline Holler asserted at the 2012 Canadian Historical Association meeting, "We all know the excitement of entering the archive after a long absence; the reluctance to quit and resentment of closing times when we see something swimming toward us through the dusty pages; the elevated heart rate and flushed cheeks in those moments we find something really good."[394] Holler evokes here the bodily response to being drawn to the space of the archives and, more specifically, to the archival objects that one might not have even known they were searching for. Historian Joan Scott similarly claims the archival search as an "extraordinary pleasure" and writes of the process, "Part of the fun of archival research is guessing what might be found in a box of papers whose label is seemingly irrelevant to the inquiry at hand."[395] In these moments and in these mysteries, one can get taken in by both dusty pages and dusty spaces.

Historian Carolyn Steedman, in contrast, is much more ambivalent about the physical and emotional sensations brought forth by the archives. In a humourous play on Jacques Derrida's foundational work in archive theory, *Archive Fever*, Steedman describes the physical and mental ailments, or "fevers," that come from doing historical research in archives. Steedman recounts

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[392] Turkle, *Evocative Objects*, 5.
[393] Jacqueline Holler, "Ravished by Clio: Eruptions of Intimacy and Desire in the Archives of the Holy Office" (Canadian Historical Association Meeting, Waterloo, ON, 2012).
[394] Ibid.
[395] Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History*, 145, 148.

the experiences of French historian Jules Michelet, who gained much pleasure in breathing life into historical figures by breathing in their dust in the archives.[396] Through a tracing of the history of book manufacturing, she turns Michelet's pleasures in the archives into his demise; she proposes that the dust Michelet breathed in contained anthrax, which might have eventually killed him.

Steedman also describes her own experiences of archival research, which bring on much more anxiety than pleasure. She expresses her own roller coaster ride of emotions while in the archive, with its "myriads of the dead, who all day long have pressed their concerns upon you."[397] The massive quantities of objects that the dead have recorded and left behind can become a burden and she writes, "You think: I could get to hate these people; and then: I can never do these people justice; and finally: I shall never *get it done*."[398] Though she does not experience the passion that many researchers describe as the "romance of the archive," Steedman recognizes the archive as an affectively-rich space. The archive, in all of the above examples, becomes thick with the researchers' own desires, anxieties, and excitements that far exceed archival research at its most documentary.

Community-run archives especially, so often located in homes or in home-ey spaces, are evocative upon entrance.[399] As Cvetkovich describes, the Lesbian Herstory Archives, which resides in a brownstone in Brooklyn, is "organized as a domestic space in which all lesbians will

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[396] He writes, "As I breathed their dust, I saw them rise up"; this is cited in Steedman, *Dust*, 27.
[397] Steedman, *Dust*, 17.
[398] Ibid., 18.
[399] Cvetkovich describes these types of environments in her work on the Lesbian Herstory Archives, which is currently housed in a Brooklyn brownstone but began in the apartment of founders Joan Nestle and Deborah Edel. Information studies scholar Danielle Cooper has also written about archives that are based in the homes of LGBT people: Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*; Cooper, "House Proud."

feel welcome to see and touch a lesbian legacy."[400] Further, she explains, "The LHA aims to provide an emotional rather than a narrowly intellectual experience."[401] The objects that find their way to these archives, in form as well as content, are also evocative. The feel of creases in an aged newsletter, the vision of fading ink on a handwritten love letter, the beauty of artistic objects, and the warmth of a well-worn t-shirt can draw researchers toward certain objects that then come to influence and direct their interest in historical research and writing. As Turkle notes in the epigraph, "we think with the objects we love and we love the objects we think with."[402] Often the initial lack of knowledge about the specifics of the object – when it was made, used, or found; who owned, used, or encountered it; why it was saved, modified, or discarded – allows the researcher to consider multiple interpretations that enable captivation. According to Scott, "The point is that the archive is a provocation; its contents offer an endless resource for thinking and rethinking"[403] A researcher might become obsessed with certain objects because of identifications or dis-identifications with the people affiliated with the objects; because of the colour, texture, or shape of the object; or because of the mystery that surrounds the object with its lack of contextualization in the archives.

These affective experiences with objects in the archives most often involve people whom you would expect to find spending a great deal of time in these spaces, namely historians and other researchers. However, these kinds of emotional relationships with objects need not be limited to the researcher; they could extend to others who access these materials. Through processes of exhibiting these objects within archives or in public spaces like galleries and

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[400] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 241.
[401] Ibid., 241.
[402] Turkle, *Evocative Objects*, 32.
[403] Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History*, 147.

museums, these affective experiences with objects might be made available to broader audiences with or without a pre-existing interest in LGBTQ histories.

The GLBT Historical Society Archives, San Francisco

The GLBTHS Archives, founded in 1985, has always been invested in bringing archival objects to public audiences, but until the opening of its museum in 2011 this goal posed a challenge to the organization. Initially housed in the apartment of founding member Willie Walker, the GLBTHS Archives began collecting materials related especially to San Francisco and Bay Area LGBTQ histories.[404] From the time of its founding, however, members of the GLBTHS considered the importance of exhibiting these histories in an effort to educate the public in addition to preserving these historical materials. Gerard Koskovich, an early GLBTHS member and co-curator of the museum's inaugural exhibit "Our Vast Queer Past," tells me:

> The first issue of the newsletter [in June 1985] published the results from the survey that was handed out at the founding meeting [of the GLBTHS]. We each filled out a little form about what are our interests are and what we'd most like to work on and what we think the organization should be doing. And roughly two-thirds said archives and one third said museums/exhibitions, so early on, already people were saying we need to be telling these stories, not just collecting them. And we need to be showing these things, not just putting them in a box.[405]

Throughout the past thirty years, the GLBTHS Archives' extensive work in collecting and processing archival materials has been supplemented by the creation of public exhibits. Perhaps the first was the small, temporary exhibit, mounted on doors, that traveled to the San

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[404] Koskovich, "Displaying the Queer Past," 84.
[405] Koskovich, Interview.

Francisco County Fair within months of the Society's founding.[406] Many of the public exhibits, both those that traveled and those that were displayed in the archives themselves, have made extensive use of archival documents and objects. The GLBTHS Archives is one of the most well-stocked in North America, with 22,000 linear feet of materials, including more than 4,000 periodical titles, 80,000 photographs, and 2,000 hours of audio and film recordings.[407] The collecting work of the GLBTHS aligns with the previous comments made about queer archives with regard to the collection of objects: according to "Our Vast Queer Past" co-curator Don Romesburg, "while many archives focus mostly on manuscripts and photographs, the GLBT Historical Society has collected objects and textiles essential for dynamic and compelling museum exhibition."[408] These objects range from iconic items, including Harvey Milk's collection and the sewing machine that was used to construct the first rainbow flag, to the many articles of clothing, shoes, and private journals left behind by those whose names and histories are less recognizable.[409] These everyday and ordinary objects have been some of the strongest in illustrating a diverse and captivating queer history and have often been used in the various public exhibits that have been mounted in the space of the archives.

Due in part to the success of these exhibits, in 2003 the archives moved to a new location that would provide the GLBTHS Archives with space dedicated to exhibition.[410] The new space offered two rooms for engagements with the public: one, a one-wall exhibition space, and the other, a large room. The room in particular was substantial enough to accommodate public events as well as having the flexibility to mount many different kinds of historical and artistic

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[406] Ibid.
[407] Koskovich, "Displaying the Queer Past," 65.
[408] Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past," 134–35.
[409] Koskovich, "Displaying the Queer Past," 66.
[410] Koskovich, 67.

exhibitions, including the 2008 show, "Lineage: Matchmaking in the Archive." In the following

section, I look to "Lineage" in particular, as an object-oriented exhibit that brought numerous

publics into direct contact with the archives. Whether for the artists who contributed to the show

or the visitors who experienced it, objects served as a personal way into the lives that became

part of the exhibit.

Bringing the Archives Out of the Archive: "Lineage: Matchmaking in the Archive"

> The past may well be fundamentally chaotic and unknowable. But it never seems
> closer than when one delves into documents that reveal such incredible detail about
> everyday life in its most quotidian or intimate forms.… The desire of the historian
> is no different from the desire of the lover in that its object is elusive.
>
> -   Jacqueline Holler[411]

In 2008, visual artist E.G. Crichton volunteered to be the Historical Society's first artist-

in-residence. In the GLBTHS Archives' new location, she curated a large exhibit entitled

"Lineage: Matchmaking in the Archive." "Lineage" illuminates the romance of the archive in a

literal sense, while also showcasing the role of objects in creating this sort of romance or

captivation. Specifically, "Lineage" illustrates how objects can create emotional intensity and

historical connection through the affective pull of romantic and sexual desire. It also provides a

model for how these objects might function in their travels from the space of the archives,

through the space of the art exhibit within the archives, and finally to the space of the museum.

History has long been an aspect of Crichton's artistic practice, which has at times been

based on archival research at the GLBTHS Archives. For her work as artist-in-residence,

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[411] Holler, "Ravished by Clio."

Crichton wanted to bring other artists into contact with the histories held within the archives. Not

only wanting to bring artists into the archives, Crichton wanted their artistic work to bring the

archives out of storage, to meet even broader publics. In an interview, Crichton tells me:

> I wanted to involve other people in the archives. I wanted to make my own recognizable art work, but I was even more interested in a form of more social practice kind of art that would involve people in the archives, bring in new people…. I just had this idea of sort of bringing the archives out of the archive and making them more accessible, the way artists can do.[412]

Crichton found her way to history through her early familial and sexual life and the

secrets that circulated, near-silently, amongst those biologically connected to her. Part of this

related to her emerging queer sexuality, but it was also about other social factors such as mental

health. Her general curiosity and her attempt to figure out these secrets extended into her role as

the artist-in-residence at the GLBTHS Archives. In initially planning her curatorial debut at the

Archives, Crichton focused her search for inspiration on the archival objects and was allowed to

roam the archives unobserved and unimpeded for a summer. Secrets and mysteries abounded in

the rows and rows of boxes. She tells me about how more than half of the collections had not yet

been processed at the time and how the labels were incredibly vague and inconsistent. In this

space it was very difficult to look for particular materials, so instead of looking for any particular

thing, she allowed herself to get lost and be "taken in." She writes, "I find that browsing the

shelved collections is somewhat like cruising, threaded with the thrill of chance encounters, the

lure of fantasy, the possibility of probing deeper. … Desire is my retrieval mechanism, or maybe

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[412] E. G. Crichton, Interview by Tamara de Szegheo Lang, February 14, 2014.

it's the fuel. How to select, dive in, open myself to what is inside, let myself be taken in."[413] The affective pull of desire led Crichton to choose collections associated with queer people from the past, those who had died and were not famous, and to take on the role of matchmaker, setting these archives up with eleven contemporary artists or activists.

Crichton first started to match people based on demographics, looking for easy points of similarity. Over time, however, she changed her process, trusting her "intuition to match creative individuals with an archive that might turn them on."[414] Much like she was arranging a blind date, Crichton introduced the artist or activist to the subject of the archives and left them alone in a room to get to know the historic figure. The only instructions given to the artists were that they were to create a response, in any form, to the person they met through archival remnants. These encounters would eventually come to be represented in the 2009 exhibition where the archival objects, the contemporary artists' responses to the objects, and portraits of the matched pairs, taken by Crichton, were displayed in and amongst steel archival shelving and archival boxes. While the final exhibit was beautiful and fascinating, in the context of this chapter I am more interested in the process of creating the exhibit than in its final manifestation.

After their introduction by Crichton, some of the artists fell instantly in love or lust with the objects they found in the archival materials, and in turn with the people whom the objects represented, while others took some time with the objects before becoming drawn in. For example, performance and visual artist Lauren Crux was matched with cabaret performer and social justice activist Janny MacHarg, who died in 2003 at the age of eighty. Crux reflects on the experience, saying: "Think about being on a blind date: the awkwardness, the hopefulness, the

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[413] E. G. Crichton, "LINEAGE: Matchmaking in the Archive" (College Art Association Conference, Chicago, IL, 2010), 1–8.
[414] Ibid., 1.

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disappointments, the not-knowing. I kept wanting to bail on the whole thing. But then something

shifted and I came to appreciate and deeply care for Janny. At first I related to her as my butch

buddy, until Ida Red told me she was femme and described her favorite red leather jacket. When

I heard her song tapes, I fell in love. … I wanted her approval. Now I have to remind myself I

never actually MET her."[415] The affective swells and confused emotions – friendship, lust, love –

arose in the context of Crux's journey through MacHarg's archival remnants, objects that came to

represent MacHarg's gender, her voice, her style. These objects allowed Crux to get to know

MacHarg, at least some parts of her, and worked to draw her into MacHarg's life.

Getting to know objects like audio recordings of songs helps to em*body* history, giving

history a voice and a physical form. This can make history tangible, which in turn can encourage

the emotional impact of history on the viewer. Crichton talks about the importance of the body in

the archive and the ways in which these embodied objects can inspire artists' engagements with

the archive:

> It's not a linear history. It's not a textual narrative…. It relates more to our bodies.
> It's like when you see an object that somebody held or you see an outfit that
> somebody wore, like Janny MacHarg's archive. She was a kind of outrageous
> performer and monolgueist and singer, and so it's got an outfit she actually wore
> when she performed, in the archive, and it makes her not just a person, intellectually
> or textually, but it makes her a person that had a body, and that body held this, wore
> this, touched this. And I find that powerful. And I think it's powerful for artists. So
> a lot of my projects now, I actually do include clothing or requests for clothing from
> participants. Because I feel like it's palpable, it's about body connection that I think
> artists can literally flesh out in a certain way.

Like Michelet breathing in the dust of his subjects, one can imagine the bodily contact shared

through objects; a person in the present touches the same object that was touched in the past.

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[415] Ibid., 4.

This sort of "fleshing out" of history can provide a new method of making meaning from archival objects through affect rather than intellect. Affect, so often associated with the body rather than the mind, can provide the kinds of connections between people in the present and past that are so rarely available in written histories. When dealing with histories of sexuality, the flesh might prove an especially fertile area of investigation. Engaging objects that can bring one's body into contact with another's can enhance sexual or romantic attraction and become a method of doing queer history.

Anti-racist activist Troy Boyd, who was matched with anti-racist and AIDS activist George Choi, experienced a more immediate sexual pull, one that involved a specific attraction to Choi's body. Both men were born in 1960 and Boyd examined Choi's high school yearbook, which looked like his own. Unlike Boyd, however, Choi died in 1997. Boyd's response consisted of a thank you letter to Choi for the work he did in centering the experiences of people of colour in gay and AIDS activism. In the letter, Boyd writes: "How do you admit that you are attracted to someone who died over ten years ago? But there it is: I was immediately drawn to your physical beauty. Is this sick or flattering? I say it is what it is." For Boyd, this attraction was triggered by the many photographs that were left in Choi's archive. However, at the same time, Boyd laments the lack of narrative records of Choi's life in the archive as he wants to know how Choi experienced his coming of age in San Francisco as an Asian American gay man.

Echoing Boyd's frustrations, Crichton tells me about the archive of Jo Daly, who had been San Francisco's first lesbian police commissioner (from 1980 to 1986) and in 1975 had been the first government official in a paid position to do work with LGBTQ communities. Crichton explains that Daly's archive was a large and largely boring one, filled with official documents of her work life. It took Crichton some time before she discovered intimate and

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vulnerable diaries that Daly had written about her time living with cancer. In this case, the personal connection required some time and some coaxing.

In Crichton's own words, "Spending time with the archive of someone who has died is an intense and intimate process. There is an ineffable sadness in looking through the materials that are directly autobiographical. Someone else's artifacts makes us think of our own, and we weave a narrative to cement the link."[416] Crichton speaks of how, when cruising the archives, her instinct was often to try to find a biography of the person whose archive she was viewing. As is common in community-based archives, however, many of the collections had not yet been processed and in-depth biographies for many "ordinary" people were not available.[417] Archives cannot provide their visitors with a full story, instead presenting a variety of objects on which the viewer must base their assumptions, interpretations, and fantasies. The subject in the archive is, as Holler writes in the epigraph to this section, like the lover in that they are elusive. The elusiveness of the subject in the archive, as discussed above, often leads researchers to search out more information outside of the archives; elusive objects can direct one's research in new directions. At the same time, because objects do not provide us with a cohesive narrative or full biography of the person they come to represent in the archives, there is much space available for us to insert our own projections, connections, and narratives into what we cannot know about the person's history. In this way, archival objects can prove especially fruitful in allowing this interplay between the lives of others and our own narrative and material lives.

Carolyn Dinshaw, in *Getting Medieval*, theorizes the many ways that people today can relate queerly to those in the past.[418] She begins with a question about how we can study such a

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[416] Ibid., 5.
[417] Community-based archives are often underfunded and frequently rely on the work of volunteers who may or may not have archival training. This often hinders their ability to process their collections quickly.
[418] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*.

heterogeneous topic as sex, quickly claiming that its slipperiness is actually one of its strengths. There is room for partial connection, disidentification, and desire for a variety of types of community in this heterogeneity, as described in the previous chapter; there is even room for what Dinshaw calls "touch across time."[419] For Dinshaw, "touch across time" foregrounds an affective relationship with figures in the past instead of an approach that attempts an objective learning of their histories. But how can we take a statement like hers more literally? After all, in the case of "Lineage," the artists were able to literally touch objects that had been touched by the people with whom they were matched. Cvetkovich writes that queer archives are "both material and immaterial, at once incorporating objects that might not ordinarily be considered archival, and at the same time, resisting documentation because sex and feelings are too personal or ephemeral to leave records."[420] In some archives, the people who artists responded to with desire would not be included, since they were not "famous." Even had they been included, however, how likely would it be to have the opportunity to encounter and touch a moth-eaten hat, a napkin, a high school yearbook, a photo of a topless person – all objects that inspired attractions and identifications in the artists? Though sex and feeling resist documentation, the affective resonances of these things do not get lost. Though the full complexities of the affective lives of those preserved in the archives will never be fully knowable, the relationship and attraction between the person in the present and the person in the past creates new sexual desires and feelings that, in some form, can be documented through responses like those that were part of "Lineage." Furthermore, these responses can provide templates for others interested in the ways in which archival objects can facilitate one's way into the lives of others and into queer history, particularly as these responses are encouraged in LGBTQ archives and public history spaces.

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[419] Ibid., 3.
[420] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 244.

In order to provide these kinds of opportunities for a general public, the GLBTHS reconsidered its exhibition program. Despite the success of exhibits such as "Lineage" and even with the space afforded by the new building, it was clear that the archives, on the second floor of a building near the business district, was not garnering the kind of walk-in attention that the GLBTHS desired for a proper exhibition space.[421] In 2008, the Society had the chance to mount a year-long "pop-up museum" in the Castro district of San Francisco, which has been a popular gay neighborhood for more than fifty years. The time frame coincided with the release of Gus Van Sant's popular film, *Milk*, a biopic on the Castro-based life of gay politician Harvey Milk. Widely successful and attracting San Francisco residents and tourists alike, the pop-up museum cemented a desire to create a stand-alone and permanent museum that could attract queer and non-queer visitors who might have little to no knowledge of LGBTQ histories.

The GLBT History Museum, "Our Vast Queer Past," and Abundant Objects

A dress form sits in the corner of the museum, under a large television screen advertising the museum and its exhibits. Draped over the form, a gown sits, heavy. Luxurious in pink velvet with gold stitching, the dress is ornate. Wide sleeves fan out like wings and a train wraps around the base of the dress, like a tail wrapped protectively around a body. The bodice is stiff and structured – the dress looks historical, deeply historical.

As I get close to the dress I smell something familiar, faint but definitely present. It smells like hundreds of garments I have seen in museums: bodily but stale. A dress that has been lived in. Sweated in. Danced in. A dress that has been sitting without life for some time now.

Next to the dress in a plexi-glass case ornate jewellery is laid out. A necklace and earrings, each with large, amber-coloured jewels surrounded by what appear to be diamonds, shine up at me, obviously placed to reflect the light. The tear shaped diamonds, like water droplets, hanging above the larger amber pieces.

I can imagine that this dress and jewellery has been worn by royalty, by famous women throughout history and, in some ways, this is true. Presented in a familiar way, these objects show a less familiar history of drag queen performances in San Francisco. The dress, having

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[421] Koskovich, "Displaying the Queer Past," 68.

been worn by Baroness Eugenia Von Dieckoff (Henry W. Dieckoff) in the 1980s, represents Dieckoff's history of drag performances dating back to the 1940s.

Alongside these artefacts, a poster of black drag performer Joan Jett-Blakk proclaims "Joan Jett-Blakk for President" and "By Any Means Necessary," echoing the famous Black Panther slogan from the 1960s. In the poster, Jett-Blakk sits in a large wicker chair in all black, wearing sunglasses and an afro, holding up a large gun, invoking the history of the Black Panthers and their famous photograph of party co-founder Huey Newton. Though the velvet dress, which looks at home in a museum, draws me to the corner, what I discover there is a history that is much less recognizable, one that speaks to racism and resistance "by any means necessary."

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The GLBT History Museum opened in San Francisco in 2011 and in its first two years it hosted approximately 30,000 visitors.[422] Its inaugural exhibit, "Our Vast Queer Past," which is the focus of the remaining pages of this chapter, was co-curated by three members of the GLBTHS: Amy Sueyoshi, Don Romesburg, and Gerard Koskovich. Unlike many new museums with an explicitly activist mission, however, "Our Vast Queer Past" did not make objects secondary to narrative. In fact, as Yelp reviewer "Johnny H." describes when recounting his visit to the museum, "it did feel like a tour through a garage sale" with "video montage, memorabilia, letters, photos, clothing, and what-not" representing gay life in historic contexts. [423]

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[422] Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past," 136.
[423] "GLBT History Museum Reviews," *Yelp*, accessed July 3, 2015, http://www.yelp.com/biz/glbt-history-museum-san-francisco.

Figure 4 "Our Vast Queer Past" at the GLBT History Museum

Romesburg, one of the three principal co-curators of the exhibit, explains that museum visitors often share one of two complaints. The first is that the museum should be bigger, a wish that many might share of a space like this. The second, and the one I am interested in for this chapter, is that there are too many objects contained in the museum, that it feels like a "garage sale" or, as Koskovich likes to say, an "explosion in grandma's attic."[424]

Here I want to look at the idea that these "thing-filled" spaces are necessarily negative. This difficulty experienced by visitors has been identified by all three of the principal co-curators as a failing of their exhibit, albeit a failing about which they have mixed feelings. What I want to argue here is that there might be power in this messiness, in this explosion, even in the

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[424] Koskovich, Interview.

discomfort that some visitors feel. In these moments of difficulty there might lie a potential for a

different kind of learning, one that is less based on knowledge transmission and more based on

an affective pull toward certain objects and thus toward certain histories. This is not an exhibit

committed to ensuring that the visitor learns *the* history of San Francisco's gay past, but rather

one that encourages and facilitates *feelings about* one or many of its histories.

It is true that the museum is packed with objects. Objects fill the three exhibition spaces –

a small hallway gallery, a smaller corner gallery, and the main room – and artefacts line the

walls, sit in the centre of the room, and hang from the ceiling. Near the entrance of the museum

in the hallway gallery sit a number of artefacts that represent histories that might be recognizable

to many – gay politician Harvey Milk's kitchen table and knickknacks sit next to the wedding

pantsuits worn by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, two of the original members of the homophile

organization Daughters of Bilitis. Behind these, against the wall, is a panel from the NAMES

Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. These recognizable objects help to usher visitors into broader

queer histories by giving them a knowable, and known, anchor to what they are about to

encounter.

As Romesburg tells me, "people will come for Milk," so the curators placed the case

about Harvey Milk near the entrance to the museum:

> If the Milk stuff was the first stuff that people would encounter, they could kind of
> relax after that. And it was literally like this jumping off point, where you start in
> the place where you know. You already arrive thinking you know everything there
> is to know, right, which is Harvey Milk's gay history. And then you go from that
> moment into this whole other world.[425]

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[425] Don Romesburg, Interview by Tamara de Szegheo Lang, February 17, 2014.

Even in presenting familiar histories, the curators attempted to display objects that were not so familiar alongside those that were. For example, in telling Milk's story, the didactic panel offers the familiar narrative of Milk's election as the first openly gay elected official in California and his subsequent assassination. However, it also explains, "of course, Milk didn't arrive in San Francisco as a gay-rights legend" and the objects in the case highlight the fact that Milk and his partner were ordinary "gay hippies with a taste for funky thrift-store finds rather than fine design."[426] The objects chosen for this purpose include Milk's kitchen table, gold and extremely worn down, a harmonica, some jeans, and a bullhorn he used in his early activist work. These objects, according to Koskovich, say, "'By the way, Harvey Milk was just like you. Everybody can lead a movement for social change. This person had the same kind of junk that you had around your house.'"[427] Similarly, Koskovich describes the pantsuits worn by Martin and Lyon: "That's your grandma's pantsuit. It brings them back down to being someone you could bump into on the street."[428] The curators, in presenting histories of famous LGBT figures, aimed to show "how these are ordinary people," and in doing so they were able to use objects to give visitors a point of entry into their own lives through a sense of familiarity. Objects help the visitor both in giving them something familiar to ground their experience but also to humanize and make ordinary the extraordinary histories that have been represented and romanticized in films and other media.

In helping visitors to "relax" after seeing the famous histories that are expected in a museum like this one, these recognizable histories – Milk, homophiles, and AIDS activism – usher the visitor into the main gallery space where, until 2014, the semi-permanent exhibit "Our

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[426] Harvey Milk: From Gay Hippie to Gay Hero (San Francisco, CA: GLBT History Museum, n.d.), Museum Didactic Panel.
[427] Koskovich, Interview.
[428] Ibid.

Vast Queer Past" decorated the large, concrete room. In some ways, this main exhibition space

feels very familiar – plexi-glass cases line the walls, luxurious costumes sit on dress forms in

corners, and museum didactics accompany the cases. However, in other ways its form and

content are not so familiar.

Bringing Archival Experiences to the Museum: The Curatorial Process

I walk up to the plexi-glass case, about as high as my hips, and look down. This one is not like the others in the museum. On the top of the clear case is engraved a map of San Francisco – well, parts of it. Thick, black lines converge all over the surface, appearing almost as a grid, with some curving forms deviating from the order. Black letters spell out neighbourhoods like Mission Dolores – or street names like Fillmore and Lexington. But what really grabs me is the beauty below the map.

Through the spaces between the streets you can start to make out what is held in the case below – on the yellow base sits a number of pamphlets and flyers. If you look through the transparent side of the case, the details become clear. The flyers are DIY representations of community organizing over the years. An orange sheet of paper advertises a forum on the history of police violence being held at the "Women's Building" on August 5, 1979. Another, a purple piece of paper, decorated by the Gay Activist Alliance in the seventies, accuses the police of ignoring the murder of six LGBTQ people. At the top of the paper, "Help! Murder!" is handwritten in black permanent marker, exclamation marks, and a frowning face, adding emphasis to the serious message. Drawings litter the flyer, surrounding the typewritten details of the events – a snake in the lower right corner, cartoonish drawings of men beating other men and police officers looking the other way at the top.

Over these colourful flyers, created to attract attention with crude drawings and handwritten words, lay the remnants of the map. The light from a faraway window pours down and through the map's etchings, creating shadows on the materials below. The effect is eerily beautiful as I look more closely. The flyers all address community violence and so does the map. Alongside the roads and neighbourhood names, the map is peppered with red dots. Some streets have none and others are covered. Each dot represents an act of violence against an LGBTQ person. The dots scar the map and these scars linger on the work of community activists below – the work done to challenge, respond to, and record the histories of this violence. This is the interplay between recognizing the prevalence of violence and fighting it in the colours and shadows.

A terrible story and yet it is strangely beautiful.
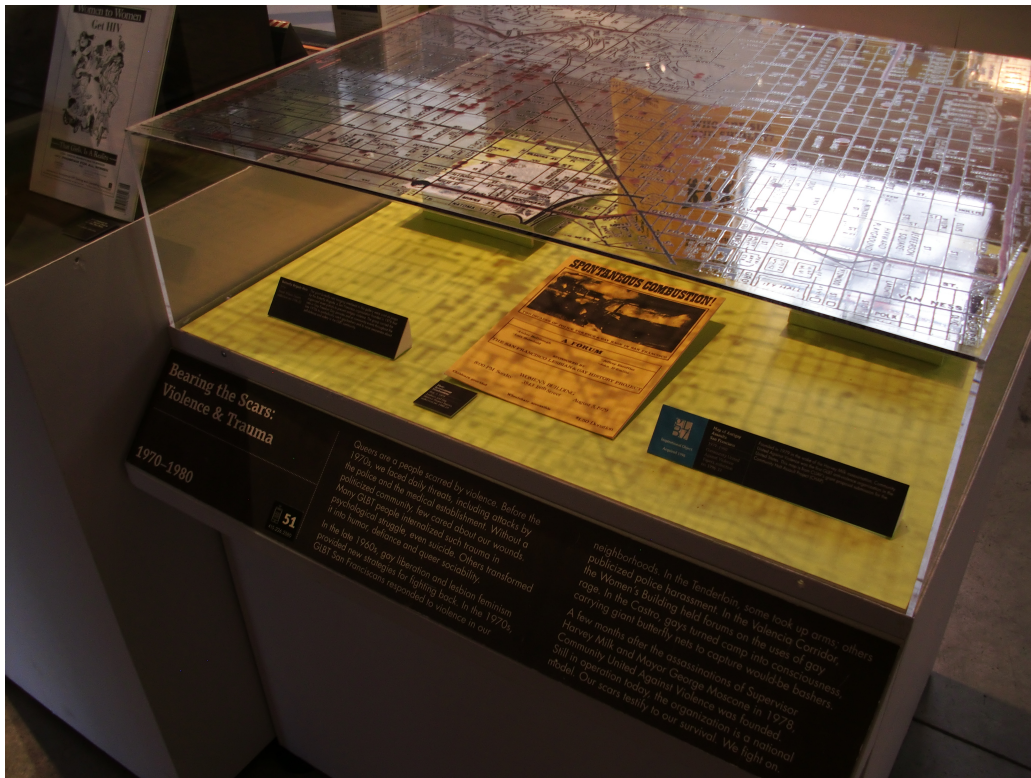
Figure 5 Bearing the Scars at the GLBT History Museum

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The museum's cozy 1,600 square foot space holds cases organized around twenty-two different themes, such as "Queers of Color Organizing," "Bath Houses," and "Lesbian Sex Wars," each filled with a variety of objects like newspaper clippings, knickknacks, clothing, towels, and tarot cards. These objects, which could have been housed in "grandma's attic," did not make their debut in the museum but are imbued with both the emotional character and the organization of their previous home in the GLBTHS Archives. After all, one of the primary goals of the museum was to showcase the varied items that resided in the archives, which are often only visited by researchers. Romesburg explains, "The museum was to showcase the archive's

depth and breadth, attract new collections, engage the public with the importance of queer history, and powerful exhibitions linking past and present."[429] In this way, the museum was intended to present the archival materials in a public education role but also to support the archive through monetary and archival donations.

The creation of "Our Vast Queer Past" was certainly intrinsically tied to the archives. The three primary co-curators, along with others, spent a great deal of time pouring over the contents of the Historical Society Archives. As Koskovich recounts, because over fifty percent of the archives' materials had not yet been processed at the time, the curators thought, "'let's actually get our noses into every last box of this place and find out what's in here because there are going to be things we can show, stories we can tell that we have no idea about.'"[430] In looking through the boxes, the curators experienced many exciting chance encounters with objects, including letters and postcards written by well-known sexologist Alfred Kinsey, writer Christopher Isherwood, and historian Jonathan Ned Katz, that they had no idea existed. Other chance encounters were more personal.

Romesburg describes an encounter he had with an overhead transparency that shows a map of San Francisco marked with red dots representing the locations of assaults on LGBTQ people in 1979 and 1980. He discovered this transparency while looking through an otherwise unremarkable grant proposal binder for the organization "Community United Against Violence" and was immediately drawn to it. As he says, "I just started thinking about who all these dots were! And just feeling this kind of, I don't know, sadness is too superficial, but just how

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[429] Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past," 131.
[430] Koskovich, Interview.

important it was that this marking was happening."[431] He told me, "I knew all this history before but it made me feel it in a more visceral sense." The visceral, emphasizing the connection to the body and to gut feelings, is often used in discussions of affect and can be considered another way that history is "fleshed out" through archival objects.[432]

Romesburg's difficulty in describing his experience with the overhead transparency is also very telling. Grasping for words to describe the "visceral" feelings he experienced upon finding this object, Romesburg speaks to the disconnect between affect and language. Considerations of affect, according to Deborah Gould, are not about making rational sense of the situation at hand; they instead "preserve a space for human motivation that is nonconscious, noncognitive, nonlinguistic, noncoherent."[433] Gould writes, "Consider how we often experience our feelings as opaque to ourselves, as something that we do not quite have language for, something that we cannot fully grasp, something that escapes us but is nevertheless in play, generated through interaction with the world and affecting our embodied beings and subsequent actions."[434] An attention to affect allows theorists to take seriously the work that feeling, intensities, and resonances do in affecting or influencing people, drawing people toward certain objects and histories in ways that are difficult to narrate or explain.

I do not want to claim that affect should replace words in this theorizing. Rather, affect can signal language's limitations and insufficiencies. We often do not consciously know why we are drawn to the objects we are drawn to or why we feel the way we feel in the face of these

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[431] Romesburg, Interview; For more on Community United Against Violence, see Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).
[432] Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*.
[433] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 23.
[434] Ibid., 20.

objects. For example, Romesburg's use of "sadness," followed by the qualifier that it is "too superficial" a term, illustrates this insufficiency. It is through language that affect is transformed into emotion, something speakable that uses "culturally available labels and meanings" as well as personal "knowledge, habit, and experience" to try to make sense of complicated feelings.[435] While Romesburg's words, and the ways he uses them, do communicate emotion, frustration, and the difficulties inherent to trying to communicate complex feelings, words will never be able to represent affect and affective relationships completely; words can only provide an approximation.

Though many affect theorists tend to place language in binaristic opposition to affect, Gould explains that it is inevitable that people try to make sense of complicated feelings and situations through language. Words are often used (productively) to signal the more complicated aspects of affect that bring people to a political movement or community organization, like the GLBTHS Archives.[436] It is under the sign of words, signifying so many complex feelings, experiences, and histories, that we often congregate and fight political battles. These words relate affect clearly to political strategies that use identity categories or queerness as their foundation. Despite members of queer communities having vastly different life experiences, through the use of identity terms such as "gay" or "lesbian," groups of people can come together to fight against shared injustice. Through a collective anger about the institutional disregard for historical evidence of non-normative sexual lives, for instance, people of various sexual identities came together to create community-run archives.

Romesburg's complicated feelings about the transparency translated into its inclusion in the museum's inaugural exhibit. Placed above objects like community newsletters, informational

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[435] Ibid., 21.
[436] Ibid., 37.

pamphlets, and event flyers, the transparency has been magnified and sits as the top of one of the

plexi-glass cases, which represents the theme of "Bearing the Scars: Violence & Trauma." The

black lines representing San Francisco streets and the red dots representing attacks become

haunting shadows on the archival objects housed below. Romesburg and I talk about the strange

beauty of the map in the space of the museum, again stumbling over words:

> de Szegheo Lang: I think this is so powerful. Because, I mean, with the shadows
> and visually it's quite beautiful and I keep thinking, 'Wow, that's so *beautiful*….
> And then it's like 'Oh right, but it's about violence, it's about specific, like
> where people are attacked, right.' And I don't know, I find that, I don't know, for
> myself, I find that really interesting that you sort of go, 'Wow. Oh.' You know,
> I'm not saying it but….
> Romesburg: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
> de Szegheo Lang: This beauty and then violence.
> Romesburg: Yes, thank you.
> de Szegheo Lang: This beauty and then you're reminded that this isn't supposed
> to be beautiful.
> Romesburg: Right. And I think I was struck by its beauty as this little
> transparency. And you have to imagine, right, it's like this, you know, plastic
> bind, with teeth on the side, just a grant report, right. And just kind of happening
> upon it that way was amazing.

My own discomfort with simply stating that I find the case to be visually pleasing is again telling

of the emotional resonances of a painful past juxtaposed with the aesthetic beauty I find in the

display. Though I try hard to make sense of the complicated reasons for my being drawn to this

case, my repeated "I don't know" shows that affect is too slippery to easily or accurately

represent through the words that I try to find and share with Romesburg. Instead, Romesburg and

I stumble along, trying to communicate to each other these complicated feelings through

imperfect words.

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Telling Personal Stories About Objects: From Curators to Visitors

Though the GLBT Historical Society has always promoted public encounters with its

archives and archival objects, the museum offers wider audiences with greater opportunities for

chance encounters with objects on display and with the histories they represent, like

Romesburg's own experience during his research for the museum exhibit.[437] For one thing, the

geographical setting of the museum in the heart of the Castro makes it accessible to passersby

who might not have an already established interest in history, including locals, tourists, queer

people, non-queer people, and school groups.[438] I would argue that the way the GLBT History

Museum stages these archival objects is also reminiscent of the experience of archival

encounters. This is significant because the museum visitors are not, for the most part, the same

people who normally get the opportunity to make contact with these captivating objects in

archives.

For the curators of "A Vast Queer Past," a crucial component of the exhibit was their own

personal experiences with archival objects. As Romesburg explains, one goal of the exhibit was

to "make power plain" or, in other words, to show the exhibit as a constructed representation that

is made by the curators themselves.[439] One aspect of this involved the creation of an audio tour

that is accessible to visitors on their cellular phones (as well as online) in four languages.[440] The

audio guide takes visitors through each themed case, with a different curator narrating the

contents, the process of constructing the case, or affective aspects of the history being

represented. As Amy Sueyoshi, the third primary co-curator, explains, the curators were told that

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[437] Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge, "Archivist as Activist."
[438] Romesburg, Interview.
[439] Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past," 138.
[440] The audio tours were made available in English, German, Japanese, and Spanish; Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past," 136.

the audio tour "should draw people in and tell a different story," so "that's precisely what we did." She continues, "We tried to tell stories you couldn't read on the chat panel." Part of this "different" story was about providing more politically charged content, but it also allowed the personalities, passions, and interests of each curator to emerge from the audio guide.[441]

The excitement and passion of the curators was often evident when they described objects in the exhibition as part of the audio tour. In various instances when listening to the audio tour, this came in the form of commenting on a particular object that drew in the curator, such as Koskovich telling visitors that he was "particularly fond of the letter written in red ink."[442] Their passion was also shown when curators described a particularly memorable process by which the materials were acquired. For example, Romesburg described receiving the collection of gay Japanese immigrant Jiro Onuma, who was incarcerated during World War II in an internment camp: "We only know about him because the brother of a long-time friend of his brought the GLBT Historical Society a small box of materials years after Onuma died. It consisted of a handful of legal documents, some photo albums, and those great early physique artifacts."[443]

At other points in the tour, the curators' enthusiasm extended to the objects' display and its effects on visitors. The themed case "Bar Life" contained dozens of matchbooks from decades of local gay bars. In the audio tour segment on "Bar Life," Romesburg enthusiastically explained,

> This is probably my personal favourite case in terms of design. All these matchbooks from fifty years of queer people going out, having fun, and finding

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[441] Amy Sueyoshi, Interview by Tamara de Szegheo Lang, February 13, 2014.

[442] It's headlined "Campus Memo to *Miss* George Raya" and is signed, "Your sister *and* brother, Bob."

[443] Jiro Onuma is featured in the museum case, "Jiro Onuma: Undocumented/Documented," which includes photographs of Onuma and friends inside and outside the internment camp, a scrapbook he made of images of bodybuilders, his passport, and other documents that bring to life the little known story of the presence of queer people within this particular racist moment in American history.

community end up creating this amazing mosaic of colors, fonts, slogans, and illustrations. … I've watched a lot of visitors interact with this case. They search the matchbooks for places they've been at in some point and point them out to their friends, and then they end up telling a story about going there.

This description gave visitors not only a sensory experience of Romesburg's enthusiasm through the recording of his voice but also a model for how the materiality of an exhibit – the "mosaic of colors, fonts, slogans, and illustrations" – could affect a visitor. Further, it suggested how the content of an exhibit – the locations represented by each matchbook – could bring people together through storytelling.

Exhibition coordinator Elisabeth Cornu explains how this case serves as a catalyst for community formation through shared stories. She tells me that the matchbook exhibit "triggers all this fantastic response in people because it reminds them of the times in bars."[444] Koskovich expands on this, emphasizing the surprise the curators felt in the sustained interest in these matchbooks. Though they had originally designed the matchbooks to be visually appealing – a "mosaic of colors, fonts, slogans, and illustrations" – so that visitors did not have to read each piece that was presented, they found that visitors spent a great deal of time with the case:

Koskovich: What's interesting is it's turned out that a fair number of people *do* come and start reading *all* the matchbooks because they're looking for the places they went to.
de Szegheo Lang: Oh, that's interesting.
Koskovich: 'Hey! There's the bar I always went to! I'm in a museum!'
de Szegheo Lang: Wow. That's really..
Koskovich: It's really kind of cool. And we've had people who've *worked* in those bars. One of them was a bar that closed in the 60s and someone came in and said, 'My uncle owned that bar, and I have like, some of the stuff, and do you want it?

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[444] Elisabeth Cornu, Interview by Tamara de Szegheo Lang, February 18, 2014.

de Szegheo Lang: Wow. That's great.
Koskovich: So it turns out that even things you don't think everybody's going to read, some people do.

Romesburg tells me that this is a case that requires some of the most frequent cleaning. Visitors often point out particular matchbooks to friends and strangers, leaving residue of their own bodies on the case through their fingerprints.

Both "Lineage: Matchmaking in the Archive" and the audio tour of "Our Vast Queer Past" offered visitors templates for how they might come to experience queer history in complex ways through archival objects. However, the curators also do not present these examples as a component of a master narrative of San Francisco queer history. Instead, the curators give people endless opportunities to invent their own ways of relating to history through objects. This is aided, in part, by the organization of objects within the museum, which at times is reminiscent of the archive, with so much of the content not yet processed. The organization of objects provides visitors with the opportunity for chance encounters.

Grandma's Attic and the Cabinet of Curiosities: Organizing Objects to Promote Wonder

Resisting a master narrative, "Our Vast Queer Past" does not provide visitors with a timeline; the themed cases are not even organized in chronological order. Because of this, they sometimes bring objects into strange juxtapositions where visitors can quickly skip between time periods, geographic locations, and social identities in the small spaces between material objects. Because of the amount and the diversity of the objects displayed, each case creates a messy collage that resists the easy construction of coherent narratives. This messiness aligns with recent work in the fields of queer theory and queer temporalities, which have brought controversial

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critiques to concepts such as linearity, periodization, teleology, and chronology in works of histories of sexuality.[445] In his 1995 article, "The Queering of Lesbian/Gay History," historian Henry Abelove previews these debates through his observations of teaching a lesbian and gay history class at Wesleyan University.[446] He observed that, with the rise of queer theory in the 1990s, students desired histories based less in searches for sexual authenticity than in postmodern approaches. He describes their primary desire in the classroom as a deconstructive and destabilizing one, whether they sought to destabilize identity categories or the nation-state.

One of the goals of "Our Vast Queer Past" was to present a story that was more aligned with these postmodern approaches. For example, one object that visitors might find in the exhibit is a handwritten journal by singer and activist Silvia Kohan documenting very personal feelings about sexuality and society's treatment of people with disabilities. This is not a general history of disability rights activism but rather a very intimate and personal way that visitors can find their way into another person's life. This object became the catalyst for the themed case, "Body Politics: Questioning the Ideal." In this case, the curators bring together objects that relate not only to topics such as disabilities but also to fat activism, transgender embodiment, and the gay "bear" subculture. Through the juxtaposition of objects that represent numerous identity categories and time periods, visitors are encouraged to make their own stories and ask their own questions about cultural and subcultural body norms. Moreover, the abundance of different kinds of objects in the case and even sometimes its appearance of disorder gives the visitor the

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[445] For a more detailed description of the recent debates about queer temporalities, see "Introduction" and "Chapter 2" in this dissertation. Some of the works involved in these debates include: Traub, "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies"; Dinshaw et al., "Theorizing Queer Temporalities"; Freeman, *Time Binds*; Freccero, "Queer Times"; Freccero, "Queer Spectrality."
[446] Abelove, "The Queering of Lesbian/Gay History."

opportunity to be surprised by what they have found there – to have chance encounters like the curators had in the archives.

Structured without much written context or many set narratives, the exhibit provides an experience akin to searching through the archive, where researchers need to decipher the fragmented materials they encounter. Similarly, with its focus on the display of surprising and wondrous objects over narrative coherence, the exhibit is also somewhat reminiscent of one historical model of the museum: the Renaissance cabinet of curiosities. Many museum studies scholars have traced the history of the modern museum to its roots in private homes as so-called "cabinets of curiosities." Cabinets of curiosities, owned by wealthy Europeans, brought together collections of natural science, archaeological, and anthropological artifacts collected from around the world, often chosen for their strange or shocking nature. The objects would be combined in these often-literal cabinets, mixing objects from different eras and cultures in highly subjective ways.

As sociologist Tony Bennett explains of the cabinets, "since the relations between objects were not subtended by any classificatory logic, they could be cohered into an order only provisionally through a dialogic social practice."[447] The goal of these cabinets was not to present a fully-formed narrative but rather a flexible one, based on careful contemplation of unfamiliar objects and discussion between the owners of collections and their guests. In addition, these spaces became dynamic places of affective response such as shock, interest, and imagination.

In the late-18th century some of these private collections, which had been only accessible to some of the most wealthy and privileged members of society, moved to public institutions

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[447] Tony Bennett, "Pedagogic Objects, Clean Eyes, and Popular Instruction: On Sensory Regimes and Museum Didactics," *Configurations* 6, no. 3 (1998): 349.

such as the British Museum in London and the Louvre in Paris.[448] Though the seemingly

disorganized nature of cabinets of curiosities became much more ordered after this move,

objects, and a great number of them, were still the focus of museums for a significant period of

time after the transition. As Conn explains, these museums "used a strategy of visual abundance

to underscore whatever story they set out to tell."[449] Initially, public museums would display the

bulk of their collections, showing an abundance of objects from around the world in order to

parade the power of the state.[450]

As public museums rapidly developed throughout 19th century, however, museums

increasingly used fewer objects to tell very specific, coherent, and scientific stories.[451] The

numbers of objects presented in museums decreased as curators came to believe that each object

must be so significant that it was integral to the telling of the history. Further contributing to this

narrative focus was the increasing prominence of written labels, which were tasked with quickly

showing visitors exactly why an object had been chosen and why it was significant to the history

being presented.[452] In line with Enlightenment ideals, the changing European and North

American museums were interested in presenting what were deemed to be universal truths. In

this context, the experts who were presenting these highly curated stories were hidden as the

manufacturers of these exhibits and the authors of their stories.[453] Engrained in processes of

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[448] Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 46–47.
[449] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, 23.
[450] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 51.
[451] Bennett, "Pedagogic Objects, Clean Eyes, and Popular Instruction," 355.
[452] Ibid., 361–362.
[453] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London, UK: Routledge, 1992), 168.

nation-building, colonization, and industrialization, museums sought to "civilize" the public through museum education.[454]

Conn argues that with an increase in the pedagogic goals of museums, there was a decrease in the use of objects.[455] In contrast, Bennett explains of the Renaissance cabinets of curiosity that "were more concerned to create surprise or provoke wonder," which meant creating displays aimed at a "sensational rather than a rational and pedagogic effect."[456] Modern museums sought to present objects that were representative, generalizable, and easily interpreted rather than the wondrous, unique, or surprising. I would argue, however, that the sensational need not be placed in opposition to the pedagogic.

In conversation with this history, I agree with education scholar Ann Chinnery, who argues "for a revival of the kind of museum education … in which visitors had direct experiences with rooms full of objects with little or no explanatory documentation to mediate their encounters."[457] In provoking a sense of wonder, I believe, museums and museum objects can create a sense of interest in the pedagogic aspects of not only learning about but also deeply contemplating the diverse, complicated, and oftentimes difficult histories that institutions such as the GLBT History Museum present to their visitors.

Making Relationships with Objects Through the Material

A blue hue blankets the scene, outlining the figures of two men flanked by transport trucks that loom tall beside their bodies. I struggle to see them in greater detail but I can only make out

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[454] For more on this role taken by museums, see the following chapter. Karen Stanworth, *Visibly Canadian: Imaging Collective Identities in the Canadas, 1820-1910* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's Press, 2014), 27; Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 47–50.

[455] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, 26.

[456] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 2.

[457] Chinnery, "Temple or Forum?," 270.

their contours. Pants fall around their ankles, bulges of fabric climbing up their legs, one man behind the other who has his arm above his head and his face against the side of one truck.

I move away from them, and toward a cluster of objects. A sign – wooden framed, hangs on the wall, letters placed in grooves precariously, crooked, missing pieces of the story. The sign greets me, "Welcome to the Bachelors Quarters." I skim the rest of the information it provides – "Condoms - $2.85," "popper" – no price, "student and military discount at all times."

There is a red lock box for valuables – deep red, rust seeping from the corners of the box, the red speckled where the paint has chipped and allowed the aluminum to show through. Wear and tear from an active history – the box continually having been opened, closed, dropped, jimmied. The box is currently open, its lid pushed to the left side, four shiny metal tokens – bronze, blue, silver, and gold – sit on the opened lid, the words "Gay Freedom Day" stamped into their faces. Inside the box rests a single silver key.

Two towels are folded on the table in front of the lock box – one red and one white. The red towel has been embroidered with "Club Turkish Baths" in cursive writing. All the words are connected with loops and swirls and I wonder who the little old lady is who spent her time crafting the towels for this place. Did she know what these towels would see in their lifetime?

The other towel, white, advertises only "Turkish" in bold red block letters. The fabric is no longer plush but worn down, threads showing through in horizontal lines, vertical lines. Little, unidentifiable flecks stain the towel, the unknown previous life it lived. This towel, I think, is so small it would not even wrap around my body, though I suppose modesty is not really the point here.

I want to reach out and touch it, feel its rough texture on my skin but I cannot. Like the mural on the wall of the two men fucking between the transport trucks, the sign, the lockbox, and the key, the towels are behind glass in the GLBT History Museum. Sitting stationary, no longer being used, touched, or played with, these objects have found a way to welcome a different kind of visitor into the space of the bathhouse.

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Figure 6 "Bathhouses: Coming Together or Waiting Outside" case at the GLBT History Museum

As museums became more and more focused on pedagogical goals, they used objects as tools or evidence in their telling of narrative stories about the past. Objects in this context are used primarily as illustrative of, or complementary to, the text-based information that provides the object with context.[458] While today, many people are used to learning history through

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[458] Sandra H. Dudley, ed., *Museum Objects : Experiencing the Properties of Things* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), xxvii.

narrative or text-based stories, objects can function on many levels, including but not limited to narrative. In fact, in the early public museums discussed above, objects were used precisely to escape dependence on books and lectures for knowledge transmission.[459] As museum studies scholar Sandra Dudley describes, before reading about the history that is associated with a museum object, there is greater potential for visitors, like archival researchers, to be drawn to an object for a variety of reasons.[460] In describing one of her own instances of being drawn to a museum object that she knew little about, Dudley writes, "because I was already emotionally receptive to the artefact, I had an empathic as well as purely cognitive response to, and thus a greater interest in, its history."[461] Personal connection to an object can change one's relation to, and interest in, histories.

The affective pull of objects in these settings depends on what Dudley calls the object-subject relationship, which describes the highly subjective way in which an object will be experienced. The museum visitor brings to this relationship their own life histories, which will shape how an object is received intellectually and emotionally, and also the sensory dimensions of the relationship – both the physicality of the object and the actions of seeing, smelling, or touching it. These varied responses to objects are what the space of the archives can sometimes facilitate, since narrative history is not provided as a way of contextualizing the many and varied objects that are found there.

Museums do not, however, always encourage these diverse uses. As Dudley cautions, "museums' preference for the informational over the material, and for learning over personal

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[459] Chinnery, "Temple or Forum?," 272.
[460] Dudley, *Museum Objects*, 1–4.
[461] Ibid., 2.

experience more broadly and fundamentally conceived, may risk the production of displays which inhibit and even preclude such affective responses."[462] While museums tend toward the "informational" through a focus on knowledge as transmission, Dudley, like Chinnery, advocates a move toward the material and the sensory, toward a museum with the object and its potential for affective response at its centre.

Similarly, Stephen Greenblatt proposes two types of museum exhibition styles: those that promote resonance and those that promote wonder. For Greenblatt, wonder is "the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention."[463] This arresting reaction, however, revolves around the object alone, out of its context. Resonance, on the other hand, is "the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand."[464] In other words, resonance invokes in the viewer an interest in, and understanding of, the context – social, political, affective, or otherwise – of the object. Greenblatt concludes his argument by advocating a strong combination of the two strategies; a good museum exhibit should first invoke a sense of wonder, which then leads to or inspires a sense of resonance. "Our Vast Queer Past" accomplishes this model quite well. Though there is necessarily an informational quality to the exhibit and the objects cannot be interacted with physically, the many objects on display are not accompanied by much descriptive text, allowing

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[462] Ibid., 8.
[463] Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," in *Exhibiting Cultures*, eds. Steven Lavine and Ivan Karp (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 48.
[464] Ibid., 48.

visitors to be drawn to particular objects before trying to make sense of them in the context of San Francisco GLBT history. [465]

Using Objects to Diversify Narratives: The Danger of Fewer Objects

Though the objects presented in "Our Vast Queer Past" are grouped into cases that represent broad themes, the exhibit does not try to present an overarching, cohesive narrative. As Koskovich explains:

> We don't have a master narrative, although there are a series of sub-narratives, and of narratives that can interlink … [we] help guide people towards that kind of thinking about how they can come as use this exhibition as raw material. That it's not the 'finished' story, it's a series of questions and possibilities, that open out into other questions and possibilities and that you could re-relate any number of those cases to have them talk with each other in ways that would tell longer stories, or that would contradict one another, that our past is so unruly that you can't create a master narrative without leaving out everything that matters. [466]

Instead of prioritizing the informational through master narratives, the exhibit, like the archives, presents the visitor with clusters of objects that can be considered "raw materials" from which the visitor can build their own narrative or exclude a narrative entirely. In presenting clusters of objects, the exhibit does not demand that the visitor consider each object as important because it is a piece of one cohesive story, it instead encourages the visitor to be drawn to the objects and associated stories that capture their attention. Romesburg tells me, "we were also very aware, as

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[465] Some museums are now using technology to bypass the deterioration of artifacts due to human touch. For instance, books can be digitized so that the visitor can "flip through the pages" on a tablet computer. Similarly, creating duplicates of documents and objects can allow a simulated physical interaction. These interactive components of exhibits can increase visitor engagement and might well have helped "Our Vast Queer Past" to inspire both wonder and resonance.
[466] Koskovich, Interview.

museum goers ourselves, that a lot of times, especially in smaller museums, you kind of wander

into them, you spend a few minutes, you get drawn to the things you get drawn to and you

leave."[467] This sort of wandering visit is what the object-centric exhibit encourages, one where

the affective pull of certain objects or the unexpected objects that capture the visitor's attention

might be the determining factor in how the exhibit comes to be experienced and understood,

much like how researchers get pulled in different directions by their experiences and chance

encounters in archives.

Romesburg provides a useful example of the power of encountering the unexpected

during the wandering visit when he writes:

> British blogger Ceri Padley reflects the affective force of the exhibition's
> demonstration of belonging. Like many, she came to bear witness to Milk's "fight
> for equal rights." But she was transformed as she "wandered" through the museum.
> "So much pain and suffering was caused and so much bravery and togetherness
> rose up so everyone could be able to walk down the street with their head held high
> and not be treated like an outsider," she wrote. "I began to cry. I suddenly
> understood the bravery so many people needed to step forward [and] be proud of
> who they are." In an act of solidarity she declared her "official and long-overdue
> coming out" as bisexual.[468]

Objects that no one knew existed or objects that one was not expecting to find in the GLBT

History Museum can provoke this sense of wonder, as they did for Padley. However, when

visitors find familiar narratives and objects in the museum, they are less likely to respond with a

surprised sense of wonder. In this context, like cabinets of curiosities, "Our Vast Queer Past"

provides viewers with many objects that might inspire different visitors in different ways.

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[467] Romesburg, Interview.
[468] Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past," 138.

Of course, there are no guarantees that visitors will be affected by exhibits that provide a multitude of histories through their displays of objects. Because affect and affective connection are so hard to describe and so rarely discussed, it is very difficult to gauge the successes of these sorts of exhibitions. Museum studies scholar Richard Sandell explains that the effects of museum exhibits on individuals is often hard to comprehend and often strays from the museums' explicit goals. He claims, "The impact on individuals' lives may only emerge informally through anecdote or remain undisclosed or unevaluated."[469] While we can look to the comments left in guest books and online reviews or recount the anecdotal evidence that has been shared with curators, docents, and volunteers, it would be exceptionally difficult to obtain an accurate representation of the affective impacts of "Our Vast Queer Past." Instead of looking to quantifiable "successes" of exhibits, Chinnery explains that educators should become more comfortable with uncertainty about outcomes.

> Rather than focusing on prescribed learning outcomes or on having students take in as much information as possible about the various exhibits, a return to contemplation as the primary museum experience means that students will need to learn how to pause and look deeply at perhaps only one or two selected objects. Before rushing to judgment … students should be encouraged to attend to the ways in which the object affects them.[470]

While many museums now create exhibits in line with school learning outcomes, Chinnery offers the recommendation of returning to an exhibit model that provides students and other visitors with many objects from which they can focus on but a few. This allows these visitors to be drawn to those objects they are drawn to for the variety of reasons I have already outlined in

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[469] Richard Sandell, ed., *Museums, Society, Inequality* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 5.
[470] Chinnery, "Temple or Forum?," 2012, 275.

this chapter. She argues that even encouraging this practice, whether or not it leads to known benefits, is a worthwhile pursuit. That said, and knowing that written comments are an imperfect measure of affective engagement, visitors *do* speak favourably about objects in the GLBT History museum, even though the curators of the exhibit seem to feel uncertainty about the quantity of objects and their impact on visitors.

Describing the audience reaction to the abundance of objects in the exhibit, Romesburg explains, "Of forty-three comments on four visitor websites (such as Yelp), six complain that the approach is 'random', 'confusing', or 'lacking organization', while ten appreciate it as 'thematic', 'well-organized', or 'jampacked'."[471] Furthermore, in many of the online reviews that praise the museum and emphasize the connection the visitors felt to queer history, objects play a central role. Whether it was Harvey Milk's kitchen table, "dildoes [sic] and vibrators," or photographs of the Gay Men's Chorus, objects helped to elicit and inspire feelings of amazement, disbelief, or physical manifestations of emotion, including, for instance, "a lump to the throat."[472] These reactions can be seen as representations of wonder. Johnny H., who referred to the museum as like a garage sale, also writes, "There was material I had never thought of instead of the usual rehash of gay events that have become so famous, that they don't quite require the illumination of fogrotten [sic] transgendered [sic] performers and the lives of people of color."[473] So in providing a multiplicity of stories through objects and encouraging the viewer to make sense of the stories, the museum enables visitors to be drawn in by the unexpected, the chance encounters with marginalized stories that they were not expecting to see.

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[471] Romesburg, "Presenting the Queer Past," 139.
[472] "GLBT History Museum Reviews," *Yelp*.
[473] Ibid.

Sueyoshi raises an additional benefit of the plethora of objects. She says that the problem

with having fewer objects in an exhibition is that the show can become an extremely white-

centered single narrative.[474] She tells me that it certainly is not impossible to avoid this narrative

while having fewer objects, but that it is difficult. With its multitude of objects, "Our Vast Queer

Past" does show a particularly diverse history and this is something that connects on many levels

with many visitors. Conn offers a warning that aligns with Sueyoshi's:

> Museum exhibits still use objects to tell stories, but with fewer objects to tell those
> stories, each object must do more of the telling. What's more, fewer objects mean
> fewer opportunities for alternative stories to compete. When museum galleries were
> stuffed to the rafters with objects, they certainly conveyed a narrative, but with so
> many objects filling our visual field there well may have been more space for the
> accidental or unintentional for visitors. Even as museums have worked hard to
> promote differing points of view in their exhibits, serendipity has been replaced
> with careful curation.[475]

Sueyoshi tells me that she often gets contacted by visitors to the GLBT History Museum who are

surprised to find objects, photographs and letters that represent people of colour, trans people,

people with disabilities, people who take part in kinky sexual practices, among others. She tells

me that visitors who have unexpected encounters with LGBTQ histories that are not primarily

about white gay men moves marginalized visitors, giving them a sense of belonging in a

community and history that is not always welcoming.[476]

While the informational will always be important in museums, as they after all are

promoting knowledge of queer histories, there is great potential for museum objects to create a

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[474] Sueyoshi, Interview.
[475] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, 23.
[476] This sense of surprise is caused, in part, by the history of many North American LGBTQ archives.
Many were founded by white gay men and thus the collections tend to overly represent those groups, as I
discuss in the introduction to this dissertation; Sueyoshi, Interview.

sense of wonder that might then lead to a desire for resonance and a desire to learn more diverse histories. The example of the GLBT History Museum's "Our Vast Queer Past" is one where this combination is negotiated well. As queer museums continue to emerge from the work of community-run queer archives, I hope that this model of museum might be further enabled by the relationship between the two, between archive and museum.

Imagined Histories in the Heritage Museum:
Spectral Public History Pedagogy in "Land|Slide: Possible Futures"

In 2013, I was in England for a conference and, in an effort to feed my endless fascination with quirky museums, I ended up at the Sherlock Holmes Museum in London. The museum, at 221b Baker Street, is an amazing recreation of a life never lived. As its website describes, the museum is "dedicated to the life and times of Sherlock Holmes, and the interior has been faithfully maintained for posterity exactly as described in the published stories."[477] However, the interior has not actually been "faithfully *maintained"* but rather faithfully *created* to represent elements of Arthur Conan Doyle's short stories, including details of past events such as bullet holes in the walls. In an effort to convey a sense of authenticity, most of the objects in the museum appear to be used and well-worn. Many of the rooms look as if they had just been left by their inhabitants, with clothing, tea cups, and chemistry sets left out on furniture that has been carefully placed by the museum curators. The rhythms of daily life seem to infuse the space, invoking a sense of contemporary life or ghostly attendance. At the same time, however, the space also has qualities that make it like most museums: around the rooms are glass vitrines filled with artefacts and didactic panels, which describe many of the objects from Sherlock Holmes' life, firmly placing

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[477] "The Sherlock Holmes Museum," viewed 12 February 2016, http://www.sherlock-holmes.co.uk/.

him in the realm of the "real" preserved past.

As I stood, admiring the carefully constructed reality made out of pure fiction, several tourists stood next to me, having an animated discussion in a language I could not understand. Slowly one approached the docent standing nearby and asked, "Was...Sherlock Holmes a real person?" The docent, trying not to laugh, answered that he was not; the museum was based on the fictional books by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. "Ahh, I thought so," said the tourist, looking around in astonishment, utterly confused by the evidence left behind of what looked like a (real) life well-lived.

Most visitors at the Sherlock Holmes Museum that day did not seem as confused as this group was, but in this chapter I use the figure of the confused visitor as the desirable outcome of a model of critical museum pedagogy, which I advocate. Disjunctures and confusions caused by fictions in history museums can prove helpful in inspiring a critical museum pedagogy that encourages conversation and critical thinking rather than knowledge transmission from "expert" to "public." Using "Land|Slide Possible Futures," (Land|Slide) a large-scale public art exhibit that was mounted at the Markham Museum in Ontario in 2013, I reflect on the power of art interventions to provoke this kind of disjuncture and confusion. Several of the artists involved in the exhibit brought attention to the constructed and curated nature of museums through their insertion of alternate histories into the Markham Museum space, using art to create fictions that wrote often-ignored types of events and marginalized figures back into the story. However, their work did not simply insert a more diverse history into the one already existing at the museum; it created atmospheres of affective disjuncture where predetermined ideas about dominant historical records and dominant historical practices were thrown into question. Engaging visitors on more than a purely cognitive level, these atmospheres of affective disjuncture played out on

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the bodies of visitors through their physical movements in the spaces and through their affective responses – fear, surprise, shock, comfort – to experiencing the unexpected.

In this chapter, I analyze three pieces from "Land|Slide" to consider the role of affect – and, in particular, affective dissonance – in creating a critical museum pedagogy. Alongside close readings of the artworks, I describe and analyze my interactions with exhibition visitors while serving as a docent at the exhibit. Because some visitors came to see the exhibition and others to see the museum site and learn about local history, the borders between public art and public history were usefully blurred.[478] Additionally, even those who visited the art exhibit knowingly were often faced with a productive sense of affective dissonance between the feelings evoked by the museum and those by the art that took it over. I therefore discuss how the sensory and affective aspects of art interventions in museums might work to pique an unexpected interest in histories both present and absent and encourage more critical engagement with historical knowledge and methodology.[479] Specifically, I use the figure of the demanding ghost as an affective agent who has the ability to shock, confuse, or frighten visitors, while also negotiating histories that are both present and absent in the museum space.

Throughout this dissertation, I have been presenting case studies of the circulation of affect in public history spaces dedicated to LGBTQ histories. In this chapter, I do not present a

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[478] Unlike exhibits such as those of Iris Häussler, "Land|Slide" was not attempting an elaborate hoax and pretending that the art in the exhibit was part of the heritage village as it usually appears. Though some visitors did not know there was an art exhibit currently being shown, there was extensive signage to inform visitors. The fact that visitors were not "tricked" into thinking that the heritage houses were historically accurate does not preclude the potential for affective dissonance; Heather Jessup, "Complicated Truths in Contemporary Art: Inventions, Interventions, and Hoaxes," *The Dalhousie Review* 93, no. 1 (2013): 95–110.

[479] Andrea Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 28, no. 3 (2013): 255–271; Chinnery, "Temple or Forum?"; Jennifer Bonnell and Roger I. Simon, "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters," *Museum and Society* 5, no. 2 (2007): 65–85.

case study that is based exclusively upon LGBTQ identities (however broadly construed) but instead try to take some of the work that affect and feeling play in LGBTQ spaces and bring them to bear on a space that is not specifically designed to present either histories *of* marginalized social groups or histories *to* marginalized social groups. I ask how affect might be used in a broader social project to bring to light marginalized histories and to *make them matter* to public history visitors. In this chapter, then, I will first use the figure of the ghost to frame what I call spectral public history. I will then explain the pedagogic opportunity that the figure of the ghost in public history exhibits can present.

Fictitious Histories, Dominant Narratives, and Nation-Building Through Heritage

Most museums are at least a little bit fictitious. For example, large portions of the famous dinosaur skeletons at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto are made of plaster instead of bone. While this fact is not hidden, the dinosaur skeletons, made of a combination of plaster casts and bones, are presented to visitors as a cohesive whole: a complete body. Similarly, in Los Angeles' Museum of Tolerance, pages from Anne Frank's diary are carefully reproduced to appear authentic in the "Anne" exhibit; it would be easy to assume that these were the pages written by the young woman in the midst of the Holocaust. Moreover, in most museum and heritage sites, both objects and their exhibition are carefully considered and curated to tell cohesive histories in specific ways, which always entails certain omissions. Museums can never represent a whole or objective truth. Yet as many museum studies scholars contend, the space of the museum is generally considered to be a pedagogical space of knowledge and fact, with its curation meant to remain invisible, undertaken by so-called experts but not readily apparent to visitors.

Museum studies scholar Eilean Hooper-Greenhill identifies two approaches to museum

pedagogy – pedagogy as transmission, linked to what she terms the modernist museum that emerged in the nineteenth century, and pedagogy as culture, linked to the more recent "post-museum."[480] In the modernist museum, the histories presented are considered to be objective truths, represented but not constructed by experts.[481] Here, the construction of these "realities" is not meant to be questioned. In the words of museologist Duncan Cameron, with the development of the public museum as an educational institution in the nineteenth century, "The public generally accepted the idea that if it was in the museum, it was not only real, but represented a standard of excellence. If the museum said this and that was so, then that was a statement of truth."[482] This is what Hooper-Greenhill refers to when she describes a style of pedagogy as transmission-based. She claims that the modernist museum "understood its visitors as deficient…and was tasked with the production of authoritative knowledge."[483] In this modernist museum, "knowledge is seen as factual, objective, singular and value-free, and therefore able to be transferred from those who are knowledgeable to those who are not."[484] Here visitors are expected to passively absorb the information that is presented to them without questioning its accuracy or construction.

This model allows curators and directors of museums the power to represent histories in particular and strategic ways. Because of this, the modernist method of museum education has been an important part of nation-building, colonialism, and nationalism. It is no coincidence that in the nineteenth century there was a substantial rise in the construction of new public museums.

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[480] Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 125.
[481] Ibid., 130.
[482] Cameron, "The Museum," 195.
[483] Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 125–126.
[484] Ibid., 133.

The accessibility of museums to the public, often without admission cost, had a social function.[485] According to museum studies scholar Jennifer Barrett, "It was seen as being possible to produce morally upstanding citizens if those people had been exposed to 'desirable' cultural institutions such as museums and libraries, rather than the tavern or public house."[486] However, the cultural institution that would produce these desired citizens was not neutral. As Barrett explains, "One function of the museums was to impress upon visitors the power of the state."[487] Especially concerned with the urban working classes, those who advocated museums as a "civilizing" force sought to train visitors in proper social behaviour and in the knowledge and narratives that supported state interests. According to museum studies scholar Tony Bennett, this often happened on the level of the body and bodily actions: the museum "might function as a space of emulation in which civilized forms of behaviour might be learnt and thus diffused more widely through the social body."[488]

At the same time as the apparent importance of museum education grew, so too did the collections and narratives that museums could transmit to visitors. One reason for this is that the timing of the proliferation of public museums emerged with and supported the intensification of colonialism and imperialism. European and North American colonialism in the 18th and 19th centuries allowed for the collection of stolen artefacts from distant geographic regions, creating vast new collections for museums to showcase.[489] It was through these displays of objects from afar that many Europeans and North Americans learned about the world beyond their own countries and cultures. Of course, the world they were learning about was a highly curated one,

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[485] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*.
[486] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 52.
[487] Ibid., 51.
[488] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 24.
[489] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 48.

explained in a way that upheld the European and North American values, which justified colonization in the first place. However, this model also depended on the visitor's acceptance of these truths – they were not meant to interpret what was presented, but rather to accept the narratives that were recounted through the exhibits.[490]

While I have been largely referring to the model of the modernist museum in the past tense, these kinds of museums are still alive and well, though some of the exhibitions within them are changing. Over the last several decades, some museum studies scholars and curators have shifted practices related to the narratives provided to visitors, partly by including peoples and histories that were typically excluded from museum representation. As education scholars Jennifer Bonnell and Roger Simon explain, with increasingly recognized diverse and complex social dynamics in twentieth-century North America, "it is no surprise that over the last thirty years, many museums have attempted to move away from a singular emphasis on confirming presentations of patriotism, triumph, and great deeds toward a greater appreciation of the complexities, competing motivations, and potential for aggression inherent in human relationships."[491] The twentieth century generally saw a decrease in the construction of new modernist "survey" museums and an increase in local and thematic museums and exhibits that represented specific regional histories, targeted certain audiences such as children, or focused on particular themes such as labor, science, and technology.[492] Examples of this tendency extend from national contexts to local ones. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Smithsonian added the National Air and Space Museum and the Renwick Gallery of American Craft and Decorative Arts to its collection while in the Ontario context, which is the focus of this chapter, the Science Centre and

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[490] Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 131.
[491] Bonnell and Simon, "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters," 65.
[492] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 54–55.

the Textile Museum of Canada opened. This shift also reflected an awareness of museum visitors as people coming from diverse countries and cultures, as well as from a multiplicity of social and political experiences. These different kinds of visitors required more varied exhibitions in order to maintain social relevance in the twentieth century and beyond. Between 1964 and 1987, museums that focused on African and African American history and culture, such as the National Museum of African Art in Washington, the African American Museum in Philadelphia and the Museum of African American History in Detroit were built. Similarly, between 1961 and 1980, a number of museums that addressed the Holocaust and Jewish history and culture opened, including the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, the Koffler Centre of the Arts in Toronto, and the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. These are only a few of the many museums and exhibitions that were established in this period to address the cultures and histories of marginalized peoples.

This move toward diversification could be aligned with what Hooper-Greenhill considers the cultural model of museum pedagogy, which is centered around communication and conversation. The cultural model does not consider the objective "real" to be represented in the space of the museum, but argues instead that the very representation *creates* what comes to be known as reality through its prioritization of certain narratives and authoritative voices.[493] She claims that the challenge for those who work in museums and want to promote a cultural model approach is to "provide experiences that invite visitors to make meaning through deploying and extending their existing interpretive strategies and repertoires, using their prior knowledge and their preferred learning styles, and testing their hypotheses against those of others, including

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[493] Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 138.

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those of experts."[494] This critical museum pedagogy, though not always absent in museums today, is generally at odds with the practices of modernist museums, especially those that rely on large-scale exhibits that travel internationally without links to local curators. Instead of presenting audiences with a static and supposedly factual metanarrative, a critical museum model attempts to encourage visitors to think for themselves, even if that means calling into question the very narratives that are being presented by the curators and other "experts."

Museum studies scholars and curators are attempting to address concerns about curation and representation in multiple ways. From inserting marginalized histories into exhibits to changing the ways that objects and exhibits are narrated, many are trying to create a critical museum pedagogy that is in line with Hooper-Greenhill's cultural model. However, while I agree that the narrow stories told in many museums must be diversified, there is a difference between presenting "better stories" that are more inclusive of difference and destabilizing stories at their roots. How are visitors supposed to engage critically with the narrative if they do not recognize that they are being presented with a constructed narrative in the first place?

I argue here that critical museum pedagogy must begin with a very simple concept: making visible the constructed nature of museum exhibits themselves. Most visitors have been taught to accept the knowledge of the experts who construct these narratives without question. To disrupt this, they must first recognize that even an expert makes choices and assembles certain stories while leaving others out. They must first recognize that the histories presented are not objective truths. Diversifying the stories being told in museums will not necessarily do this. It is the museum's duty, in a cultural model like Hooper-Greenhill's, to make more clear the constructed nature of museum exhibits.

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[494] Ibid., 139–40.

Accomplishing this goal is not an easy feat and doing so might make many visitors uncomfortable, as it is not what most have been taught and trained to experience in museums. As Bonnell and Simon contend, "One way an exhibition might be said to be difficult is if visitors undergo significant challenges to their interpretive abilities. This is a familiar issue for museums that seek to honour the absence of simple endings in history and the presence of multiple perspectives on historical events."[495] When museums challenge the structure and form of what visitors are accustomed to, this can bring about feelings of difficulty or discomfort. However, difficulty and discomfort can actually be a strength. They can stress that things are not "business as usual" in the museum and can shock visitors out of a passive form of knowledge transmission and into thinking more deeply about the experience in which they are engaged.

In this context, I propose that fictional exhibits, like those in the Sherlock Holmes museum that resemble but do not present the "real," can be powerful tools in making visible the social processes of museum construction and narration. In moments when visitors feel comfortable in the familiarity of a museum setting, encountering something unexpected can create a moment of disorientation when new thinking is possible. After all, if a museum about a fictional character can be constructed to closely resemble a "real" heritage house, it might become more clear that supposedly real spaces of history and heritage might also be fictional.

Fictions in Heritage Sites

Heritage sites such as historic houses, pioneer villages, and community museums could be considered part of the twentieth century shift from national survey museums toward museums

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[495] Bonnell and Simon, "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters," 67.

that are embedded in specific local contexts. While the emphasis on specific visitors and geographic regions can be linked with a move away from museums as sites of objective truth and imperialist discourse, it can also support sites that reflect and replicate the same ideologies as the larger national museums but in more local contexts. Because of this possibility, heritage sites and community museums must be implicated in the debates that surround large-scale national museums in terms of representation and the conversations that address the pedagogical roles they play as venues of public history. Though often much smaller in scale, heritage sites and community museums, like national museums, reflect more than just the histories they attempt to represent. Though they tend to focus more on social history, "ordinary" people, and everyday life, these museums often represent and produce simplified narratives, much like larger museums do.

In post-World War II Ontario, the development of new community history museums prospered alongside the rapid urban development of many rural areas.[496] Historian Mary Tivy writes, "In the face of postwar immigration, urbanization, regionalization, and the disappearance of farms, homes, local businesses and traditional institutions, the building of local museums was driven largely by fear of the loss of local character, and nostalgia for the idea of past values and past communities."[497] As many old homes and farms were transformed into suburban developments that seemingly lacked history and heritage, many small cities and towns fostered interest in a shared past by constructing community museums. In these spaces a communal history could not only be *preserved* but *created*. As historic homes were literally replaced by

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[496] Mary Tivy, "Museums, Visitors and the Reconstruction of the Past in Ontario," *Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle* 37, no. 1 (1993): 36.
[497] Ibid.

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modern developments, the idea of the community history museum comprised of a "village" of

homes rescued from the wrecking ball became more popular.[498] These historical villages served a

dual purpose – as sites of leisure activities for families living in these new suburbs and as

representations of the past that reflected the desires and values of the present.[499] On both levels,

normative white family life was generally privileged. This becomes increasingly important to

recognize when, as education scholars Jennifer Bonnell and Roger Simon explain, "Museums

function as institutions of social memory with a potential public role in constituting what

members of any given society understand as their cultural heritage."[500] In the post-World War II

period, the cultural heritage of many suburban spaces in Ontario emphasized whiteness, settler

culture, and normative family life.[501]

Tivy explains that, despite the specific and diverse histories of different regions in

Ontario, community history museums largely focus on either the time of original European

settlement or the Victorian period. Some historic villages, such as the Markham Museum,

address both of these periods. For others, often named "pioneer villages," the hard work and

nation building done by settlers is emphasized. This is in part because, as historian and

geographer David Lowenthal describes, "We increasingly hark back to a past we ourselves have

never known, one more imagined than real. The romance of pioneering suits our wistful longing

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[498] See, for example, the Ontario-based Lang Pioneer Village in Keene, Black Creek Pioneer Village in North York, and Upper Canada Village in Morrisburg.

[499] Aleksandra Kaminska and Janine Marchessault, "Real and Virtual Histories of Past and Future in the Heritage Village," in *Land | Slide: Possible Futures, A Public Art Intervention*, ed. Janine Marchessault et al. (New York: PUBLIC Books, 2015), 183.

[500] Bonnell and Simon, "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters," 65.

[501] For more on this time and place, see Elise Chenier, *Strangers in Our Midst: Sexual Deviancy in Postwar Ontario* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Homo and Hetero Sexualities*, 2nd ed. (Montreal, QC: Black Rose, 1996).

for ways of life so briefly and variously experienced that we invest them with whatever forms we choose."[502] Additionally, as Tivy elaborates, "The growing function of the community museum as a civic institution compounded the theme of pioneer virtue into a narrative linking honest struggle with civic success."[503] For growing suburban regions, civic success was a worthy subject of public education, just as nation-building was during the development of many national museums.

While settlers' lives are often portrayed as difficult in these sites, the hardships depicted usually come in the form of the physical labour required to build houses, find nourishment, address disease, and survive inclement weather. Rarely are the challenges interpersonal, social, or cultural. While heritage villages provide visitors with a sense of everyday life in historical periods, often demonstrating farming, cooking, and child rearing, they also offer a very simplified image of this life, excluding the quotidian nature of physical violence, sexual assault, religious intolerance, racism, sexism, and colonization in private and community life. According to Tivy, due to a combination of financial concerns and a desire to give visitors a pleasurable experience, "social issues such as industrial labour, cultural or racial conflict, suffrage, poverty, crime and so on are minimal in exhibits in these museums."[504]

Perhaps the most striking exclusion made to facilitate visitor pleasure is that of Indigenous peoples who lived in and around these sites. Like many national museums, heritage sites and villages often exhibit a settler colonial history that naturalizes the erasure of Indigenous and other marginalized peoples. Through their negotiation between truth and fiction, community

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[502] David Lowenthal, "The Pioneer Landscape: An American Dream," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1982): 6.
[503] Tivy, "Museums, Visitors and the Reconstruction of the Past in Ontario," 36, 41.
[504] Ibid., 38.

museums often give visitors the impression that Europeans discovered in North America *terra nullius* or a land devoid of human life.[505] Especially in sites that glorify a pioneer past, as do many heritage villages, European conquest and settlement are valourized through the presentation of a seemingly cohesive and *real* daily life, without Indigenous people and others who challenge normative conceptions of white settler family life.[506]

The Markham Museum and *Land|Slide: Possible Futures*

The Markham Museum and Heritage Village exemplifies many of the trends outlined above. Built slightly later than Tivy's post-war community museum boom, the 1971 museum sits on twenty-five acres of land in Markham, Ontario. Markham, part of the Greater Toronto Area, lies less than fifty kilometers from Toronto's city core. With a fairly affluent population of over 349,000 people, Markham is one of the most culturally diverse cities in North America.[507]

Markham's museum consists of an orientation gallery with rotating exhibits, an events

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[505] Julie Nagam, "The Occupation of Space," in *Land | Slide: Possible Futures, A Public Art Intervention*, ed. Janine Marchessault et al. (New York: PUBLIC Books, 2015), 151; Kerry Swanson, "The Noble Savage Was a Drag Queen: Hybridity and Transformation in Kent Monkman's Performance and Visual Art Interventions," *Sexualities and Politics in the Americas* 2, no. 2 (2005): 12–14.

[506] There are exceptions to the trends I am outlining here. For example, Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site in Dresden, Ontario, commemorates former American slave and abolitionist Reverend Josiah Henson. Other sites that played a role in the Underground Railroad are also designated heritage sites in Ontario. A number of famous white women are also commemorated through heritage houses and sites, such as author Lucy Maud Montgomery and education reformer Adelaide Hunter Hoodless. However, the inclusion of women in these sites does not necessarily mean that they counter dominant narratives. Finally, there are a number of Ontario sites that represent Indigenous peoples. However, as Tivy explains, these are usually either in the context of first contact with Europeans such as the Fort William Historical Park, which recreates a historic fur trade post, or in archaeological sites, such as the Peterborough Petroglyphs. Having these sites as the most visible representations of Indigenous history and heritage supports narratives of settlement and connecting Indigenous people "forever to a pre-civilized past." Tivy, "Museums, Visitors and the Reconstruction of the Past in Ontario," 42.

[507] According to the Statistics Canada 2011 census, 72% of Markham's population is part of a visible minority group. Most identified as Chinese or South Asian. Approximately 58% of the population was not born in Canada.

space, and eighteen historic buildings constructed between the early-nineteenth and the early-twentieth centuries. It also acts as a community gathering place and hosts children's day camps, public lecture series, arts and crafts workshops, and more.[508] With its mission "to make history relevant, accessible and enjoyable," it attempts to enrich "the cultural life of [the] community by researching and preserving local history," provide the material to allow "research into the heritage of all City residents," and engage "traditional audiences and the newest members of the community."[509] These statements make it clear that community-building and the construction of community heritage are significant goals of the museum. The Markham Museum strives to represent, as Bonnell and Simon state above, "what members of any given society understand as their cultural heritage" through outreach to various communities within Markham.[510] With its relatively new and diverse population, these kinds of narratives draw together diverse groups of people under the banner of community history.

Much of the cultural heritage and history displayed at the Markham Museum is presented through its heritage village. The eighteen historic buildings on site have been transported from across the geographic region and repositioned in a seemingly cohesive village organized around a series of dirt roads. Though the village is carefully curated, for many visitors it would appear to be historically "accurate": a perfectly preserved village. Each building has its purpose, either economic – the mill, the general store – or domestic – the home of the Maxwells or the Chapmans. While it is clear that the Markham Museum is a fiction, as the buildings were neither built in the same period nor originally found in the same location, for many visitors the village

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[508] "Markham Museum Facebook Page," accessed April 18, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/markhammuseum/.
[509] "Friends of Markham Museum | Foundation of the Markham Museum," accessed April 18, 2016, http://friendsofmarkhammuseum.ca/.
[510] Bonnell and Simon, "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters," 65.

offers an "authentic" experience of a "real" historic town. Despite the fact that many of these buildings would have originally stood far from neighbouring houses and stores, through the placement of the buildings in a format that is recognizable to most visitors as a village, the museum does not combat the assumptions that visitors might make about its authenticity. As historian Linda Young explains, "It appears irresistible to contextualise a collection of buildings arranged along access roads as a village. Common sense is bolstered by a nostalgic wish for the supposed ideals of small town life."[511] She explains that, for visitors, it is natural to suppress a critical reading of spaces such as heritage villages in order to buy in to the nostalgic image that is being presented to them.

The interiors of the buildings similarly ask visitors to buy into the fiction being presented. Each building offers didactic panels indicating the family structures and simple biographies of its original inhabitants; each building is furnished with objects that look, to the outsider's eyes, as if they had always decorated the building. It is easy to enter the buildings and imagine that these are perfectly preserved, that the furniture had been, at one time, sat upon by the "Chapmans" or the "Maxwells" but instead it is a reproduction. In fact, the objects in the buildings have been carefully chosen from archives or sourced from outside the museum to create a fictional whole that fits with the image that visitors might have about how the Chapmans and Maxwells lived.

While the Chapmans and Maxwells are "real" people who once lived in these houses, the construction of their homes as an authentic reflection of a period in Markham's history is not unlike the construction of Sherlock Holmes' apartment in London. None of these figures – historical or fictional – sat upon the chairs that decorate their parlours and none of them studied

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[511] Linda Young, "Villages That Never Were: The Museum Village as a Heritage Genre," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, no. 4 (2006): 328.

at the desks in their libraries. The village, the buildings, and the furniture seem to provide their "own solid evidence" of authenticity.[512] As Young claims, however, "authenticity is a tricky concept."[513] Many visitors to heritage villages are not particularly interested in an experience that is totally authentic; instead they want, as geographer Jillian Rickly-Boyd finds, one that is symbolically authentic, an experience in line with their expectations of what a site like this will look like.[514] In the context of the tendency of visitors to assume authenticity even where museums are not particularly authentic, Young suggests that "ethical museum villages" should make their constructed nature very clear to visitors.[515] This clarity will not come from minor text-based references to the curation of museum exhibits at the sites – visitors must be stirred from long established patterns of absorbing the knowledge presented to them. This is precisely what "Land|Slide Possible Futures" did at the Markham Museum and Heritage Village.

In the autumn of 2013, over thirty artists from around the world descended upon the Markham Museum and Heritage Village to create a large-scale, site-specific art exhibition. Land|Slide, curated by Janine Marchessault, was organized around themes of community, urban expansion, and environmental sustainability. Marchessault, professor of Cinema and Media Studies at York University, was no stranger to large-scale, site specific exhibits. In 2009, Marchessault co-curated "Leona Drive," an exhibit that inhabited a number of post-war suburban homes that were slated for demolition. Similarly, the art works of Land|Slide took over the Markham Heritage Village buildings for three weeks by, for example, extending large wooden structures out of a barn, installing interactive video pieces in the general store, and playing

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[512] Ibid., 328.
[513] Ibid., 323.
[514] J. M. Rickly-Boyd, "'Through the Magic of Authentic Reproduction': Tourists' Perceptions of Authenticity in a Pioneer Village," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 7, no. 2 (2012): 141.
[515] Young, "Villages That Never Were," 323.

narrative soundscapes in a tool shed.

Although the general viewing public has been taught to accept the stories told in museums at face value, the histories presented in heritage villages are far from objective truths and several of the artists involved in the Land|Slide exhibition encouraged visitors to recognize this curatorial reality.[516] Several pieces reminded visitors that the museum presented simplified narratives and that these left out many marginalized people who would undoubtedly have been a part of the histories of these buildings and the city of Markham more broadly. Leaving many historical artefacts in place, some artists created spaces of surprise or shock by adding objects that were clearly at odds with official narratives. Whether it was spiderwebs and a ghost in a private residence, a twenty-first century party scene in a log cabin, or an Indigenous dwelling in a wagon shed, each installation became both familiar and strange to the visitor. Through an analysis of these installations, I propose that fictive exhibits that resemble reality but are *not quite right* are powerful tools in making visible processes of narration and omission, of truth and fiction. In moments when visitors feel comfort and familiarity in a museum setting, encountering something unexpected can engender feelings of rupture and disorientation where new relationships to history are possible. This reaction would be different had the artists entirely transformed the buildings so that they were more recognizable as art gallery-like spaces.

In my formulation, this is not a "corrective" or "additive" form of museum pedagogy, where historical sites attempt to diversify the history that they present to publics. It requires instead a restructuring of the way that history is done in these sites. While a more diverse history is also needed, visitors must be taught to see the curated exhibits for what they are: curated. One

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[516] Bennett, "Pedagogic Objects, Clean Eyes, and Popular Instruction"; Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*.

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way to accomplish this is to promote an awareness of ghosts, by which I mean figures, experiences, and structures of feeling that are excluded from each site, even those that are most committed to diverse representation. The figure of the ghost productively negotiates between what is *there* and *what is not there*, what is *real* and what is *fiction*.

In the following pages, I use close readings of three of the artworks produced for "Land|Slide" to illustrate my theorization of the role of the ghost in mediating between historical "fact" and "fiction." To do so, I combine theoretical work on haunting and descriptive vignettes of my experiences as docent at Land|Slide. I use the first, Allyson Mitchell's "Guh Why Low: White Lesbian Ghost," to build a framework through which I address the rest of the exhibit. This is the methodology of spectral public history, illustrated through Mitchell's literal use of the figure of the ghost, who is a persistent, unwelcome, and sometimes terrifying reminder of what does not usually appear in traditional museum exhibitions. I then move on to the other works of art, by Julie Nagam and Duke and Battersby, that invoke the ghost in more subtle ways to elicit a reaction in the visitor that, I argue, makes them more attuned to the spectral reminders of the curated nature of heritage sites and public history more generally.

Attunement to Specters: Invoking the Ghostly in Public History

> It seemed to me that haunting was precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done.

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- Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*[517]

The Western fascination with ghosts and hauntings can be traced through past centuries in venues such as the 19th century American spiritualism movement or in popular culture through orally-transmitted and recorded ghost stories, films, and fiction.[518] More recently, however, scholars such as Jacques Derrida and Avery Gordon have taken up the spectral on the social, rather than the individual, scale.[519] Instead of focusing on a singular dead figure with whom one can commune or by whom one is haunted, as in traditional conceptions of the ghost story, haunting in late-20th and early-21st century academic discourse presents scholars with a metaphorical specter that both represents and haunts larger social structures. In this figuration, the ghost and the ghostly are not to be exorcized or avoided but rather are valued as figures that have important messages to tell us about current social dynamics. As literary scholars María de Pilar Blanco and Esther Pereen note, Derrida "uses the figure of the ghost to pursue (without ever fully apprehending) that which haunts like a ghost and, by way of this haunting, demands justice, or at least a response."[520] Similarly, literary scholar Carla Freccero claims that "the goal of spectral thinking is thus not to immure, but to allow to return, to be visited by a demand, a

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[517] Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xvi.

[518] Molly McGarry offers a cultural history of the 19th century American spiritualist movement in *Ghosts of Futures Past* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008). Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock gives a brief overview of the impact that ghosts and hauntings have had on American popular culture in "From *Introduction: The Spectral Turn*," in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 61–68.

[519] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*; Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).

[520] María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, eds., *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 22.

demand to mourn and a demand to organize."[521] In this way, haunting takes on a political

meaning in a time of great social inequality.

Sociologist Avery Gordon, in her seminal work, *Ghostly Matters*, emphasizes the

inseparability of social life and spectral haunting. She writes, "Haunting is a constituent element

of modern social life. It is neither premodern superstition nor individual psychosis; it is a

generalizable social phenomenon of great import."[522] For Gordon, haunting makes visible the

constructed nature of social dynamics, power structures, and history, exposing the dominant

ideas that marginalize or exclude those who do not support official narratives of nation or

community. Haunting allows for moments "when things are not in their assigned places, when

the cracks and rigging are exposed" in the social foundations of society.[523] In this way, haunting

is a productive framework in a deconstructive or postmodern critical project that challenges

dominant historical narratives. This theory could easily be transferred to sites of public history

when the curated nature of heritage sites and the limited histories they tell suddenly becomes

apparent to the visitor. The figure of the ghost works to show the visitor the cracks and rigging in

the narrative of the heritage site or exhibit.

Indeed, theories of haunting and spectralities are often used to address history, whether in

sites of public history, popular culture, or literature.[524] The ghostly figure in this context can

represent marginalized people left out of the master narrative histories of community, identity, or

nation or historical events that challenge these master narratives. As del Pilar Blanco and Pereen

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[521] Freccero, "Queer Spectrality," 338.
[522] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 7.
[523] Ibid., xvi.
[524] E.g., Freeman, *Time Binds*; José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2009); Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Sharon Patricia Holland, *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

explain,

> Spectrality is used as a conceptual metaphor to effect revisions of history and/or reimaginations of the future in order to expose and address the way certain subjectivities have been marginalized and disavowed in order to establish and uphold a particular norm, as well as the way such subjectivities can never be completely erased but insist on reappearing to trouble the norm.[525]

Historians and public historians who write and present marginalized histories can thus be seen to be answering the haunting demands of ghosts, figures who insist that they will not be erased from history. As Gordon claims, "To write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities is to write ghost stories. To write ghost stories implies that ghosts are real, that is to say, that they produce material effects."[526] It is not in the name of these ghosts alone that these histories must be written and recognized; ghostly presences reflect the material effects that the exclusion of their histories have on marginalized people today. This recognition is important for more than just professional and public historians. In order to foster a critical public history pedagogy in relation to larger audiences of history in public and private realms, paying attention to the demands of specters could prove fruitful.

Reckoning with ghosts is not easy, nor is it a task that can be resolved through logic and rationality. For Gordon, communing with ghosts is an affective experience that requires "a different way of seeing, one that is less mechanical, more willing to be surprised, to link imagination and critique."[527] In its social rather than individual nature, the ghost does not represent a specific and familiar person who has died, but rather a social figure who has been

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[525] del Pilar Blanco and Peeren, *The Spectralities Reader*, 309–310.
[526] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 17.
[527] Ibid., 24.

shut out of the story. This means that sites of haunting are also sites of imagination, where fiction and fantasy come to be taken seriously. Instead of looking at that which is present and visible, reckoning with ghosts requires "thinking in terms of shadows" and paying attention to that which is felt.[528]

As in the epigraph to this section, the emergence of the ghost often comes with "disturbed feelings" and is often deeply "troubling."[529] Listening to ghosts exposes uncomfortable histories and current dynamics that are painful and traumatic. The ghost, however, insists that these histories be recognized, and further, that they be acted upon.[530]

Allyson Mitchell's "Guh Why Low White Lesbian Ghost"

Here I turn to one installation from Land|Slide: Allyson Mitchell's "Guh Why Low White Lesbian Ghost." I take up Mitchell's piece as a way to illustrate the functioning of the ghost as intervention into public history sites. As a more literal manifestation of the ghostly, Mitchell restages the Markham Museum's "Chapman House" as a scene of lesbian haunting. "Guh Why Low White Lesbian Ghost" provides a useful frame through which to discuss two other pieces in the show – Julie Nagam's "singing our bones home" and Duke and Battersby's "Always Popular; Never Cool." These two pieces serve as additional examples of work that encourages a spectral approach to critical public history pedagogy.

Mitchell developed "Guh Why Low White Lesbian Ghost" in conversation with the

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[528] Ibid., 195.
[529] Ibid., xvi.
[530] Ibid., 23. Of course, for many marginalized people and communities, these painful histories can never remain unseen. It requires a certain level of privilege to be able to choose to not see and not be affected by painful histories of racism, colonization, and sexual violence, for example.

history of the Markham Museum's "Chapman House," which the museum presents as the residence of a somewhat wealthy family. The Chapmans, a Methodist family that built and lived in the house in the nineteenth century, demonstrated their wealth through the multiple rooms in their house (in opposition to other single-room homes in the village), including a dining room, three bedrooms, a kitchen, an office, and a parlour. Their home is also well-adorned with wallpaper, photographs, and decorative furniture, curated to look as it might have in the late 1800s. While the Chapman House in many ways looks as one might expect a heritage house to look, with small informational panels adorning the walls next to staged living rooms, a set dining table, and beds fully made up with antique quilts, Mitchell's additions to the space become immediately, if subtly, apparent.

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The small single-story wooden house is white with green trim, sitting raised above three stairs that need to be climbed to access the front door. As I enter the house and turn to my left I see a sparse parlour with a heavy velvet chair and couch in the corner. A pump organ and another table sit across the room from the sitting area. The organ looks as though it has not been played for some time. The floors are worn down painted wood and on the cream wallpaper intricate designs swirl. Heavy burgundy curtains keep the house dark and seemingly dusty. I can almost imagine the house was sealed up and left abandoned for a hundred years if not for a few things that mark it as an active space of public history. Worn out velvet ropes keep me away from the artifacts and paper signs warn me not to sit on the furniture. But then there is something else that marks this space as not-quite uninhabited – subtle but gargantuan spiderwebs, crocheted from off-white yarn are hung in the corners of the room, extending over the doorway to a small bedroom that lies just beyond the parlour.

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Adding to the decorations that were normally staged in the heritage house, Mitchell mounted large crocheted spiderwebs in corners of the rooms, over windows, and blocking

doorways, reminding visitors that some of the items in this house were not original and not everything presented was historically accurate. Cobwebs, marking the presence of unseen spiders and the absence of regular movement through space, hint at the remnants of what is there but not easily visible. In Mitchell's artist statement, she explains that the additions to the Chapman House were an ode to the marginalized people, and especially marginalized women, who haunt mainstream histories in which they are rarely acknowledged.

The crocheted cobwebs do significant affective work here. Not only do they hint at an unexpected presence (even if only that of a fictitious spider) in a museum that stages houses as frozen in time, but they also elicit feelings of family, familiarity, and, perhaps most importantly, femininity. Some of the visitors with whom I spoke about this piece commented on the comforting feelings that the webs created. Many commented on how they reminded them of the crafting hobbies of grandmothers or other feminine caretakers. Others found this feminine form to be humourous in the space of the museum – something so evocative of one's own modern home in a professionalized space of history. These feelings, whether interpreted as comforting or humourous, put the visitor at ease before they encountered the rest of the house.

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As I proceed through the house, the patriarch's office is off to the right, while a small bedroom sits to my left. I begin to hear strange sounds as I step down the few stairs to the kitchen. The kitchen, the space of femininity and motherhood, is covered in spiderwebs. The light from the two windows is obscured by the layers and layers of webbing, casting long, tangled shadows on the floor. The door that leads out of the building cannot be reached, cannot be touched because of the feet of cobweb in my path. It is then that I realize I am not alone. Behind me there is another door but it is padlocked, keeping someone – or something – in the cellar. The door rattles and shakes and pushes against the lock that I see straining to contain what lies behind. There is a woman's voice, moaning, crying out. Is she in pain or overcome by pleasure? Who is this woman who is locked away?

Figure 7 The kitchen in "Guh Why Low: White Lesbian Ghost" by Allyson Mitchell

In the kitchen of Chapman House, a space traditionally seen as the domain of the feminine, a ghost moans and rattles the latch of the basement door, startling unassuming visitors. Mitchell's "white lesbian ghost," as named on the signage outside the house, is the culmination of her haunted heritage house. Though visitors had already been made aware of the presence of something that did not quite belong, the rattling door and moaning voice gives the ghostly figure a more tangible, albeit still invisible, presence. As visitors entered the kitchen, they were often surprised to find the ghost. I often heard people shriek in surprise from the dining room, where I waited for their return.

Mitchell's "white lesbian ghost" dovetails nicely with theories of (metaphorical)

haunting. Her ghost is not an obvious manifestation of what is left out of mainstream histories – women, lesbians, or people of colour – but is rather a figure that demands to be noticed and interpreted by the visitor. Derrida explains in an interview, "What has, dare I say, constantly haunted me in this logic of the specter is that it regularly exceeds all the oppositions between visible and invisible, sensible and insensible. A specter is both visible and invisible, both phenomenal and nonphenomenal: a trace that marks the present with its absence."[531] Mitchell's ghost was, after all, not really in the kitchen with visitors. Visitors could easily hear a voice that might be interpreted as feminine, though the ghost is lacking other identity markers that might make her visible as a lesbian, a white woman, or a person of colour; she is not visible, but rather a specter upon which visitors superimpose their own ghosts. For example, if visitors consider the title of the piece, which was posted outside of the house, they might assume that the ghost is a white lesbian. However, the title of the piece itself offers a number of contradictions that do not provide visitors with easy answers. Though the ghost is named as white, "Guh why low" is Cantonese; a derogatory term for a white man. Though the ghost is named as a lesbian, she appears in a house decorated to look like an era before the identity marker of "lesbian" existed.

While not strictly visible, this ghost is a definite presence in the room, recognized by the visitor through her auditory and visible traces (such as the rattling door). In this case, the ghost's visible presence is not necessary to aid in the work of haunting and its deconstructive effects on dominant historical narratives. As Gordon explains, "if haunting describes that which appears to be not there as 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

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[531] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 52.

is taking place."[532] Mitchell's ghost creates an absent presence that cannot be ignored. Mitchell

provides the viewing publics with a ghost – a sign that a haunting is taking place on a much

larger scale, demanding that dominant histories, and their public history housings, be called into

question. The taken-for-granted realities thus are called into question by the ghost, who compels

the visitor to consider what else is not easily apparent.

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*After encountering the webs and the ghost, I look a little bit closer at the decorations in the
house. At first I might have thought the house was set up the way the museum had staged it, but
now I am not so sure. First, in the parlour there is a mysterious nail stuck in the wall. Next to the
nail with nothing mounted on it is a portrait of a woman dressed in Victorian clothing. The
picture itself looks authentic in relation to the period represented by the house and yet the nail
hints at something that is missing. In the dining room, there are old picture frames with what
look like dried flowers in them. Again, these look like they could easily be found in a heritage
house like this one. Upon closer inspection, it is clear that these are definitely not dried flowers.
They are woven from a strange filament and are ornate and complicated designs of flowers,
braids, and baskets.*

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Mitchell drew subtle attention to gendered dynamics throughout the house by

strategically replacing certain artifacts with others from the period, maintaining the familiar form

of the heritage house but changing the story through manipulation of the objects used to tell it. In

one instance, she did this by removing a portrait of the family's patriarch from its position next

to his wife. Mitchell also replaced paintings in the dining room with two framed hair wreaths, a

craft undertaken by women in the Victorian era to commemorate their dead.

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[532] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 8.

Mitchell used the textiles and the affective textures of the familial home, as well as crafts historically linked to domestic femininity, to reflect on invisibilities in histories of the family. Mitchell linked a more recent feminine craft, that of crochet, to an older form, the production of hair wreaths; in both cases, women primarily have created decorations that enhance a home but do not immediately stand out to someone visiting; they easily fade into the background, just like women's domestic labour. Mitchell often incorporates crochet and other textiles liked with the feminine into her art practice. Cultural theorist Elizabeth Freeman describes Mitchell's previous work as suggesting:

> the thrill and power that a discounted past – indeed, a literally 'discount' past cobbled together from cheap textiles and anonymous strangers' jettisoned home craft projects – can bring to a much more slick contemporary moment. They recast feminism's political temporal heterogeneity in a tactile mode, as differences in 'feeling'. And feeling is crucial to Mitchell's work, where castoff pasts also offer a differential way of experiencing one's own bodily stigma.[533]

In the case of "Guh Why Low," Mitchell used craft to question what can be considered part of the official narratives of the privileged family, including the work of men and patrilineal descent, and what must be left out, including women's autonomy, same-sex intimacy, and sexuality.

For the visitors, the movement from dining room to kitchen and back again created a sense of affective disconnect. At times, visitors felt the need to debrief their experience with me as I stood in the dining room, waiting for their return from their encounter with the ghost. They told me they did not initially find this haunted house to be frightening. The crocheted cobwebs put them at ease, giving them a sense of home and a warm feeling in an otherwise cold and abandoned house. The ghost often caught them off-guard. Some were embarrassed by their fear.

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[533] Freeman, *Time Binds*, 89.

Others wanted to talk about who the trapped ghost-woman was. Some even reported their concern for the fictional woman and said they wanted to open the lock and release her. For many, their surprise fostered a sense of curiosity and deeper thinking about the piece and so they sought me out to talk to about what they had experienced.

As visitors returned from the kitchen, they often looked more closely at the objects displayed in the house, looking for what else might have been added to the space. If we interacted, I gestured towards some of the objects that had been added or removed from the walls. The visitors listened, fascinated by the small and subtle details that Mitchell manipulated in the house. In Mitchell's piece, visitors' encounters with the ghost, through a moment of affective dissonance, often allowed for a deeper engagement with the critique of dominant historical narratives that Mitchell presented.

Duke and Battersby's "Always Popular; Never Cool"

A small log cabin sits off in the distance, separated from the main roads that wind through the village. Even from a distance I can hear the loud music, bass humming against the grass. The music is upbeat and draws me in. I walk across a vibrant green lawn and over a broken wooden fence to get closer to the pulsing building. Pop music, familiar from inescapable radio play over recent years, pours out of the darkness inside the building. Visitors around me dance a little as they smile and enter the space. Almost none are smiling when they emerge from the one room cabin.

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Perhaps one of the most controversial pieces, which also happened to be one of the most affecting for me and for the visitors with whom I spoke, was "Always Popular; Never Cool," which was created by artists Emily Vey Duke and Cooper Battersby. Like Mitchell, Duke and

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Battersby used the heritage house as it had been staged by the museum curators to offer visitors a sense of familiarity that was soon disrupted by the insertion of their art work.

"Always Popular; Never Cool" incorporated a diorama amongst the everyday dressings of the Maxwell Cabin, which was built in 1850. As visitors entered the single-room log home, much of what they saw would appear familiar to those who had previously visited pioneer villages and would therefore have seemed "symbolically authentic" to many.[534] A long wooden table with aged benches sat in the middle of the room, a bed was placed in the corner, and a large loom was positioned opposite the bed. Drying herbs hung in front of a window, near a wooden butter churn and empty jars. The cabin showed traces of simple family life, evoking the meals shared and hard work that characterize what we often see in representations of pioneer lives. However, in addition to the wood furniture and worn textiles, visitors found themselves in the midst of a modern-day house party scene. Six mannequins congregated in the room in small groups.

<center>***</center>

Two young teenagers stand near a table that is scattered with empty beer bottles, alcoholic cooler cans, and cups, looking at a video playing on a tablet. The boy, with his back turned to me, has disheveled blond hair being stamped down by a slouchy toque. His hooded sweatshirt hangs off his slight frame and he holds the tablet out to the girl standing in front of him – an offering. She is smaller than he is, wearing tight clothing: skinny jeans, a shirt with a unicorn on it, a baseball cap exclaiming "YOLO!," while numerous colourful bracelets adorn her arms and lipgloss reflects the light off her lips.

Beyond these two, a scene between four others plays out, despite their stillness. Two boys, all shaggy hair and sneakers, stand between me and a bed where a girl lies, face down in tights, a short skirt, and a t-shirt. The girl is blanketed in her blond hair, while one boy records her with his phone's camera from the foot of the bed. The other boy, taller than the rest, is distracted by a

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[534] Rickly-Boyd, "'Through the Magic of Authentic Reproduction'"

short girl dressed in furs. He stands tall, face to face with her, her fist outstretched to keep him away from the bed.

Beyond the horror of the represented event that makes itself more and more obvious as I move through the space, there is an eerie feeling in the room. The music, alcohol, and party scene do not match the small size of the mannequins – surely they are much too young to be part of a scene like this.

<div align="center">***</div>

Bright colours and contemporary sayings adorned the mannequins' fashionable clothes. They held alcohol, smart phones, and tablets, as loud pop music played in the background. The technology, popular songs, and fashion all made it clear that the scene presented was very particular to the contemporary moment: 2013. While the scene appeared to be a cheerful one, upon further inspection of the mannequins it became clear that a sexual assault had just been interrupted on the bed. The video recording of the interrupted attack plays on the phones and tablets of the other youth in the house – the violent images have spread rapidly.

Like Mitchell's house, "Always Popular; Never Cool" evoked feelings of pleasure in visitors before they encountered a dramatic shift in the tone of the piece. However, unlike Mitchell, Duke and Battersby made it clear to visitors as they approached the work that they would not find "business as usual" inside the old log cabin; the loud dance music immediately signaled to visitors that 1850 was not the sole era with which they would be confronted. The feelings this music evoked were also not the same as the cozy and familial feelings that the crocheted crafts in Mitchell's house evoked. However, pop music's ubiquity does create a sense of the comfortable and familiar. Its association for many with parties and popular culture also

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works to create an atmosphere of pleasure, not violence.[535]

Because of the nature of this particular exhibit, a warning statement at the bottom of the description plaque outside the house read "Warning: This installation may contain content only suitable for mature audiences." Though this warning is vague, visitors could have read into the description on the plaque, which used terms such as 'coercive sex', 'slut shaming', and 'rape culture' to gain a sense of what they might encounter inside.[536] Despite this written warning, I saw very few visitors read the signage before entering the house.

Though family life is an often evoked aspect of the homes represented in these types of museums, familial and community violence, and specifically sexual violence, rarely becomes part of the story, despite historical scholarship that has established the prevalence of sexual assault in Ontario in the nineteenth century.[537] In preserving the Maxwell Cabin as decorated by the Markham Museum but adding these modern-day figures, Duke and Battersby drew attention to the persistence of sexual violence and the silence that surrounds it, both historically and in the present. Further, they drew attention to the divide between the private – where sexual violence, and sexuality more broadly, are expected to remain – and the public – where this violence is

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[535] Duke and Battersby told me that they had originally made a playlist of pop songs that reflected contemporary rape culture but had trouble finding the technology to play their list. In a pinch, they had to buy a pop music compilation CD from a local store. However, they soon realized that many of the song lyrics on the randomly chosen playlist reflected rape culture. Once they pointed this out to me and I listened to the familiar songs more closely, the songs took on a sinister character. One noteable example of this is Hedley's "Kiss You Inside Out," which contains the lyrics "give up the fight, I'm in control, why don't you let it go" and "just close your eyes and shut your mouth and let me kiss you inside out."
[536] The term "rape culture" might have been unfamiliar to some visitors, creating more confusion around what they were about to see. However, at the time of the exhibit, campus sexual assaults were very prominent in the media and conversations about rape culture were reaching mainstream audiences.
[537] Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

rarely addressed.[538] Through the strange juxtaposition of the distant past (through the cabin, furniture, and artifacts) and the recent past (through the mannequins, clothing, and technology), Duke and Battersby bring the past and present into contact, folding time through the common thread of forms of violence that transcend historical categorization.[539]

One figure in the cabin personified this historical overlap particularly well. Duke and Battersby named one of the mannequins Ardath, who appears in startlingly different apparel as compared to the other youth. Her clothing and position in the room made it particularly difficult for the visitor to place her in either the present or past. Ardath stood next to the bed, one fist extended in front of her and another close to her chest. Her pale white skin glowed even more pale, captured by a bright spotlight in the relatively dark cabin. She wore animal pelts, which covered her long dark hair, one of her arms, her torso, and her legs. The faces of the animals who were the original occupants of the furs stared out from their resting place. Finally, from between Ardath's legs, a taxidermied coyote growled at the boy who stood in front of her; the boy who was the sexual assailant of the girl on the bed.

Ardath can be considered another manifestation of the spectral figure who "alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future."[540] Ardath refused both the present as represented by the hyper-modern teenagers and the past as represented by the pioneer setting. Ardath's furs, animal others, and clothing are all reminiscent of a different way of being when contrasted with the highly-modern, technological scene of

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[538] For more on the public/private aspects of sexual assault, in a historic context, see Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*.
[539] While conceptions of sexual violence – what is and is not considered legal, ethical, or taboo, for instance – is certainly very historically and culturally specific, sexual violence itself has existed throughout history.
[540] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

which she was a part. Hinting at a refusal of modernity, she also implied a strong refusal of the

world in which the young teens live. Ardath reached back, asking visitors to consider the silent

histories embedded in popular stories about settlement, the stories of the countless women (and

others) who were assaulted and not avenged.[541]

Figure 8 Ardath: Part of Duke & Battersby's "Always Popular; Never Cool"

Ardath adds another layer to the spectral conversation between past and present: the

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[541] Ardath's furs can also signal popular imaginaries of the Indigenous people, and especially women, who are so often left out of pioneer narratives. As a pre-modern figure, she can remind visitors that that which is not seen in heritage villages – whether Indigenous people or sexual assault – did exist in the past. Further, as a pre-modern figure who appears in a hyper-modern setting, she can critique popular tales of Indigenous people as *only* existing in the past, at time of contact. She can insist that Indigenous lives, as well as violence, continue to live on in the present.

future. Ardath does not sit idly by but states a clear demand to act; Ardath asks us to think differently about the future. Ardath resembles Gordon's ghostly figure who both "registers the actual 'degraded present' in which we are inextricably and historically entangled *and* the longing for the arrival of the future. … The ghost registers *and* it incites."[542] As they explained in their artist talk at the exhibition, Duke and Battersby envisioned Ardath as representative of their hope that things could be different in the face of contemporary news stories about sexual assaults that included witnesses who documented the assault rather than intervening. For cultural theorist José Muñoz, the feeling of hope can encompass the past, present, and future, blurring the distinctions between them. Like Ardath, whose placement in time was unclear or perhaps multiple, hope can be, according to Muñoz, "a backward glance that enacts a future vision."[543] Through the figure of Ardath, Duke and Battersby brought a utopian vision of the future into being. Ardath represented a future where others do not stand idly by in situations of sexual assault; she demanded that visitors consider their own role in either enabling or interrupting rape culture. She demanded that the visitor choose different futures. This demand to act, however, is not an easy one to meet. Sexual assault, so often relegated to the private realm, is not easy to bring into the light. Speaking about rape culture and envisioning a different future, like spectral demands, create "troubling" and "disturbing" feelings.

As visitors left the dark building and returned to the (often) bright sunny day, their reactions were written all over their bodies.[544] Few smiles rested on the faces of those exiting the building. Many people left quickly, avoiding my eyes, bodies tense. Others needed to talk about

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[542] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 208.
[543] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 4.
[544] The six weeks in September and October when Land|Slide was open to the public were shockingly sunny and hot in comparison to the Greater Toronto Area's usual Autumn weather.

what they had just experienced – more than any other piece that I observed, visitors showed that

they felt the need to acknowledge the violence they witnessed. This acknowledgement, however,

came in two forms: those who wanted to talk about the ways that the piece addressed sexual

violence and those who wanted to talk about their discomfort but were not able or willing to talk

directly about the sexual violence. In the art installation, on a dresser, was a taxidermied cat,

curled up as if asleep. Many visitors asked about the cat – whether or not it was real – or needed

to talk about the fear and discomfort it brought out in them. All the docents felt that this

obsession with the cat was a manifestation of discomfort bubbling up in the visitors. Visitors'

palpable feelings and reactions seemed too intense, too overblown to be only about a stuffed cat.

Julie Nagam: Singing History

*I stand in a strange pop music video, waiting outside the cabin housing Duke & Battersby's
piece. I look down a pebble road at the back of the "village" church and the wagon shed that
was built beside it to house the farm machinery so representative of settlement. A middle-aged
white couple stroll slowly between the church and shed, heading straight for me. They glance to
the side, not registering a white form within the shed. I anticipate what will happen next and
watch intently. As they get closer and closer to the shed, a loud drum-beat and strong voices sing
out to them. The couple jumps in surprise and I chuckle. They reorient their bodies toward the
shed and explore what lies there – what they have been trained to miss.*

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As a gender studies scholar, I was often asked to stand with the Duke & Battersby piece,

making myself available for warnings to visitors before entering or an outlet for their responses

and emotional reactions once they left the cabin. My station near the piece offered me a perfect

vantage point from which to observe those walking past Julia Nagam's "singing our bones

home." In a wagon shed next to a church, Nagam constructed a wigwam. The ground inside the

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wigwam was coated in cedar branches creating a fragrant respite from the surprisingly warm Autumn sun.

The wagon shed in which the wigwam stood did not seem to be a structure of much interest to visitors, and many walked quickly past it without giving it much attention. Inside, Nagam's piece, a white, low structure, also did not draw much attention initially. However, as visitors walked past the wagon shed and toward the Duke & Battersby cottage, which spewed loud, enticing pop music onto the lawn, Nagam's piece came to life. Using motion detectors, the piece sensed the presence of visitors (even if they were walking quickly) and began playing one of four Indigenous honour songs loudly. Assuming they were passing an ordinary shed, many visitors jumped in shock when the music began. Upon closer inspection, the smell of cedar welcomed visitors inside the wigwam, where a video was projected on the round walls. While not many visitors attempted the crawl required to enter the wigwam, the sound did draw visitors attention and they would often stop and listen to the songs.

Figure 9 Julie Nagam's "singing our bones home"

Like the previously mentioned pieces, "singing our bones home" created by artist Julie

Nagam, used the presence of unexpected objects to remind visitors of those who are made to

disappear from a heritage village's narrative of settlement. Nagam's piece lay next to the Baptist

Church in a Wagon Shed. Surrounded by various historic European modes of transportation,

Nagam erected a wigwam with an associated motion-activated sound component. In her artist

statement, Nagam explains that the placement represents the juxtaposition of the "wigwam that

represents nomadic lifestyles, and the wagon shed that is a symbol of settlement." The wigwam,

built from white cloth and found willow branches and lined with a carpet of cedar, invited

visitors inside to witness the projected video on the white walls. The video, invoking settler ideas

of land devoid of human inhabitants, shows large expanses of beautiful grassy landscapes.

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However, in these familiar images of seemingly empty land, a ghostly figure appears at times, reminding visitors that the land is and was most definitely not vacant.

Nagam's work reminded visitors of the histories of Indigenous peoples that are almost always left out of heritage spaces, which are so often tightly linked to unspoken histories of colonization. In these contexts, Indigenous people are made to disappear – both from the histories and from the land on which the houses and the museum are built. Through the erasure of Indigenous people's lives, the museums become complicit in an ongoing process of colonization, made so clear in these kinds of museums and "pioneer villages," which imply, as Nagam claims, that the land settled by those represented in these villages was void of life.[545]

While the Markham Heritage Village stands as a space of commemorating, and even mourning, the settler lifestyle that was replaced by recent suburbanization, what is not given space is the commemoration of the Indigenous lands and cultures that have been displaced, first by the early settlers of the Markham region, then by suburbanization, and again, by the museum. Specifically, Nagam's piece commemorates the Markham Ossuary, where the bones of Indigenous people were disinterred and moved to make way for development. On land that is supposedly open for taking and developing, the people whose remains lay in the ossuary were not to be commemorated or mourned.

Sociologist Augustine Park, in a study of Canadian Residential Schools, posits that the settler colonial "logic of elimination" means that Indigenous deaths were and continue to be ungrievable. Because colonizers needed the availability of land to settle, Indigenous people needed to be eliminated, either through death or assimilation. In this context, the lives and cultures of Indigenous people were not to be mourned when they disappeared. As an extension of

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[545] Nagam, "The Occupation of Space," 151.

this, Park argues that grieving for the ungrievable is a political act. Similarly, we could say that recognizing ghosts and heeding their call for action is a political act.

Using this argument to address "*singing our bones home*," we can see Nagam's insistence on mourning the bones of those lost through both the projection of the ghostly figure on the walls of the wigwam and through the audio component of her piece. The audio component, which began when triggered by passing visitors, comprised a number of audio files, some ambient sounds and others Indigenous honour songs, meant to sing the bones and spirits to a more restful place.[546] Through the immersive effect of the combination of sound, scent, space, and sight, the piece pulls visitors into conversation with Nagam's ghost. As communications scholar Shana MacDonald explains, "Nagam's piece actively encourages the dissolution of the lines between sacred space and the everyday, between human and spiritual worlds and between past and present within the ritual space of the wigwam."[547]

I watched as many visitors moved quickly past the wagon shed, not noticing the art intervention that had been made inside the structure. As they walked by, not expecting to see this history in a space like this, Nagam's ghostly figure sang out loudly to them. This often led to surprise or even fear. However, it also brought the visitors into a closer attention to the piece. In bringing visitors to the wigwam through the sound of the honour songs, this piece also brought visitors into a political space for recognizing and mourning the historical and contemporary ways that Indigenous peoples and cultures are written off of the land of Markham and beyond.

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[546] Shana MacDonald, "On Resonance in Contemporary Site-Specific Projection Art," *Performance Research* 19, no. 6 (2014): 65.
[547] Ibid., 68.

Shock and Surprise as Museum Pedagogy

> Rather than aiming to 'educate the public', an approach tied to the current climate of standardization across educational and cultural institutions, the pedagogical impulse of [Land|Slide] sought to interrupt a 'strong, redemptive, missionary education' by offering a provocation for learning rather than being instructive, and by calling artists and visitors into active engagement … The Land|Slide exhibition sought to offer visitors 'possibilities for engaging ideas differently' by centering the experience of learning rather than teaching, and the significance of group life, rather than the role of the expert, for thinking anew about sustainability.[548]

The three installations that I have analyzed in this chapter invoke the figure of the ghost in order to trouble the heritage buildings as they are, inviting visitors into familiar spaces and then presenting them with objects and histories that do not seem to clearly belong. The pieces do not present new and more inclusive historical narratives but rather invite the visitor into dialogue with ghostly figures who challenge the existing histories being presented. The ghostly figures do not allow for clear narration but are rather subtle and sometimes confusing. Ghosts ask visitors to look closely and think critically about what is being presented. In these moments, a form of cultural museum pedagogy is encouraged, where visitors must interpret the exhibits themselves, perhaps even calling into question the choices of the curators in presenting the histories that they exhibited. These exhibits present "the experience of learning rather than teaching," as Land|Slide Education Lead, Chloe Brushwood Rose, writes above.

The juxtaposition of the familiarity of museums and heritage villages with what was actually found by visitors is crucial in this process. For visitors who did not know the exhibit was

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[548] Rose, "The Intimate Relations of Sustainability," 86.

inhabiting the Markham Museum, this dissonance would have been more pronounced. However, even many of those expecting the art exhibition would have experienced the sense of discord between a recognizable site of history and the political messages presented by rattling doors, 21st century technology, and singing ghosts. The affective elements of this sense of dissonance open the space for critical reflection. As Museum Studies scholar Andrea Witcomb explains, "The element of surprise, the shock of recognizing something as other than what you thought it was, can bring the past into radical tension with the present. Affective forms of knowledge are crucial to enabling this."[549] Witcomb contrasts this type of affective learning with an idea of knowledge as transmission from expert to visitor. In the latter type, Whitcomb argues that thinking is actually shut down when visitors are presented with a large amount of information. For Witcomb, a critical museum pedagogy requires instead "the ability to not close off narrative, the requirement that visitors engage imaginatively in the space between themselves and the object or the spatial and aesthetic structure of the displays."[550] In the context of Land|Slide, this imaginative engagement might be fostered in the facilitation of affective relations with the ghosts in each art intervention.

For Bonnell and Simon, affective forms of knowledge in museums entail an "intimate encounter with the demanding gift of histories of violence and suffering."[551] I might propose instead that these forms of knowledge encourage an intimate encounter with the demanding *ghosts* of histories of violence and exclusion. Bonnell and Simon consider an intimate encounter one where the visitor is not observing but is open to an engagement; it is an experience "with the

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[549] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums," 269.
[550] Ibid., 267.
[551] Bonnell and Simon, "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters," 69.

capacity to unsettle the self, enabling a possibility of reflexive critique and transformative insight regarding one's relationship to the past and one's complicity with established historical certainties."[552] These intimate encounters encourage visitors to think deeply, to be open to the unexpected, and to be ready to be emotionally and cognitively challenged.

However, these intimate encounters are not easy to encourage or to experience when talking about what Bonnell and Simon term "difficult histories." Difficult histories, which are both cognitive and affective, entail the difficulties visitors experience both in processing histories that are upsetting to learn about due to their violent nature and in processing exhibits that are not presented to visitors in a readily accessible, familiar, or linear format. These exhibits, as Witcomb explains, require "emotional or intellectual labour" on the part of their visitors.[553] This labour might not be readily given by visitors who rely on their own familiarity with the narratives they are expecting to see in these spaces. Returning to Rickly-Boyd's findings that many visitors to heritage villages find pleasure in the "symbolically authentic" – that which is in line with their expectations – the demands made by Land|Slide might indeed be very difficult in both senses of the word, as defined by Bonnell and Simon. It is unavoidable that some visitors rejected these difficult histories at Land|Slide when they quickly left the houses or did not engage visibly with me or the art. It is impossible to gauge whether or not these visitors were haunted by what they had experienced, coming to be affected long after the exhibit closed. At the same time, many visitors clearly did accept the challenge to contribute emotional or intellectual labour during their visit to Land|Slide.

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[552] Ibid., 69.
[553] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums," 267.

When visitors shrieked, jumped backward, and asked whether the taxidermied cat was real, these were manifestations of affective disjuncture, of shock and surprise. When visitors looked closely at the walls of the Chapman house, wanted to save the ghost in the basement, were physically drawn toward the wigwam, and asked me about the artists and exhibits, these were demonstrations of an active engagement with the work. Though the quantifiable outcomes of this form of pedagogy are difficult to determine – Do these visitors look at all museums and heritage spaces differently after "Land|Slide"? Do they consider the role of marginalized people in traditional histories after "Land|Slide"? – these moments of active engagement should be considered as a valuable indicator of success.

As previously stated, I am not advocating here a method of museum pedagogy that would seek to add marginalized histories to an already existing story of settler history. Instead, I am proposing an affectively-infused method of *destabilizing* that familiar narrative so that visitors come to question *any* story being recounted in the spaces of museums and heritage sites. The artists I have highlighted in this chapter do not try to add stories that are fact-based or even probable – they are instead fantastic and shocking. They do not present histories in an ordinary or easily accepted form but rather seek to surprise the viewer and make them consider what is in front of them. After all, as Gordon writes, "Haunting is the sociality of living with ghosts, a sociality both tangible and tactile as well as ephemeral and imaginary."[554]

While Mitchell's lesbian ghost, the Indigenous singers imagined in the space of Nagam's wigwam, and Duke and Battersby's Ardath are *not* necessarily *real* – they do not represent people with names whose stories we can easily tell – they all represent people who undoubtedly

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[554] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 201.

did exist across time but who rarely appear in heritage museums. In some ways we might consider these fictitious characters like Sherlock Holmes in his own museum. Through their imagined lives and constructed remnants, these specters can help us to see the ways that no histories are objectively real and that museum narratives are always constructed to include some and leave out others. In these moments, interventions in the museum space can help to shock visitors out of a passive encounter with history and into a critical engagement with it.

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The Feeling of 'Coming After':

On Contagion and the Broadening
Horizons of Queer Public History

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Bad history has consequences. I'm not afraid we will forget AIDS; I am afraid we will remember it and it will mean nothing.

- Hugh Ryan[555]

Where is our permanent memorial? … Where is our wall of white marble with the names of every New Yorker who died of government neglect, and blank tablets with room for more to come, surrounding a white marble fountain spouting water the color of blood? … Where is our Nuremberg trial? Where is our catharsis, our healing? Where is our post-traumatic stress diagnosis? Where is our recovery?

- Sarah Schulman[556]

In my teaching in gender and sexuality studies courses, I often lecture on the history and

historical memory of the AIDS crisis in North America. I ask students, many now born on the

cusp of the twenty-first century, when they first remember hearing about HIV and/or AIDS.

While some vaguely recollect HIV/AIDS being used during public school health classes as a

warning of the dangers of sex, many now repeat that they first heard of AIDS through the 2005

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[555] Hugh Ryan, "How to Whitewash a Plague," *New York Times*, August 3, 2013, sec. Opinion.
[556] Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind*, 48.

feature film *Rent*.[557] The film version of *Rent* is based on a play written by Jonathan Larson that was first workshopped in New York in 1993 and which made its way to Broadway in 1996. Based loosely on Puccini's *La Bohème*, *Rent* took the form of a "rock operetta," serving to raise awareness of the health crisis and appeal to younger audiences in particular.[558] The story, which takes place in 1987 and 1988 Manhattan, follows the lives of a number of artists and activists who are affected by the AIDS crisis in its early days. Through scenes of love, life, and death – bringing audiences to gatherings at cafés, hospital rooms, protests, and memorial services – the play humanizes the AIDS crisis, offering viewers of both the musical and film a glimpse into the everydayness of living through government ignorance and apathy.

Rent has not been the only piece of cultural production born of the North American AIDS crisis that has resurfaced in the past fifteen years. For example, the play *Angels in America* focuses on, among others, a gay couple struggling to come to terms with one member's AIDS diagnosis in 1980s New York. The over-seven-hour theatre production was written by Tony Kushner in 1991 and performed in the years following, during the American AIDS crisis. More recently, in 2003 the television network HBO created a mini-series version of the story, starring a host of famous Hollywood actors.[559] In 2018, the London revival of the play will take up residence on Broadway, again starring well-known Hollywood actors.[560] Additionally, *The Normal Heart*, a 1995 play written by one of the founders of both Gay Men's Health Crisis and

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[557] I should specify that these memories come largely from students who grew up in North America. My students who grew up on the African continent, for example, have very different experiences of HIV/AIDS as a contemporary health crisis with very real implications in their lives.

[558] Isaac West, "Reviving Rage," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 1 (2012): 100.

[559] These actors included Academy Award winners Meryl Streep, Emma Thompson, and Al Pacino.

[560] Travelling from the London production will be Nathan Lane and Andrew Garfield in two of the lead roles.

ACT UP, Larry Kramer, dramatized the first years of the GMHC. In 2014, HBO produced a feature film version of *The Normal Heart*, casting Mark Ruffalo as the lead character based on Kramer himself and Julia Roberts as an early AIDS physician.[561]

In addition to these resuscitated theatre productions from the early-1990s, two feature-length documentary films on the AIDS crisis were released in 2012, twenty-five years after the founding of ACT UP New York. *United in Anger*, created by AIDS activists Sarah Schulman and Jim Hubbard, documented the work of ACT UP New York using archival footage alongside interviews with former group members. *How to Survive a Plague*'s depiction of AIDS activism in San Francisco was directed by David France and nominated for an Academy Award.

These are but a few examples of the proliferation of cultural production that have emerged recently to reflect a particular story of AIDS and I do not believe this wave of popular representations of AIDS and AIDS activism is accidental.[562] Elsewhere, I have argued that popular culture nostalgia for queer pasts can reflect something felt to be missing in contemporary culture.[563] Perhaps more importantly, though, we must consider the impact of this historicization through popular culture. As the North American AIDS crisis becomes more and more confined

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[561] Sarah Schulman has critiqued both Rent and Angels in America. Both were very popular during their first years on stage and each won a host of awards including Tonys (multiple each) and Pulitzer Prize (each for Drama). Schulman argues that their mainstream popularity was due to the depictions of AIDS conflict as occurring interpersonally rather than on the social level. Further, Schulman argues that Larson stole much of Rent's content from Schulman's own novel, *People in Trouble*, though, she says, he depoliticized her story line. Sarah Schulman, *Stagestruck: Theater, AIDS, And the Marketing of Gay America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

[562] There are many other examples of this trend that I could mention. For instance, the 2013 film *Dallas Buyers Club*, starring Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto, rewrote the story of AIDS activism to place a white heterosexual man as the central character. The film won both McConaughey and Leto Academy Awards (alongside four other awards), presumably in part due to their physical transformations; McConaughey lost weight to appear ill while Leto played a transgender woman in the film.

[563] Tamara de Szegheo Lang, "The Demand to Progress: Critical Nostalgia in LGBTQ Cultural Memory," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 19, no. 2 (2015): 230–248.

to history, those who did not experience the epidemic first hand will increasingly rely on public

venues to learn these histories. We must consider this emergence through three related questions:

why does this public history focus on AIDS in the past; which version of AIDS of the past is

being represented; and what does this representation do for people today?

AIDS, of course, should not be confined only to history; it continues to be a worldwide

epidemic. Schulman, in her 2013 book *The Gentrification of the Mind*, differentiates between

"AIDS of the past" and "ongoing AIDS," neither of which, she claims, are over.[564] Schulman

focuses her work on "AIDS of the past," when there was "a mass death experience of young

people" between 1981 and 1996.[565] This history, however, is far from past; Schulman claims that

it leaves an "enormous, incalculable influence on our entire cultural mindset."[566] Despite her

own focus, Schulman also draws attention to "ongoing AIDS," which she considers a separate

issue from "AIDS of the past." "AIDS in Africa," as it is often named, is arguably the most

visible form of "ongoing AIDS" due to the public face of North American-based non-

governmental organizations (NGOs) and their affiliation with consumer goods and advertisers to

raise money.[567] East and Southern Africa are currently home to over fifty percent of people

currently living with HIV in the world, numbering over nineteen million people.[568] The

HIV/AIDS epidemic, however, should also not be discursively confined to places outside of

North America at present simply because we believe that HIV is adequately treatable and treated

in Canada and the United States. In 2014, Indigenous people living in Canada were 2.7 times

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[564] Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind*, 42–43.
[565] Ibid., 45.
[566] Ibid.
[567] Ibid., 43.
[568] "HIV and AIDS in East and Southern Africa Regional Overview," AVERT, October 16, 2017, https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/sub-saharan-africa/overview.

more likely than others in Canada to contract HIV.[569] In Saskatchewan that year, HIV infection

rates within Indigenous populations were among the highest in the world due to a lack of

services.[570] The Opioid Crisis, killing thousands of people in North America, also increases risk

of new HIV infections in IV drug users.[571] Governmental and medical institutions fail to

adequately address this crisis in either Canada or the United States.

Legal, media, and pharmaceutical institutions are also to blame for "ongoing AIDS." The

criminalization of people with HIV in Canada continues to marginalize and endanger those with

HIV/AIDS. Since 1989, more than 184 people have been charged for non-disclosure of their HIV

status to sexual partners in Canada. Seventy percent of those charges have led to conviction and

over ninety percent of convictions in prison time, even if the risk of transmission is not

significant and/or transmission does not occur. Media outlets tend to focus on the black men who

have been charged through this criminalization.[572] Treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS is

also still inaccessible for many, especially in the United States. For instance, Martin Shkreli,

CEO of Turing Pharmaceuticals, increased the cost of AIDS drug Daraprim by more than five

thousand percent in 2015.[573] While Shkreli was widely considered a villain for his price hike,

U.S. President Donald Trump continues his attempts to overturn the Affordable Care Act, which

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[569] "HIV in Canada: A Primer for Service Providers," HIV in Canada, CATIE - Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information, accessed November 8, 2017, http://www.catie.ca/en/hiv-canada/2/2-3/2-3-4.
[570] Brad Bellegarde, "HIV Treatment in First Nations Communities in the Global Spotlight," CBC News, July 15, 2016, http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/hiv-aids-indigenous-globe-1.3680781.
[571] Martha Henry, "Opioid-HIV Connection a Troubling Trend," Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, December 22, 2016, https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/opioid-hiv-connection-troubling/.
[572] Colin Hastings, Cécile Kazatchkine, and Eric Mykhalovskiy, "HIV Criminalization in Canada: Key Trends and Patterns — Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network" (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, March 17, 2017), http://www.aidslaw.ca/site/hiv-criminalization-in-canada-key-trends-and-patterns/?lang=en.
[573] Heather Long, "What Happened to AIDS Drug That Spiked 5,000%," *CNNMoney*, August 25, 2016, http://money.cnn.com/2016/08/25/news/economy/daraprim-aids-drug-high-price/index.html.

provides greater access to medical care for those living with HIV/AIDS.[574] The AIDS crisis is

evidently still very present, in Canada, in North America, and globally.

Despite the severity and widespread nature of ongoing AIDS, this burst of visibility of

AIDS within popular and visual culture has been very focused on history, and a particular history

at that. Though Schulman claims in her 2012 book that "amazingly, there is almost no

conversation in public about these events or their consequences," there are now many popular

representations of the history of the AIDS crisis, or "AIDS of the past." In fact the history of

AIDS that is represented in my first chapter, on contagious history, makes its mark on each of

the films, theatrical productions, and documentaries that I mention above.

We can see this revived interest in AIDS crisis cultural production and history as a form

of contagion; the history of this particular moment in the 1980s and 1990s is infecting a

generation that has little to no firsthand knowledge of it. These efforts insist on the ongoing

presence of AIDS in a time and place often thought to be over it due to medications that can

prevent infection and manage symptoms. The impact that this history makes on the present is not

personal memory but a complex form of historical transmission. This complex historical

transmission does not focus on the facts of the epidemic: timelines, evolving research, and

changing laws. The particularities of films and television miniseries, for instance, present

viewers today with complex characters with whom viewers can identify or empathize. These

characters, though sometimes fictional, invite viewers into the emotional realms of the North

American AIDS crisis, of struggling against an apathetic government, and of grappling with the

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[574] Julia Belluz, "Why Obamacare Repeal Would Be Devastating to People with HIV," Vox, February 15, 2017, https://www.vox.com/2017/2/8/14532310/obamacare-aca-repeal-hiv-aids.

illness and death of loved ones. This emotionally engaged form of history insists on its relation to the present moment.

I am not claiming that television and film are the best or most significant forms of historical education, however there is much we can learn from the abiding interest in this history as told through these venues. While many powerful academic and non-academic writings on the topic of the history and visual cultures of the North American AIDS crisis exist, these popular venues tend to reach mass audiences. As the North American AIDS crisis is historicized in public, we need to consider the stakes of these forms of and venues for historical education. How do we grapple with mainstream interest in histories of LGBTQ people and other marginalized peoples? How do we move from community-based preservation and dissemination of these histories to the presentation of these histories to broader audiences? History is, after all, political. Those who tell it, or exhibit it, shape it. While historians and archivists have long acknowledged the construction of history and engaged history in complex and critical ways, these forms of critical practice must be followed in all realms of public history as well. These are the forms of critical public history that, I argue throughout this dissertation, have been taken up by community-run LGBTQ archives as well as the venues that have followed in their path in recent years. This critical public history tries to complicate dominant narratives and amplify multiple, and at times contradictory, diverse voices. It highlights the lives of ordinary people as well as those of the extraordinary. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for this study, it recognizes emotional relationships *in* history as well as encouraging them *with* history.

Each of the chapters included in this dissertation speak to these goals of a critical public history. In focusing on the role of affect, feeling, and emotion in fostering both interest in and connection to queer histories, the chapters highlight the diversity of forms of usable pasts in

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LGBTQ public history exhibitions. "Contagious History" pays tribute to the decades of work done by community-run LGBTQ archives and shows how the emotional needs of community members have always been a priority of this work. Further, it demonstrates a model whereby public history exhibitions seek to recruit more people into relationships with LGBTQ histories: making histories contagious. "Queer Ancestral Longings" interrogates one form that these relationships take: queer ancestral genealogies. Through the diversification of historical narratives produced through the work of amateur historians and "crowd sourcing" history, the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History foregrounds the affective spark that leads to these queer ancestral relationships. "The Romance of Objects" turns to a method through which these relationships are formed: interactions with archival objects. The GLBT History Museum's exhibition "Our Vast Queer Past" stages for broad publics the experiences of researchers within archives. In displaying a vast number of objects, the exhibition encourages visitors to make surprising discoveries of unexpected objects that come to matter to them. In continuing the analysis of the generative nature of surprising discoveries, "Imagined Histories in the Heritage Museum," focuses on the potential created by affective atmospheres of surprise. For the massive art exhibition "Land|Slide Possible Futures," artists inserted fictional exhibits into a heritage village, challenging visitors to question dominant historical narratives and methods through which history is exhibited. All of these chapters speak to the importance of how the past is crafted into histories that speak publicly to the ongoing needs and concerns of today.

Remembering AIDS of the Past

I want to briefly restate the importance of these themes through the recent public historicization of the North American AIDS epidemic in venues devoted explicitly to public history education. In 2013, two history exhibits opened in mainstream venues in New York City: the New-York Historical Society and the New York Public Library (NYPL). Both exhibits focused on the history of AIDS in New York and neither was affiliated with a community-based LGBTQ Archives or aimed specifically at LGBTQ audiences. "AIDS in New York: The First Five Years" was mounted at the New-York Historical Society Museum and Library and focused on the years 1981 to 1985. The exhibit used archival materials, including photographs, advertisements, and news broadcasts, "that capture the immense grief felt by affected communities" during the "fear and hysteria" of the initial emergence of AIDS.[575] While the exhibit tries to educate visitors about a history that is, in the words of curator Jean S. Ashton, "little-understood and nearly forgotten," not all visitors to the exhibit were satisfied with the exhibit's own understanding of these years.[576] Hugh Ryan, founder of the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, writes of the exhibit "'AIDS in New York: The First Five Years' accomplishes a neat trick: it takes a black mark in New York City's history – its homophobic, apathetic response to the early days of AIDS in the early 1980s – and transforms it into a moment of civic pride, when New Yorkers of all stripes came together to fight the disease. It's a lovely story, if only it

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[575] "AIDS in New York: The First Five Years," New-York Historical Society Museum & Library, accessed October 30, 2017, http://www.nyhistory.org/exhibitions/aids-new-york-first-five-years.
[576] "AIDS in New York: The First Five Years," *The New York History Blog* (blog), April 23, 2013, http://newyorkhistoryblog.org/2013/04/23/aids-in-new-york-the-first-five-years/.

were true."[577] Ryan goes on to accuse the exhibit of representations that comprise "victim blaming" of people with AIDS, treating them as "scared" and "angry" rather than as those who fought for the medical community and government to take notice and take action.[578] Online comments on the article from people who lived through this history echo Ryan's frustration and the importance of public representations of history for those who experienced it firsthand and for those who did not. For this exhibit, which explicitly targeted visitors with limited knowledge of the AIDS crisis, an awareness of the politics of historical representation was all the more crucial.

Later in 2013, the New York Public Library, which itself holds large archival collections about ACT UP New York and LGBTQ history, mounted an exhibit entitled, "Why We Fight: Remembering AIDS Activism." As opposed to "AIDS in New York," the NYPL exhibit focused on the "passionate work of dedicated individuals who tended the sick, challenged prejudices against people living with HIV, educated their communities, and fought for resources and research" in New York City.[579] In doing so, the exhibit tried to grapple with the multiple histories of AIDS activism. As NYPL Coordinator for LGBT Collections Jason Bauman explains, it is important to prioritize "showing how elective it is, showing disunity, showing multiple agendas, multiple senses of what was effective politically, continuing to be effective politically."[580] "Why We Fight" certainly endeavored to tell a different history of AIDS in New York, comprising different voices, perspectives, and narratives than "AIDS in New York" did. Bauman, however, also prioritized a history that remained active and alive in the present, in

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[577] Ryan, "How to Whitewash a Plague."
[578] Ibid.
[579] "Why We Fight: Remembering AIDS Activism," The New York Public Library, accessed October 30, 2017, https://www.nypl.org/events/exhibitions/why-we-fight.
[580] *VisualAIDS* and the *Pop-Up Museum of Queer History*, "(re)Presenting AIDS: Culture and Accountability" (transcript with images), September 2013, 8.

relation to visitors. He says, "I try to create exhibitions that empower people to know that they can make a difference in the world. … I think that the nuts and bolts of making things happen, and realizing that they can make a difference in the world, collectively, is something that is left out of histories. That is something I try to bring to the surface." "Why We Fight" offered visitors a history of activism and activist tactics *and also* a call to action for visitors to come into relation with that history.

Finally, I want to highlight one art-based exhibit that took a different approach to the history of "AIDS of the past." In 2011, an art exhibit that took up similar themes, *Coming After*, opened in Toronto. Curator Jon Davies describes the show as not comprised of artists who experienced the AIDS epidemic firsthand but, rather, those who "came after." He writes, "we grew up in the shadow of these crisis years – whether by fate or by choice – seeking out these narratives and figures of not-so-long-ago and consciously aligning ourselves with them emotionally, culturally and politically, whether as open wound, fount of inspiration or both as once."[581] The artists that contributed to *Coming After* sought out the past because they see themselves as somehow imperfectly *like* figures from the era; they identify with and desire to be part of the past that they feel is no longer available to them. However, the artists do not try to recreate the past that they long for as a "perfect snapshot" – their work is not a restorative mission – but rather they complicate the existing narratives of the AIDS crisis through their longing for complicated memories.[582] The art that made up the exhibit highlighted the artists' relationships to the history of the North American AIDS crisis over the narrative history itself.

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[581] Jon Davies, "Coming After: Queer Time, Arriving Too Late and the Spectre of the Recent Past" (Toronto, ON: The Power Plant, 2011), 14.
[582] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002), 49.

Whether this is accomplished through self-portraits, photographs of lost queer spaces, or sound-, light-, and scent-scapes, the pieces evoke the feeling of history rather than its narrative telling.

Whether in the form of a narrative exhibit, one focused on the lessons of the past for the present, or one that models affective relationships to the past, the ways in which histories are presented to audiences with little to no knowledge of the events are indeed extremely politically significant. We need look no further than the United States to see lives being lost in battles over which histories deserve to be given space in public.

In August 2017, a white-supremacist rally, "Unite the Right," descended on Charlottesville, Virginia. The neo-nazis, white nationalists, and far right marchers gathered in Charlottesville after a vote passed to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee from the city. The marchers used the politics of commemoration and history in general to justify their racist, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic violence. This violence came to a head when one participant drove his car through a crowd of counter-protestors, killing 32-year-old anti-racist activist Heather Heyer.[583]

The current clashes and debates over monuments to Civil War leaders, which extend well beyond Charlottesville, are rife with feeling, emotion, and affect. A historical statue can represent the intergenerational trauma of slavery, the haunting of lynchings, the repression enacted by the Jim Crow South, and the ongoing anger and action of responding to the repeated murders of black people by police officers. A statue can represent for others familial pride, loss of a glorified way of life, or anger at those who are not truly responsible for one's

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[583] "Charlottesville Attack: What, Where and Who?," *Al Jazeera*, August 17, 2017, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/charlottesville-attack-170813081045115.html.

powerlessness.[584] Looking at the emotional aspects of this debate over history in public is not to dismiss these feelings as tangential or trivial to the issue of racism in America today but rather to reinforce the centrality of affect in these terrifying events.

How can we approach these public histories without pretending that the emotional importance is not there? How can we avoid claims that to consider the removal of monuments or the renaming of public spaces and buildings is an attack against the "truth" of history? How can we use public history to account for the intergenerational trauma of histories told from the perspectives of the victors, of historical acts of violence that served to create a nation?

In the previous chapters I have presented some models that I hope can help us to think about these questions in many different contexts. The exhibits I have analyzed here, and many of the community-run LGBTQ archives that have come before them, have never considered history as distinct from the emotional needs of, implications for, or impacts on the present. They have critiqued historical meta-narratives through their very existence and, to various extents, continue to do so explicitly.[585] They have given space for multiple voices to emerge through their exhibits and archival objects. Finally, they have worked to encourage a critical analysis of tellings of history more generally. As LGBTQ histories and those of other marginalized peoples become increasingly embedded in mainstream sites of public history – the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the New York Public Library, and others – I hope they bring with them some of these orientations.

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[584] "The Unfinished Battle in the Capital of the Confederacy," *Code Switch*, accessed August 23, 2017, http://one.npr.org/i/545267751:545427322; "White Haze," *This American Life*, accessed September 22, 2017, https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/626/white-haze.

[585] As addressed throughout this work, archives and archival exhibitions also serve to create new meta-narratives of LGBTQ history, with their own exclusions and problematic implications. However, I have also highlighted three spaces that challenge these new normalized historical narratives.

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