

MAKING SENSE OF THE PRACTICAL LESBIAN PAST: TOWARDS A RETHINKING OF
UNTIMELY USES OF HISTORY THROUGH THE TEMPORALITY OF CULTURAL
TECHNIQUES

by

VALÉRIE SIMON

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Philosophy
and the Division of Graduate Studies of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2023

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Valérie Simon

Title: Making Sense of the Practical Lesbian Past: Towards a Rethinking of Untimely Uses of History Through the Temporality of Cultural Techniques

This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Philosophy by:

Colin Koopman	Chairperson
Daniela Vallega-Neu	Core Member
Camisha Russell	Core Member
Michael Allan	Institutional Representative

and

Krista Chronister	Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
-------------------	-----------------------------------

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Division of Graduate Studies.

Degree awarded June 2023

© 2023 Valérie Simon

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Valérie Simon

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Philosophy

June 2023

Title: Making Sense of the Practical Lesbian Past: Towards a Rethinking of Untimely Uses of History Through the Temporality of Cultural Techniques

This dissertation focuses on the practice of untimely uses of lesbian history, and in particular the diverse practices of engagement with lesbian activist history, all of which aim to mobilize this activist history for the present and towards the construction of alternate futures. I approach such practices technologically by foregrounding the method and theory of ‘cultural techniques’ in a way that reframes the problem oriented by engagement with lesbian activist history. Specifically, I develop a reframing that shifts the focus from a question of representation (how to ensure the histories engaged with are more diverse?) to a question of how to engage with lesbian history in ways that guide and inspire action in the present and towards the future worlds that we deserve. I argue that to answer the latter question what is needed is attention to the practices (and in particular the technologies) we find in archives and to evaluate what these practices might do in the present through an understanding of these practices’ temporality, historicity and the ethico-political questions they raise.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	7
PART I: TOWARDS A RETHINKING OF UNTIMELY USES OF HISTORY THROUGH THE TEMPORALITY OF CULTURAL TECHNIQUES.....	15
CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS A CULTURAL TECHNIQUES APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY WITH FOUCAULT AND KITTLER.....	15
2.1 Introduction.....	15
2.2: On the Different Meanings of “Technology” in Philosophy of Technology	28
2.3 Foucault and Philosophy of Technology.....	35
2.3.1 The Meanings of “Technology” in Foucault’s Work	36
2.3.2 On Technology and Technique in Foucault’s Work.....	41
2.4 On a Cultural Techniques Approach to Philosophy of Technology	44
2.4.1 Kittler on Foucault: Towards a “Technological Re-reading” of Foucault ..	49
2.4.2 From Technology and Techniques to Practices and Problematization.....	53
2.4.3 The Technological Elements of a Cultural Techniques Approach	55
CHAPTER 3: FROM AFFECT TO TEMPORAL WORK AND REMOBILIZATION	69
3.1. Introduction	69
3.2 From Cruel Optimism to Temporal Work.....	80
3.2.1: Cruel Optimism Reconceptualized: On the Space of Experience and the Horizons of Expectation.....	83
3.2.2: On the Practical Past as Space of Experience	88
3.2.3 Towards Temporal Work.....	93
3.3 On Untimely Uses of History and Remobilization.....	96
3.3.1 On Temporal work and Repetition.....	96
3.3.2 On the Stonewall Riots and Drawing on History.....	103
3.3.3 On Repetition and Layers of Time in Koselleck.....	108
3.3.4 Towards a New Horizon of Expectation.....	115
3.3.5 Towards a Different Horizon of Expectation.....	119

PART II: ON THE ETHICAL DIMENSION OF UNTIMELY USES OF HISTORY.....	128
CHAPTER 4: ON SCENES OF CRUEL OPTIMISM, INSTITUTION, AND THE READING ANEW OF SOURCES FROM THE LESBIAN PAST.....	128
4.1 Introduction.....	128
4.1.1 The Structure of the Ethical Rules Giving Coherence to Untimely Uses of History	131
4.2 Towards an Ethics of Distance.....	138
4.2.1 Generational Distance and the Denial of History View.....	139
4.2.2. From Generational Debates to Confrontation of Ethical Outlooks.....	143
4.2.3 Beyond the Ethical Evaluative Impasse of the Practical Past.....	150
4.2.4 Making Sense of the Lesbian Past	155
4.3 Towards a Reading Anew of Sources from the Lesbian Past.....	163
4.3.1 “Lesbian Potentiality” and the Vindication of the Lesbian Past	164
4.3.2 On Institution, Historical Injustice, and the Temporal Complexity of Structures of Oppression.....	168
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	181
REFERENCES CITED	187

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In “Poetry Is Not A Luxury”, Audre Lorde writes that, [T]here are no new ideas still waiting in the wings to save us as women, as human. There are only old and forgotten ones, new combinations, extrapolations and recognitions from within ourselves—along with the renewed courage to try them out (Lorde 2007, 38).

Our task, then, for Lorde is to find new ways to make these ideas felt through poetry (Lorde 2008, 39). While Lorde’s text is focused on arguing for the necessity of poetry for social change, what she is describing in these lines is a way to engage with history: an approach to engaging with feminist and lesbian history focused on conjuring new forms, stretching what certain ideas are about and can do, and finding the renewed courage to try them out in the present and see where they take us.

This dissertation is about just that: the diverse practices of engagement with lesbian activist history all of which aim to mobilize this activist history for the present and towards the construction of alternate futures. This dissertation is about what I call untimely uses of history. While Lorde is focused on one such untimely use of history (poetry), in this dissertation I am concerned with articulating a different approach to the engagement with lesbian history altogether by examining such engagement with lesbian history as itself a practice. I thus aim to give an account of what such a practice does and aims at and what its politics opens us to.

My focus on understanding untimely uses of history differently emerges out of a question that structures long-time lesbian and HIV/AIDS activist, author and thinker Sarah Schulman's engagement with and creation of these archives: how is change made (Schulman 2021, 5) and how do we retrospectively understand our movements' successes and failures (Schulman 2021; Cogswell 2021)? The urgency of these questions is captured by Schulman's observation that:

the fate of a society is determined by very small groups of people. Only tiny vanguards actually take the actions necessary, and even fewer do this with a commitment to being effective. The purpose of that combination is to open up new possibilities and set new paths for the larger community (Schulman 2021, xviii).

Schulman's work then in creating and engaging the ACT UP New York archive through a seventeen year long *ACT UP Oral History Project*, a 2012 documentary *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP*, and a 2021 non-fiction book published on ACT UP New York based on the long-form interviews of the oral history project is to articulate effective methods (or in the language I develop in the dissertation practices) of action in the present for activists today. One such practice is direct action.¹

¹. In Chapter 2, I return in further detail to Schulman discussion of direct action as it relates to an activist practice originating in the Civil Rights Movement: Freedom Ride. I trace historically the different shifts this practice has undergone in the process of being remobilized by the Lesbian Avengers in the 1990s.

For Schulman, direct action does not just speak to what ACT UP New York did in the period under study (1987-1993) but represents one key strategy useful for activists today to understand how change is made. As Schulman describes:

In that brief moment of stepping into the sight line of the powerful, shunned people use direct action to be understood. And they are making two things clear: (1) the specific content of their demand for change, and (2) that they will never stop fighting for their survival (Schulman 2021, 28).

Thus, Schulman's focus on the practice of direct action aims to both make this practice available for remobilization in the present and give an argument as to why and how it is an effective practice for action in the present. In other words, by knowing this practice and its value a queer activist today can be one step closer to mounting effective action in the present.

However, as I show in this dissertation, more is needed than knowing the value and proven efficiency of a practice to remobilize it in the present. Namely, what is needed, is to understand how this practice such as direct action has shifted and been transformed since its ACT UP days, how embedded in it are both the successes and failures of ACT UP, how, in addition, it comes with the histories and knowledge of the ways in which it has traveled and developed since its ACT UP days. Integrating the shifts internal to the practice of direct action is key in turn for effective action in the present as a focus on these shifts permits to avoid ineffective repetition and to get us closer to create new forms of action in the present that are able to "stop the rate of giveback and regression" (Schulman 2021, xviii), and "open

up new possibilities and set new paths for the larger community” (Schulman 2021, xviii).

By understanding untimely uses of history as a practice with many forms (such as the example of direct action) I reframe the problem of engagement with activist history from a question of knowing the fullness, diversity, and potential of lesbian and queer histories and the practices they hold. What I shift toward is a question of how to engage with lesbian history in ways that guide and inspire action in the present and towards the future worlds that we deserve. Such a shift is necessary, I suggest, because of the ways in which the dominant focus on making practices from the archive visible and accessible does not have tools other than creating more histories to address the ethical, technological, temporal and historical questions untimely uses of history raise. Thus, in this dissertation instead of looking for what is missing or how to fill a gap, I argue for the importance of attention to the practices (inclusive of technologies) we find in archives and evaluating what these practices might do in the present. In short then, by examining untimely uses of history as a practice, I offer an account of how to think anew the task of finding new combinations and extrapolations to try out in our present moment. This is the through-line I both develop across the dissertation and recurrently track in a number of philosophers including Michel Foucault, Hayden White, Saidiya Hartman, Bernard Williams, Reinhart Koselleck, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

In understanding untimely uses of history as a practice I mean that untimely uses of history are to be understood, following Michel Foucault, as:

ways of doing things—that are more or less regulated more or less conscious, more or less goal-oriented, through which one can grasp the lineaments both of what was constituted as real for those who were attempting to conceptualize and govern it, and of the way in which those same people constituted themselves as subjects capable of knowing, analyzing, and ultimately modifying the real (Foucault 1994, 318).

The richness of this conception of practices is also present in the work of John Rawls. Rawls uses the word practices “as a sort of technical term meaning any form of activity specified by a system of rules which defines offices, roles, moves, penalties, defenses, and so on, and which gives the activity its structure” (Rawls 1955, 3 footnote 1).

For Rawls, practices emerge when “in many areas of conduct each person’s deciding what to do [...] case by case leads to confusion, and that the attempt to coordinate behavior by trying to foresee how others will act is bound to fail” (Rawls 1955, 24). Thus, practices emerge as “the specification of a new form of activity” (Rawls 1955, 24) such that “those engaged in a practice recognize the rules as defining it” (Rawls 1955, 24). However, “the rules cannot be taken as simply describing how those engaged in the practice in fact behave: it is not simply that they act as if they were obeying the rules” (Rawls 1955, 24). Rules in relation to a practice are publicly known, understood as set or definitive, can be taught and are what gives a practice its coherence (Rawls 1955, 24). Many actions can fall under a practice and the rules that give it specificity. Bringing together Rawls’s and Foucault’s characterization of practices, I understand practices as of “ways of doing

things” (Foucault 1994) involving the historically situated specifications or rules that give any practice its coherence.

In turn, I understand practices as technologies in that they have a variety of cultural techniques that fall under them. By shifting the focus from media practices to untimely uses of history (under which those media practices fall), this dissertation project, rather than being concerned with attending to a diversity of lesbian media practices, is focused on the cultural techniques that give such practices coherence for the lesbians and queers engaged in or studying these practices. It is by attending to these cultural techniques and the temporal, historical and ethico-political questions they raise that an understanding of untimely uses of history beyond questions of representation emerges.

This dissertation has two parts. In part I, consisting of two chapters, I characterize anew what untimely uses of history do and aim at. Specifically, I argue that what untimely uses of history do is temporal work and that such uses aim at navigating the limits of what they draw on in archives and history for action in the present and towards the future.

In chapter 2, I offer a portrait of the technological elements that compose practices in general, and untimely uses of history specifically: cultural techniques and operations. As I will show, in addition to being ways of doing things with rules that give them coherence, practices are an umbrella composed of cultural techniques that shift and vary historically. Thus, cultural techniques are a way of examining practices in that such an approach focuses on how a practice’s rules and

ways of doing things are informed by a host of techniques. It is by tracking changes in these techniques that changes in the practice can be more fully understood. In addition to falling under the umbrella of a practice, cultural techniques have operations, that refer to what they aim to do in the most basic terms. It is, in turn, by focusing on the temporal aspect of these operations that you get at what untimely uses of history do and aim at. This chapter draws specifically on the philosophical work of Michel Foucault, Friedrich Kittler, and others.

In chapter 3, I turn to the operations of the cultural techniques of untimely uses of history and argue for a different temporal understanding of the cultural technique of drawing from lesbian history, and what it can do for thinking about the mobilization of history for present and future politics. Specifically, I will contend that the temporality of drawing from history is characterized by what I call “temporal work” rather than affect, and that in the specific case of untimely uses of history, the temporality of drawing from history, i.e., of the operations of selection storage and transmission, is characterized by remobilization: a type of temporal work that aims specifically to select and store practices for future redeployment in the present and towards the future. In doing so then, I show that untimely uses of history do temporal work and aim to navigate the limit of objects and documents for action in the present. My interlocutors in this chapter appear to be a disparate set and yet they nevertheless help me weave together the argument just described: here I focus on the work of Reinhart Koselleck, Hayden White, Friedrich Kittler (again), and Saidiya Hartman.

In part II, which consists of one chapter, I am concerned with the rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history. Such rules are not just the product of cultural techniques, but also encompass a certain ethical orientation towards the oppressive aspects of the past. Thus, I am specifically concerned in this part, with characterizing anew the ethical orientation of untimely uses of history. I do this in chapter 4, by contrasting two ethical approaches: the denial of history view focused on the suppression of lesbian history and the historical injustice view focused on the ethico-temporal problem of ongoing structures of oppression. I offer an argument in favor of the historical injustice view by returning to the ethical questions raised by the temporal work approach developed in chapter 3 as it relates to navigating the veto power of sources and the need for an evaluative criteria of the practices we find in the archive for the remobilization in the present. Here I mobilize the work of Bernard Williams and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to develop a different way to attend to these ethical issues.

PART I: TOWARDS A RETHINKING OF UNTIMELY USES OF HISTORY THROUGH THE TEMPORALITY OF CULTURAL TECHNIQUES

CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS A CULTURAL TECHNIQUES APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY WITH FOUCAULT AND KITTLER

2.1 Introduction

In the first part of this dissertation, composed of chapters 2 and 3, I am concerned with characterizing anew what untimely uses of history do and aim at as a practice. To do so, I first develop in this chapter, through an engagement with the work of Friedrich Kittler and Michel Foucault, a cultural techniques approach to practices (Kittler 1990; Siegert 2015; Vismann 2013). In doing so, I give a portrait of the technological elements that compose practices in general, and untimely uses of history specifically: cultural techniques and operations. As I will show, in addition to being ways of doing things with rules that give them coherence, practices are an umbrella composed of cultural techniques that shift and vary historically. Thus, cultural techniques are a way of examining practices in that such an approach focuses on how a practice's rules and ways of doing things are informed by a host of techniques. It is by tracking changes in these techniques that changes in the practice can be understood. In addition to falling under the umbrella of a practice, cultural techniques have operations, that refer to what they aim to do in the most basic terms. It is, in turn, by focusing on the temporal aspect of these operations, I will argue in chapter 3, that we get at what untimely uses of history as a practice do and

aim at: remobilization, i.e., as a practice, untimely uses of history store and select techniques from archives and history for future redeployment in the present and towards the future.

Untimely uses of history as a practice take a variety of forms such as creating digital archives, digitizing print only publications, memes, historical social media accounts, films, documentaries, t-shirts, and more. Central to these activities in the lesbian archive is an engagement with and a digital reworking of LGBT archival material and history. Typically, these digital reworkings are approached in one of two ways. One approach is to examine the content of these reworkings in relation to specific tools (social media, website, museum exhibit, etc.). The focus here is on what is shared (or not), how it can be accessed (through a hashtag, a google search or a specific institution for example), issues of representation, and what these activities tell us about contemporary lesbian communities. Another approach is to examine the relationship of digitally reworked ephemera to the lesbian history it portrays (McKinney 2020).

At work in both of these approaches is an incomplete inventory of what can be found in archives that could then in turn be reworked through digital distribution on social media networks or on websites. In other words, reworked in a way that they are searchable on Google and would yield results. Such an inventory includes: flyers, zines, pictures, slogans, magazines, newsletters, speeches, fashion, posters, buttons, and so much more. What is often missing from that inventory of what can be found in the LGBT archives and be mobilized for digital use are practices.

Practices can be stored in archives either by being attached to specific objects, e.g.,

the creation of zines, flyers, newsletters. Another way in which practices can be stored in archives is by being explicitly referenced or explained in ephemera left in the archive, e.g., a zine explaining how to do direct action. In that example, two practices are described, first, the one explicitly referenced how to do direct action as well as the practice of documenting and explaining a practice a group engages in. The idea that practices are stored in archives may sound puzzling in the abstract but make sense in the context of minority groups striving towards more just conditions by drawing on the work of past and present activism.

That practices are to be shared in the present and archived for the future is an insight at the heart of the Lesbian Avengers'² activism as well as of the archiving of key moments of the group by members through documentaries, ephemera in archives, memoirs and handbooks. It is for this reason that I do a close examination of the Lesbian Avengers movement and archives in this dissertation. Through an engagement with this archive, I develop (specifically in this chapter and the next) a cultural techniques approach to the practice of untimely uses of history which in turn results (as I will show in chapter 4) in a reading anew of the resources made available to us through the traces of movements we look up to (like that of the Lesbian Avengers) or have contributed to build.

In 1993, seeing how in many states anti-gay ballot measures were propelled by the Christian Right, the Lesbian Avengers developed a new grassroots organizing

². The Lesbian Avengers were a “direct- action group focused on issues vital to lesbian survival and visibility” (Cogswell 2014, 9) founded in East Village New York in 1992 by Ana Simo, Anne Christine D’Adesky, Maxine Wolfe, Marie Honan, Ann McGuire and Sarah Schulman.

project called The Lesbian Avengers' Civil Rights Organizing Project (LACROP). LACROP's aim was for the Lesbian Avengers to go on "tour" and share their tactics and the knowledge they built with local communities as well as provide logistical and organizational support to defeat these ballot measures (Schulman 1994, 313). LACROP documented what they learned and did in their 1993 and 1994 campaigns in "Out Against the Right: An Organizing Handbook". In my close investigation of LACROP's practice of going on tour, my aim is to illustrate how looking at practices raises a host of new questions and avenues for inquiry not fully answered by the content approach and the digital reworkings relationship to lesbian history approach. Indeed, at stake in examining practices, is asking how they have changed through time, how they are mobilized and remobilized to do specific things, how their deployment shifts context, and what debates take place over the rationales that justify the use of each practice.

LACROP's idea of going on tour started out as a pitch to, in the words of Kelly Cogswell in her memoir *Eating Fire: My Life as a Lesbian Avenger*, create "a kind of Freedom Ride" (Cogswell 2014, 73). In her 1994 *My American History: Lesbian and Gay Life During the Reagan/Bush Era*, Sarah Schulman writes in the chapter "The Lesbian Avengers Part Four: The Freedom Ride" that LACROP was about creating "a sixties model 'Freedom Summer' organizing project focused on helping one of these small communities defeat the measure" (Schulman 1994, 313). Animating this project was, in the words of Sarah Schulman, the "belief that helping gay people register and vote to protect their own basic rights is a huge step towards gay and lesbian self-empowerment and is a crucial political act" (Schulman 1994, 317). I will

return to how Schulman and Cogswell mobilize two different moments of the Civil Rights Movement, but for now, I focus on how LACROPS's practice of going on tour is a mobilization, with modification, of the Freedom Ride and Freedom Summer practices.

Sarah Schulman is not only a co-founder of the Lesbian Avengers, but prior to her work with the Lesbian Avengers, she was a rank-and-file member of ACT UP New York from 1987 to 1992. Later, in 2001 with Jim Hubbard, she co-founded the ACT UP Oral History Project (Schulman 2021, xiv-xv). In her recent history of ACT UP New York titled *Let The Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP New York, 1987-1993*, Schulman makes explicit the link between the Civil Rights Movement and how ACT UP (and by extension the Lesbian Avengers) conceived of direct action. She writes: "It was the Black civil rights movement's interpretation of 'direct action' that best represents ACT UP's, although this, too, was not made explicit at the time." (Schulman 2021, 25). The language of Freedom Ride and Freedom Summer is then, a direct reference to the Civil Rights Movement development of those practices, but with a modification: direct action as creative action. Indeed, as Schulman puts it: "most of ACT UP's public protests were creative actions. Instead of marching around with signs and listening passively to speakers as the sole end-all of an organizing experience, ACT UP created elaborate images of the obstacles they were fighting and the world they wanted to live in" (Schulman 2021, 26). ACT UP's and the Lesbian Avengers' (and others) mobilization of civil rights movement practice of direct action, with a modification, went on to create a recognizable practice, in its own right: queer direct action/queer activism (Rand 2014). At this

stage of the examination of this example, we see how practices inspire others, are transformed into something else and give rise in turn to new practices, here, new forms of direct action. I now turn to the questions raised by a shift in the context of a practice, here, from 1960s civil rights struggles to 1990s queer activism in New York. At stake in this shift of context is the question of how to understand the relationship between race, sexuality, and activism.

Founded in 1942, CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) was central in studying, developing, adapting and deploying nonviolent direct action in the U.S. The 1961 Freedom Rides organized by CORE consisted of Black and white activists traveling in buses from Washington DC down South and aiming to reach New Orleans, Louisiana, to test the Supreme court rule in *Boynton v. Virginia* rendering unconstitutional the segregation of interstate travel facilities (King Encyclopedia, n.d.). Freedom rides themselves emerged as a practice as early as 1947 when CORE members aimed to test the Supreme court rule in *Morgan v. Virginia* making segregation on interstate buses unconstitutional (King Encyclopedia, n.d.).

While the 1961 Freedom Rides garnered national media attention as it ended with Freedom Riders being met by a violent white mob and left to fend for themselves, the 1964 Freedom Summer had different implications in the historiography of the Civil Rights Movement. The Freedom Summer was marked by the disappearance and murder of 3 CORE activists (James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman) which sparked disenchantment, for many, with the framework of nonviolence (King Encyclopedia, n.d.). In addition, the Freedom Summer, with the 1965 Voting Rights Act, marked the end of what became

periodized as *the* Civil Rights movement, followed by, post-1965 a “decline” of the movement.

As noted above, in their references to how LACROP emerged as a project, Cogswell and Schulman refer to two distinct and temporally separate practices of the Civil Rights Movement: the 1961 Freedom Ride and the 1964 Freedom Summer. These two moments of the civil rights movement and the nonviolent direct action they embody came to speak very differently about what to do with violence (of a mob or of murder), how to make sense of that violence, and what nonviolence can meaningfully do to resist that violence and advocate for social change. In shifting the context of application of these practices to the 1990s and the violence queers are faced with, the Lesbian Avengers’ modified use of these practices raises the following question about the relationship between race, sexuality and activism: are 1990s queer activists “like” these freedom riders met with the white mob?

This question and the links between race and sexuality it aims to articulate is especially important as nonviolent direct action practices were developed and used by two queer figures who have been practicing nonviolent direct action in the US since the 1940s: Bayard Rustin and Pauli Murray (Murray 1987; D’Emilio 2003). In a time of persistent criminalization for being gay in public, Bayard Rustin was openly gay, and because he was gay and criminalized for it (D’Emilio 2003, 184-205), was forced into the background of movements and groups, even though he was instrumental to the deployment of nonviolent direct action in the US and the Civil Rights movement. The few times, later in life when the gay liberation movement had done its work, when Rustin would talk about being gay and Black, Rustin would say

that for him being gay is a “private matter” (D’Emilio 2003, 491). At the same time, Rustin also made clear the necessity to deal with violence and discrimination faced by gay men in political terms: “There are great numbers of people who will accept all kinds of people: blacks, Hispanics, and Jews, but who won’t accept fags. That is what makes the homosexual central to the whole political apparatus as to how far we can go in human rights” (as quoted in D’Emilio 2003, 490).

Pauli Murray also views issues of gender identity and sexuality as a private matter, not commenting on these issues in either of their memoirs. However, they did work with their 1965 framework of “Jane Crow” and as a co-founder of NOW to think gender and race together. In short, with Murray and Rustin, issues of sexuality (and gender identity in the case of Murray) are a private matter, but at the same time the impact of this difference on their life trajectory is undeniable, even if not integrated in an explicit political agenda of human rights. The Lesbian Avengers then, in redeploying Freedom Ride and Freedom Summer practices in a different context are also, with many others, not only shifting the understanding of sexuality as a “private matter”, but taking position, as I will show next, with their redeployment of Freedom Rides and Freedom Summer, on how to think race, sexuality, and activism together.

The twin issues of how to understand and resist violence and how to understand the relationship between race, sexuality, and activism came to a head when the Lesbian Avengers were critiqued by Barbara Smith for using the phrase “Freedom Ride” to describe their organizing project against the Christian Right (Smith 2014). In their discussion of Smith’s critique and the demand to not use the

phrase “Freedom Ride”, Cogswell’s and Schulman’s responses focus on three things. First, Cogswell and Schulman resist the mischaracterization of the composition of the group as homogeneous. In response, they highlight the voices of the “black, Latina and Asian women in the Avengers” (Schulman 1994, 318) that came together to make the decision to continue using the phrase “Freedom Ride” (Schulman 1994, 318; Cogswell 2014, 75). Second, Schulman and Cogswell make the case that to use the practices of Freedom Ride and Freedom Summer to deal with issues of sexuality and rights is important and rejected “the homophobia in the assumptions dykes would dirty up the name ‘Freedom Ride’” (Cogswell 2014, 75). Third, and this is key, the remobilization of these practices is important because it articulates a certain vision of how race and sexuality are to come together and serve as a starting point to examine “the real problem of racism in the queer community” (Cogswell 2014, 75) and “the complex racial issues raised by the Christian right” (Schulman 1994, 318).

For Cogswell and Schulman, the rationale that gives coherence to the remobilization of Freedom Ride and Freedom Summer practices is a group facing attack on their civil rights (here queers) coming together to fight it. As Schulman puts it:

We felt that our Freedom Ride was in the best tradition of the Freedom Rides of the sixties because it involved people literally moving geographically to defend a community that they identify with when they are under siege. At stake are basic civil rights protections that could not be denied (Schulman 1994, 318).

In her account, Cogswell highlights how long it took for this vision of race, sexuality and activism and the links it aimed to establish to be recognized. She writes: “[W]as it inevitable to wait twenty years for an African American president to see Seneca Falls, Selma, and Stonewall as three faces of one struggle for freedom and human rights?” (Cogswell 2014, 76). It is, however, this analogous relationship between race and sexuality as giving a rationale for the remobilization of a practice that is at the heart of Smith’s critique.

In her 1993 essay “Blacks and Gays: Healing the Great Divide”, Smith delineates the most pressing questions raised by the reliance on analogy to understand the relationship between race and sexuality. The first issue points to what Cogswell and Schulman viewed as still in need to be worked out and that for Smith has been an open question all along and is just now on everyone’s mind: how to bring together race, sexuality and activism in the difficult work of building coalitions for social change. The second issue points to why, for Smith, the analogy between race and sexuality is inadequate: “at the very same time that some gays make blanket comparisons between the gay movement and the Black Civil Rights movement, they also assume that Black and other people of color have won all our battles and are in terrific shape in comparison with gays” (Smith 2014, 180).

In *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy*, Ladelle McWhorter explores further the dangers of a reliance on an analogy between race and sexuality and “on the symbols and rhetoric of the black civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s” (McWhorter 2009, 9) in the context of 1990s US gay and lesbian activism. Identifying similar issues as the ones described by Smith above,

McWorther is concerned with how to give an account of the intertwined relationship between race and sexuality in 20th century U.S. Key for McWorther, in doing so, is to walk the line between the twin danger of, on the one hand, "identification, homogenization, and consequent erasure" (McWorther 2009, 10), i.e., "when we conflate all gestures of resistance, when all of history gets reduced to a tale of all us good guys versus all them bad guys, everybody loses, because we all lose ourselves. The differences are what we have to hold onto; the differences are the source of possibility and strength" (McWorther 2009, 10). In other words, what is lost is the power of action to produce change, it instead becomes neutralized. On the other hand, there is the second danger of "isolation, impotence, and collapse" (McWorther 2009, 10), i.e., by focusing too much on difference, the inability of seeing commonalities leads to inefficacious action in the present that "not only fail[s] to bring about the changes [activists] seek but in many instances actually help perpetuate the very oppression and injustice they devote themselves to fighting" (McWorther 2009, 15).

McWorther's proposal then is to do a genealogical analysis of racism in the U.S. to come to an "understanding of the twentieth-century biopolitical phenomenon that is modern racism" (McWorther 2009, 62). With her genealogical analysis, McWorther shows how inseparable from each other are race, sexuality and biopower. While McWorther's genealogy provides historical context for the remobilization of Civil Right Movement activism by LGBT activist in the 1990s as well as a way to understand the relationship between race and sexuality that effectively addresses Smith's criticism of the Lesbian Avengers, my focus is

elsewhere. In being concerned with the relationship between race, sexuality and LGBT activism my aim is to attend to the practices that are selected from, for example, the Civil Rights movement and the rationale given for their remobilization rather than proposing, following historical investigation, a different way to understand race and sexuality in the context of LGBT activism.

I do so because, in my view, at the heart of this debate between Smith and the Lesbian Avengers, when looked through in terms of how practices have changed through time, are mobilized and remobilized, shift context and the debates around the rationale justifying the use of a practice, is not just the question of “how diverse” the group is, of who “can” use a certain practice or of the twin dangers of historical erasure and impossible coalitions. Rather, at stake, is the question of how to understand the relationship between race, sexuality and activism and the way the characterization of this relationship serves as rationale for the remobilization, in a different context, of certain practices, here Freedom Rides and Freedom Summer practices.

This point is obscured if we focus on the content of the Lesbian Avengers remobilization, i.e., how they acknowledge (or not) the Civil Rights Movement, how diverse the group is etc. This point is also obscured if the focus is solely on the difficult questions raised by Smith about coalition politics and the assumptions at work in the race-sexuality analogy. My suggestion is to situate each of these points within the context of a debate on what rationale justifies the use of a practice which in turn highlights and contextualizes shifting understandings of the relationship between race, sexuality, and activism across many histories, not only the history of

the Civil Rights Movement, but also the history of LGBT activism. This approach requires engaging the practices that are stored in the archives.

Attention to practices in the archive then necessitates new tools that are attentive to how practices are mobilized or remobilized, and changes and debates that justify the use of a practice in different contexts. In other words, it necessitates attention to both what a practice is (ways of doing things with rules that give coherence to their deployment and redeployment) as well as the techniques that fall under its umbrella. As I will develop in this chapter, a starting point for such an analysis of practices is to be found in the work of Michel Foucault (who also informs McWorther's book cited above) and Friedrich Kittler (who was deeply influenced by Foucault). Their approaches to technology, in their focus on practices, suggest, in my view, that examining how practices shift both in terms of ways of doing things, and the rules that give them coherence, necessitates tracking changes in cultural techniques, i.e., historical shifts in the techniques that inform the ways of doing things and rules that give coherence to a practice by falling under the umbrella of the practice under investigation, here, namely untimely uses of history.

In this chapter, my argument unfolds in the following way. In sections 2.2 and 2.3, I situate an approach to the study of technology with a focus on practices as found in the work of Foucault within the field of Philosophy of Technology. In section 2.2, I trace the different meanings of "technology" in the field of Philosophy of Technology and identify a difficulty in using practices as a starting point for analyses aimed at understanding technologies and their development. In section 2.3, I examine philosophers' of technology diverging understandings of "technology" in

Foucault's work. I show that even though technology as an activity or practice in Foucault's work is underexamined by philosophers of technology, it is an apt starting point for technological inquiries concerned with activities or practices. In section 2.4, I bring together Foucault's and Kittler's work to give an account of my version of a "cultural techniques approach" to practices that tracks changes in practices through tracking changes in cultural techniques. Specifically, I give an account of the technological elements that compose untimely uses of history.

2.2: On the Different Meanings of "Technology" in Philosophy of Technology

Philosophers of technology have long mined Foucault's work for insight and methods to think about technology (Ihde 1991, Verbeek 2011). One such early examination of Foucault's work in relation to technology (Ihde 1991) makes clear that there are multiple definitions of technology at play in philosophy of technology and it is important to attend to these differences in reading authors for what they say (or not) about technology. Within the field of philosophy of technology, Don Ihde offers the earliest account of Foucault in the field (at the time in its early development) in his 1991 *Instrumental Realism: The Interface between Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Technology*. In this work, Ihde's main concern is to develop an account of the "new philosophy of science [that] not only has opened the way to a different perspective upon science and its development but, in that very perspective, makes way for a philosophical concern with technology" (Ihde 1991, 8). Ihde identifies Kuhn (for the natural sciences) and Foucault (for the social and human

sciences) as central figures who spearheaded the development of this “new philosophy of science” (Ihde 1991, xi; 12).

Ihde is concerned with charting this “philosophical concern with technology” that the new philosophy of science gives way to by focusing on the instruments in science or on instrumentation. Indeed, for Ihde:

instruments form the conditions for and are the mediators of much, if not all, current scientific knowledge. They are the concrete and material operators within scientific praxis. Yet little has been done, even by the new philosophers of science, regarding the effect instruments play upon the paradigms or epistemes which occur in science. I shall use this variable to make the transition to a possible philosophy of technology (Ihde 1991, 45).

Ihde’s account of a lack of focus on technology refers specifically to a lack of focus on instruments in science themselves understood as “the more concrete aspects of human-technology *praxis* or *perception*” (Ihde 1991, 44; emphasis in original).

This specific understanding of instruments is in line with Ihde’s 1990 *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth* where he offers a groundbreaking account of what philosophy of technology is and can do with his framework of postphenomenology. In his account, technologies are “those artifacts of material culture that we use in various ways within our environment” (Ihde 1990, 1). Technologies have two key characteristics for Ihde, and they are different from their technical properties. First, technologies are ambiguous: “a technological object, whatever else it is, *becomes* what it ‘is’ through its uses” (Ihde 1990, 70). Second,

technologies in use can be grouped under one of four kinds of structural human-technology relations: embodiment, hermeneutic, alterity and background.³

Ihde reads and evaluates Foucault in relation to a specific understanding of technology: technology as objects encountered in the context of specific relations or human-technology relations. Within the field of philosophy of technology, however, multiple meanings of technology come together, and I argue such a reading practice should be deployed when reading through the lens of technology the work of an author.

In his 1977 *Autonomous Technology: Technics-out-of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought*, Langdon Winner notes that:

Technology has expanded rapidly in both its denotative and connotative meanings. It is now widely used in ordinary and academic speech to talk about an unbelievably diverse collection of phenomena—tools, instruments, machines, organizations, methods, techniques, systems, and the totality of all these and similar things in our experience (Winner 1977, 8; emphasis original).

³ Embodiment relations are “one in which the technology becomes maximally ‘transparent’” (Ihde 1990, 73) for example, when wearing glasses. Hermeneutic relations concern “a special interpretive action within the technological context. That kind of action calls for special modes of action and perception, modes analogous to the reading process” (Ihde 1990, 80). Alterity relations are ones where technologies are “quasi-others” to which humans relate to, such as computers (Ihde 1990, 106-107). These three relations are, for Ihde, foreground relations to be put on a continuum and differentiated from a fourth kind of human-technology relations: background relations, i.e. those technologies that “remain in the background or become a kind of near-technological environment” (Ihde 1990, 108).

To attend to the way technology has come to refer to a “collection of phenomena” and their impact on our experience, philosophers of technology have taken to create a taxonomy of what technology refers to. While Winner’s account (and others such as Carl Mitcham and Mark Coeckelbergh) help make the case that technology refers to many interrelated objects and activities, the question is then: if technology does not have a single meaning, then what is philosophy of technology about? I briefly examine the taxonomies of Winner, Mitcham and Coeckelbergh to answer this question and situate where practices fit in their taxonomy of technology.

Through the taxonomies of Winner, Coeckelbergh, and Mitcham, five different meanings of “technology” come to the fore. First, there is *technology as object or artifact* (Coeckelberg 2019, 5; Mitcham 1994, 159) or what Winner calls “apparatus” (Winner 1977, 11). These human-made things or artifacts can be material or immaterial and include cars, computer programs, infrastructure of system such as roads of cars, public transport system, and the Internet. The second understanding of technology, which is linked to the first, is the *technology in use* view that understands technology as “a device, a more or less smart thing that we use to make life easier for us” (Coeckelberg 2019, 5). For example, use is embedded in Winner’s definition of technology as object or “apparatus”, that he defines as “the class of objects we normally refer to as technological–tools, instruments, machines, appliances, weapons, gadgets–which are used in accomplishing a wide variety of tasks” (Winner 1977, 11).

The third understanding of technology is linked to the first and the second and is the *technology as technique* view where technology is understood as “an

activity, or a skill, for instance the activity or skill of using, operating, inventing, making, maintaining, and so on” (Coeckelberg 2019, 5). Similarly to Coeckelberg’s definition, Mitcham limits the scope of what he calls “technologies as activity” to the activities that relate to a human’s engagement with technologies, i.e., the activities that fall under the umbrella of making and using (Mitcham 1994, 210). Winner introduces another definition of technology as technique or practice where more activities are included. Instead of activities related to specific engagement with technologies, technique, Winner includes “the whole body of technical activities—skills, methods, procedures, routines—that people engage in to accomplish tasks” (Winner 1977, 12). What characterizes technique for Winner is that it picks out those activities that have been “distinguished from other modes of human action by [their] purposive, rational step-by-step way of doing things” (Winner 1977,12).

The last two ways of understanding technology can be captured under two umbrella designations. The first is *technology as a combination or composition*. Winner identifies two such technologies: the organization, i.e., “some (but not all) varieties of social organization—factories, workshops, bureaucracies, armies, research and development teams, and the like” (Winner 1977, 12) and the network, i.e., “those large-scale systems that combine people and apparatus linked across great distances” (Winner 1977, 12). The final approach to technology can be located through Coeckelberg’s definition of the *technology as idea* view (Coeckelberg 2019, 5) where technology is understood as something that is either not yet or only partly realized such as “the idea of the new human, enhanced by technologies, or the idea of the cyborg: a merger between humans and machines” (Coeckelberg 2019, 5). I

also place here Mitcham's descriptions of *technology as knowledge* (knowledge about "the making and using of artifacts" [Mitcham 1994, 194]) and *technology as volition* (where "technology is associated with diverse types of will, drive, motive, aspiration, intention, and choice" [Mitcham 1994, 247]). In addition, I distinguish these five conceptions of technology just noted from the approaches to technology found in the work of Michel Foucault as well as in the interdisciplinary field of media archaeology and cultural techniques both of which build on Foucault's work that will be the focus of this chapter.

My project of examining untimely uses of history as a practice involves a conception of technology as activity. However, this conception faces a tension. The tension identified by Mitcham (but also German Media theorist Bernhard Siegert and others working on the cultural technique approach) is twofold. On the one hand, "technology as activity [can be] associated with diverse human behaviors, with distinctions among them often less clear than for either artifacts or cognitions" (Mitcham 1994, 209). On the other hand, "technological activities inevitably and without easy demarcation also shade from the individual or personal into group or institutional forms, which call for a second if not wholly independent analysis" (Mitcham 1994, 209). In other words, at issue is, how to distinguish technology as activity from the constellation of human behaviors as well as how to isolate and analyze the individual, personal, group and institutional forms that technology as activity can take.

Mitcham's solution to this issue is to restrict this diversity of activities that technology is about and focus on "making", i.e., actions (such as crafting, inventing,

designing) and processes (such as manufacturing, working, operating, maintaining) (Mitcham 1994, 210). Mitcham restricts himself to these practices because in his view: “a cursory inspection of this overlapping diversity suggests that in active technological engagements with the world there are two broad themes: production and use” (Mitcham 1994, 210).

At work in Mitcham’s account of technology as activity is a distinction between activities of the body and activities that relate to objects (Mitcham 1994, 210) that is also at work in Hannah Arendt’s distinction between labor and work in *The Human Condition*. Indeed, labor refers to “the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body” (Arendt 1998, 7) and it produces “the least durable of tangible things [needed] for the life process itself” (Arendt 1998, 96) and destined to be consumed (Arendt 1998, 124). Work, in contrast, “provides an ‘artificial’ world of things” (Arendt 1998, 7), it fabricates durable objects destined for use, i.e., “things of the world [with] relative independence from men who produced and use them” (Arendt 1998, 137).

I identify two forms of technological engagement in Arendt’s work. First, there are tools and instruments as used in the labor process and the work process. Second, there are tools, instruments and machines and the way they condition human existence, i.e., how they are part of the “conditions under which life is given to man on earth, and partly out of them, men constantly create their own, self-made conditions” (Arendt 1958/1998, 9). These two engagements in turn are key to create and sustain the human world that “rests primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were

produced, and potentially even more permanent than the lives of their authors” (Arendt 1998, 95-96). Arendt’s technological concern with activities regards the implications for the human condition of the overlap (and possible substitution of one for the other) of labor and work, consumption and use, easing the life process and creating durable objects as it relates to tools and instruments on the one hand, and machines on the other hand (Arendt 1998, 151-152).

For Arendt and Mitcham alike then, limiting what activities are under investigation provides an apt starting point for technological analysis focused on technologies and their development. In my view however, an analysis of technology of activities, or for me, of practices, can use practices as a starting point other than those limited to a specific set of activities as described in Mitcham’s and Arendt’s work. To show this, I will turn in the next two sections to Foucault’s work. Specifically, in section 2.3, I engage with discussions of Foucault’s work within the field philosophy of technology to show how he understands technology as intertwined with technique. Then, in section 2.4, I attend to how this point is developed in Foucault’s late work in his conceptualization of the relationship between problematization and practices.

2.3 Foucault and Philosophy of Technology

The reading practice of examining the work of an author through the lens of technology by tracking the multiple meanings of technology at work in the author’s corpus and how they come together is already part of the small body of literature that reads Foucault’s work in relation to the field of philosophy of technology. This

literature examines technology in Foucault's work in terms of technology as power (Gerrie 2003, Behrent 2013), technology as objects (Dorrestijn 2012; Bergen and Verbeek 2021), and technology as an activity or technique (Matthewman 2013). In my brief foray into this literature, I will show, in section 2.3.1, that the third understanding of technology as activity or technique is under-explored in Foucault's work even though all the authors discussed recognize the importance of technology as an activity or technique in Foucault's work. Then, in section 2.3.2, I will turn to a first articulation of the relationship between technology and technique in Foucault's work, the idea that technologies involve techniques, as an apt starting point for investigating technologies as activity that go beyond themes of making and use that still dominate the literature in philosophy of technology.

2.3.1 The Meanings of "Technology" in Foucault's Work

In his 2003 article "Was Foucault a Philosopher of Technology?" Jim Gerrie identifies the "technology as power" view at work in Foucault's work. Gerrie reads Foucault's characterization of power as in line with observations philosophers of technology such as Ellul and McLuhan make about technology. Not only is technology not "simply an ethically neutral set of artifacts by which we exercise power over nature" (Gerrie 2003, 66), but it is "also always a set of structured forms of action by which we also inevitably exercise power over ourselves" (Gerrie 2003, 66). In the later article "Foucault and Technology", Behrent makes a similar observation as Gerrie: to track technology in Foucault's work is to track his reflections on power and neutrality (Behrent 2013, 55).

What Behrent adds to Gerrie's early account of technology as power is an account of why this view of technology as power emerges in Foucault's work. Behrent traces in Foucault's work an ambivalence in the way technology is used as well as an "anti-humanism" (Behrent 2013) to respond to the negative aspects of technology. This "anti-humanism" takes the form of a rejection of humanist accounts offering "a celebration of the human being in its non-technological essence" (Behrent 2013, 58) to critique the negative aspects of technology as a form of domination (Behrent 2013, 58). For Behrent, it is in turn Foucault's "anti-humanism" that made it possible for a technology as power conception to emerge in his work, i.e., understanding technology as "a way of shaping and coordinating behavior of individuals that made no assumption about a violated or estranged human 'essence'" (Behrent 2013, 57; see also p.65). This "anti-humanism" identified by Behrent is in turn mobilized by scholars concerned with the "technology as object" view in Foucault's work to address the ethical challenges thinking about technology and ethics raises.

The technology as power reading of technology in Foucault's work is critiqued, unsurprisingly, by postphenomenologist philosophers of technology, for the lack of attention to the concrete technologies or objects that appear in Foucault's work. For Dorrestijn, this "neglect of Foucault's analysis of concrete technologies" (Dorrestijn 2012, 222) is the result of a methodological choice in examining technology in Foucault's work: to "search for the term 'technology' in Foucault's work rather than looking for references to concrete technical objects" (Dorrestijn 2012, 222). While Dorrestijn recognizes the specific ways in which technology goes

beyond objects in Foucault's work (Dorrestijn 2012, 222), in his view, Foucault's contribution to philosophy of technology is to be understood in terms of "revealing the role of (hard) technology for *governing and fashioning human subjects*" (Dorrestijn 2012, 223). Specifically, Foucault's work contributes "a new understanding of the human subject in relation to the influence of technology" (Dorrestijn 2012, 222), of "how users of technology experience and operate transformations of their mode of existence by engaging with new technologies" (Dorrestijn 2012, 222).

This new understanding is especially important, for Dorrestijn, due to the perceived cost for an ethics of technology of pursuing Foucault's "anti-humanism" (Behrent 2013). Indeed, if the goal of an ethics of technology is not to preserve a human sphere free of technology or to defend "humanity" from technology, then "the cost of a more detailed account of technical mediations and the hybrid form of human existence seems to be the loss of a solid ground for ethical claims" (Dorrestijn 2012, 227; Verbeek 2011, 13). For Dorrestijn, Foucault's work and its understanding of "ethics as the active engagement of people with governing and fashioning their own way of being in relation to conditioning circumstances" (Dorrestijn 2012, 227) makes it possible to get out of this impasse. Indeed, with such an understanding of ethics, an "ethics of technology does not entail defending what is genuinely human, but caring for the quality of one's hybrid mode of being" (Dorrestijn 2012, 234), such that "technical devices become our own and are not experienced as constraining or alienating" (Dorrestijn 2012, 239).

In their article “Foucault, Levinas and Technologically Mediated Subjectivation”, Bergen and Verbeek explore further that exact question. Instead of focusing on practices or activities or techniques identified by Foucault as involved in governing, fashioning and transforming modes of existence such as dieting or meditation for example, Bergen and Verbeek focus on the artifacts that accompany such practices like paper notebooks, pens, ink, and specifically a modern version of these artifacts: the app Habitica, a “gamified form of the to-do list” (Bergen and Verbeek 2021, 328). With this approach, their claim is that “a better understanding [of] how these technologies support practices of the self requires answering the question of how we relate to such technologies and how they are able to conjure up morally salient sentiments such as shame” (Bergen and Verbeek 2021, 328). In doing so then, they identify the app Habitica not as the techniques of technologies of the self, but as the hard technology or “technology of technologies of the self” that supports the exercise of technologies of the self (Bergen and Verbeek 2021, 344).

A focus on objects and ethics shows some continuity with the technology as power reading of Foucault’s work in wanting to address the consequences of Foucault’s “anti-humanism” as it applies to ethics and technology more fully. However, both the technology as power and the technology as object approach de-emphasize in their own ways techniques or technology as activity in Foucault’s work, even if the authors writing on each approach recognize the importance of technology as activity. For example, for Gerrie, Foucault’s work “[moves] towards a broader conception of technology which attempts to include the whole penumbra of activity and discourse attached to any particular technology or technique” (Gerrie

2003, 72). Similarly, Dorrestijn recognizes that “when Foucault speaks of ‘technology,’ he does not mean concrete tools or machines but instead he uses the term in a broader sense, also denoting skills and methods or rationalities that govern people’s practices” (Dorrestijn 2012, 222).

In my view, a de-emphasizing of practices and techniques in Foucault’s work is unwarranted given that, “the fundamental point stressed by Foucault is the intimate connection of technology, understood in its broad sense as objects, activities, knowledge and modes of organization, to power” (Matthewman 2013, 280). With this observation, Matthewman centers technology as activity in his examination of Foucault’s work. For him, “Foucault returns us to one of technology’s forgotten domains; the scholarly blind spot of technique” (Matthewman 2013, 282). This return operated by Foucault’s work is important because of Mitcham’s critique (discussed in section 2.2) of inquiries into technology that use technique or activities (beyond production and use) as starting points.

As I will show in the next section, Foucault’s work opens up space into an inquiry of technology as activity not limited to activities of production and use. To support this claim, I first return to Behrent’s account of technology in Foucault’s work to show, reading Behrent against the grain, how the terms “technology” and “technique” function together in Foucault’s work. This will then open the way in section 2.4 for an examination of how this relationship between technology and technique is further developed in Foucault’s late work through the relationship between problematization and practices.

2.3.2 On Technology and Technique in Foucault's Work

In "Foucault and Technology", Behrent offers a close reading of the key moments when "technology" and "technique" appear and are mobilized in Foucault's work through the years. While at the outset, Behrent notes that the terms "technology" and "technique" are often used interchangeably (Behrent 2013, 55), the meaning of the terms and their relation to one another is in my view more complex than that. Indeed, in reading Behrent against the grain I identify two senses of technology at work in his account of Foucault. On the one hand, there is technology as an object of worry, as something to contend with and as the focus of Foucault's "antihumanism". On the other hand, there is technology as involving technique which is a sense of technology (as I will show in section 2.4) that comes to be further developed in Foucault's late work.

These two senses of technology in Behrent's account of Foucault's work emerge out of a shift in 1974 in the way technology and technique are used by Foucault. Indeed, according to Behrent, until 1974 technique and technology are used interchangeably and refer to a wide variety of elements.⁴ After 1974, however, both the interchangeability of technology and technique, as well as a conception of skills and methods on the one hand and of technology as an attribute of modern society on the other hand shifts. Indeed, post-1974, what came to be identified by

⁴ First, technology refers to skills or methods. Specifically, "a range of repressive medical and psychological practices [such as] cold showers [or] the rotary machine" (Behrent 75-76). Second, technology refers to "a fundamental attribute of modern society" that is a site of worry, concern or adaptation (Behrent 2013, 59). It is when talking about technology as an attribute of modern society that Foucault's "antihumanism" as documented earlier distinguishes him from his contemporaries (Behrent 2013, 65).

Gerrie (and Behrent) as the “technology as power” view emerges. Technology does not refer to an attribute of modern society. Rather, technology is:

both a form of power that “produces” individuals in ways that integrate them into political and economic structures by supervising, subjecting, and normalizing them, and a term that dispels the illusion of the “individual as abstract subject, defined by individual rights” (Behrent 2013, 82).

In this understanding, technology and technique appear together, and are not, as Behrent puts it, used interchangeably. In the passage quoted above, techniques of “supervising, subjecting, and normalizing” (Behrent 2013, 82) are tied to technology as a form of power exercised on and by individuals, and technology and technique function together, but not interchangeably, to understand power anew. This reading is supported by Matthewman’s account of the relationship between technology and technique in Foucault’s work. Indeed, for Matthewman, Foucault’s “discussion makes it plain that power is neither property nor capacity. Power is a relation, an accomplishment actualized by techniques” (Matthewman 2013, 281). Indeed, these techniques of supervising, subjecting, and normalization refer to what is deployed to act on human conduct and the specific forms supervision or normalization take (from cold showers to the panopticon) are not seen as static. Rather, these specific forms are to be inquired into to understand technology.⁵

⁵ What is important about these techniques is that Foucault tracks in *Discipline and Punish* is that “these techniques are not the special preserve of particular institutions or cultures, but become ‘general’ formulas of domination,’ which can be applied in a wide range of contexts to achieve any number of ends” (Behrent 2013, 85).

In examining power, what Foucault draws attention to is not only that “prior academic accounts of power fixated on those who were said to hold it, an endless procession of monarchs and generals” but also that the “*exercise* of power was seldom discussed, much less the mutual imbrications of knowledge and power” (Matthewman 2013, 283). In other words, Foucault was not just concerned with power as a technology, but also with tracking the techniques that operationalize power (Matthewman 2013, 283). By tracking technique then, it is possible to examine techniques that go beyond production and use (such as supervision and normalizing), to distinguish them from human behavior, to attend to how they work on the body and the mind as well as to the individual, group and institutional forms the technology they are associated with take.⁶

To further give support to this reading and address further challenges to how Foucault’s account of technology and technique serves as an apt starting point for the analysis of practices of untimely uses of lesbian history, I turn, in section 2.4 to Foucault’s late work as well as to the media theorist Friedrich Kittler. In developing his pathbreaking approach to technology, Kittler points to the limit of Foucault’s account of technology as involving technique. I turn then to this critique and Foucault’s late work, to show how Foucault’s tracking of techniques adds to Kittler’s account.

⁶ In short, for Matthewman, “Foucault made the question of techniques an ongoing concern of his work, by which he meant the specific practices which concretize political rationalities and tie individuals to social collectives in particular ways” (Matthewman 2013, 283).

2.4 On a Cultural Techniques Approach to Philosophy of Technology

The cultural techniques approach to practices emerged, in German Media Theory, out of certain reading of Kittler's work "with a closer focus on the local practices, series, and techniques that configure medial and technological arrangements" (Geoghegan 2013, 66). This approach is most associated with the work of Bernhard Siegert as well as with the work of Cornelia Vismann and others (Geoghegan 2013, 67). The cultural techniques approach that I develop in this section then, is grounded in the work of Siegert and Vismann and their development of that approach, with some modifications, as I will describe below, that emerge from my pairing, as we will see in this section, of my own re-reading of Kittler's work with Foucault's late work.

For Vismann, central to cultural techniques is their auto-praxis (*Eigenpraxis*), i.e., the way that "cultural techniques describe what media do, what they produce, and what kinds of actions they prompt" (Vismann 2013, 83). In other words, for Vismann, "cultural techniques define the agency of media and things" (Vismann 2013, 83). While Vismann explores the significance and implication of the auto-praxis of cultural techniques for thinking about the law and the cultural technique of law-making (Vismann 2013; Vismann 2008), Siegert is concerned with the ways in which cultural techniques are at the heart of our cultural distinctions and include a host of "media, symbolic operators, and drill practices [located] at the base of intellectual and cultural shifts" (Siegert 2015, 2).

While the type of cultural techniques and the focus of their analysis is different, both Vismann and Siegert understand a cultural techniques approach as one focused on the way in which cultural techniques recursively shift by drawing on other cultural techniques. Cultural techniques are “processing operations” (Winthrop-Young 2013 10; Siegert 2011) or “chains of substitution” (Vismann 2013), in that their shift follows a certain order, which in turn makes it possible to study historically and technologically these shifts. For example, the cultural technique of walking brings together physiology, gravity, kinetics as well as ambulatory abilities and cultural protocols (Winthrop-Young 2013, 10), or again digitization “allows for a diachronic perspective on writing—diary writing, for instance, which evolves into blogging, or the autograph, which finds its extension in the electronic signature” (Vismann 2013, 91). Thus, different techniques, from different domains, come together and give shape to a specific technique under investigation such as walking or digitizing.

Cultural techniques are recursive then in that in tracking their shifts, we find other cultural techniques at work.⁷ As Vismann puts it: “the study of cultural technique is folded within itself, eternally recurring and ready to be continued” (Vismann 2013, 92) or again, as Siegert puts it: “Every culture beings with the introduction of distinctions [...]. The chains that make up these distinctions are recursive; that is, any given distinction may be re-entered on either side of another distinction” (Siegert 2015, 14). In addition, as processing operations that create

⁷ I will return to this characteristic of cultural techniques in section 3.3 of chapter 3.

distinctions (which is the key focus of Siegert), cultural techniques “frequently coalesce into entities which are subsequently viewed as the agents or sources running these operations” (Winthrop-Young 2013, 10; See also Siegert 2011). In other words, it is by focusing on the shifts between techniques and cultural distinctions that such techniques make possible that a cultural techniques approach centers these techniques auto-praxis.

My own cultural techniques approach to practices departs from Siegert and Vismann in that, as I will show, like in Foucault’s late work on practices of the self, my starting point is a practice (here untimely uses of history) which in turn I understand as an umbrella under which we find shifting cultural techniques. In addition, following Foucault, I not only track cultural techniques, but also their temporality which I explore in detail in chapter 3. Doing so, I locate the auto-praxis of cultural techniques in that it is these historically shifting techniques, and not just that a practice is in use at a given time by human agents, that characterizes a practice’s ways of doing things and rules that give it coherence. Here then, I rejoin again Vismann’s cultural techniques approach.

For Vismann, cultural techniques, as “processual operations,” are characterized by their reproducibility and learnability (Vismann 2013, 87). This reproducibility and learnability, in turn, is to be examined by “deriving the operational script from the resulting operation” or again “to extract the rules of execution from the executed act itself” (Vismann 2013, 87). In other words, to understand the rules of the cultural techniques as processual operations or chains of substitution that, the cultural techniques approach focuses on techniques of

execution rather than on agents' behavior, or what they say about the rules of doing things. It is this aspect of Vismann's cultural techniques approach, building on cultural techniques' auto-praxis, then, that I also apply to the study of practices: the rules that give them coherence and the way of doing things they capture are to be characterized in my approach not by what agents do or say about such practices, but by looking at the cultural techniques that fall under the umbrella of the practice under investigation, here untimely uses of history.

Locating the auto-praxis of cultural techniques in the way they characterize practices then, both expands approaches to technology focused on techniques and give a way to not only focus on the different forms untimely uses of history take, but rather focus on what these different forms have in common: mobilizing the practice of untimely uses of history. In my view then, in understanding this practice through shifting cultural techniques, we can understand differently the work these different forms of untimely uses of history do in the present.

So far, I have discussed two aspects of the cultural techniques approach: the auto-praxis of cultural techniques as well as how cultural techniques are to be examined recursively, i.e., by identifying other cultural techniques. The final element of the cultural techniques approach that I modify and will discuss is: operations of selection, storage and transmission. While in my approach, the rules cultural techniques determine are the one that make up practices, in German Media Theory, "cultural techniques concern the rules of selection, storage, and transmission that characterize a given system of mediation, including the formal structures that compose and constrict this process" (Geoghegan 2013, 69).

Such an understanding of the operations of selection, storage, and transmission are a modification of Kittler's understanding of these operations as we will see in section 2.4.3. Geoghegan, identifies such a shift in understanding these operations as part of a "dislocation in the Kittlerian program" where "rather than starting with an already-organized technology, research on cultural techniques commences with an inchoate mixture of techniques, practices, instruments, and institutional procedures that give rise to a technological set-up" (Geoghegan 2013, 70). In other words, rather than start with specific technological media that select, store and transmit the real in specific ways such as the gramophone, in my cultural techniques approach the starting point is the ways in which different cultural techniques come together and inform these rules.

In my own account of operations that I introduce in section 2.4.3, I bring together Kittler's understanding of these operations with Foucault's approach to practices that both tracks cultural techniques and temporality to focus on the temporal aspect of these operations: they do temporal work, i.e., operations of selection, storage and transmission re-order and shift our temporal understanding of the past, present and future. I then, in chapter 3 will give an account of the temporal work operations of selection, storage and transmission do in relation to history (specifically queer, feminist and lesbian history). If operations are what informs what cultural techniques do in the most basic sense, and in turn cultural techniques inform the rules and ways of doing things that make up a practice, it is by understanding operations and their temporal aspect that we get an account of what untimely uses of history do and aim at.

In sum, it is through a close reading and interpretation of Kittler and Foucault's work together that I develop my cultural techniques approach to practices that also draws on, with some modification as described above on Vismann, Siegert and a general understanding of this approach in the German Media Theory literature.

2.4.1 Kittler on Foucault: Towards a "Technological Re-reading" of Foucault⁸

In his 1985 book *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, Kittler develops new vocabulary to talk about technology that abandons the "technology as" approach found in the field of philosophy of technology. Instead of technology, Kittler is concerned with discourse networks, media and technological media, and instead of "technique", Kittler is concerned with cultural techniques. Discourse networks are "the network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store, and process relevant data" (Kittler 1990, 369). They include, for example, literature as an institution and books as a processing technology (Kittler 2016, 92). Discourse networks involve the coming together of media, cultural techniques and institutions.

Cultural techniques, in the most basic sense, are attached to media and institutions. For example, literature and books involve cultural techniques of reading and writing that themselves go through changes. It is these changes that Kittler aims to track to bring to light the differences between the discourse network of 1800 and the one of 1900 in *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*. These cultural

⁸ (Kittler 2016, 97).

techniques are in turn linked to institutions. Reading is after all “a dependent variable that presupposes more or less professional institutions” (Kittler 2016, 100) such as schools that administer reading and writing. In his analysis, Kittler is specifically concerned with the cultural techniques of speaking, hearing, reading and writing (Kittler 2016, 91).

For Kittler, “‘media’ are first and foremost cultural techniques that allow one to select, store, and produce data and signals” (Krämer 2006, 93). Technological media refer to analog media (such as the gramophone, photography and film) that shift how culture is processed. They mark the difference between an era when writing and the book are *the* media that processes culture, to an era where writing and the book are one medium among others (Kittler 1990, 245). In addition, while writing “operates by way of a symbolic grid”, technological media “process[es] physical effects of the real” (Winthrop-Young 2011, 59), i.e, they are able to record the extra-symbolic (Krämer 2006, 94; 98).

In Kittler’s work, then, media refers to a new object of study, a new approach, and is used as a rhetorical device in the context of the field of media studies, i.e., it puts on its head what the field understands as “media” (Winthrop-Young 2013, 13). To understand media as an object of study and a new approach it is necessary to go expand on the preliminary definition of cultural techniques described above. Indeed, for Kittler, cultural techniques offer a way to analyze practices (Kittler 2016, 105) because “analyzed as cultural techniques, even the most quotidian practices shed their apparent harmlessness and individuality” (Kittler 2016, 105). Thus, by tracking changes in cultural techniques it is possible to describe discourse networks.

In developing his approach to technology, Kittler draws explicitly on Foucault's work with some modifications. First, Kittler's focus on discourse networks is a development of Foucault's concept of discourse (Kittler 2016, 94). Second, like in Foucauldian archaeologies, Kittler's work compares historical snapshots: the "Republic of Scholars", discourse networks of 1800, and discourse networks of 1900 (Kittler 2016, 94; Wellbery 1990, xviii-xix). In *The Order of Things*, Foucault contrasts the epistemes in the Renaissance, the Classical period and the Modern period (Foucault OofT⁹, xxi-xxii; Wellbery 1990, xix). Third, Kittler views his approach to texts in his account as similar to Foucault's as "there [is] no prejudging what roles are played by what texts within a given information network" (Kittler 2016, 97). This is so because Foucault does not aim "to describe the progress of knowledge towards an objectivity in which today's science can finally be recognized" (Foucault 1994, xxii) or in other words, to single out texts that support claims of progress. Rather, Foucault's archaeology tracks changes in epistemes. It is in this tracking of changes that Kittler sees himself as going beyond Foucault's account.

Indeed, for Kittler, in contrasting different discourse networks, "the only data and pieces of evidence that are conclusive are those that, irrespective of all matters of opinion, clearly point to a change in the cultural techniques themselves" (Kittler 2016, 95). In other words, to track changes between the discourse networks of 1800

⁹ When citing Foucault's work, for clarity, I use an abbreviation for the book or essay title and the English edition page number. See the bibliography for the full citation of the English and French edition of his work used for citation. The page number refers to the English edition.

and 1900 means tracking changes in cultural techniques, *and* the changes technological media introduces to how a culture selects, stores and processes data (Kittler 2016, 94-95). However, even though Foucault focuses on the conditions of possibility that make certain knowledges and sciences possible (Foucault 1994, xxii) in tracking changes in epistemes, Foucault does not track the changes technological media introduce (Kittler 2016, 97; Krämer 2006, 97; Winthrop-Young 2011, 59).

While I agree here, Kittler's (and others') reading that Foucault does not integrate in his account the changes operated by technological media, my own reading of Foucault differs on the question of his tracking of cultural techniques. In other words, while it is clear that Foucault does not consider discourse networks, it does not follow that he also does not track changes in cultural techniques. Indeed, in examining Foucault's late work I find that cultural techniques do appear in his work, especially in the complex relation between problematization and practices he develops in *The Uses of Pleasures* (and subsequent volumes of the *History of Sexuality*) that is in turn a development of the view that technology involves technique in Foucault's previous works (as discussed in section 2.3.2). As we will see, in these volumes and essays leading up to them, Foucault examines cultural techniques only they are ones that differ from those identified by Kittler. Foucault looks at: dieting, dream interpretation, penitential discipline, monastic asceticism, and practices of self-writing such as hupomnemata and correspondence. As I will show in section 2.4.2 and 2.4.3, Foucault can be read as expending what is a cultural technique or put in other words, as providing a rationale to identify cultural techniques in relation to specific practices.

2.4.2 From Technology and Techniques to Practices and Problematization

In section 2.3.2, I noted that I read the technology involving techniques account that we find in Foucault's work as further developed in his late work. This development emerges out of specific questions tracking changes in techniques raises. Recall that in the *technology involves techniques* view discussed in section 2.3.2, we find that technology refers to the shaping of human conduct and technique refers to what is deployed to act on human conduct. These techniques can take different forms over time and are not static. This in turn raises two questions. First, as I will take up in section 2.4.3, the question of how to track these changes of forms (or what I will call, in cultural techniques) as well as how these changes in form affect how technology and technique function together through different historical contexts. Second, the question of which techniques come to the fore in a specific context rather than others. For example, returning to the repressive medical and psychological practices examined by Foucault in his early work, why was one technique to use cold showers and not something else like solitary confinement? The answer to these questions, as we will see in section 2.4.3, emerges out of Foucault's late work on techniques of the self, where the specific techniques that come to the fore are, on the one hand, the ones already present in a given historical moment to act on human conduct, and on the other hand, these techniques emerge through what Foucault calls "problematizations".

Foucault's attention to techniques is clearest in his late work on ethics. Central to Foucault's conception of ethics is that "the study of ethics can be fruitful even when there is little or no change in the moral codes examined" (Davidson

1992, 231). Such study entails a focus on “the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself [...] which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions” (Foucault 1984c, 352; see also Davidson 1991, 228). Thus, the focus in taking ethics as an analytics is on examining this self-relationship through “modes of subjectivation” (Foucault 1984a, 32; Dorrestijn 2012, 234), i.e., through an examination of the specific forms taken by “the ethical substance, the types of subjection, the forms of elaboration of the self, and the moral teleology” (Foucault 1984a, 32; see also Dorrestijn 2012, 233-239). However, in Foucault’s late work, an examination of how techniques shift through time is an account of not only differences between moral codes at the level of modes of subjectivation, i.e, at the level of the ethical substance or telos over time, but also of how, even within a given code, or between two moral codes, there will be many ways to practice what the codes demand, be it celibacy, faithfulness, etc. (Foucault 1984a, 26). It is in this double task of looking at both modes of subjectivation and practices that I locate the development of the *technology involves technique* view through an examination of problematizations and practices because for Foucault, these differences in the form practices of celibacy or faithfulness take are the result of differences in problematization.

This double task in turn maps onto the way problematization and practices work together. On the one hand, “a problematization [is both] an object of inquiry (that is, an underlying depth problem that inquiry illuminates) and an act of inquiry (that is, that which renders the seemingly natural more problematic” (Koopman and Matza 2013, 827), and on the other hand, a practice function as both a category that

brings a field of inquiry into view and is an object of inquiry as something that is responsive to problematization and emerges into focus in the inquiry.

By using this double work of problematization and practice as a starting point to examine Foucault's late work in the next section, I will offer an account of how Foucault tracks changes in technique as well as the rationale to understand why certain techniques come to the fore over others in a given historical context. In doing so, I begin to show how practices like untimely uses of lesbian history that are neither about production and making nor solely reduced to writing and speaking can be analyzed as technologies through a *technology as technique* view that uses Foucault's account as an apt starting point for such inquiry into these practices. Also, I will show that not only does Foucault track techniques, but that he enriches Kittler's account of what cultural techniques are and do.

2.4.3 The Technological Elements of a Cultural Techniques Approach

In this final section of this chapter, I develop my cultural techniques approach to practices through an attention to what I view as the technological elements that compose practices in general, and untimely uses of history specifically: cultural techniques and operations and how they relate to a specific practice. In the first half of this section, I turn to Foucault's late work to show how, on the one hand, he also tracked cultural techniques and how his account gives a rationale for identifying cultural techniques that are neither related to production and making nor reading, writing, speaking or hearing, and on the other hand, introduces how such techniques are to be understood temporally. Following this, in

the reminder of this section, I return to Kittler's work, first, to argue that cultural techniques in relation to practices, are connected to operations of selection, storage and transmission, rather than use as we find in Foucault. Second, to show how in turn these operations of selection, storage and transmission are to be understood further in relation to the temporal work they do.

A double relationship between problematization and practices structures Foucault's inquiry in volumes 2, 3, and 4 of the *History of Sexuality* series. Foucault understands these volumes to be concerned with the following problematization (as object of inquiry): "why is sexual conduct, why are the activities and pleasures that attach to it, an object of moral solicitude?" (Foucault 1984a, 10). He understands his inquiry as having an "archaeological dimension" that makes it possible to examine the "forms of problematization", while the "genealogical dimension" of the inquiry makes it possible to "analyze [their problematizations] formation out of the practices and the modifications undergone by the latter" (Foucault 1984a, 11-12). Thus, problematizations have a form (in terms of how ethical concern about sexuality takes shape) and this form in turn comes to life through practices and their modifications. It is out of this form-formation relationship that characterizes problematizations and practices that cultural techniques and the tracking of their transformation appear in Foucault's account.

In closing the introduction to *The Uses of Pleasure*, Foucault writes that in focusing on the problematization of sexual conduct: "it seemed more pertinent to ask how, given the continuity, transfer, or modification of codes, the forms of self-relationship (and the practices of the self that were associated with them) were

defined, modified, recast, and diversified” (Foucault 1984a, 31-32). In this passage then, the forms of problematization refer to “forms of self-relationship”. These problematization are in turn formed out of and associated with practices, here “practices of the self”¹⁰, and these practices are in turn “defined, modified, recast, and diversified” (Foucault 1984a, 32).

What is done to these practices of the self captures both a temporal element of how these practices change as well as an account of the kind of practices that are at work to define, modify, recast and diversify problematization of forms of self-relationship and the associated practices of the self. In my reading then, cultural techniques appear in Foucault’s work but they are not the elementary ones identified by Kittler. Rather, they are characterized by what they do to a specific set of practices (here practices or techniques of the self) that are under investigation. If texts are the object of cultural techniques of reading, learning, or meditating, then practices of the self in being “defined, modified, recast, and diversified” (Foucault 1984a, 32) are the object of specific and shifting cultural techniques such as dieting and dream interpretation.

What we find in Foucault’s account then, is a shift in how practices function as a starting point for inquiry. While reading Kittler’s work through the taxonomy I am developing, what I call practices best aligns with his discourse networks. These

¹⁰ For Foucault, practices of the self are “those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria” (Foucault HSV2, 10-11).

networks of technologies and institutions have, in turn, cultural techniques attached to them. In tracking change, then, Kittler is focused on tracking changes to both these cultural techniques at the heart of discourse networks such as writing and reading, and changes due to the introduction of technological media. Foucault, on the other hand, has identified, through an attention to how certain actions become problems, a kind of practice (here practices or technologies of the self) that are the starting point of his inquiry. Practices or technologies of the self, in turn, take different forms due to their responsiveness to different forms of problematization through time. Similarly, in this dissertation, I have started with untimely uses of history as a practice that takes many forms in relation to historical and technological questions. To track changes in these practices, the focus in Foucault's account and mine is the cultural techniques that fall under the umbrella of the practice (practices of the self or in my case untimely uses of history). For Foucault, the focus is on how practices of the self are done through cultural techniques of dieting. For me, the focus is on how untimely uses of history are enacted through the remobilization of cultural techniques such as freedom rides. In addition, the focus is on tracking how these cultural techniques have changed. How, for example, dieting as a practice of the self has shifted between the 4th century BCE and the first and second century of the common era or, how freedom rides as an untimely practice as an untimely practice of history shifted across political movements of the late 20th century.

To understand how Foucault tracks changes in cultural techniques, I now turn to two key aspects of his inquiry: practical texts (as functional devices) and

persistence or *permanence* (as the temporality of these devices). The first key aspect of Foucault's inquiry in volumes 2 to 4 of *The History of Sexuality* is the kind of texts at the heart of this investigation and how they are under investigation. As seen in section 2.4.1, Kittler appreciates the way in which Foucault approaches texts "anonymously" in his earlier work. In the later work here under investigation, Foucault is looking at texts not just for what they say, but for the kind of practices they are the object of. Indeed, Foucault focuses on "'prescriptive' texts—that is, texts whose main object, whatever their form (speech, dialogue, treatise, collection of precepts, etc.) is to suggest rules of conduct" (Foucault 1984a, 12). These are texts that "served as functional devices that would enable individuals to question their own conduct, to watch over and give shape to it, and to shape themselves as ethical subjects" (Foucault 1984a, 13). Not only were these texts (because of their focus on conduct) key to trace forms of self-relationship and the practices of the self associated with them, but these texts as "functional devices" were also themselves the object of practices, i.e., of cultural techniques of reading, learning, reflection, testing as "they were designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out, and they were intended to constitute the eventual framework of everyday conduct" (Foucault 1984a, 12-13). Using these texts then, Foucault is able to identify which cultural techniques come to be identified as practices of the self in different historical contexts.

The second aspect of Foucault's inquiry is how he tracks cultural techniques and makes them more precise, i.e., tracks the changes they undergo and how these changes relate to changes in forms of problematization and practices of the self.

Indeed, Foucault tracks those changes in problematization through an attention to “persistence” (*permanence*) (Foucault 1984a, 15). Foucault tracks the persistence of key themes in the problematization of sexuality: “a ‘quadri-thematics’ of sexual austerity—formed around and apropos of the life of the body, the institution of marriage, relations between men, and the existence of wisdom” (Foucault 1984a, 21). This attention to persistence does not mean a blanket attention to what stays the same, but rather to how:

It would be a mistake to infer that the sexual morality of Christianity and that of paganism form a continuity. Several themes, principles, or notions may be found in the one and the other alike, true; but for all that, they do not have the same place or the same value within them (Foucault 1984a, 21).

In other words, key is to focus on changes of the cultural techniques themselves and how these changes give shape to different forms of self-relationship depending of the importance and place at a given historical moment and context of a cultural technique.

So far, I have clarified how practices and cultural techniques function together in Foucault’s account and that Foucault, contrary to Kittler’s reading as discussed in section 2.4.1 actually does track changes in cultural techniques to understand changes in a specific kind of practice under investigation. In doing so, I have also clarified the workings of the technological elements of practice and cultural techniques of the cultural technique approach to technology I am developing. I now turn to the last element, “operations”, to give an account of why

specific cultural techniques rather than others come to the fore in Foucault's analysis. This enables me to make the case for why, when practices are the starting point of a technological inquiry, not "everything" counts as a technique as Mitcham warns about.

Two elements come out of Foucault's problematization of self-relationships through the category of practices of the self in his late work: concepts such as the uses of pleasure, the care of the self, the confessions of the flesh, and cultural techniques of dieting, dream interpretation, penitential discipline, monastic asceticism, and practices of self-writing such as *hupomnemata* and correspondence. In his account, Foucault tracks not only the different forms of problematization (which give rise to concepts of care of the self) and which cultural technique is at work at a given moment, but how specific practices that were already at work in attending to conduct in a given historical moment are mobilized in problematizations about sexuality. Indeed, the cultural techniques that come to the fore in Foucault's analysis are "the existing and recognized practices by which men sought to shape their conduct" (Foucault 1984a, 93). Thus, in Foucault's account, what cultural techniques of dieting or self-writing do in the most basic sense, i.e., the kind of operations they perform, is to be in use. Foucault then tracks how a cultural technique is in use as a practice of the self. I now briefly turn to Foucault's examination of dieting, dream interpretation and self-writing to illustrate how the operation of use functions in his account to later contrast them to the operations at work in Kittler's account.

In *The Uses of Pleasure*, Foucault identifies the cultural technique of dieting as an “art of living” that shapes conduct and self-relationship (Foucault 1984a, 108). Dieting is in turn related to how sexuality is problematized through aphrodisia in the Greek culture of the fourth century BCE, i.e., “the acts, gestures, and contacts that produce a certain form of pleasure” (Foucault 1984a, 40). Indeed, at the heart of this problematization is the question of how to “define the uses of pleasures—which conditions were favorable, which practice was recommended, which rarefaction was necessary—in terms of a certain way of caring for one’s body” (Foucault 1984a, 97). Thus, dieting as a cultural technique responsive to this problematization of sexuality is a practice of the self focused on an attention to the body to find ways to develop an adequate use of pleasures, i.e., one that is “modulated according to the condition of the body and external circumstances” (Foucault 1984a, 117).

In Greek and Latin texts of the first and second centuries of our era, Foucault identifies in *The Care of the Self* “a more intense problematization of the *aphrodisia*” (Foucault 1984b, 39) due to “the development of what might be called a ‘cultivation of the self’, wherein the relations of oneself were intensified and valorized” (Foucault 1984b, 43). This cultivation of the self (*culture de soi*) is defined by the “principle of the care of the self that establishes its necessity, presides over this development, and organizes its practice” (Foucault 1984b, 43). In this *culture de soi*, how dieting is used changes. The principle of the care of the self shifts the role of practices of the self from a focus on “a whole manner of forming oneself as a subject who had the proper, necessary, and sufficient concern for his body” (Foucault 1984a, 108) to a focus on how one is a subject who “suffers from certain ills and

[needs] to have them treated, either by oneself or by someone who has the necessary competence” (Foucault 1984b, 57). Thus, dieting as a practice that shapes conduct and self-relationship changes from a sole concern with the body to a concern with the body and the soul (Foucault 1984b, 133). This is so because “it is the soul that prompts one to choose the times that are not suitable, to act in questionable circumstances, to contravene natural dispositions” (Foucault 1984b, 133). Thus, dieting, as a transformed cultural technique, in focusing on the body and the soul, is concerned with “the [soul] correcting itself in order to be able to guide the body according to a law which is that of the body itself” (Foucault 1984b, 134).

In addition, with this *culture de soi* and its principle of the care of the self writing (specifically self-writing) emerges as an important cultural technique part of the *culture de soi* (Foucault 1994c, 232). To trace this emergence of writing as an important cultural technique, Foucault turns to dream interpretation because it requires almost from the start “a notebook beside one’s bed upon which to write one’s dreams in order either to interpret them oneself the next morning or to show them to someone who would interpret them.” (Foucault 1984c, 367). Thus, not only does writing as a cultural technique come to the fore, but with it, comes the notebook and the question of *what* is recorded in writing in the notebook. Indeed, while with dream interpretation what is recorded is details of the dreams one had the night before, in practices of self-writing such as the hupomnemata, what is to be recorded are “things read, heard, or thought, thus offering them up as a kind of accumulated treasure for subsequent rereading and meditation” (Foucault 1994b, 209). This practice of self-writing in the shift it operates with what is recorded, is in

Foucault's view, "as disrupting as the introduction of the computer into private life today" (Foucault 1984c, 363).

What my brief examination of how the operation of being in use functions in Foucault's account shows is that the cultural techniques that come to the fore are the ones already in use in a given historical context and that how cultural techniques are in use shifts. The temporal aspect of how a cultural technique is in use is only captured by persistence if like dieting, dream interpretation or writing it is a practice that comes to the fore in different historical contexts. This focus on use and temporality can be further developed through Sara Ahmed's engagement with and expansion of Foucault's work in *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use*.

In *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use*, Ahmed, building on Foucault's work explores how use is "a technique for shaping worlds as well as bodies" (Ahmed 2019, 12), i.e., how "to use something is to shape something" (Ahmed 2019, 12). For Ahmed, use itself (and not a specific recording technique like writing) is a "record of life" (Ahmed 2019, 22). Life is here understood temporally as about the relationship between the past, the present, and the future. Indeed, as Ahmed puts it:

what seems to point to the future (can be used) can just as easily refer back to the past (has been used). And what has been used in the past can just as easily point us toward the future; if use records where we have been, use also directs us along certain paths (Ahmed 2019, 22-23).

For Ahmed then, use as a recorder, the temporality of use and use as a shaping technique all come together to give an account of use as an operation where "in a

relation of use, there is a kind of transfer” (Ahmed 2019, 22) where use affects what is being used and what it is being used on in different ways. For example, writing or drawing with a pencil on a piece of paper dulls the tip such that it eventually has to be sharpened with a pencil sharpener, in turn the pencil sharpener by sharpening pencils, becomes duller (see Ahmed 2019, 22 for a similar example with a knife). Thus, what use is a record of is of these transfers, these disjointed and different transformations (sharpened versus getting dull but at very different speeds for example).

Ahmed’s account of the operation of use as record adds to Foucault’s is an account of the temporal aspect or “strange temporality” of use as an operation of cultural techniques. Use as a record then gives an account of how a cultural technique remains available for future use, in that prior use records it as something that can be revisited because “use can shape what is [...]; use can explain how something is selected from what is [...]; and use can be what is possible given what is” (Ahmed 2019, 85).

While “use might have strange temporalities because use is how time *comes to matter*” (Ahmed 2019, 85), in untimely uses of history and their associated cultural techniques such as freedom rides, time comes to matter with the operations associated with untimely uses of history because these cultural techniques can be temporally manipulated, i.e., be from a past, but reworked to be in and of the present towards the future. Thus, the cultural techniques associated with untimely uses of history are not only revisited, i.e., used again or in different ways, towards different ends. Rather, these cultural techniques are remobilized, i.e., they are the

result of and make possible operations of selection, processing and storage of practices for future redeployment. I will continue examining the temporal aspect of these operations and the type of temporal work they support in chapter 3. For now, I focus on concluding this chapter by giving further support to my view that the operations of the cultural techniques associated to untimely uses of history are operations of selection, storage and transmission. To do so, I return once more to Kittler's work.

The question of cultural techniques, their operations and time manipulation has been identified to be an important thread in Kittler's work by Sybille Krämer in her classical article "The Cultural Techniques of Time Axis Manipulation: On Friedrich Kittler's Conception of Media" where she traces the idea that techniques can manipulate time or in her words, give an "explanation of the technological as a modality of time management" (Krämer 2006, 96) in Kittler's work.

Recall from section 2.4.1, that for Kittler, discourse networks select, store and process data, and that Kittler focuses on technological media to trace changes to these operations. Indeed, for Kittler, between the discourse network of 1800 and the one of 1900 one key rupture is introduced: writing and the book are not anymore the only way to record and store data (Kittler 1990, 245). It is in tracing the implications of this change that Kittler departs from Foucault, and focuses his attention on operations of selection, storage, transmission (and digitization) (Krämer 2006, 97) and how each media can manipulate time differently.

Indeed, as Krämer identifies, for Kittler, writing is “the first technique for manipulating time” (Krämer 2006, 99; Kittler 1993b:182) in that “by shifting the chronological order of time to the parallel order of space—and spaces are things that can principally be restructured—written media become elementary forms that not only allow temporal order to be stored but also to be manipulated and reserved” (Krämer 2006, 99). Technological media (such as film or the gramophone), in turn, in their time manipulation capacity go further. Recall, from section 2.4.1, that technological media are characterized by how they “attempt to select, store, and produce the physical realities themselves” (Krämer 2006, 94), i.e., “that which cannot be encoded and fixed in writing in the symbolic network” (Krämer 2006, 98). While “textual media transform the linguistic-symbolic into an operable code; technological media, by contrast, transform the contingency-based, material real into a code that can be manipulated. This type of manipulation creates the possibility of reversing temporally-sequenced events” (Krämer 2006, 100). For example, rewinding a cassette tape. Finally, digital media, manipulates time through the universal standard of the binary numerical system that “allows one not only to translate each of the numerous formats of image, sound, and textual media reciprocally, but also, and at the same time, to traverse the symbolic-technological boundaries of the epoch of alphabetic writing” (Krämer 2006, 102-103).

In sum, with technological media, Kittler is able to give an account of transformations of operations of selection, storage, and transmission. These operations are transformed on two levels. First, on the level of what media technologies are involved in this work (only writing and the book, or also film and

the gramophone) and the implications of the end of the monopoly of writing. Second, on the level of time manipulation where different media technology (writing, analog or digital) enable different kinds of time manipulation as described above which in turn is shaped by the form taken by storage as well as the operations of transmission and processing (Krämer 2006, 99). It is this latter aspect that is key, in my view, to understand the temporal aspect of the operations of untimely uses of history.

Indeed, with untimely uses of history, the temporal aspect of their operations is not only related to the traditional category of past, present and future and how they relate to one another as we see with the operation of use. Rather, the temporal aspect of untimely uses of history involves remobilization, a specific type of temporal work that selects and stores practices for future redeployment. In chapter 3, I turn to understand the temporal aspect of these operations of untimely uses of history to give an account of how the practices we find in the archive as introduced in this chapter such as freedom rides are temporally laden. At the heart of this temporal ladenness is how we cannot just take the practices we find in the past as they were and apply them in the present. Rather, we need to remobilize them. That requires, I will argue, to attend to the temporal work performed by operations of selection, storage and transmission.

CHAPTER 3: FROM AFFECT TO TEMPORAL WORK AND REMOBILIZATION

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced the technological elements of cultural techniques and operations as they relate to practices as part of developing my cultural techniques approach to practices. In doing so, I showed how, by tracking cultural techniques, it is possible to understand practices, i.e., the specifics of how they are ways of doing things with rules that give them coherence. To get at more specifically what practices of untimely uses of history do and aim at, however, requires looking more closely at the technical element of operations since these are what the cultural techniques associated with a practice do in the most basic terms.

In this chapter, I am specifically concerned with the operations that I argued (at the end of section 2.4.3) are associated with the cultural techniques that fall under the umbrella of untimely uses of history: the operations of selection, storage, and transmission. Specifically, I am concerned with their temporal dimension, and I will show that the operations of selection, storage and transmission aim to select and store practices for future redeployment, i.e., they aim to remobilize them. That which they select, store and transmit comes from history and archives. Thus, in this chapter, I turn to philosophy of history, the discipline of history and the interdisciplinary literature on queer, feminist and lesbian history to investigate the temporal and historical aspects of the operations of selection, storage and transmission that animate the cultural techniques that fall under the umbrella of

untimely uses of history. I understand these literatures and the scholars I engage with in this chapter (Hayden White, Reinhart Koselleck, Helge Jordheim, Geoffrey Bowker, Saidiya Hartman, and Friedrich Kittler) as in conversation with and further developing a historical and technological characterization of operations of selection, storage and transmission first introduced in Chapter 2 through Kittler's and Krämer's focus on their technological aspects.

The historiographical questions that the operations of selection, storage and transmission raise coalesce around the question of how to draw on (i.e., select from, store and (re)transmit), the lesbian (but also feminist and queer) past for scholars in philosophy (Browne 2014), queer theory (Freeman 2010), and women's and gender studies (Hemmings 2011, Traub 2016). Thematically, scholars aim to explore and try to resolve a tension between historiographical practices as they relate to feminist, queer and lesbian history and the political aims of the social movements and values they are associated with in the present (Browne 2014).¹¹ Scholars are concerned with how to ensure that engagements with the past, do not make that activist past *passé*, but rather open space for a complex relationship of this past to our present. In other words, scholars are concerned with the question of how to

¹¹ Here I follow Browne in her contrast between historiography in general and feminist historiography. Browne defines historiography as "a theoretical or philosophical exercise that takes a step back from the actual writing or producing of history to critically examine the 'deeper' conceptual models that underpin historical practice" (Browne 2014, 4). Feminist historiography, in contrast, is "a theoretical meta-reflection on the ways that feminists conceive and construct histories of feminism, and the resulting impacts upon feminist political and intellectual practice" (Browne 2014, 4). In other words, feminist historiography reflects on "the ways in which we are constructing and representing feminist histories to ensure that the kinds of stories we are telling and models we are using are not contrary to our aims" (Browne 2014, 6).

maintain the untimely character of these uses of history through an attention to the temporality, i.e., how the past, present and future come together.

In a first instance, this temporal concern takes the form of aiming to get out of the “waves and periodization” model of feminist history by attending to “multiple temporalities”, i.e., that there are multiple layers of time that come together to form a linear history of a period or a cohesive wave of feminism (Jordheim 2012).¹² This move away from waves and periods to understand feminist history is key as these models also speak to how lesbian, queer and feminist history are understood and relate to each other (Freeman 2010, Hemmings 2011). To move away from these models then, one strategy involves a proposed rethinking of key historical categories of historical time (Browne 2014), history (Traub 2016), temporality (Freeman 2010), or stories (Hemmings 2011) in light of multiple temporalities as a starting point to explore the question of how to draw on the activist past.

For scholars such as Victoria Browne (2014) in *Feminism, Time and Nonlinear History* and Valerie Traub (2016) in *Thinking with Early Moderns*—concerned with the question of how to draw on the activist past— their focus on the issue of multiple temporalities emerges out of the contrast between two aspects of being “in” time. On the one hand, there is time as a “phenomenological dimension” (Traub 2016, 79) or lived time (Browne 2014, 2), i.e., the way in which time “is an abstraction, yet also something we know feelingly through our own aging, mortality,

¹² I borrow the term “multiple temporalities” from the work of Koselleck’s scholar Helge Jordheim (2012). I will return to Jordheim’s work on this question in section 3.3.1 of this chapter.

future-leaning aspirations, and retrospective memories” (Traub 2016, 79). These ways of experiencing time “do not conform to a straightforward past-present-future chronology” (Browne 2014, 2). On the other hand, there is the need to move beyond a subject-centered time to time as it affects groups and collectives and generations and are in turn taken up by individuals as they draw on the past (Ricoeur 2004, Carr 1986; Browne 2014). In chapter 4, I will return to this question of phenomenological time and break away from this language of contrast between two forms of time (subject- or individual-centered and beyond) to rather talk about time in terms of institution, following Merleau-Ponty’s work, as such a concept is more apt, in my argument, to characterize our relationship to multiple temporalities, both as individuals, but also as part of groups, collectives or societies.

In this chapter, however, what is key to note is that the historiographical categories of historical time and history need to be reframed to reflect these multiple temporalities. For Browne, historical time is composed of two layers: lived time and a polytemporal layer, itself “an internally complex, ‘composite’ time, generated through the interweaving of different temporal layers and strands” (Browne 2014, 2). For Traub, it is history that is polytemporal in that, on the one hand, “each synchronic moment is riddled with multiple, and sometimes contradictory asynchronicities”, and on the other hand, that “time, like language, operates simultaneously on synchronic and diachronic axes” (Traub 2016, 74-75).

A focus on multiple temporalities raises two questions for scholars concerned with the question of how to draw on the activist past: how to conceive of the layers that make up historical time or history and what techniques are involved

in shaping these multiple layers? Browne's answer is that we need to develop a "framework or language of temporal coexistence and shared time, which can register and work with this temporal plurality" (Browne 2014, 38). The concept of complex coevalness captures for Browne the different layers that compose historical time without the assumption that these layers make up a whole (Browne 2014, 41-42). In addition, she does not separate the question of techniques from the layers that compose historical time. Rather, Browne understands them together as four different kinds of time (the trace, the narrative, the calendar and generational time) that "enter into the configuration of historical time" (Browne 2014, 46-47).

For Traub, rather than focus on how to conceive of the multiple layers that make up history, she turns her attention to the synchronic and diachronic moments that make up history (Traub 2016, 82). Indeed, for Traub, this means paying attention to cycles of salience, i.e., "forms of intelligibility whose meaning recur, intermittently and with a difference, across time" (Traub 2016, 85). In other words, it means asking, when drawing on the past, "why do certain figures and tropes of eroticism (and gender) become culturally salient at certain moments, becoming saturated with meaning, and then fade from view?" (Traub 2016, 85).

Brought together, Browne's and Traub's accounts point to two important elements involved in inquiries into how to draw from activist history that has multiple temporalities as a starting point. First, layers of time do not form a whole, and second, there is a need to pay attention to the interplay of synchronic and diachronic moments through recurrence of, in this case, of certain logics and tropes that relate to sexuality.

In *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory and Times Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Clare Hemmings (2011) and Elizabeth Freeman (2010) respectively, put pressure on the multiple temporalities approach to historical time and history and its conflation of layers of time with the techniques involved in shaping multiple temporalities because it erases the power dynamics that the shaping of multiple temporalities through techniques involve. Hemmings's argument is not so much against multiple temporalities *per se*, but rather a warning against equating multiple temporalities with silenced and underrepresented histories (Hemmings 2011, 16). At stake, for Hemmings (and Freeman) in equating multiple temporalities with the stories that are silenced, absent, omitted, is to miss, on the one hand, the power dynamics that are involved in the fate reserved to these histories, and on the other hand, the normative force of the forms of times they impose on us.

Hemmings attends to the former power dynamic by focusing on “technologies of the presumed” (Hemmings 2011)—specifically of citation and affect—found in the stories that emerged out of engagement with feminist history. For Hemmings, focusing on these techniques is key to attend to silenced stories because, in her words:

if we can identify the technique through which dominant stories are secured, through which their status as ‘common sense’ is reproduced, that political grammar may also offer a rigorous point of intervention through which Western feminist stories might be transformed (Hemmings 2011, 19).

In other words, by focusing on stories and how they come to be written and be dominant, it is possible to destabilize this seamless reproduction of dominant narratives.

Freeman attends to the latter power dynamics, i.e, the normative force of time. Indeed, Freeman's starting point is that "time binds" us existentially, socially, economically through chrononormativity (Freeman 2010, 3). Chrononormativity is in turn "a technique by which institutional forces come to be seen like somatic facts. Schedules, calendars, time zones, and even wristwatches inculcate what the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel calls 'hidden rhythms,' forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege" (Freeman 2010, 3). In response to chrononormativity, Freeman articulates queer temporality as a way to be existentially bound to the world, our communities, and societies differently. Queer temporalities are "points of resistance to this temporal order that, in turn, propose other possibilities for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future others: that is, living historically" (Freeman 2010, xxii).

The two kinds of techniques identified by Hemmings and Freeman, i.e., those at work in writing histories, and those that set the pace of time (schedules, calendars, time zones), while successfully separating techniques from layers of time, fail to fully conceptualize an important question that multiple temporalities as a starting point raises: how to conceive of change between layers, a change of different forms, speed, place, and time? This question is important because at the heart of the power dynamics regarding the fate of silenced stories and the ways in which time is imposed on our lives, is the question of how to conceive of that change

in temporal terms: how we go from one wave to another, what change forces that to happen, how in turn conceiving change in that way impacts how the dominant story is retold, and finally what logics are drawn up again and again to explain that change (Nguyen 2012). Thus, without taking head on this question, we stay stuck with a host of historiographical problems that relate to temporality.

What is therefore important to note preliminarily is that an approach to multiple temporalities as a starting point to think about history and historiography is concerned with investigating how the categories of past, present, and future came to be articulated in our current moment, rather than with a pre-given order of past, present, and future. Such an approach is to be contrasted with another way of understanding how the order between past, present and future comes to be understood especially as it relates to activist histories, i.e., affectively.

The question of affect first appears in the observation that what one draws from history is motivated by “a specific interpretation of the conditions and events being marked out” (Browne 2014, 114) or “the position one occupies or wishes to occupy in the present” (Hemmings 2011, 13). Choices of date, for example, are, for Browne, “sticky” i.e, dates as sticky signs, accumulate, through repetition, through repeatedly drawing on them, affective value” (Ahmed 2004/2014 90-91; Browne 2014, 115). In turn, for Hemmings, affects of despair, hope, resent and passion, are sticky in that they are intersubjective in that stickiness is an “effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs” (Ahmed 2004, 90; Hemmings 25). For Hemmings, then, “affect is part of the *texture* of narrative and political investments

in feminist theory” (Hemmings 2011, 24) and it produces an “internal textual and external community cohesion that is difficult to resist” (Hemmings 2001, 21).

Freeman gives further detail into how these affects bind communities and are intersubjective and historical. Indeed, for Freeman, “we feel through and with representational, technological, and social forms whose histories are uneven and overlapping” (Freeman 2010, 127). Thus, for example, temporal drag as “the gravitational pull that ‘lesbian,’ and even more so ‘lesbian feminist,’ sometimes seems to exert on ‘queer’” (Freeman 2010, 62) is reconceptualized as a form of queer temporality, i.e., a “set of feelings” that inform “a countergenealogical practice of archiving culture’s throwaway objects, including the outmoded masculinities and femininities from which usable pasts may be extracted” (Freeman 2010, xxiii).

For Traub, such a move that involves “foregrounding the affects” to help “explain why we pursue some questions and not others” (Traub 2016, 133), raises many questions. Most importantly for our purposes, it raises the question of what happens to the “autonomy of the past”, i.e., “whatever happened in the past irrespective of our encounter with it” (Traub 2016, 136), “when scholars are interested mainly in producing a map of their own affective relation to it?” (Traub 2016, 136). Traub’s answer is a nuanced approach to affective engagements with history focused on awareness of the limits and possibilities of such an approach for further inquiry.

I, on the other hand, am interested in asking a different question. The affectively understood motivated aspect of historical engagement has been

examined in terms of the question why this event, date, moment or figure rather than that event, date, moment, or figure. However, the question can be posed differently drawing from a Koselleckian approach: why is there this repeated return across different accounts to that date, event, moment, or figure to grapple with the present? Asking the question this way in turn involves a recharacterization of the operations of selection, storage and transmission. Indeed, asked in this way, the question is not just about what is selected and how, i.e., what becomes “sticky”, but about what such selection, storage and transmission do to time and our understanding of the past, present, future.

Following this shift in question, this chapter will argue for a different temporal understanding of the cultural technique of drawing from lesbian history, and what it can do for thinking about the mobilization of history for present and future politics. Specifically, I will contend that the temporality of drawing from history is characterized by what I call *temporal work* rather than *affect*, and that in the specific case of untimely uses of history, the temporality of drawing from history, i.e., of the operations of selection storage and transmission, is characterized by remobilization: a type of temporal work that aims specifically to select and store practices for future redeployment in the present and towards the future.

To make this case, I will characterize the temporality of drawing from history through the use of Koselleck's historical categories of "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation". In part 3.2, I contend that the affective understanding of the temporality of drawing on history is characterized by a space of experience of cruel optimism (Berlant 2011) and a horizon of expectation of an impossible future

archival subject. What such a characterization of the affective understanding of the temporality of drawing on history highlights is how at work in such characterization is temporal work, i.e., a certain understanding and reorganization of how the past, present and future come together. I suggest an understanding of the space of experience through Hayden White's concept of the practical past, i.e., through this experience of drawing on history to find ways to act in the present and towards the future rather than through cruel optimism. In section 3.3, I then turn to an account of temporal work and how it reorders past, present and future through synchronization (Jordheim 2014). Then, to get at a horizon of expectation that is different from the future archival subject present in the affective approach, I focus on analyzing the specific kind of temporal work done by untimely uses of history in drawing on history: remobilization. In drawing on Reinhart Koselleck and his own focus on repetition, Friedrich Kittler and his development of recursion as a way to approach repetition in history and ultimately also on Saidiya Hartman's reflection on recursive histories, I show that the horizon of expectation is best characterized as negotiating the limits of the sources we draw on in archives and histories for action in the present. As such, through this account of what I call a "temporal work approach" to drawing on history, I show that what untimely uses of history do is temporal work and that such uses aim at navigating the limits of what they draw on in archives and history for action in the present and towards the future.

3.2 From Cruel Optimism to Temporal Work

Beyond the “stickiness” of certain events, dates, moment or figures the affectively understood motivated aspect of historical engagement with lesbian history has been equally concerned with engagement with the lesbian and queer archive. In *Documenting Rebellions: A Study of Four Lesbian and Gay Archives in Queer Times*, Rebecka Taves Sheffield reframes such motivated engagement or, in her words, “why communities contribute labour, often without compensation, and invest in sustainable archival practices” (Sheffield 2020, 230), in terms of, what she calls “archival optimism”. Sheffield’s concept of “archival optimism” draws on Lauren Berlant’s notion of cruel optimism (Berlant 2011, 1-2). For Sheffield then, optimism is “the force that moves us beyond our individual lives and brings us closer to creating something we cannot do on our own” (Sheffield 2020, 230). Thus, archival optimism is “the thread that draws communities together to engage in archival practices” (Sheffield 2020, 230).

In addition, archival optimism involves a temporal orientation towards the future in terms of what Sheffield describes as a:

collective sense of confidence in a future that will recognize the shared heritage that we build and include those who respect our determination to preserve this heritage, even if the experiences and opinions of those documented in the records diverge from our own (Sheffield 2020, 230).

Archival optimism’s orientation towards the future involves, in turn, an orientation towards the present and the past: “that history provides a context for the present,

enshrined in the archival aphorism, what is past is prologue” (Sheffield 2020, 230). However, this temporal understanding of how the future, the past and the present relate to one another leads to cruel optimism as it has a hard time dealing with the following question: “what if a community begins to recognize, through the changing present, that its future may not unfold in ways previously imagined?” (Sheffield 2020, 231).

At play here in exploring this question identified by Sheffield, is, as Cait McKinney notes in *Information Activism: A Queer History of Lesbian Media Technologies*, in addition to a certain vision of future engagement with archives, “an imagined future subject” that motivates archival engagement (McKinney 2020, 214). In McKinney’s work, an orientation towards a future archival subject as motivator for archival engagement also leads to cruel optimism because “the ongoing management of information about the past generates more and more material for this future subject who is always in the process of arriving and is only anticipated in certain forms” (McKinney 2020, 214). Thus, McKinney concludes, “put simply, the archives, by its very nature, can never catch up to what, and who, it wants to serve” (McKinney 2020, 214).

In sum, in Sheffield’s and McKinney’s work, Berlant’s concept of “cruel optimism” arrives, in their analysis, as a way to diagnose a contemporary impasse in engagement with lesbian and queer archives. In this case, what motivates archival engagement (archival optimism and a future archival subject), makes it impossible for this engagement to be sustained in the future (cruel optimism). This deployment of Berlant’s concept as a diagnostic of the present aligns, in my view, with the

temporal organization of past, present, and future that is embedded in Berlant's own development of cruel optimism.

For Berlant, cruel optimism is a relation that "exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (Berlant 2011, 1). Such a relation occurs when "the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving" (Berlant 2011, 2), and involves a certain understanding of the relation of past, present and future. Indeed, while Sheffield and McKinney highlight the future orientation towards the archive that leads to cruel optimism, in theorizing cruel optimism, Berlant was concerned with how the present is produced (Berlant 2011, 4), that is, "conceiving of a contemporary moment from within that moment" (Berlant 2011, 4). This present is, in turn, "perceived, first, affectively" (Berlant 2011, 4). In this sense then, Berlant's concern with optimism is a concern with "a social relation involving attachments that organize the present" (Berlant 2011, 14). In short, what I read as Sheffield's and McKinney's mobilization of cruel optimism as a diagnosis of the present is in line with Berlant's own conception of cruel optimism as a way to attend to political impasses (Berlant 2011, 4) we are faced with by way of understanding how our present came to be our present and reflecting on ways to adjust to these situations (Berlant 2011, 3; McKinney 2020, 213).

This interplay between the present and the future as found in the affective accounts of Berlant, McKinney and Sheffield is only one way to understand the interrelation between the past, present and future. While it has proven fruitful in diagnosing present situations, it has been less so in moving past the impasse it so

compellingly identifies. In my view, to move beyond the diagnostic of cruel optimism, what is needed is not another diagnostic, but rather to attend to other temporal aspects of engagement with the archive and of drawing on history especially as it relates, in the case I am concerned with, to untimely uses of history. The question is, then, how to understand this temporal relation of untimely uses of history outside of a future imagined subject that we can never fully capture correctly. To answer this question, I return to the work of Reinhart Koselleck and put it in conversation first with the work of Hayden White, and later with that of Friedrich Kittler, and finally Saidiya Hartman

3.2.1: Cruel Optimism Reconceptualized: On the Space of Experience and the Horizons of Expectation

The first step in moving beyond the temporality of cruel optimism and its imagined future subject is to understand these categories differently. To do so, I turn to the work of Reinhart Koselleck. The focus on affect to understand how the order between past, present and future comes explains the absence of Koselleck's work in discussions of multiple temporalities in relation to queer and feminist history. However, Koselleck offers an apt starting point to understand temporality non-affectively through his conception of historical time as multilayered.

Koselleck is a theorist of history and historiography that offers two contributions to philosophy of history: conceptual history (or *Begriffsgeschichte*)¹³

¹³ Conceptual history focuses on “the semantics of central concepts in which historical experience of time is implicated” (Koselleck 2004, 4) such as revolution, chance, fate, progress, and development.

and a theory of historical time as a plurality of times. In my view, and in line with Koselleck scholars such as Helge Jordheim (2012; 2014), Juhan Hellerma (2020), Niklas Olsen (2012), and John Zammito (2004), a constant in Koselleck's work is a concern with historical time understood as composed of multiple layers (Koselleck 2002, 110; Koselleck 2004, 2; Koselleck 2018, 4). Key in how Koselleck introduces the concept of historical time is that even under the banner of conceptual history, historical time is not singular. In addition, at this moment of his work, Koselleck aims to get at the layers that compose historical time by way of a focus on "spaces of experience" and "perspectives of the future" or experience and expectation (Koselleck 2004, 3) as a way to understand "how, in a given present, are the temporal dimensions of past and future related?" (Koselleck 2004, 3). In other words, Koselleck is concerned with "structural change in temporality" (Koselleck 2004, 12), i.e., how the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future come to be related in different ways through time. This focus on a structural change in temporality that characterizes modernity is in turn supported by an underlying theory of historical time that is fully developed in later work (Jordheim 2012, 152; Hellerma 2020, 209).

In his earlier work, Koselleck aims to get at the layers that compose historical time (or that make up multiple temporalities) by way of a focus on "spaces of experience" and "perspectives of the future" or experience and expectation (Koselleck 2004, 3). He develops this perspective in the essay titled "Space of

Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two Historical Categories" collected in his volume *Futures Past*.

At this moment in Koselleck's work the words "space" and "horizon" denote the form layers of historical time take.¹⁴ For Koselleck, "the past is spatial since it is assembled into a totality, within which many layers of earlier times are simultaneously present, without, however, providing any indication of the before and after" (Koselleck 2004, 260). Experience, in turn, "is specified by the fact that it has processed past occurrence, that it can make it present, that it is drenched with reality, and that it binds together fulfilled or missed possibilities within one's own behavior" (Koselleck 2004, 261). Expectation, in turn, is a horizon, because "the horizon is that line behind which a new space of experience will open, but which cannot yet be seen" (Koselleck 2004, 261). Finally, expectation is "at once person-specific and interpersonal, expectation also takes place in the today; it is the future made present; it directs itself to the not-yet, to the nonexperienced, to that which is to be revealed" (Koselleck 2004, 259).

What is important to note here in Koselleck's description of the space of experience and the horizon of expectation is how such historical categories form, in my view, a starting point to reconceptualize the temporal relation between the future, present and past. Indeed, in mapping Koselleck's terminology on to the temporal account of Berlant and others, a future subject that will have a shared

¹⁴ As we will see later in section 3.3.2 Koselleck shifts how to characterize historical time with the concept of layers of time in his later work.

understanding of the archival project becomes an “horizon of expectation” and the diagnosis of cruel optimism becomes a “space of experience”. What is more, the tension, for Koselleck, between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation that maps onto the tension between the future imagined archival subject and cruel optimism. Indeed, as Koselleck puts it: on the one hand, “things can always turn out differently from what was expected” (Koselleck 2004, 262), and on the other hand, “but, and this must be said, it could also have been different from what was experienced” (Koselleck 2004, 262). This is so because of the temporal structure and relationship between a space of experience and a horizon of expectation. As Koselleck describes, regarding a space of experience:

experiences overlap and mutually impregnate one another. In addition, new hopes or disappointments, or new expectations, enter them with retrospective effect. Thus, experiences alter themselves as well, despite, once having occurred, remaining the same. This is the temporal structure of experience and without retroactive expectation it cannot be accumulated (Koselleck 2004, 262).

Thus, while experiences are shaped by different elements at different moments in time, expectations are not possible without experiences (Koselleck 2004, 262).

There is then a tension between experience and expectation that emerges due to how “space of experience and horizon of expectation are not to be statically related to each other. They constitute a temporal difference in the today by redoubling past and future on one another in an unequal manner” (Koselleck 2004, 263). In turn, “it is the tension between experience and expectation which, in ever-changing patterns,

brings about new resolutions and through which this generates historical time” (Koselleck 2004, 260).

What Koselleck’s account points to, then, is how what was a simple diagnostic of cruel optimism due to the failure of an impossible imagined future archival subject, is actually the result of a complex and unequal interplay between experience and expectation. This suggests that cruel optimism as a space of experience is informed by a series of experiences, hopes, disappointments and shifting expectations. In addition, if experiences such as cruel optimism can change, then when faced with such a diagnostic the task is not just one of adjustment, as Berlant puts it by emphasizing how “people manage the incoherence of lives that proceed in the face of threats to the good life they image” (Berlant 2011, 10).¹⁵ It is also a “practical” and ethical question: What should I/we do if we need a new horizon of expectation? How do we, in turn, understand the space of experience differently such that this different horizon emerges? This line of questioning can be explored through Hayden White’s *The Practical Past* where he conceived of what he calls “the practical past” as a space of experience drawn on to answer the question of what is to be done and how to conceive of a new horizon of expectation.

¹⁵ For Berlant, the fantasies that are fraying include “upward mobility, job security, political and social equality” (Berlant 2011, 10).

3.2.2: On the Practical Past as Space of Experience

In my introduction to this chapter, in putting in conversation the historiographical questions that untimely uses of history raise with interdisciplinary historiographical concerns about the queer, lesbian and feminist past, what exactly is drawn upon, i.e., selected, stored and (re)transmitted alternates between the terms “history”, “the past”, and “feminist historiography”. In *The Practical Past*, White makes the case that there are important distinctions to consider between the past, the historical past as a kind of history written by professional historians, and the practical past from which we draw when we are confronted with the ethical question of what to do in the present.

Indeed, for White, the past is “the totality of all events and entities that once existed but no longer exist and most of which have left no evidence of their existence” (White 2014, xiii). The historical past and the practical past, in turn, are just one aspect of the past that we can never fully get to. Specifically, the historical past is “a *construction* and only highly selective *version* of the past” (White 2014, xiii) and it “consists of references of those aspects of the past studied and then represented (or presented) in the genres of writings which, by convention, are called ‘histories’” (White 2014, xiii). The historical past is the past written by historians in that “it is constructed as an end in itself, possesses little or no value for understanding or explaining the present” (White 2014, 9). Thus, and this is a controversial claim among philosophers of history, the practical past is to be distinguished from the historical past because, for White, the practical past “focuses on those aspects of the real past which the historical past cannot deal with” (White

2014, xiv). The practical past is focused specifically on those aspects of the past that we can draw on as a starting point to solve the practical problems we are faced with in the present (White 2014, 9).

The historical past is to be contrasted with the practical past at the level of motivation: the former posits itself as only being concerned with history as an end in itself while the latter is characterized by a practical concern in its engagement with history. Thus, the practical past is 'practical' in a first sense, i.e., "in Kant's sense as born of the uniquely human awareness of the *necessity* of doing something. We call upon the practical past of memory, dream, fantasy, experience, and imagination when confronted with the question: 'What ought I (or we) do?'" (White 2014, 10). Faced with the practical need to answer this question, the historical past will, for White, not do as it can only tell us what others did at other times (White 2014, 10), but the practical past can be of use as this is the past drawn upon to find answers for our own present.

The first characteristic of the practical past then, is that it is the past drawn upon by individuals, institutions, agencies, and members of groups "in order to help them make assessments and make decisions in ordinary everyday life as well as in extreme situations (such as catastrophes, disasters, battles, judicial and other kinds of conflicts in which survival is at issue)" (White 2014, xiii). It serves as "the basis for the kinds of perceptions of situations, solutions of problems, and judgments of value and worth that we must make in everyday situations of the kind never experienced by the 'heroes' of history" (White 2014, 14-15).

María Inés La Greca challenges White's distinction between the practical past and the historical past as it does not fit the trajectory of "historical writing by feminist scholars" (La Greca 2016, 396) as discussed by the important work of feminist historian Joan Wallach Scott on the question of gender, women and history. Indeed, for feminist historians carving space for the study of gender historically as well as the study of women:

having a history meant having a *historical* past, and not just 'a past'. Having a history meant having a historiography that accounted for them as subjects of history and that produced legitimate knowledge about women's experience through time. The feminist project was both practical and historical at once (La Greca 2016, 400-401).

In other words, to answer the question what should be done, feminist historians looked at the past in both its practical and historical form. Thus, for La Greca, contra White, "feminist history could be seen as an example of a kind of historical writing that productively confuses a historical and a practical interest in the past. It made the supposed *historical* past *practical* too" (La Greca 2016, 401). However, and this is a development identified by La Greca in Scott's work, this practical use of the past leads back to, in my view, the familiar terrain of cruel optimism as seen in McKinney, Sheffields, and Berlant.

Indeed, La Greca notes that Scott and White share in their later work (from the 2010s) a similar worry about "the value of history as an academic discipline for life" (La Greca 2016, 406) or in other words "pessimism towards the capacity of

academic history to contribute to positive change in the social world” (La Greca 2016, 404). For La Greca, in this case, “the practical, the political, and the future appear here again as a question of what should be done (and how to do it). In this sense, there is a coincidence in White’s and Scott’s reflections” (La Greca 2016, 406). In the case of Scott, the productive confusion of the historical and the practical past did lead to a cruel optimism in relation to the grand narratives that emerged out of such histories. As La Greca puts it:

feminism’s success in achieving academic acceptance and a legitimate claim to knowledge production, although empowered by that teleological grand narrative, finds itself unable to imagine its future with the loss of validity of any grand narrative (La Greca 2016, 407)

For La Greca, reading Scott, this situation belies the affects and effects of cruel optimism: “melancholy towards the idealized past of feminist scholars as revolutionaries” (La Greca 2016, 407; Scott 2011, 33).

By contrast with La Greca, Verónica Tozzi offers a way out of this predicament of cruel optimism while at the same time finding a way to challenge White’s distinction between the historical and the practical past. Indeed, she focuses on how White’s understanding of the ‘practical’, in this first Kantian sense of what we should do, is to be revisited and shifted to a pragmatic understanding of the practical. Thus, instead of breaking the past into the historical versus the practical, Tozzi’s proposal is to understand anew this division in terms of different “uses” of

history based on different interests and motivation by different people with different backgrounds. Indeed, for Tozzi:

a pragmatist reading would value White's distinction not as a reification of two kinds of past, but rather as the unraveling of the different constitutive interests of two practices or disciplines, history and literature, each with its own criteria or rules to guide its practices (Tozzi 2018, 76).

At issue with Tozzi's assessment, however, in my view, is that this second sense of the 'practical' in practical past is already at play in White's account. The practical past is practical for White, not just in answering an ethical question, but in the way that is useful to a variety of people engaged with history to understand the present and move towards the future.

Indeed, this points us to the second characteristic of the practical past or the second sense in which the practical past is practical: it is a space of experience.

Indeed, White notes, similarly to Tozzi's quote above, that:

the distinction between 'the historical past' and the 'practical past' is useful for distinguishing between modern professional historians' approaches to the study of the past and the ways in which lay persons and practitioners of other disciplines call upon, recall, or seek to use 'the past' as a 'space of experience' to be drawn upon as a basis for all kinds of judgments and decisions in daily life (White 2014, 15).

Thus, key to this distinction between the historical and the practical past is not so much a different kind of past (which on that reading reifies the differences between

the two), but rather a practice of drawing on the past, that in turn, through this engagement builds something that takes the form of a “practical past”, i.e., what “Reinhart Koselleck called ‘the space of experience’ (*Erfahrungsraum*), that warehouse of archived memories, ideas, dreams, and values which we go to as a kind of ‘old curiosity shop’ in search of intimations of where we came from in order to grasp, in some way, what we are to do with all the detritus left to us as a legacy of dubious relevance to the solution of current ‘practical’ problems” (White 2014, 10). Thus, bringing together White’s account and Koselleck’s work, not only is the practical past, practical in that it is a space of experience, but as space of experience it is shaped by and shapes expectations for the future in its examination of the present. This situation, however, raises in turn further ethical questions.

3.2.3 Towards Temporal Work

So far, in this section, in moving beyond the affective temporality of cruel optimism and its future imagined archival subject, by shifting from a space of experience characterized by cruel optimism to a space of experience that is also a practical past, my argument has opened the way to move beyond an affective understanding of drawing from history towards an understanding of how such operations are concerned with answering the question of what is to be done in the present. However, as discussed in 3.2.1, a new horizon of expectation cannot emerge without a space of experience. And yet, a space of experience understood as a practical past raises an ethical question most clearly articulated by La Greca. Indeed,

for La Greca, if the distinction between the practical and the historical past is to hold, the distinction raises an ethical question that it cannot answer:

there is nothing in the practical past understood as 'notions people having in everyday life'; that can prevent its user from appealing to the most oppressive stereotypes or exclusionary narratives to solve his or her problem (La Greca 2016, 409).

For La Greca, then, to face this ethical challenge posed by the practical past, what is needed is a narrative as a guide to get to a new horizon of expectation:

we need a narrative to choose a past and envision 'a future to inherit, rather than one to endure,' as White tells us regarding the practical past [...]; but we also need a narrative constructed from a critical stand-point with regard to how 'those notions we draw on to solve our present situation' may reproduce the oppression of our present situation (La Greca 2016, 409).

While I recognize the importance of this ethical question raised by La Greca, I depart from her approach to answering this ethical challenge by a shift of emphasis. Indeed, on my reading of La Greca's account, in addition to the critical work this narrative would do to guide the emergence of a new horizon of expectation, such a narrative also does what I call "temporal work", as in her words: "it has to do with rethinking how the past, present and future can be reconnected in some kind of practical or political program"(La Greca 2016, 408). In my view then, if, as La Greca puts it, the work of the narrative is to rethink the relationship between past, present and future, i.e., if the work of the narrative is to do temporal work to understand the

expectation and experience differently, then the focus in my view needs to be on *how* the narrative does that work of rethinking these relationships, not just at the level of the mechanics of narration (as in Hemmings in section 3.1), but by looking at the different forms such temporal work takes. Doing so shifts how to understand the historical and historiographical questions that the untimely uses of history raises and how the operations of selection, storage and transmission function when associated with projects aimed at making history, on the one hand, relevant to current needs, and developing, on the other hand, a relationship with that history that does not make it *passé*.

Indeed, at issue with untimely uses of history and the operations of selection, storage and transmission is not just what histories they draw on, how to draw on more or different histories, or the narrative form these histories take. Rather, at issue is how untimely uses of history and the operations of selection, storage and transmission do temporal work and reorder past, present and future—and how, in turn, temporal work is central to create a new horizon of expectations that move beyond an unattainable future archival subject. Thus, to understand the emergence of a new horizon of expectation, what is needed is not just a critical standpoint or a certain ethical outlook, but an attention to the temporal work operations of selection, storage and transmission do.

Thus, while in this chapter, I will continue to pursue in the next sections the form temporal work takes, in chapter 4, I will return to this ethical question the practical past raises and argue for a different understanding of the ethical issue at the heart of the practical past thus moving away from a simplistic account of how a

critical stance alone can prevent drawing on oppressive aspects of the past. In my view, more is needed, and it starts by paying attention to how narratives do temporal work in multiple layers.

3.3 On Untimely Uses of History and Remobilization

3.3.1 On Temporal work and Repetition

At stake in the temporal work of drawing from history is the normative force of time. One way to understand this normative force is through the concept of chrononormativity (Freeman 2010), i.e., the form of a host of techniques (such as schedules, calendars, timezones, etc.) that come together to create one time that seems natural and evident to us. Helge Jordheim (2014) challenges the idea that there is only one normative organization of time “according to which the relationship between past, present, and future, and thus the direction, speed and rhythm of history, can be defined” (Jordheim 2014, 501). As he effectively shows, this view is challenged, first, by how “globalization has brought with it more complex and heterogeneous temporal relations” (Jordheim 2014, 500) in that “events and processes unfolding in different parts of the world at the same time, in parallel, do not follow the same rhythms or fit into the same narratives” (Jordheim 2018, 65). Second, this view is challenged by the “the ‘deep times’ of climate change” (Jordheim 2014, 501). Central to Jordheim’s account of a “multiplicity of different regimes of temporality” (Jordheim 2014, 501) is that the normative force of time does not just consist of a time imposed through techniques, but that such imposition takes its

significance by becoming the measure against which other contexts are to situate themselves temporally.¹⁶

To break down this double normative force (imposes time, but also imposes ways to understand temporally global orders), Jordheim proposes also drawing on Koselleck as I have done too, to center, in understanding history and the historical past, the ways in which events unfold in parallel and at different speeds. Koselleck's term for this is the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous (*Gleichzeitigkeit der Ungleichzeitigen*) (Jordheim 2014, 505; Koselleck 2004, 95), which has alternatively been translated as “‘the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous,’ and [...] ‘the synchronicity of the non-synchronous’” (Jordheim 2017, 66). Key, for Jordheim, with Koselleck's concept of *Gleichzeitigkeit der Ungleichzeitigen* or, in the English translation he privileges, of the synchronicity of the non-synchronous, is that:

at any time in history there are elements, words, concepts, institutional structures, or social and political practices that are not ‘in sync’ with each other, because they feature durations, narrative structures, visions of the future or dreams of the past, rhythms, continuities or discontinuities that structure the relationship between past, present, and future in radically different ways (Jordheim 2017, 66).

¹⁶ In exploring then the “multiplicity of different regimes of temporality” (Jordheim 2014, 501), the question of the normative force of time, or of time and power, “manifest in expressions such as ‘Europe at different speeds,’ ‘more and less developed countries,’ and ‘first, second, and third world,’ and ‘the time lags of climate change.’ These expressions are representative of an entire vocabulary of delays, lags, and accelerations, used consistently to conceptualize global orders and disorders” (Jordheim 2014,513).

In understanding history as characterized by the synchronicity of the non-synchronous, in turn, Jordheim's shifts our understanding of time and power, from the idea that there is one time that is seen as natural and evident and that is the normative force of time that we have to resist, to rather that key to the normative force of time is that techniques come together and "synchronize" time in the first place, that is then seen as natural and evident. In other words, the normative force of time, or where the power of time lies is in its synchronizing ability, i.e., in its "ability to establish a temporal standard that is the same everywhere and for everyone, to adapt and adjust different times, different temporal regimes, to one another, to merge them into one" (Jordheim 2014, 513, emphasis original). Thus, understanding temporal work then, i.e., how the past, present and future are reordered, involves focusing on synchronization. Synchronization, in turn, has a double meaning.

On the one hand, synchronization refers to something techniques do: they come together and make time one. Recall from the previous chapter, that Krämer identifies, in Kittler's work, how different types of media manipulate time through distinguishing between blank and filled space, transforming material events (sound, image, film) into numerical values using mathematical formulas (Krämer 2006, 101) or the use of a universal standard (the binary code) in the case of digital media. Thus, it is because media can manipulate time in these ways, that synchronization is not just describing a historical practice, but also a technical practice that has to do with what techniques can do, and as we will see below specific techniques or as

Jordheim calls them “tools of synchronization” mobilized to do such synchronization.

Indeed, it is this understanding of media and techniques that in turn underlies Jordheim’s conceptualization of synchronization as a cultural technique that synchronizes both synchronically in its “ability to deliver a simultaneous and shared moment in time to people who are not physically co-present” (Jordheim and Ytreberg 2021, 406) and diachronically, as seen above in the discussion of time in power, “in the rhythms, intervals and sequences they impose on communication, and in the forms of orientation they enable to the past and future” (Jordheim and Ytreberg 2021, 406). In addition, key to this first aspect of synchronization as what techniques do to time, is that synchronization is work and this work is performed by specific tools (Jordheim 2014; Jordheim 2017; Jordheim and Ytreberg, 2021). This understanding of the “work of synchronization” (Jordheim 2014; Jordheim 2017; Jordheim and Ytreberg 2021), further developed by Jordheim, originates in the work of Geoffrey Bowker who defines synchronization as “the work that it takes to bring various bits of the world together into a single archival framework” (Bowker 2005, 37). This archival framework, as we will see is composed of techniques of classification and standardization. I briefly turn to Bowker’s work to examine and contrast the kinds of tools involved in the work of synchronization in Bowker’s and Jordheim’s account.

In his 2005 *Memory Practices in the Sciences*, Bowker is concerned with memory practices, i.e., the work that goes into creating a so-called “perfect memory of the past” in the institution of sciences (Bowker 2005, 4). These memory practices

include this “perfect” memory’s “textures and discontinuities; [the] technologies and techniques that subtend it, and [...] ways of thinking about it with a view to designing robust scientific databases that contain traces of the past that are currently cast into oblivion” (Bowker 2005, 4). Memory practices in turn “expends into space into a unit” Bowker calls the archive and expends “into time in units” Bowker calls] the epochs of memory (Bowker 2005, 9). Key for Bowker’s understanding of the archive is that what is stored in archives are “not facts, but disaggregated classifications that can at will be reassembled to take the form of facts about the world” (Bowker 2005, 18). These classifications, in turn, are structured by standards. For Bowker, then, the key tools of synchronization are classifications and standards in the form of specific information practices that vary through different epochs.

Building off of Bowker’s concept of synchronization and memory practices, Jordheim extends the tools that make the work of synchronization possible to include tools associated with classification and standardization as well as “tables, trees of knowledge, reference systems, and indeed books” (Jordheim 2014, 518), “calendars, clocks, narratives, encyclopedias, social media, mobile phones, and so on” (Jordheim 2014, 510). Key for Jordheim then is that “synchronisation is vitally dependent on these technologies; media are thus key tools for synchronizing human behavior and activities, although there are others, such as concepts and genres” (Jordheim and Ytreberg 2021, 407).

In addition to referring to something techniques do, synchronization refers to, on the other hand, a characteristic of a history characterized by the synchronicity

of the non-synchronous: the historical past that we have is actually the past as synchronized. Thus, synchronization also refers to a historiographical practice. Indeed, in his development of the concept of the work of synchronization, Jordheim contrasts synchronization (the work involved in making time and the historiographical approach of seeing history as synchronized) and synchronism where “temporal orders are displayed in their plurality and heterogeneity, stretching backwards into the past and forwards into the future.” (Jordheim 2017, 33). This contrast emerges, in turn, from a historical context where synchronism was replaced by synchronization (Jordheim 2017, 88) Given this historical context then, for Jordheim, “we should understand synchronization as a historiographical practice, a practice by which the idea of homogeneous linear, teleological time, that is, the idea of progress comes into existence” (Jordheim 2017, 61).¹⁷

The consequence of this understanding of synchronization as a historiographical practice, in turn is that,

historiography and theories of history have tended to deal with a history that is already synchronized, in which the multiple temporal regimes at work in every historical situation have already reduced to the one singular, homogeneous time of historicism (Jordheim 2014, 518).

If the histories we tend to deal with are already synchronized, then in attending to them critically, we need not just to look at narratives and their mobilization of

¹⁷ For Jordheim here, “practice here should be understood in the widest possible sense, and should include not just concepts and narratives, but also the uses of visual representation and the exploration of the possibilities of print” (Jordheim 2017, 68).

concepts and genres, but how narratives order time in the first place, i.e., the temporal work they do through synchronization and tools of synchronization.

Jordheim is specifically interested in building a “theory of synchronisation” which should also be taken as a set of methodological steps, where mediated acts of synchronisation are analyzed according to the work they perform, the tools they use, the sites they inhabit and the ways they are contested.” (Jordheim and Ytreberg 2021, 409). My development of temporal work in conversation with the concept of synchronization that makes such reordering of the past, present and future possible goes a step further.

In attending to the multiplicity present in what came to be synchronized, my focus is on how to attend to what events, stories, facts, archives are drawn upon again and again to create different synchronized history, or in the context of untimely uses of history, what is remobilized for the present and towards the future. *Remobilization* here refers to a specific type of temporal work, i.e., of reordering the past, present and future at work in untimely uses of history that aims to select and store practices from history and the archive for future redeployment. While Bowker and Jordheim argue that it is because histories are synchronized and have memory regimes that we can draw on them, their accounts do not give us a sense of how and why certain parts are draw on again and again and how in turn drawing on these parts again and again shapes different horizon of expectation. This requires attending to layers of time as well as repetition.

3.3.2 On the Stonewall Riots and Drawing on History

To clarify what I mean by this I consider an infamous example from queer history: the 1969 Stonewall Riots. The Stonewall Riots are an event in queer history that is continually drawn upon to articulate again in the present the stakes, import, and solidarities of queer organizing. In other words, the Stonewall Riots are remobilized to give support to a specific horizon of expectation that animate the stakes of that organizing. To analyze how the Stonewall Riots are an apt example of remobilization, I turn to three descriptions of the events and explore what each description purport to say about the relationship between remobilization and an horizon of expectation.

In his 1983 *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, John D’Emilio wrote one of the first accounts of U.S. gay history (D’Emilio 1998, vii). In this book, D’Emilio is concerned with how pre-1969 gay and lesbian activism (especially the Homophile Movement) set the stage for post-Stonewall activism and the gay liberation movement (D’Emilio 1998, xii). Stonewall is invoked here as the birth of the gay liberation movement, a movement made possible by pre-1969 activism and the development of gay and lesbian identity (D’Emilio 1998, 2).

At the start of the book, Stonewall is described as birthing a gay liberation movement leading to gay men and women fighting for their rights. In his words, D’Emilio writes:

since June 1969, when a police raid of a Greenwich Village gay bar sparked several nights of rioting by male homosexuals, gay men and women in the

United States have enlisted in ever growing numbers in a movement to emancipate themselves from the laws, the public policies, and the attitudes that have consigned them to an inferior position in society (D'Emilio 1998, 1).

Such a description of the multi-day riot at Stonewall in 1969 greatly contrasts with the fuller description later presented in the book. Three elements of that later description are of note. First is that “patrons of the Stonewall tended to be young and nonwhite. Many were drag queens, and many came from the burgeoning ghetto of runaways living across town in the East Village” (D'Emilio 1998, 231). Second is that the riot started when: “an officer attempted to steer the last of the patrons, a lesbian, through the bystanders to a nearby patrol car” (D'Emilio 1998, 231-232). Finally, “rioting continued far into the night, with Puerto Rican transvestites and young street people leading charges against rows of uniformed police officers and then withdrawing to regroup in Village alleys and side streets” (D'Emilio 1998, 232).

In contrasting these two descriptions of the Stonewall events, we see how each remobilization describes a different horizon of expectation. In other words, who is taken to have been there those nights in June 1969 (either gay men and women or a mostly non-white, young, gender-nonconforming crowd) gives authority to the direction of post-1969 queer and LGBT+ activism as well as organize temporally the other events that happened before and after it.

We see this especially in the second type of remobilization of Stonewall, focused on highlighting the names and activism of the mostly non-white, young,

gender-nonconforming crowd that was at Stonewall Inn that night or who went there regularly and were key in agitating for the gay liberation movement to center deep solidarity and intersectionality in its self-conception.

Miss Major Griffin-Gacy puts into perspective these two descriptions of Stonewall by D'Emilio in a 2016 oral history interview that is part of The OUTWORDS project. Griffin-Gacy notes that, from the beginning, i.e., since 1969, descriptions of the Stonewall riots have been shaped by erasure. As Griffin-Gacy puts it:

[I]t's not a matter of being tired about it [talking about Stonewall], it's a matter of they haven't been telling the truth about it since it happened. They've been berating and demoralizing and defaming and disenfranchising all the girls who were popular and known at that time like Sylvia and Marsha.¹⁸ The other girls who were around like me and Helen and Evelyn and Monica, all the other girls who were around and they're doing all of that at the same time, we're just the whitewash, the wayside of all this stuff. They concentrated on them (Miss Major 2016).

What Griffin-Gacy points out here is that on the one hand, the actual non-white gender nonconforming people that were at Stonewall Inn were erased from accounts of the riots and the story of the birth of the gay liberation. On the other hand, it also erased the work of other activist such as Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P.

¹⁸ Here Miss Major is referring to Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P Johnson.

Johnson who aimed to push the gay liberation movement away from only focusing on the interests of white and class-mobile gay men and lesbians.¹⁹

Thus, Griffin-Gacy remobilizes Stonewall here to articulate anew the kind of solidarities that the Stonewall Riots can point to. This path of remobilization is followed by many others. Susan Striker produced a documentary on the 1968 Compton's Cafeteria Riot thus putting the rebellion in Stonewall in the context of a series of uprisings. Another instance is Tourmaline's archival work, art and film on the activism and life of Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson. Remobilizing Stonewall in this second way, then, is not just about saying what the gay liberation could have been, how assimilationist the LGBT rights movement became and how it could have been otherwise, but about the temporal work it opens up to reorder past, present and future differently, about the new horizon of expectation different from the current present as well as current horizon of expectation or desired future.

The relationship between the remobilization of Stonewall and a new horizon of expectations is especially clear in the last example I will discuss. In a recent piece in "Literary Hub" titled "Hugh Ryan on the Urgency of Prison Abolition" Hugh Ryan builds off his 2022 book *The Women's House of Detention: A Queer History of a Forgotten Prison* Ryan opens the piece with the following observation:

¹⁹ Miss Major continues, commenting on white-washed accounts of the Stonewall riots: "in reading this thing you would think as if there was thousands of white gay guys there helping to fight this thing and fight the police. There weren't any white gay guys there. The hustlers who were in the club with us who came around us because they didn't mind being around us. Those gay guys didn't give a shit whether we lived or died" (Miss Major 2016).

On the first night of the Stonewall Uprising in June, 1969, there were actually two riots. In the Women’s House of Detention—the prison that hulked just 500 feet down Christopher Street from the bar—incarcerated people heard what was happening outside, and flocked to their small, barred windows. Chanting, “Gay rights, gay rights!” they set fire to their meager belongings and tossed them at the crowds below—tiny missiles of freedom like falling stars, blessing the resistance. (Ryan 2022)

From these two simultaneous events (the Stonewall Riot and the uprising in the Women’s House of Detention), Ryan concludes that from the beginning there has been a relationship between the Stonewall Inn Riots, gay liberation, and prison abolition. This thread, while rejected at the time by a faction of those that mobilized that Summer after the riots (Ryan 2022), informs, in turn, if explored, how to think about prison abolition and queer activism in the present.

In sum, in my view, what is key here in reading together these three accounts of Stonewall is that these accounts do not replace one another with descriptions that are closer to “what actually happened”. Rather in drawing on Stonewall again and again the multiple layers of historical time and of past, present and future are reorganized to give support to a different horizon of expectation than where the present might be leading us without action. It points to what we should do, to what solidarities we should be paying attention to, to modify the space of experience such that from such modification it gives evidence and support for what it deems should be remobilized. To attend then to how drawing again and again on an event leads to a new horizon of expectation, I return to the relationship between the space of

experience and horizon of expectation discussed in section 3.2 to examine this question: how does experience accumulate such that it can be drawn upon again and again, and how does this in turn affect how the horizon of expectation is shaped?

3.3.3 On Repetition and Layers of Time in Koselleck

In the final essay of *Futures Past*, titled “‘Space of Experience’ and ‘Horizon of Expectation’: Two Historical Categories”, Koselleck concludes by taking up the question of how experience can accumulate such that it can be drawn upon again and again. He writes:

it is evident that experiences can only be accumulated because they are—as experience—repeatable. There must then exist long-term formal structures in history which allow the repeated accumulation of experience. But for this, the difference between experience and expectation has to be bridged to such an extent that history might once again be regarded as exemplary. History is only able to recognize what continually changes, and what is new, if it has access to the conventions within which lasting structures are concealed (Koselleck 2004, 275).

Koselleck concludes the essay by saying that for experience and expectation to have the temporal structure that they have (as discussed in 3.2), it is key to understand the interplay between repetition and long-term historical structures. In other words, to understand how experience changes, how it is necessary for a horizon of expectation to emerge, and the tension between space of experience and horizon of

expectation that creates historical time, the historical categories of 'space of experience' and 'horizon of expectation' are not enough. Thus, at the end of his essay repetition becomes a problem to grapple with for Koselleck.

The question repetition raises for Koselleck is how, on the one hand, can history be experienced as unique, but also involve experiences that repeat themselves through time such that both the uniqueness of the experience and the repetition and accumulation of experience also have their own temporal structure. For our purposes, then, this shift towards repetition is important because remapping the space of experience from cruel optimism to the space of experience and the horizon of expectation from a future archival subject to the limits of the sources found in archives and history for action in the present is not enough in itself to characterize anew the temporal arc of drawing on history. Indeed, in addition what is needed is an attention to repetition and layers of time.

In the essay "The Unknown Future and the Art of Prognosis" collected in *The Practice of Conceptual History*, Koselleck argues that the horizon of expectation depends on the repetition of "formal structures in history" (Koselleck 2002, 136), i.e., that "ideas about the future rest upon a structural repeatability derived from the past" (Koselleck 2002, 137). In addition, the horizon of expectation depends on layers of time as Koselleck continues later on in that essay:

"It is not only the formal repeatability of possible history that guarantees a minimum amount of prognostic certainty, but success also depends on taking

into account the multilayeredness of historical courses of time” (Koselleck 2002, 143).

Thus, in *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*, the essay collection where Koselleck outlines his theory of historical time these two ideas are combined, and structures of repetition become one of the three layers of historical time as historical time is no longer understood through the interplay between space of experience and horizon of expectation as described earlier.²⁰

From a historical perspective, there are two approaches to this dependence of the emergence of a horizon of expectation on repetition and layers of time. First, there is an examination of repetition as a way to examine anachronism productively as we find in Freeman’s work. Second there is a recursive approach to repetition found in Kittler’s late work.

In the second chapter of *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* titled “Deep Lez: Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism” Freeman’s

²⁰ In the title essay “Sediments of Time”, Koselleck introduces his theory of historical time or of a plurality of time (Hoffmann & Franzel Intro, xii) with the key concept of layers of time (*Zeitschichten*). A theory of historical times is “a theory of history that does not examine empirical findings about past histories, but instead asks as to the conditions of possible history” (Koselleck 2018, 43), i.e., “the theoretically discernable presuppositions that make conceivable why histories occur, how they unfold, and, likewise, how and why they must be examined, represented, or narrated” (Koselleck 2018, 43). The three layers that make up historical time are: “singularity” or the way “events are experienced primarily as surprising and irreversible” (Koselleck 2018, 4), “structures of repetition”, i.e, the way in which history is not only made up of singular events, but also that “history as a whole is based upon structures of repetition that are not exhausted in singularity” (Koselleck 2018, 5), and finally there are “preconditions of experience”, i.e, conditions that are “in effect *before* their respective generational cohorts, and that will most likely continue *after* these cohorts pass on” (Koselleck 2018, 8). Central to this third layer is how it points to “long-term, recurring foundational assumption [that] only change at a creeping pace” (Koselleck 2018, 9). As part of that theory of historical times, layers of time are important to be able to track varying “velocities of change” by way of “reveal[ing] different modes of historical change that indicate great temporal complexity” (Koselleck 2018, 6).

examination of repetition is concerned with distinguishing between action in the present that are *passé* from what she calls “temporal drag”. To make this case she examines the work of New York performance artist Sharon Hayes who stood in the street with different political slogans from the past, one of which was “Ratify E.R.A. Now”. Freeman identifies the failure of this slogan compared to others that functioned effectively as “incitements to action” and “gestures toward the past’s unrealized futures” (Freeman 2010, 60). For Freeman, the “Ratify E.R.A. Now” slogan fails on two accounts:

Backward-looking, it seems naive in the face of numerous critiques of so-called equality feminism. Looking forward, the phrase “Ratify E.R.A. Now” is not portable; it does not shed new light on contemporary situations, and were a reinvigorated, mass-popular feminism to appear again on a national level, it would be unlikely to simply continue that particular battle (Freeman 2010, 60-61).

In other words, the failure of that slogan then for Freeman is located in that it is unable to “manifest the power of anachronism to unsituate viewers from the present tense they think they know, and to illuminate or even prophetically ignite possible futures in light of powerful historical moments” (Freeman 2010, 61).

Rather, for Freeman, “not only the slogan but also Hayes’s very body turn into a vintage display” (Freeman 2010, 61).

For Freeman, examining remobilizations from the past, how something is draw on again and again is about examining if that repetition mobilizes the power of

anachronism to unveil a new horizon of expectation or not.²¹ It is about asking: “how can we know for certain that something is securely done with?” (Freeman 2010, 62) or in other words, how do we know not to draw on something again once it has been exhausted? What this approach highlights, however, is that more is needed to examine the possibilities that repetition open up in the present and for the future. Indeed, anachronism points to a certain temporal order of past present and future. It points us back to the temporal work of synchronizing history linearly and the political stakes in relation to horizons of expectation of improperly attending to it. Thus, what Freeman’s focus on anachronism highlights is that we cannot just take things we draw upon as is. We need a way to evaluate how it moves us to action in the present through attending to temporal work and its relationship to repetition.

In addition to an approach to technology, as discussed in chapter 2, Kittler’s work offers an approach to media history. Indeed, in *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* Kittler’s historical approach focuses on “narrow snapshots without filling the interim gaps with lots of speculation” (Kittler 2016, 94). In this case, one snapshot from 1800 and another from 1900 reveal a paradigm shift undergone by cultural techniques of reading, writing, and hearing with the emergence of technological media. Then, in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Kittler continues this

²¹ Freeman turns to repetition with anachronism and articulate that force for moving us to politics in the present, and not just repetition with difference: “yet motions to do not always go forward. If identity is always in temporal drag, constituted and haunted by the failed love-project that precedes it, then perhaps the shared culture making we call ‘movements’ might do well to feel the tug backward as a potentially transformative part of movement itself” (Freeman 2010, 93).

investigation of technological media in ways that challenge assumptions in media history such that “media history is made up of three marked phases: the invention and dissemination (1) of the alphabet; (2) of the printing press: and, finally, (3) of the computer” (Krämer 2006, 94). Rather, Kittler is concerned with the difference between when writing was the central means of selecting, storing and transmitting culture, and when, with the emergence of technological media writing became only one technique among others being able to process culture and such technological media were able to store things that went beyond symbols such as sounds. In the essay “In the Wake of the Odyssey” characteristic of Kittler’s later work, Kittler is still concerned with cultural techniques specifically of writing and the Greek alphabet (Winthrop-Young 2011, 3), but he modifies his historical approach in doing so by developing a recursive approach to history.

In this later essay, Kittler’s approach to the history of cultural techniques takes the form of “recursion” (Kittler 2013, 275) where he is concerned with the “ever-repeated return to the Greeks” specifically to the *Odyssey* across different media and times (from the *Illiad*, to Dante’s *Inferno* to Godard’s and Kubrick’s film). In the essay, he is concerned with understanding these repeated returns not in terms of progress, but in terms of recursions and how such returns were made possible in the first place by “the alphabet in the unique form that the Greeks gave to it—a form, that is, which records vowels and by this means can transcribe any language at all” (Kittler 2013, 275). In a detailed analysis of the essay, commentator Larson Powell points out how then the *Odyssey* functions in this text as a model for understanding history that both attends to the invention of an alphabet as well as

the “laying out of the geography of the Mediterranean” (Powell 2012, 431). Indeed, throughout the text, at each turn, Kittler points out for example how the *Odyssey* is a recursion of the *Illiad* made possible by the Greek alphabet without which it would have been impossible for two Sirens to recite the *Illiad* to the hero of *Odyssey*. Kittler goes so far as hopping on a boat and testing this (Kittler 2013, 277). Again, Kittler is concerned with how in the different recursions to the *Odyssey*, Italy and its landscape is further described, named or filmed. (Kittler 2013, 276; Kittler 2013 283-284). Thus, a recursive approach to history can “generate history not in the usual linear sense but only in repetitions” (Powell 2012, 438).

Key for Kittler in changing his historical approach in his late work is as he puts it in a scholarly interview: “rather than focusing on linear history, we should instead think about what I call ‘recursive history’, where the same issue is taken up again and again at regular intervals but with different connotations and results” (Armitage 2006, 32-33).²² In other words, Kittler invites us to not only consider how history has been synchronized linearly, but to focus on when an issue is taken up again and again, like the earlier example of Stonewall and how each uptake highlights different connotations and results, here expectations about a more just future and what kind of coalition is necessary to get here.

It is this invitation that I follow and view as central in developing a different temporal understanding of the operations of selection storage and transmission in

²² In addition to an alternate historiographical paradigm, recursion is, for Winthrop-Young “a self-description that reveals the way in which Kittler’s thinking developed (Winthrop-Young 2015a, 448).

untimely uses of history where the drawing again and again of events, archives, moments that result in different horizon of expectation in untimely uses of history. Indeed, if synchronization and its associated tools illuminate how temporal work, i.e., the reordering of the past, present and future, is possible and puts to the forefront the ethical questions such reordering aims to answer, recursion here is mobilized to explain how remobilization leads to new horizons of expectation.

Recursion or a recursive approach to repetition and horizons of expectation as I will develop in the last section, in my reworking of the term, is a way that attends both to layers of time and to repetition as well as to the limits of documents or what we find in the past (like a slogan such as “Ratify E.R.A. Now”) to tell us what to do in the present. As I will develop in the next section, I am suggesting that an understanding of our present space of experience through the practical past, temporal work, synchronization and remobilization leads to an horizon of expectation focused on the limits of what we find in archives and history for action in the present.

3.3.4 Towards a New Horizon of Expectation

In the scholarship on German Media Theory, recursion has been picked up and further developed to deal with the multiplicity of temporalities. As Winthrop-Young notes in “Siren Recursions”:

the basic reason for the rising profile of recursion as (counter-) historiographical procedure is the increased fracturing of time. We do not live under the rule of one absolute time; we live in and through different

temporal habitats that are every bit as varied as our spatial environment
(Winthrop-Young 2015b, 77).

While Jordheim introduced this issue through globalization and the deep time of climate change, for German Media theorists, the challenge of multiple temporalities has been focused on how “established historiographical narratives are unable to handle non-human temporalities” (Winthrop-Young 2015b, 77-78).

This point is most associated with the work of Wolfgang Ernst and his conception of media archaeology focused on distinguishing between history, i.e., “the more or less linear progression of things and the narrative account of their development, their creation and their demise, regardless of how disjointed it may appear” (Ernst 2013a, 141) and “the intrinsic temporality (*Eigenzeit*) of media technology” (Ernst 2013a, 141), i.e., the temporal perspective of the media technology rather than the human perspective grasped through senses.²³ To illustrate this distinction, let’s turn to an example Ernst gives in the essay “Media Archaeography: Method and Machine versus the History and Narrative of Media”: “a radio built in Germany during the National Socialist regime (the famous *Volksempfänger*, which was used to broadcast propaganda speeches). If in operation today, because the technology of broadcasting has remained stable, the radio can

²³ To illustrate this “temporal perspective of the media technology”, Ernst breaks down the different temporalities of sound between “the acoustic (physics), the sonic (cultural conditioning) and the musical (cultural semantics)” (Ernst 2013a, 141) As while “the oscillating string of an instrument still forces its sound — and with it its (intrinsic media) temporality upon our ears” and our “ears hear different harmonies in the same sound” (Ernst 2013 TCS, 141) this sonic and culturally conditioned aspect is only one form the temporality of sound takes.

play current radio programs” (Ersnt 2013b, 56-57). Key, then, in examining the temporal perspective of this radio for Ersnt is that:

there is no ‘historical’ difference in the functioning of the apparatus now compared to then (and there will not be, until analog radio is completely replaced by digitized transmission of signals); rather, there is a media-archaeological short circuit between otherwise historically clearly separated times (Ersnt 2013b, 57).

In other words, Ersnt’s focus is on this circuit that maintains the continued functionality of the radio that is the object of analysis rather than the fact perceived by our senses and how we understand ourselves in relation to this radio that was first manufactured in the early 20th century.

Recursion is, however, another approach to attend to multiple temporalities and especially non-human temporalities. Indeed, while for Kittler, recursion, similarly to Ernst’s media archaeology, is focused on moving away from linear history (Armitage 2006, 32), recursion can also be focused on what is returned to again and again but takes different forms and gives different results at each return. Thus, on a technological level it is concerned with the recursive characteristic of cultural techniques identified in section 2.4 of chapter 2. In other words, “on a technical level, recursion involves a media technology that processes its own, historically grown properties. But it is precisely by means of this turning in on itself, as it were, that it acquires the ability to register, store and transmit something outside of itself” (Winthrop-Young 2015a, 449). In turn, such media technologies,

namely drawing on history as a cultural technique is the result of a recursive process in that to draw on history especially lesbian, feminist or queer history you start out with some analysis about what such history can do for contemporary movements and why it is important to engage with such history in the first place. Then, this very analytical framework and questions and the associated cultural techniques associated with it, inform and shift how drawing on that history is done subsequently. It is in this way then that drawing on history, as a cultural technique is recursive.²⁴

In short, then, a new horizon of expectation emerges out of remobilization, because drawing on history again and again is a recursive process that transmits something different at each return which in turn shapes different horizons of expectation. To get at what this different horizon of expectation looks like specifically in relation to remobilizations, I next put in conversation Saidiya Hartman with Hayden White and Reinhart Koselleck. I consider each in light of their examination of recursive histories to show that the horizon of expectation that characterized a temporal work approach to drawing on history is one focused on the limits of sources in archives and history for action in the present and towards the future.

²⁴ Here I am reformulating Winthrop-Young's account of a "recursive autocatalytic loop involving two operations: Operation 1—the analysis of hitherto un(der)analyzed media technologies—results in media-specific insights which, in turn, serve as a catalyst for operation 2—namely, the analysis of the hitherto un(der)analyzed premises underlying operation 1. The results of operation 2 alter these premises which subsequently guide the next, upgraded installment of operation 1" (Winthrop-Young 2015a, 455). Winthrop-Young traces such recursion in Kittler's work, as: "a return to earlier positions 'in modified form,' and each stage is a 'certain reality' that appears by mean of recursive processing" (Winthrop-Young 2015a, 452).

3.3.5 Towards a Different Horizon of Expectation

When Hayden White introduced his concept of the “practical past” and its distinctiveness from the historical past, he referred to the work of Toni Morrison and her 1987 novel *Beloved*. The novel is based on the historical individual of Margaret Garner who in 1856 “murdered her infant daughter and attempted to kill her other children while trying to escape slavery” (Taylor 2016, 1). In excavating and returning to this story, itself a recursive return to a historical event, White remarks that “the question, for Morrison, at that time was how to use the facts of Margaret Garner’s life for insight into the ethical issues with which a black women in her situation and in her time had been confronted” (White 2014, 22). Thus, for White, in working through this question, Morrison

proceeds to draw a distinction between the ‘historical’ Margaret Garner and what I would wish to call the “poetical” Margaret Garner, by which I mean, the flesh-and-blood woman who was capable of the kind of tragic actions traditionally ascribed only to the archetypal figures of myth, religion, and art (White 2014, 22).

Such a distinction was necessary in Morrison’s work because, in her own words, “the *historical Margaret Garner* is fascinating, but, to a novelist, too confining” (as cited in White 2014, 22; emphasis by White).

In her 2016 account of the “historical Margaret Garner” historian Nikki M. Taylor rejects this kind of turning to fiction as giving up something historical. Indeed, for Taylor, while both *Beloved* and her account of the historical Margaret

Garner are concerned with demonstrating how “slavery damaged not only black women’s exteriors—their bodies—but also their interiors—their minds and spirits” (Taylor 2016, 2), Taylor’s aim in doing so is to provide “one example for how we might fill the gaps and silences in historical sources—not with fiction, but with traditional and nontraditional historical sources, other disciplines, methods, and interpretive frameworks” (Taylor 2016, 5). In other words, Taylor turns to the historical Margaret Garner as a way to “reclaim black women’s voices and agency in history when traditional historical sources are scarce, nonexistent, vague, coded, or erased” (Taylor 2016, 5). To do so, Taylor approaches the historical record with ingenuity and flexibility as “Garner’s truth is not revealed through her direct words alone—written or spoken—but also through insinuations, euphemisms, actions, and even markers on her body” (Taylor 2016, 73).

In White’s reading, however, Morrison’s turn to fiction does not represent a giving up on approaching the historical record with flexibility and ingenuity, but rather as way of navigating how:

those aspects of Margaret Garner’s story capable of illuminating and serving as a goad to ethically responsible action in the present could not be truthfully presented in a strictly historiographical treatment. So Morrison takes another route, that of invention (White 2014, 22).

In other words, Morrison’s turn to fiction is read by White as attending to the limit of historical events and sources to be a goad for ethical action in the present. In addition, such a turn to invention or fiction has a peculiar characteristic: it is not at

odds with the historical Margaret Garner. This raises the question for White: “What kind of fiction—a fiction that is in no way at odds with the known facts—would that be?” (White 2014, 23). Such a fiction is the outcome of a rethinking of the fact/fiction distinction of “the idea that a fact, whatever else it may be, is identifiable by its logical opposition to ‘fiction,’ where fiction is understood to be an imaginary thing or product of the imagination” (White 2014, 23).

In “Fiction and Historical Reality”, Koselleck is concerned with thinking anew the distinction between fact and fiction given that in the 18th century both writers and historians deal with history, i.e., with “what has happened and how it by chance occurred” (Koselleck 2018, 11). Thus, Koselleck asks: “what is the relationship of the linguistic constitution of a history, whether it is the history of a writer of history, poetry, or any kind of text, to what from then on is experienced and designated as historical reality?” (Koselleck 2018, 14). In other words, what is the relationship between historical narratives and what is referred to in the narrative or a historical reality? For Koselleck, such a relationship is one where “historical reality never entirely overlaps with what can be articulated in it and about it” (Koselleck 2018, 17).

Thus, for Koselleck, “the historian, the literary historian, and the poet (or ‘writer’ in contemporary usage) are all faced with the same incommensurability of historical reality and its linguistic processing. However, each of these figures reacts differently to this same challenge” (Koselleck 2018, 18). In other words, what distinguishes Morrison’s and Taylor’s account of the events surrounding Margaret Garner’s life is not that one wrote a novel and the other wrote a scholarly

monograph. The difference is in how in dealing with the incommensurability of language with historical reality, they came to different approaches to the sources they engaged with. Indeed, while on the one hand, for Koselleck, “the only thing that is real in an accessible and verifiable sense are the sources that have been transmitted to us from the past” (Koselleck 2018, 19), on the other hand, “the reality of history that we derive from them, in contrast, is a product of linguistic possibilities, theoretical pre-givens, and methodological points of access that come together in a narrative or depiction” (Koselleck 2018, 19-20). Thus, a source “never shows what should be said, but always what cannot be said” (Koselleck 2018, 20). In Koselleck’s memorable phrase: “Sources have a veto power” (Koselleck 2018, 20).

It is this veto power of sources that is at stake in understanding how White reads fiction to be mobilized in Morrison’s work and in turn how it works in the context of this return to Margaret Garner’s life. Indeed, Morrison’s mobilization of fiction offers a hypothesis that suggests a new horizon of expectation through its return to an event, date, story, figure, community, etc. Thus, in relation to sources, White reads Morrison as being confronted with their limit as a goad for action in the present. In dealing with these sources, Morrison on this reading, mobilizes fiction not simply by choosing a kind of narrative to engage with the events of Margaret Garner’s life, but as a way to deal with gaps and moments that could never be in the archive in the first place, i.e., for which there is not, or could not be, any source. Taylor, on the other hand, is concerned with the kind of sources mobilized and how to expend what counts as a source and what can be source of information. This leaves us with a false tension between the limit of sources for action in the present

and developing, as Taylor calls for, approaches to the historical record that are ingenious and flexible. Enter here the work of Saidiya Hartman as moving beyond this tension in being concerned with both aspects.

Hartman opens her now classic 2008 article “Venus in Two Acts” with a litany of returns to “Venus”. In each of these returns she finds the same thing: that “no one remembered her name or recorded the things she said, or observed that she refused to say anything at all” (Hartman 2008, 2). Hartman then moves to analyzing one specific return to Venus: her own return to an account of the murder of Venus in the chapter titled “The Death Book” in her 2007 groundbreaking *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. Faced with such dire sources, in her own first return to Venus, Hartman writes that she,

chose not to tell a story about Venus because to do so would have trespassed the boundaries of the archive. History pledges to be faithful to the limits of fact, evidence, and archive, even as those dead certainties are produced by terror (Hartman 2008, 9).

In other words, what she could say about Venus was limited by the veto power of sources. This in turn led Hartman to a meditation on what could have been said, could have been recorded, could be useful to know or think through. As Hartman puts it:

the romance of resistance that I failed to narrate and the event of love that I refused to describe raise important questions regarding what it means to

think historically about matters still contested in the present and about life eradicated by the protocols of intellectual disciplines (Hartman 2008, 9-10). Thus, when Hartman asks, “how does one tell impossible stories?” (Hartman 2008, 10) she is highlighting how these stories are impossible not because she is giving up, as Taylor argues, on the power of historical and interdisciplinary methods to probe sources to tell us what happened.²⁵ Rather, Hartman turns our attention to how, attending to what is not or could not be recorded, is not about filling a gap, but rather probing the veto power of sources, the contours of what can and cannot be said with them and how navigating this spectrum is key to attending to the contemporary issues we are faced with and seek answer to when we return again and again to certain historical figures, events, dates, texts or stories. In short, such an approach to sources asks again and again: “What are the stories one tells in dark times? How can a narrative of defeat enable a place for the living or envision an alternative future?” (Hartman 2008, 14).

For our purposes, what Hartman’s return to Venus highlights is that the horizon of expectation that emerges out of a temporal work approach, is an horizon of expectation that is not faced with an impossible future imagined archival subject, but rather the need to negotiate the limit of sources for action in the present through an exploration of what could be said and recorded and what could not be.

²⁵ Indeed, Hartman writes that her focus has been on documents themselves. She writes: “I have embraced the document, and by this I don’t mean to suggest any fidelity to the truth or authority of the document, but simply that I have tried to figure out what I might do with official documents, given the limits, the lies, the omissions, the fabrications” (Hartman 2021, 129).

To do this work, Hartman develops “critical fabulation” as a methodological approach to probe those limits.²⁶ Critical fabulation rearranges the basic elements of a story in order to “re-presen[t] the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view (Hartman 2008, 11).

Critical fabulation is an extension of Morrison’s mobilization of fiction as well as her approach to historical sources and time in her narratives.²⁷ What Morrison provides, for Hartman, is an answer to the following question: “if history is a chronicle of change over time, then how does one tell a historical story for those who endure the *long durée* of dispossession and the seemingly interminable and unalleviated condition of fungibility?” (Hartman 2021, 133).²⁸ For Hartman, such an imposition of time is “unsuited to the complex texture of Black life” (Hartman 2021, 133), and thus critical fabulation intervenes as a kind of recursive narrative (Hartman 2021, 131) that does temporal work. Indeed, as a method that produces narrative that probes the limit of sources and documents by returning to them again

²⁶ See Hartman’s own mobilization of critical fabulation in her 2019 *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*. See also the work of Tiya Miles in *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley’s Sack, a Black Family Keepsake*, and in a different register, the work of Daniela K. Rosner in *Critical Fabulations: Reworking the Methods and Margins of Design* for another example of mobilizing critical fabulation.

²⁷ Hartman writes that for her: “Morrison’s work provides the model for the time travel or temporal entanglement enacted in *Wayward Lives*, because works like *Beloved* and *A Mercy* exceed the imposed boundaries of historical periodization or the discrete, homogenous and regimented time of capitalist modernity. The matters of time and history are especially vexed for those whose existence challenges the prevailing periodization, who are deemed unfit for history or castaway as ‘outside of history,’ or those who are not guaranteed any right to live. Those who live intimately with the dead experience the porosity of the then and now, and do not perceive and apprehend the world through the taxonomies and categories of anti-Blackness or colonial reason” (Hartman 2021, 131).

²⁸. For an exploration of this question by another author of fiction, see the 1981 *The Chaneysville Incident* by David Bradley.

and again, critical fabulation “jeopardize[s] the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done” (Hartman 2008, 11).

While Hartman’s focus has been on developing this method of critical fabulation as a way to approach sources, thus moving away from the false dichotomy of approaching sources creatively and the limit of sources for action, my interest in her accounts lies in highlighting the importance of reading sources anew for the horizon of expectation associated with untimely uses of history. Indeed, Hartman’s account not only gives further support to what a horizon of expectation that is focused on the limits of sources for action in the present looks like but it also highlights how ethics is central to what gives coherence to the practice of untimely uses of history. So, while the shift from affect to ethics (discussed in section 3.2) is focused for White on the question of what is to be done in the present, Hartman (as well as White’s discussion of fiction) open up another ethical aspect of a practice of untimely uses of history: the ethics of dealing with the veto power of sources while at the same time moving past sources to be able to act in the present and towards the future.

This in turn opens up the second part of the inquiry of this dissertation. In part 1, I have been focused on thinking anew what untimely uses of history do and aim at. In chapter 2 and 3, through a temporal approach to cultural techniques, I have shown that untimely uses of history do temporal work (specifically remobilization) and aim at navigating the limits of sources for action in the present. Doing so, in turn opened up a host of ethical questions such as those discussed in

section 3.2: that in a temporal work approach that understand the space of experience as a practical past there is nothing to prevent choosing the wrong past or drawing on its most oppressive aspects; as well as the question of the veto power of sources for action in the present. The stakes of these ethical questions in turn are high as ethics play a central role in determining the rules that give coherence to the practice of untimely uses of history. Thus, in part 2 of this dissertation, in chapter 4, I will consider these ethical questions as they relate to my account of untimely uses of history. In doing so part 2 articulates the reading anew of sources that emerges out of understanding untimely uses of history as practices that do temporal work and are focused on the limits of sources for action.

PART II: ON THE ETHICAL DIMENSION OF UNTIMELY USES OF HISTORY

CHAPTER 4: ON SCENES OF CRUEL OPTIMISM, INSTITUTION, AND THE READING ANEW OF SOURCES FROM THE LESBIAN PAST

4.1 Introduction

“Apparently all the Black people were out picking cotton while you were taking photographs.” This anonymous statement was written on an index card as part of a Photography Exhibit at the ArQuives²⁹ where, according to Rebecka Taves Sheffield, “guests were invited to interact with the show by commenting on cue cards provided on a nearby desk and pin these to the Photograph Wall” (Sheffield 2020, 4). While index cards in this vein were “anticipated and welcomed comments [...] as a way to address issues of whiteness and racialization in gay liberation history” (Sheffield, 2020, 4), the disappearance of this particular physical card from the installation would initiate a crisis of meaning for the archives and its audience at a later community conversation about the exhibit.

The question of the ethical dimension of the practice of untimely uses of history emerges out of such scenes of cruel optimism: the objects and documents from the queer archives are assembled in an exhibit and their failure to speak to the relationship between race, sexuality, and gender identity in both the past and the

²⁹ The ArQuives: Canada’s LGBTQ2+ Archives is based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada and is considered one of the largest independent LGBTQIA+ archives in the world and collects LGBTQIA+ archival material nationally.

present illicit a crisis. Traces of the crisis are in turn documented (artifacts archived, screenshots saved, apology letters circulated), but what the crisis is about or what should be done about it is unclear. Is the issue homogeneity, erasure, racism, inclusion, representation, archival failure, or a lesbian past that is not meaningful anymore? All of these answers together?³⁰

While race often comes in as an intervention or disruptor within lesbian, feminist and queer narratives about themselves (Nguyen 2012; Sheffield 2020, 237-238; Cogswell 2014, 124-129), at stake with such scenes of cruel optimism is that they are occurring in the present and are about the present. The present of archives, the present of racism, transmisogyny, and lesbophobia. The present of what to do with this history in the present.

The recurrence of these scenes of cruel optimism and the crisis of meaning they engender raises two questions for Sheffield:

How do these crises and our responses to them impact our community archival practices? How can community archives serve as spaces where voices from the past, present and future are simultaneously alive and speak to one another for the purposes of expansive transformation? (Sheffield 2020, 231).

³⁰ For other examples of such scenes of cruel optimism see: (Sheffield 2020, 237-238) and (Mitchell and McKinney 2019, 138-142).

While Sheffield's answer surveys different answers (from the limits of strategic essentialism and identity categories to the perils of diversity and inclusion), her focus in exploring these answers is on how:

By serving as an abeyance structure, or an apparatus to support resource and knowledge sharing between and among various communities, the archives has established itself as a critical contributor to reparative justice work and community building despite its history of archival homophily (Sheffield 2020, 238).

In other words, Sheffield maintains the need to continue to focus on how archives and their content are important for the strength of our movements for change in the present. While I agree with Sheffield on this point, her account still leaves open what to do with these crises of meaning and what is at issue in them.

In this chapter, then, I reframe the ethical questions that function as rules that give untimely uses of history their coherence by asking: how could we resolve such crises of meaning to find pathways of action in the present? In doing so, I aim in this chapter to make explicit the underlying ethical view that I call *the denial of history view*. This view animates current examinations of different answers to the crisis of meaning generated by scenes of cruel optimism. The denial of history view's response to such crises, like Sheffield's answer, surveys possible answers, but remains concerned with the importance of archives for the present and the future. In doing so, I propose a different ethical approach to the rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history: I call this *the historical injustice view*. This view

understands such crisis of meaning as ethical disagreement over how to understand and tackle systemic oppression that are historically reproduced, i.e., whose “persistence cannot simply be regarded as a legacy (of the past)” (Nutti 2019, 27).

4.1.1 The Structure of the Ethical Rules Giving Coherence to Untimely Uses of History

At the heart of the forms that untimely uses of history take from the creation of digital archives and the digitization of archival materials to the subsequent objects and documents that such archival engagement make possible are the underlying ethical issues that form part of the rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history.³¹ Indeed, we find in these debates and conversations as they relate to lesbian history two contrasting understandings of the ethical gesture that underlies untimely uses of history.

The first view is associated with the archival optimism view I have described and discussed in part I of this dissertation and that I have labeled *the denial of history view*, i.e., a concern with redressing the suppression of lesbian history from general narratives, and the building of a sense of a long-standing queer history of resistance that supports current demands for a better future in addition to building community through the building of history. Under this view, untimely uses of history address the denial of history by doing right by a future archival subject in leaving behind as much as possible for them to confront the present. Consider a

³¹ As we have seen in chapter 2, cultural techniques and their changes through time shape these rules too.

concrete example of this view in Cogswell's memoir, discussed in a previous chapter.

At the end of her memoir, *Eating Fire: My Life as a Lesbian Avenger* (2014), Kelly Cogswell narrates the moments that led her to create what would become the Lesbian Avengers Documentary Project (LADP), a digital archive documenting the Lesbian Avengers. While living in France, in the 2008, Cogswell (and her partner Ana Simo) got invited to do a presentation on the Lesbian Avengers at a conference on "Lesbians and the Weapon of Laughter". For the presentation, Cogswell was revisiting for the first time since the mid-1990s Lesbian Avengers documents (like their 1993 documentary *Lesbian Avengers Eat Fire, Too*, pictures of direct actions organized by the Avengers, and more). In doing so, she decided to google the Lesbian Avengers to see what was present on the web about this group that had an international reach at its height. She found nothing (Cogswell 2014, 225). She writes: "our history had disappeared. First, Natalie Barney. Then the Avengers. Now, we were even filtered out of the Web, and nobody seemed to notice or care" (Cogswell 2014, 226). For Cogswell, this absence of the Lesbian Avengers is in line with other instances of denial of lesbian history such as the one of the early 20th century lesbian figure Natalie Barney. In grappling with this denial of history as a continuum over time, Cogswell focuses on the development of the LADP digital archive and the digitization of Avengers documents to create visibility and access to the Lesbian Avengers history as well as the tools the group had created in the 1990s and could be of use to activists today (Cogswell 2014, 230). In addition, when asked after another conference, this time in the United States, if she would like to archive

her papers at Harvard University's archive, she replied that she would, and then she did (Cogswell 2014, 230; Kelly Cogswell Papers, 1968-2018).

In short, animated by the question "we could disappear, and who'd know we'd gone?" (Cogswell 2014, 231), Cogswell engaged in the creation of a digital archive, the deposit of her papers in an institutional archive and the digitization of documents "to be a splinter under society's fingernail, create an annoyance for the forces of invisibility" (Cogswell 2014, 230) and to say in short: "Look. There's proof. We existed. It's my world, too." (Cogswell 2014, 230). Animating the denial of history view is the idea that the past could be lost and that parts of it can be saved from oblivion by leaving traces from our lives, activism, and the lesbian history we have accumulated over the years and creating pathways to access said traces.

This mobilization of digitization to create access and visibility for lesbian history is of course not limited to Cogswell's case alone. It coheres with other studies on lesbian history and digitization such as McKinney's examination of "lesbian-feminist digitization practices" at the New York based Lesbian Herstory Archive. Indeed, the archives' "lesbian-feminist goals emphasize the need to provide not only safekeeping for, but, moreover, *access to* lesbian materials" (McKinney 2020, 159). Digitization then, on the one hand, is about navigating what McKinney calls the "digital imperative," i.e., "the idea that digitization is a necessary, inherently progressive process [that] archives must carry out to stay relevant and preserve their holdings." (McKinney 2020, 159). On the other hand, digitization is an infrastructure of access that fights against the denial of history with a rich collection of materials (McKinney 2020, 159) to which digitization and the brick-and-mortar

archive “build the information infrastructure through which lesbian history might continue to be enlivened, guiding how histories of sexuality are accessed and imagined” (McKinney 2020, 204). Thus, in the denial of history view, to avoid that the lesbian past be gone, it is key to create and maintain pathways of access as “that there will continue to be more and more paper to do something with ensures a past that matters, a present animated by vital technologies, and a future with a value in it” (McKinney 2020, 216). However, such a conception of the past that underlies the denial of history creates more silences than it challenges. To illustrate this point, I turn to the work of Jack Giesecking on lesbian and queer communities and patterns of gentrification.

In their work on “a historical geographic rendering of urban lesbian-queer spaces and places of the recent past” (Giesecking 2020, 9), specifically focused on New York City, Jack Giesecking productively shifts the focus of understanding practices of lesbian and queer space production from a concern with the denial of history to what I am calling a historical injustice perspective. Although they note that, “Park Slope is one of the world’s most studied cases of gentrification, yet the lesbian-queer role in that process has been greatly under-explored” (Giesecking 2020, 152) and that “the project of recording lesbian and queer histories recuperates stolen queer pasts to rework and resist the toxic present” (Giesecking 2020, 235), I maintain that Giesecking’s approach to gentrification is not guided by a denial of history view, but rather by a historical injustice view. Instead of fighting denial of history through visibility and access, Giesecking’s approach is to rather ask about the lesbian lives of participants. In so doing, Giesecking does not find a

disappeared history. Rather, in studying the history of gentrification in New York over the period of study (1983-2008), Gieseeking identifies patterns of lesbian-queer gentrification in the New York neighborhood of Park Slope, where the Lesbian Herstory Archives studied by McKinney discussed above is located.

Central to Gieseeking's approach for my purposes is that lesbian-queer space creation is contextualized within processes of gentrification that in turn are conceived as historical injustices, i.e., as injustices that "do not merely remain present as something passively handed down from a distant era" (Nuti 2019, 27), but rather partially establish "the background conditions in which individuals and collective agents interact" (Nuti 2019, 28). In doing so, Gieseeking refocuses the injustice from the absence of or the limited number of studies on lesbian-queer space creation to gentrification and the unjust processes that make it possible through time. Indeed, Gieseeking writes that:

The absence or restriction of Puerto-Rican, other Latinx, and Black queers, working-class and poor queers, and non-college-educated queers from a neighborhood that once was home to many members of these groups is palpable and painful to record. Lesbian-queer gentrification was and is analogous to the outgrowth of the settler mentality that combines the lesbian land movements with the back-to-the-city movement of antisuburban (and what they saw as anti-cis-heteropatriarchal) sentiment (Gieseeking 2020, 194).

Since, for Giesecking, “neighborhood-level gentrification, like all processes of injustice, is bound to and dependent upon racism, classism, sexism, and cis-heteropatriarchy writ large” (Giesecking 2020, 235), the aim in studying such process is to resist processes of gentrification through engagement with history that helps better understand how it works and structures lesbian-queer lives and space creation practices. Indeed, while gaps and silences in history and the archive take many forms (Trouillot 2015), such silences are not reduced by way of only playing at the level of sources, archives, narratives and history, but also by way of avoiding silence about processes of injustice and their reproduction.

In shifting from a denial of history view to a historical injustice view, the ethical focus is not just on working on making visible lesbian-queer space creation and the forms it takes, but in addition, and especially to focus on calling for “coalition building, which, of course, includes antigentrification, antiracist, anticolonial, and trans feminist organizing” (Giesecking 2020, 235).

Giesecking’s work and Cogswell’s narrative furnish two contrasting examples that help showcase two differing views on shaping understandings of the ethical aspect of the rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history. The historical injustice view that I here seek to develop is concerned with addressing historical injustice by way of a concern with the ways in which “transplanting the radical strategies of the past on to the present can reproduce the same injustices against which they were devised” (Giesecking 2020, 194). In other words, the goal is not to create a new Park Slope, i.e., a new lesbian neighborhood that will not only feed into gentrification processes but also will in the long run not be a space where lesbians

can live in as those that would be able to move there at some point would end up pricing themselves out. Rather, the ethical task is to pay attention to the reproduction of injustices through time and change ways to evaluate if something from the past is totally complete and consider how it could be usefully remobilized in the present.

In this chapter, then, I argue for a shift from the denial of history view to the historical injustice view to characterize the rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history. As I present them, these rules have three interrelated aspects: a goal or aim, a specific concern about the past, and a method to address these concerns about the past to reach its goal or aim. In section 4.2, I shift the understanding of the scene of cruelty from generational differences to ethical disagreement. In doing so, I argue for change in our understanding of the aim of the ethical rules that guide untimely uses of history from a focus on doing right by a future archival subject to navigating a horizon of expectation animated by the limits of objects and documents for action in the present. Specifically, my argument addresses both the ways in which we cannot copy and paste what we find in archives and our need for an ethical criterion of evaluation that I call “making sense of the lesbian past” as a way to do the evaluative work required to assess the usefulness of remobilization in the present. In section 4.3, I turn to showing how crises of meaning do not imperil the importance of lesbian archives and the past they preserve and make accessible, but rather are concerned with the silence this sole focus on vindicating the importance of lesbian archives for contemporary politics perpetuates on processes of historical injustice and their reproduction. As such, to resolve such crises of meaning for

action in the present, what is needed is to evaluate the objects, documents and practices of the lesbian archives for action in the present focused not on bringing greater lesbian visibility, but rather targeted against the shifting practices of structures of oppression in the present.

4.2 Towards an Ethics of Distance

One key characteristic of untimely uses of history and their relationship to the past is that the past is at varying distance from us. The “constantly changing whole or totality” (White 2014, xiii) that is the past with the events, objects and documents we have access to are closer or further away to us in ways that are not linear and constitute “our” past, present, or future in different ways. How such distances from the past are conceptualized in turn shapes how to deal with and settle historical and ethical disagreements between groups differently situated in relation to the past, such as between those that, in the past, created the archives and those that, in the present, stand in for an imagined future archival subject that animated the creation of the archive in the first place.

In this section, I will contrast the generational understanding of this distance from the past that we find in the denial of history view with Bernard Williams’s account of how to deal with a past at various distance from us in order to show that the ethical disagreement that animates the diagnostic of cruel optimism is not to be limited to generational differences, but rather is to be understood in terms of a

confrontation of ethical outlooks focused on ethically evaluating the objects and documents from the archive for action in the present.

4.2.1 Generational Distance and the Denial of History View

In the context of the historical material under survey in this dissertation, the denial of history view is most clearly expressed in and referenced back to Joan Nestle, long time lesbian activist, writer, and founder of the Lesbian Herstory Archive. In the simplest terms, the denial of history view is concerned with redressing the patriarchal suppression of lesbian history through mobilizing visibility and access to objects and documents of the lesbian past in order to do right by a future archival subject which needs as much as they can get to deal with the challenges of the present.³² Indeed, for Nestle, “the strongest reason for creating the archives was to end the silence of patriarchal history about us—women who loved women. Furthermore, we wanted our story to be told by us, shared by us and preserved by us” (Nestle 1990, 87).

Patriarchal history’s suppression of lesbian history is the central ethical focus of a denial of historical point of view. The archive intervenes in this process of silencing to, as Nestle puts it, “leave the fullest record we can leave”, to challenge “a simplified, homogenized past” that would “not be rich enough in ideas, inspirations, actions or images to nourish a diverse and embattled lesbian community of the future” (Nestle 1990, 93). Thus, through methods of visibility and access the denial

³² See also (Bessette 2018, 12).

of history view is concerned with the task of connecting “the present struggles of lesbian women of all backgrounds to the past, to show, the legacy of resistance and to give the keys needed to unlock the sometimes coded language of liberation battles of another time” (Nestle 1990, 91). In doing so, Nestle hopes, on the one hand, “to bring the collection alive, to show its inclusiveness, its respect for lesbians of all colours, classes, physical abilities, cultural backgrounds and sexual styles” (Nestle 1990, 88), and on the other hand, that “the discussion of lesbian strategies and identities that these objects represent will go on for generations to come, each decade adding its layers of complexity” (Nestle 1990, 93).

As we’ve seen in chapter 3, this view leads to a diagnostic of cruel optimism in the present when this imagined reaction from the future archival subject is confronted, in the present, to a host of positive and negative reactions to the materials archived and the values of inclusivity and diversity it portrays. In Nestle’s account and in the denial of history view more generally, both the distance of the imagined future subject from these materials and the different understanding of these values of inclusion and diversity especially as it relates to issues of racism and cissexism that shape the host of reactions from the future imagined archival subject in the present are understood generationally, i.e., the distance from the lesbian past of those that created the archive and those in the present that are situated at different distances from that past are understood as characterizing different generations. The crisis of meaning that arise from the tension that lesbian history and its archives raise around issues of racism and cissexism are understood in turn as generational debates.

Consider now another example of this view. In their work on lesbian historical methods and digital humanities Michelle Schwartz and Constance Crompton are concerned with how digital humanities methods can be used to “engage with the historiography of the women who came before us to aid us as we work toward greater intergenerational understanding” (Schwartz and Crompton, 2018, 131). By this they mean to move away from a certain “‘generational chauvinism’ that reduced radical lesbians of the 1970s to stereotypes” for 1990s lesbians or again, how “there had been a similar generational rift between lesbian feminists and the women of the bar scene that preceded them” (Schwartz and Crompton, 2018, 131). In other words, Schwartz and Crompton are “interested in engaging lesbian historiographic methods, especially the enumeration, naming, cataloging, listing, and self-publishing that women undertook in the 1960s and 1970s in order to help keep omission, misnaming, and censorship from hindering intergenerational understanding and knowledge transmission” (Schwartz and Crompton, 2018, 131). By conceiving of the distance from the past generationally, the denial of history view is concerned with the ways in which disagreement about values can lead to further denial of history and sabotage efforts to create visibility and access to material that has important tools to confront our present.

This focus on generations and on keeping intergenerational lines of communication open, is concerned with how different lesbian generations did or did not conceive of racial justice and gender identity inclusion and how the form these conversations take is negatively shaped by social media and what Ryan Conrad and Gary Lee Pelletier (2022) call “acid sociality”. Rather than talking about “cancel

culture” or “call out vs call in”, with acrid sociality, Conrad and Pelletier are concerned with the “relational behavior that destroys potential bonds, political affinities, and collaborations across difference with sympathetic others” (Conrad and Pelletier 2022, 86).

The framing in terms of generational disagreements and the form that these conversations take is thus centered on the ethical question of, on the one hand, “why we are so vicious to each other—to individuals we share varying degrees of our politics, art, scholarship, bodies, disciplines, values, struggles, pleasures, hopes, critiques, and traumas with across varying degrees of difference” (Conrad and Pelletier 2022, 82), and, on the other hand, “what kind of ethical relations to problematic queer, lesbian, and feminist histories are possible when the desire for inclusion into queer, lesbian, and feminist history is so pressing, so injured, and so hurt?” (Tompkins 2019, 152). In other words, such a generational framing is concerned with developing an ethics of conversation that promotes action in the present to continue fighting against racism, cissexism, and more by mobilizing this lesbian history while continuing to do better on issues of inclusion and diversity as it relates to race and gender identity.

At issue, in my view, with such a generational framing of our various distance from the lesbian past is that on the one hand it limits the scope of ethical issues to the question of the ethics of conversation, and on the other hand, it elides the ways in which we cannot, as alluded in section 3.3.3, just up and pick what we find in the archive and remobilize it in the present. Thus, another way of understanding our various distance from the lesbian past is needed. To do so, I turn now to the work of

Bernard Williams that opens the scope of the ethical issues that a past at various distance raises.

4.2.2. From Generational Debates to Confrontation of Ethical Outlooks

For Bernard Williams, a concern with life is a concern with ethics, as “the only serious enterprise is living” (Williams 1985, 117). The denial of history view is concerned with life as a “complex creation” (Nestle 1990, 93) with a potential to be understood to craft how it can be different (Samer 2022, 4). Thus, this view is also concerned with ethics in William’s sense. Ethics is concerned with life for Williams because “the aim of ethical thought [...] is to help us construct a world that will be our world, one in which we have a cultural, and personal life” (Williams 1985, 111). Thus, at stake in an ethical concern with life is that “we must also see that our reactions and relations to other groups are themselves part of our ethical life, and we should understand these reactions more realistically in terms of the practices and sentiments that help to shape our life” (Williams 1985, 160).

At stake ethically when contrasting the ethical outlook³³ of groups at different distances in the past is how much theirs is a position we can adopt and integrate into our own ethical outlook in the present. Put another way, at stake in such ethical confrontations is that “it matters whether the contrast of our outlook

³³ By “ethical outlook” Williams means “fairly large-scale systems or bodies of beliefs and attitudes” (Williams 1985, 162).

with another is one that makes a difference, whether a question has to be resolved about what life is going to be lived by one group or the other” (Williams 1985, 160).

The ethical question that emerges, then, when considering pasts of varying distances is not one of an ethics of conversation, but rather the question of how to resolve³⁴ the disagreement to find pathways for action in the present. This is so because distance, in my interpretation of Williams’s account, is to be understood in terms of a kind of confrontation between ethical outlooks.

For Williams, confrontation between ethical outlooks (such as that found in the case under investigation between those that created the lesbian archive and the future imagined archival subject reacting to it in the present at different intervals) is characteristic of “ethical disagreement as we more ordinarily meet it” (Williams 1995a, 147) contrary to moral philosophy’s typical focus on extremes. To illustrate the kind of confrontation between ethical outlooks at play I turn to Williams’s essay titled “Saint-Just’s Illusion”.

In this essay, Williams is concerned with interpreting the illusion at the heart of the Jacobin leader Saint-Just famous last word “after all, it was I who did that”, pointing to “the great tables of the Rights of Man” (Williams 1995a, 135). Saint-Just’s

³⁴ At work in Williams account is two sense of the word “resolve” as it relates to ethical outlooks. In the first sense, it has to do with the kind of confrontation at work between two groups situated at different distances temporally: is it a “real confrontation” or a “notional confrontation”, i.e., is the ethical outlook a “real” option for the group? In the second sense, “resolve” in Williams work relates to ethical conflicts in real confrontations with real options: such conflict is not to be resolved in the sense of an ethical theory giving guiding principles and values to settle an ethical conflict or disagreement on how to parse through what left from the past and how apply to present, but rather to be understood historically in its contingency and chance.

illusion is one that is marked by the gap between two kinds of confrontation between ethical outlooks. In Williams words:

Saint-Just's illusion marks the meeting place of two spaces that we naturally treat differently. One is the space of our actual social and political life, within which we encounter various political and ethical demands and ideals, argue with them, adapt ourselves to them, try to form a conception of an acceptable life within them. The other space, of which we may be conscious only in a very shadowy way, is of other conceptions and ideals and world pictures that human beings have had, and may perhaps still have elsewhere, which are not part of our social and political space, are not even starters for a life we might now lead, and are—strictly in that sense—alien to us” (Williams 1995a, 139).

These two spaces in turn describe two kinds of confrontation, two ways of dealing with the ethical disagreement that arises from them. What characterizes the first space and the ethical disagreements that are at work in it is that the two ethical outlooks that are under examination constitute both a “real” option for the group in the present such that “we may see the alternative conception of an ethical life as a real possibility for us and our world” (Williams 1995a, 146). The confrontation at work here is a “real” confrontation. For Williams,

An outlook is a real option for a group either if it already is their outlook or if they could go over to it; and they could go over to it if they could live inside it in their actual historical circumstances and retain their hold on reality, not engage in extensive self-deception and so on. The extent to which they can do

this depends on what features of their present social situation are assumed to remain constant if they go over to the other outlook (Williams 1985, 160-161).

If two competing outlooks are a real option, then, the contrasting ethical outlook is “something to be argued with, not only something to be understood” (Williams 1995a, 146).

If, on the other hand, the competing outlook is not a real option because it is so far in the past that it cannot be a real option or because the values that it embodies in the past are not held in the same way in the present, then the confrontation between ethical outlooks is notional, i.e., it is something to be understood, but not argued with.

Regarding specifically the kind of ethical confrontation at play in relation to various distance from the lesbian past, Williams’s account distinguishes between cases where the past is so far away that the ethical outlook at play is not a real option, from those where both ethical outlooks are real options. For example, the ethical outlook of lesbians in the early modern period (Traub 2016) are not a real option for us and have not been for a long time since the distance between is so great that we could not live inside that period’s ethical outlook without some self-deception. By contrast, ethical disagreements between the creator of archives and the future imagined subject in the present are (or at least often are) a real confrontation since either outlook is a real option. Indeed, to draw on lesbian

history and archives of the last few decades the objects, documents, and narrative refer to questions or navigate situations that are a real option in the present.

What makes a confrontation notional is not simply that it is X years away from us, but also that values shift and transform too. Indeed, part of Saint-Just's illusion has to do with an understanding of freedom that does not make sense in the present context in which he uttered his last words. For Williams, all values have a "primitive version" that is then further developed in historically specific ways. However, when circumstances shift enough, such historically specific conceptions become "in a sense alien, and belong to a different world" (Williams 1995a, 138). Thus, it is not only that Saint-Just's ethical outlook cannot be taken in the present in which he uttered his last words, but that in addition, the way he understood the value of freedom did not make sense in that present context anymore, making his statement obsolete such that "the social requirements in terms of which an expression is viable in one set of historical conditions may make it a disaster in another: that was the nature of Saint-Just's illusion" (Williams 1995a, 137).

These two aspects that make a confrontation notional (namely, ethical outlooks that cannot be taken up and values that have shifted in ways that make them inapplicable in the same way in the present) push Williams to "raise a question about the interpretation of ethical and political ideas, such as freedom, in different times and circumstances" (Williams 1995a, 135). Under consideration for Williams is both the question of how to deal with ethical disagreement in real confrontations as well as how to examine the shifting ways values are understood:

A value, in this case freedom, can demand different social and political expression at different times, and it is not simply a misunderstanding that refers these to the same value. Historical understanding is necessary to see how this can be so. (Williams 1995a, 137)

This aspect of Saint-Just's illusion in relation to his understanding of freedom is especially important for our purposes because when considering confrontation between ethical outlooks of the creator of the archive and its future archival subject in the present, how clear cut such confrontations are depends on the complex ways in which features of our present situation remain constant or shift at different speeds, namely how to understand and evaluate ethical outlooks in relation to questions of racism and cissexism and values of inclusion and diversity.

Thus, contrary to the way in which the generational framing of distance makes it seem like visibility and access are all that is needed to ensure the remobilization of lesbian history in the present, the portrait that emerges out of Williams's understanding of distance through kinds of ethical confrontation gives further support to the conclusion reached above in 3.3.3, namely that an evaluative process is needed for such remobilization to be effective and that the horizon of expectation being navigated is one characterized by the limits of objects and documents for action in the present. We cannot just take things we draw upon as is. We need a way to evaluate how it moves us to action in the present by attending to temporal work, repetition and the movement between past, present and future that characterizes the varying distances we find ourselves from when engaging with that

history. Distance, in terms of confrontation of ethical outlooks, highlights the ways in which what distinguishes a real from a notional confrontation is not fixed in time.

In this moving picture between real and notional confrontations, the question at the heart of such evaluation is, returning to a question posed by Freeman and examined in chapter 3: “how can we know for certain that something is securely done with?” (Freeman 2010, 62) or in Williams’s formulation, how can we know that the features of the present situation have changed so much so that some parts of the ethical outlook we cannot go over to without some self-deception or complacency? In asking the question this way, I shift the critical issue from a question of an ethics of conversation to an ethics of distance focused on the evaluation of the objects and documents in archives for action in the present. This ethics of distance is in turn the central aim of the historical injustice view that I am arguing for.

So far, with my engagement with Williams, I have traced a different characterization of our distance from the lesbian past and the ethical question it raises, namely, how to resolve disagreement to move towards pathways for action in the present through an evaluation of what we find in archives and history. The question now is what form does such ethical evaluation take? Does it draw on specific values, ethical theories, or histories to make the case for one ethical outlook over another? To answer this question, I continue with the work of Williams to show in section 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 that such ethical evaluation takes the form of “making sense” of the lesbian past.

4.2.3 Beyond the Ethical Evaluative Impasse of the Practical Past

The evaluative work that emerges out of an understanding of distance in terms of a confrontation of ethical outlooks ties together ethical considerations that the concept of practical past raises in relation to the evaluation of the objects, documents and ethical outlooks to be drawn from for action in the present. Recall from section 3.2.2 that in moving from an affective to a temporal understanding of engagement with untimely uses of history we find ethics in the “practical” part of the practical past, i.e., that space of experience we draw upon to answer the question of what to do . This part of the past is transformed by the present in light of new experiences as well as new horizons of expectation.

That the practical past is drawn upon to answer an ethical question of what is to be done in the present is however not enough on its own for the full evaluation of the question of what criteria is fit to answer the question of what objects, documents, ethical outlooks are to be drawn upon. For there remains the question of “choosing” or drawing upon the wrong past: wrong in that it is an oppressive past (e.g., drawing on transphobic narratives of lesbian activism) (La Greca 2016, Spiegel 2013) or wrong in that it repeats a mistake from a past movement in the present (e.g., exclusion of women of color from a feminist organization’s campaign). In short, at stake is the question of what criteria (ethical theories, choice or making sense) to use to choose between the diverging real options that are under consideration.

For Williams, the confrontation of ethical outlooks leads to a need to understand ethical disagreement and how to select one real option over another differently. Indeed, Williams asks:

if an ethical disagreement arises, must one party think the other in error? What is the content of that thought? What sorts of discussions or explorations might, given the particular subject matter, lead one or both of them out of error? (Williams 1995a, 145).

Depending on how ethical disagreement is conceived—as error, as falsehood, as contrasting values, as wrongness—what kind of criteria (ethical principles or values, making the right choice, what makes sense of the past) are to be used to argue for one position over the other will change? Thus emerges the longstanding problem of objectivity in ethics, or as we will see here, the impasse of the problem of objectivity in ethics in that no criteria has, after scrutiny, the authority to support the claim that it is the one to be used comparatively to another (Williams 1985; Williams 1995a).

In this section, I show that in moving away from the denial of history view and attending to the question of how to resolve ethical disagreement by way of rethinking how to conceive of that disagreement in the first place, the evaluative criteria to resolve disagreement to open space for action in the present is, drawing further from Williams, that of “making sense” of the lesbian past.

Recall La Greca’s suggestion that to move past the ethical questions White’s separation of the practical past from the historical past raises involves developing a

critical narrative to move past present oppression, inequalities and injustices since “not every solution to a social issue is in itself an ethically good or acceptable solution” (La Greca 2016, 409). I read La Greca as advocating for an historical “ethical theory” in Williams’s terms, i.e., “a theoretical account of what ethical thought and practice are, which account either implies a general test for the correctness of basic ethical beliefs and principles or else implies that there cannot be a test” (Williams 1985, 72). In other words, La Greca, in my reading, gives a first outline of what a test for principles or ethical beliefs can and should look like.

At issue with ethical theories is how they understand ethical disagreement and their resolution: by finding “justificatory reasons” (Williams 1985, 112) for one option over the other. As Williams puts it:

Here the aim of theory is not simply, or even primarily, to understand conflict. We have other ways, historical and sociological, of understanding it. The aim of theory is rather to resolve it, in the more radical sense that it should give some compelling reason to accept one intuition rather than another. The question we have to consider is: How can any ethical theory have the authority to do that? (Williams 1985, 99)

Ethical theory then shifts where to look for a criterion that escapes the problem of objectivity in ethics. The shift is away from the examination of two real options and toward the question of how an ethical theory and the way it understands values and principles can bypass the problem of objectivity. The impasse, then, is left untouched and just shifts domain. In addition, for Williams being faced with this

impasse does not mean there is nothing we can do to attend to injustices and oppression. As he puts it:

A respect for freedom and social justice and a critique of oppressive and deceitful institutions may be no easier to achieve than they have been in the past, and may well be harder, but we need not suppose that we have no ideas to give them a basis. We should not concede to abstract ethical theory its claim to provide the only intellectual surroundings for such ideas (Williams 1985, 198).

Before considering what this other path is in Williams's work, I briefly consider an alternative criteria to ethical theories: the choice we make to draw on specific aspects of the past and not others and in turn what can guide that choice.

At work in such conceptions is a certain understanding of choice, decision and action that puts willing at the center due to a certain conception of morality as it relates to blame and justice, a conception that in Williams's view is expressed in the idea that "it lies in the seeming requirement of justice that the agent should be blamed for no more and no less than what was in his power" (Williams 1995b, 72). In turn, "what depends on his will is what is strictly *in his power*: it is with regard to what he wills that the agent himself has the sense of power in action to which Nietzsche refers" (Williams 1995b, 72).

This picture is morally interesting as it focuses the question of how to attend to these historical moments of non-choice through what Williams calls "a fantasy of retrospective prevention" (Williams 1995b, 73). The idea here is that as the one

faced with historical harm, “I have a fantasy of inserting into the agent an acknowledgment of me, to take the place of exactly the act that harmed me” (Williams 1995b, 73). In this fantasy then, change only requires changing “the idea of the agent at the moment of the action” rather than “the network of circumstances in which his action was actually embedded” (Williams 1995b, 73). At issue then with the will at the heart of choice, decision, and action is that, when considering ethical questions, it turns our attention to the will as this thing that, if changed, could have brought about justice or can do so retrospectively.

At issue then ethically with the practical past, is not that there is no guarantee of freedom of choice, but that drawing from history for the present and towards the future also requires attending to aspects of the past that are present in ways that affect what and how we draw on them, for example and perhaps primarily, aspects of the past that are historical injustices (Nutti 2019). I will return to this question in section 4.3. For now, what is important is that a different criterion other than choice is needed to take up one ethical outlook over the other.

The starting point to identify such a criterion is the value of truthfulness. For Williams, when moving past the problem of objectivity, the question of the status of truthfulness in relation to our ethical reflections is what we are left to contend with and such contending requires more than the tools of philosophy (Williams 1985, 148).

In his late work *Truth and Truthfulness*, Williams is concerned with just that: that to answer questions about ethical disagreement we need more than philosophy

on its own. On his view, truthfulness is a value to be justified through a vindictory genealogical inquiry that can serve “to explain the basis of truthfulness as a value, and to suggest ways in which we can think about the forms that it has taken, and elaborations that it has received, in different historical circumstances” (Williams 2002, 20). This vindication is important in Williams’s genealogies because, it is by looking at values historically in the context of their emergence and function that it is possible to justify their use as a criteria for evaluation that does not fall back into the impasse of the problem of objectivity.

For Williams truthfulness, while a key aspect of ethical evaluation, in that “ethical thought should stand up to reflection, and that its institutions and practices should be capable of becoming transparent” (Williams 1985, 199) is not the primary criteria of evaluation that, in my reading, his account is proposing. I want to propose here that in my reading of Williams the criteria we can get out of his work to do the evaluation of the objects, documents and ethical outlooks to be drawn from for action in the present is what Williams calls “making sense” of the past (Williams 2002, 233). Such a framing in turn has consequences for how we understand the kind of drawing from the past for action in the present at the heart of the practical past as well as how to understand ethical disagreement. It is to these issues I turn in the next section as I give an account of making sense of the lesbian past as a criteria for evaluation.

4.2.4 Making Sense of the Lesbian Past

What is particular about making sense is a relation between a story that makes sense of the past and its truth. Truth is not enough on its own to determine which outlook, objects or documents to take up on this account. As Williams puts it:

when we try to make sense of a particular happening, we often tell a story about a sequence of events that led to it. If we do make sense of it (or explain it, or come to understand it), we must take the elements of the story to be true, but that of course is not enough: the sequence of events has to make sense to us, and make sense of the outcome (Williams 2002, 233).

In addition to the truth, what is needed is to make sense of things: a sequence of events or story (things worked out as described) and a certain outcome (things end up as they did). This is why, for Williams, truthfulness is a key part of the criteria necessary for evaluation but is not *the* criteria of evaluation because in addition to truth we need to make sense of the past. This is especially true in the case that I am concerned with, i.e., dealing with questions of social justice and lesbian activism both within archives and its history and in the present. As Williams highlights, this distinction between truth and making sense is especially salient when “people who think of themselves as a community that has suffered oppression and are looking for ways in which to make sense of it, but that is just one example; moreover, they do not by any means all seek to make sense of it in the same way” (Williams 2002, 256).

In relation to making sense, then, truth appears as the answer to a question. As such for Williams, “there would be such a thing as ‘the truth about the past’ only if there were one most basic question about the past that was the concern of those

inquiring into it, and there is no such question” (Williams 2002, 258). Thus, Cogswell’s memoir for example, can be understood as, among other things, making sense of the Lesbian Avengers’ arc as an activist group, as seeking to make sense of what happened to the Lesbian Avengers and their fight for lesbian visibility. The organization of the memoir in 4 parts titled “I. Activist Honeymoon”, “II. Enemies Within”, “III. A Laboratory of Identity”, and “IV. Vivas to Those Who Have Failed” supports such a reading. Cogswell’s concern is not just telling the truth about the Lesbian Avengers, i.e., not only is Cogswell creating access and visibility to the Lesbian Avengers activism (which is the core method of the denial of history view), but she is also putting a story together creating the sequence of events of how the Lesbian Avengers emerged and how they dissolved and why and how this sequence of events and its outcomes came about.

If making sense is not just about truth about the past (Williams 2002, 258), then what is it about? It is also about these elements of a story or an outcome that do not add up. As we have seen, the denial of history view emerges as the ethical rules that guide untimely uses of history because of suppression of lesbian history, but also to fight different forms of structural oppression such as racism, sexism, queerphobia, and more. Specifically, then, returning to the scenes of cruel optimism that the lesbian archives often generate as it relates to race and gender identity at play is not just the question of inclusion and exclusion of current and past people into a movement or history and disagreement about that. At play is that something about the story that lesbian archives tell about themselves does not add up regarding issues of racism, cissexism and the whiteness of many archives. This is

what to its core the ethical disagreement or conflict is about: these moments that do not add up. At stake is not to prove that one story is false and another is closer to the truth, or to what actually happened, but rather at stake is how to re-sequence the story so that things add up in terms of what we find ourselves faced with in the present.

Making sense of the past thus functions as a criteria for the evaluation of the objects, documents and ethical outlooks to be drawn from for action in the present through its relationship to truth and its focus on stories and outcomes as they relate to the past. Making sense of the past offers a criteria to examine what objects and documents to remobilize in ways that respect the veto power of sources in that making sense needs to be truthful. What we draw upon for action in the present cannot be things that are false or not true or just a matter of what an individual or group feels like (Williams 2002, 240). What making sense highlights is that even when all the facts are truthful, it can still be the wrong story, or not resolve the disagreement.

In addition, making sense of the past offers a criteria to navigate the shifting ways in which past stories present real or notional options. As Williams puts it:

If the story makes sense of things, this implies that we, the listeners, can make sense of the elements of the story, for instance, of actions that have significantly marked and formed that history. But this does not necessarily mean that we think that those actions make sense: that is to say, that we would regard them as reasonable things for us to do, or that we think the

states of mind from which they come [...] are reasonable (Williams 2002, 234).

In other words, making sense attunes our examination to the difference between real and notional confrontations by evaluating if an ethical outlook is a real option in that it is something we could take up in our current situation and not just as something we understand why and how it happened in the past.

In sum, making sense functions as an evaluative criteria through its relationship to truth, and it emerges particularly in the context of what does not add up in a story or what does not explain an outcome. In doing so, making sense refigures how to understand ethical disagreement. Indeed, making sense opens up a way to contrast two understanding of ethical disagreement as it relates to untimely uses of history: the first is ethical disagreement as in need of values to make the right choice in regards to what composes the practical past such that it can be drawn upon for action in the present; the second is ethical disagreement as aiming to convince one party over the other and thus requiring understanding and “making sense” to choose between competing outlooks (Williams 2002). The former is closely associated with a denial of history view as about doing better in the present and the future while building on the efforts of the past to fight racism, cissexism and other forms of oppression within and beyond lesbian communities. The latter is key to Williams’s account of making sense and the disagreements it generates that cannot be solved by truth or history as it is about these things in stories and outcomes that just do not add up.

Importantly, making sense is not, on the one hand, a form of relativism as relativism aims in one way or another to flatten conflict, make it go away (Williams 2002, 260). On the other hand, making sense is not a matter of will, or of changing wills in that to take up one ethical outlook or story over another all that would be needed is a change of will. For Williams, building on his previous discussion on the will (Williams 1995; Williams 2002), neither what makes sense nor what comes to make sense after hearing an other's story or sequence of events is something that is about a change of will (Williams 2002, 261-262). Making sense is about ethics and politics or "politics in the broadest sense" as Williams puts it, i.e., it is about how to live and how to bring such life about.

When focused on making sense then, the point is not for resolution to result in the disappearance of one story over another. Rather, the point is to convince the unconvinced (Williams 2002, 260). Such work of persuasion in turn is about politics and political needs. As Williams puts it:

When different stories, with different demands of what makes sense, are told at the same time and in knowledge of one another, they are not insulated from one another, or if they are, this will not be a mere consequence of the relativist account. It will be a political fact, which is constituted by there being two publics that do not speak to each other in ways that make enough shared sense. What will overcome the situation, indeed whether both the parties want it to be overcome, are themselves political questions (Williams 2002, 261).

For example, making sense of the lesbian past as a criteria for evaluation functions as a bridge between the ethical questions that animate the untimely uses of history towards the ways in which such uses of history open up political questions for debate in terms of how to organize, around what issues and towards what political ends in the present. This bridge towards the political in turn is an important aspect to further give context to scenes of cruel optimism: they are not just about ethics, they are also about politics and determining the shape of political movements for justice.

In this section, I have been concerned with the aim of the ethical point of view that animate the ethical rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history. I have argued, through an engagement with the ways in which untimely uses of history are at various distance of the past that such distance is to be understood through a confrontation of ethical outlooks rather than being understood generationally. Thus, the aim of such ethical point of view is not, as present in the denial of history view to do right by a future archival subject. Rather, the aim is to navigate an ethics of distance, i.e., the ways in which we cannot copy what we find in archives and paste them into the present without some evaluative work on how to resolve ethical disagreement for action in the present. Such evaluative work, in turn, is itself based on making sense of the lesbian past as a criteria for evaluation.

This shift in the aim of the ethical view from the denial of history's focus on doing right by an archival subject to the aim of articulating an evaluative criteria is not strictly incompatible with the denial of history view. Indeed, it could be argued that this change can function as an addition or important extension of the denial of

history view and not yet warrant a full change towards a historical injustice view. This is so because, if resolving conflict about making sense is ultimately a political question, then when doing evaluative work through the criteria of making sense at stake is still the concern that this lesbian past is important and necessary to make life more livable hence why the main focus should be on a patriarchal suppression of lesbian history. At stake in the denial of historical view is a certain “potentiality” (Samer 2022) of lesbian lives of the past for those of the present.

However, as I will further develop in the following section, such a focus on the potentiality of the past for the present confines the examination of crises of meaning to speculations about the material in archives. In the following section, I propose a shift of concern and method for the ethical rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history from the denial of history’s concern with visibility, access, and suppression towards the historical injustice view’s concern with injustices as they stretch through time. I develop this shift through a method of reading anew sources by asking about lesbian lives. Shifting the crisis of meaning away from a single focus on vindicating the importance of a lesbian past towards a focus on how to tackle injustices with historical roots and resolve ethical disagreements for action in the present brings forward the political stakes of these scenes of cruel optimism. Indeed, at stake politically in determining the shape of political movements for justice that engage with lesbian archives and history is the question of how to conceive of the temporal complexity of the structures of oppression we are up against and our response to them.

4.3 Towards a Reading Anew of Sources from the Lesbian Past

So far, in this chapter, in pursuing the question at the heart of the ethical view that animates the rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history, I have been concerned with how to conceive of the ethical disagreement that animates the crisis of meaning that scenes of cruel optimism generate. In moving away from generational conceptions towards an understanding of distance as a confrontation between ethical outlooks, I have argued for making sense of the lesbian past as the evaluative criteria to assess the use of remobilization for the present. Making sense, in turn, bridges the ethical question at the heart of the rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history with the political aspects that the crisis of meaning generates: at stake is not just an ethical disagreement, but a political disagreement about how to organize and around what or put another way how to tackle oppression as historically reproduced, rather than a legacy of the past. In short, there is a disagreement over how to conceive of the temporal complexity of structures of oppression.

In this section, then, I am concerned with how to understand the temporal complexity of structures of oppression in relation to our engagement with the lesbian past and the crisis of meaning such engagement generate. The question at the heart of conceiving of the temporal complexity of structures of oppression is: how to conceive of the context in which untimely uses of history and their remobilization take place, i.e., what kind of background condition do structures of

oppression form to our engagement with lesbian history? Indeed, recall that the ethical question that the practical past raises in relation to drawing on the past for the present and towards the future is a question of these aspects of the past that are in the background of what is drawn upon in that they affect what and how things are drawn upon from the past.

In this section, I argue that the denial of history view fails to adequately resolve crisis of meaning and find pathways for action in the present that go beyond pathways of access and demands for visibility because while it attends to the temporal complexity of our relationship to archives and histories it does not approach structures of oppression with the same nuanced temporal approach thus putting lesbian archives in a false dichotomy of “always” having been dealing with racism and cissexism for example in incomplete ways or as “not yet” having successfully addressed these issues. This is a false dichotomy in that it does not attend to the ways in which structures of oppression such as racism and cissexism are reproduced and take different forms. In others words, as I will argue below, such structures have a temporal complexity to be understood in terms of institution and historical injustice to be able to resolve the crisis of meaning scenes of cruel optimism generate by attending to structural injustices as they stretch through time and shift using methods that are able to ask about lesbian lives.

4.3.1 “Lesbian Potentiality” and the Vindication of the Lesbian Past

The potentiality of the past for lesbian lives is concerned with keeping open, with methods of visibility and access, pathways of access to the lesbian past by refocusing the crisis of meaning towards the “contingency of the past—namely, the mutual existence of what happened and what did not happen, or what could have not been but was and what could have been but was not” (Samer 2022, 35). Thus, as Rox Samer (2022) theorizes:

Lesbian potentiality as historiographical methodology means not losing the historical subject in favor of either the contemporary or the futural. Only in doing as much might we, in turn, recognize ourselves as historical subjects, acknowledging that our own work in the pursuit of potentiality will look, sound, and feel totally different from that of the unknowable potentialities to come (Samer 2022, 7).

In short, I read lesbian potentiality as focused on, in negotiating crises of meaning generated by scenes of cruel optimism, how, for example, the absence of queers of colors in a photography exhibit (as the opening example to this chapter describes) and the issues of whiteness and racism it opens up can be reframed in terms of the potentiality of addressing these issues better now (Tompkins 2019, 155).

As a historiographical methodology and concept, then, when looking at objects and documents from the archive (in Samer’s case 1970s feminist film, video and science fiction), lesbian potentiality provides feminist, queer, and transgender media studies with a way of connecting potentialities past and present that neither obfuscates nor reifies their differences. It is a method of illuminating social

movement history that also attends to its privations—the what was *and* the what could have been (Samer 2022, 7).

Such a methodology destabilizes linear understandings of the past, present and future by “not situating the past, present, and future as distinct, successive moments but, in varying ways, coexisting, co-constituted temporalities” (Samer 2022, 18). To attend to this complex temporal relation, Samer transfers the affect towards these objects and documents from the hope that Nestle describes, namely that these objects be at the heart of conversations that will continue for a long time (Nestle 1990, 93), towards lesbian potentiality as a focus on how in “attending to the imaginations of past movements, we make more apparent the potentiality of our own present” (Samer 2022, 36). Indeed, it is because the past, present and future “are in constant movement in relation to one another” (Samer 2022, 36) that encounters with objects and documents from the archive open access to potentiality of the present in ways that activism proper, feminist theory, and other means in the present only barely scratch the surface of (Samer 2022).

In cementing the specific potentiality of objects and documents in the archive, then, lesbian potentiality, while conceding that “racism remains a problem in both movements for, and in theories of, gender and sexual liberation” (Samer 2022, 31), is concerned with vindicating the potentiality of objects and documents for action in the present on these issues due to their untapped potential for the actions that were not done then but could be done now. Indeed, for Samer,

the force of lesbian potentiality and its stakes for working-class and poor women, closeted lesbians, lesbians of color, and trans and gender-nonconforming people--lesbian, out, and otherwise—became apparent when I turned away from writings of women’s movement figureheads and canonical representations of lesbian existence and delved into the imaginative archives of feminist film and video organizations and feminist SF fandom (Samer 2022, 30).

Such a shift in archival focus and canonical representation of lesbian and feminist history opening up lesbian potentiality is confirmed by the argument made by Roderick A. Ferguson (2018) and others (see also Ware 2017) concerned with reconceptualizing what the queer past is even made of especially as it relates to how histories of queerness, race and gender intersect. In thinking about the heritage found in queer and lesbian archives, Ferguson wants us to see the past as “kaleidoscopic”: there are many heterogeneous sexual formations that are transmitted, and this heterogeneity has in it different relations to time and history. In moving away from canonical media productions, Samer starts tracing these heterogenous sexual formations and the potentiality for the present they reveal.

Lesbian potentiality’s approach to crises of meaning is in my view insufficient. While such a framing is somewhat focused on racism and cissexism in specific moments in time of the lesbian movement, for example racism in lesbian communities in the 1950s vs the 1970s vs 1980s vs 1990s vs the present, lesbian potentiality fails to extend the same temporal complexity to these systems as it extends to the lesbian past. In other words, by not tracking the ways in which these

systems' persistence is not a sign of them being a legacy from the past, but rather of the ways in which they are structurally reproduced and take different changing forms (Nutti 2019), lesbian potentially cannot effectively struggle to challenge the reproduction and redeployment of harmful practices and techniques that are markers of these systems' continued reproduction and transformation in the present. As I will show in the following section, that things can be otherwise is more the product of the way in which events in archives and systems of oppression are what I will call, following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *institutions*. As institutions, they are neither fully determined by their past and future. This opens up the possibility of describing an approach to crisis of meaning centered on making the case for lesbian past's potentiality to shift things in the present.

4.3.2 On Institution, Historical Injustice, and the Temporal Complexity of Structures of Oppression

What brings together life, time, 1970s media productions, love and puberty is that they are institutions, i.e., events with a certain "subterranean logic" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 77) wherein neither the past nor the future can fully determine the form they take. In his *Institution and Passivity* lectures, Maurice Merleau-Ponty examines different events that have such a subterranean logic to paint a picture of what institutions are and in turn the consequences this concept has for phenomenology and philosophy more broadly.

Institution is a way to attend to the "difficulties found in the philosophy of consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 76). Phenomenology as a philosophy of

consciousness can only awkwardly account for certain obstacles encountered by the subject, such as the past, memory, dreams, others, sleep, and more (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 206). Institution represents a development of Merleau-Ponty's work from previous concepts such as perception and expression to attend to the problems a philosophy of consciousness cannot adequately account for (Vallier 2005).

In his oft-cited definition of institution, Merleau-Ponty writes that:

Institution [means] establishment in an experience (or in a constructed apparatus) of dimensions (in the general Cartesian sense: system of references) in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will make sense and will make a *sequel*, a history. [...] [The sense] [is deposited] as something to continue, to complete without it being the case that this sequel is determined (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 9; emphasis original).

It is the coming together of these different elements in institution that form its subterranean logic. These elements are: first, a system of reference or "symbolic matrix", second, an undetermined sequel emerging out of the movement of institution, and third, passivity as the sense that institution deposits. I highlight these elements to articulate how institution picks out what lesbian potentiality is aiming at in terms of the importance of the lesbian past and how things could be otherwise. Doing so, in turn, sets the stage for extending temporal complexity to both the lesbian past, and systems of oppression.

A key characteristic that determines if an event or series of events taken together form an institution is that institution engenders a system of reference or

what Merleau-Ponty calls later in the lecture a “symbolic matrix” that characterizes institution “in the strong sense [...] that results in the openness of a field, of a future according to certain dimensions, and from this result we have the possibility of a common adventure and a history of consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 13). This is so because “events like the industrial revolution are what [Merleau-Ponty] calls ‘matrix-events,’ which fundamentally reorganize the field of meaning [...] giving it the durable dimensions in relation to which other events will have meaning” (Vallier 2005, 293). Thus, what makes an event an institution is the ways in which it changes and organizes differently the field of meaning (Vallier 2005, 293; Vallier 2005, 298). In this way, then, the noteworthiness of an institution like 1970s lesbian media production or the establishment of the Lesbian Herstory Archives is embedded in the ways in which these events as symbolic matrixes shifted fields of meaning and opened up space for other events as they relate to lesbian lives, activism, and history to be understood in relation to these institution.

These arrangements and the sequel they engender, however, are indeterminate, in that their direction can neither be explained by the past nor the future (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 77). This is so because institution rethinks the movement between past, present and future from “not clearly demarcated partitions of time” that are “in constant movement in relation to one another” (Samer 2022, 36) to as itself institution through temporality (Morris and Maclaren 2015). Indeed, if as Merleau-Ponty puts it, “time is the very model of institution” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 7), then its movement, its flow between past, present and future has to be rethought.

To do so, Merleau-Ponty starts out with the necessity to rethink the present because “since the past is that which has been present, we cannot comprehend the modality *has been*, the index of the past, if we conceive of the present badly” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 193). Key for Merleau-Ponty is that “the present is not a picture” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 193). Rather, “the present is that which gluts the machine for living; we do not see it fully. It is the *Stiftung* of a field ‘to be developed’ (like a cliché)” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 198). Using here the German term ‘*Stiftung*’ found in Husserl that Merleau-Ponty translates to ‘institution’ in his development of the concept, the present gives rise to an indeterminate sequel that is not determined by the past or the future. The field of meaning that temporality opens up then as the relation between past and present is institution itself. Temporality is what holds together or apart the events that make an institution what it is (Morris and Maclaren 2015, 6). Thus, what institution makes most apparent about the present is not so much its potentiality (Samer 2022, 36) as the indeterminate sequel it gives rise to.

Such a redefinition of the present and temporality has further consequences in how to understand the past. Indeed, if the present is not an outcome of the past, if it cannot be fully explained by what was nor what is to come, then how do we understand the open-endedness of what has been in relation to what could be? Answering that question requires a close examination of the third element. The sense that institution deposits in me is to be understood in terms of “passivity”. What, though, is the relationship between institution and passivity? To show how understanding the temporal complexity of structures of oppression through

institution requires understanding the movement of institution through passivity, I contrast my reading of Merleau-Ponty's concept of institution with Lisa Guenther's development of the concept to also understand structures of oppression in her work in critical phenomenology.

The question of how to understand structures of oppression is at the heart of the development of critical phenomenology. Indeed, Lisa Guenther defines critical phenomenology as “a practice of suspending hegemonic ‘common sense’ accounts of reality in order to reflect on the conditions of lived experience and the lifeworld in which it unfolds” (Guenther 2021, 6). Reflecting on these conditions in turn involves thinking about how they are shaped by structures of oppression such as colonialism and racism. In turn, such structures are understood as quasi-transcendental, i.e., structures that “are contingent in the sense that they have emerged through historical struggles, the outcome of which could have been—and could still become—otherwise” (Guenther 2021, 6).

For critical phenomenology then, such structures “are not just phenomena in the world, but also (inter)subjective ways of seeing, hearing, moving, relating, and sense-making” (Guenther 2021, 6). As such, for Guenther, “what makes an inquiry *critical phenomenology* is [...] a quasi-transcendental analysis of how such experiences are possible, how such a (life)world is possible—not just ‘what is it like’ but also how it got this way, and what would it take to transform the situation” (Guenther 2021, 12; emphasis original).

Mirroring the move Merleau-Ponty makes from constitution to institution, Guenther's conception of quasi-transcendentals shifts from an understanding of such structures as "*constituted* and *constitutive*" (Guenther 2021, 13; emphasis original) to such structures being understood as institutions (Guenther 2022a; Guenther 2022b). Thus, like the move I make here in charting a different account of the temporal complexity of structures of oppression, Guenther understands structures such as racism, white supremacy and colonialism as well as social movements as institutions. Where our accounts differ, however, is in what possibilities for social change such a temporal understanding open up.

In making this move and understanding quasi-transcendentals structures as institutions Guenther aims to zero in on certain account of historical change that come with the ways in which neither the past nor the future can determine institutions and as such radical transformation is possible for a more just world. Indeed, for Guenther:

by an analysis of the contingent temporality of the settler natural attitude, understood as the rhythmic interplay of instituting events and instituted structures, helps to attune us to the possibility of instituting otherwise by organizing collectively around the demand for a different future (Guenther 2022b, 324).

In other words, because institutions are not fixed, not only can structures of oppression be changed, but the sequel they draw upon is open, the field of meaning

they institute can become otherwise through institutions focused on bringing about greater social change such as social movements.

There are two issues with such an interpretation of institutions in relation to the temporal complexity of structures of oppression. First, as noted earlier, an inventory of institutions would include not only structures of oppression but also life, puberty, love, the Industrial Revolution and more. What brings together these things for Merleau-Ponty as institutions is that they all have a subterranean logic as symbolic matrixes giving rise to undetermined sequels through the movement of institution to be understood through passivity. Thus, there is nothing in Merleau-Ponty's account that says anything about how one institution can supersede another, especially as Merleau-Ponty's focus is on how institutions come together to make "one history" (Terzi 2017, 28). Second, and more crucially, the movement of institution is not as agential as Guenther's reading lets it seem with the language of "the possibility of instituting otherwise by organizing collectively" (Guenther 2022b, 324).

Central to institution is that "the instituted makes sense without me" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 8). Thus, this movement of institution is linked to passivity which in turn is key to understanding institution. In his 1954-1955 Collège de France course series, Merleau-Ponty's first course was on institution and the second was on passivity. Importantly, though, is that both courses share an introduction regarding the problem of the philosophy of consciousness that Merleau-Ponty is concerned with. Indeed, at the start of the passivity lecture notes Merleau-Ponty writes "No introduction: cf. other course" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 117) referring to

the institution lecture. This is the first hint of how central passivity is for understanding institution.

Passivity emerges as a way to understand the problem of thinking about the past in terms of institution, i.e., the problem of thinking about the open-endedness of the past and for our purposes the relationship of that open-endedness to social change and understanding the temporal complexity of structures of oppression. As it relates to the past, the problem for a philosophy of consciousness is “how [consciousness] can be inspired by a past which apparently eludes it” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 206). For Merleau-Ponty, the past is both no longer there but also present:

Truth of the (realist) idea that the past is no longer: it is transcendent; we account for it in true memory. Truth of the idea that the past is entirely there: there is nothing of what I have touched which has not opened a field of remembrance and does not stay near (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 198).

To capture the past in this way, Merleau-Ponty argues for a renewed theory of passivity that is “as remote from ‘my past explains me entirely’ as it is from ‘I create the sense of my past ex nihilo’” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 119). This is key because, for Merleau-Ponty, “the past is alive and maintained in the present, via memory and institution; the past is not dead and gone, behind us. The past drives us. But this does not mean that the past drives us in fixed ways” (Morris and Maclaren 2015, 8). For Merleau-Ponty, passivity cannot be “frontal”, i.e., “nothing can be the ‘cause’ of a consciousness, nor the body of sleep, nor the unconscious of my actions, nor the past

of our memories” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 135). Rather it is “always lateral, i.e., the subject recognizes itself as continuing a certain *Stiftung*, a certain perspective” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 135).

In other words, “passivity is not a state of consciousness, not the antonym of activity, but rather refers to the ontological anteriority that would deposit a meaning in me, and would dispose me towards the future” (Vallier 2005, 293). Thus, passivity is what deposits sense in institution as something to continue and what characterizes this sense as neither “merely in me as consciousness” nor “as an object left behind, as a simple remainder or as something that survives, as residue” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 9).

In relation to the lesbian past and its potentiality, then, the idea of institution captures the ways in which the importance of the lesbian past for life does not come from a certain vindication of the lesbian past, but rather from the movement of making a sequel of continuing to live our lives that are themselves institutions and how in turn events of lesbian history will make sense of our experiences. In understanding structures of oppression as institution, what we get is not a theory of social change as described by Guenther. That such structures are institution does not in itself open up ways for their undoing because their movement is just that, movement animated by passivity. Such movement then cannot be the sign of how it can be stirred away from maintaining such structures and the fields of meaning they open and maintain.

By conceiving of structures of oppression as institution what can be fleshed out is the way in which at work in such structures is not just the movement of institution understood through passivity, but in addition another movement that relates to the cultural techniques that fall under the umbrella of the shifting practices that reproduce such injustices in the present. In this way, structures of oppression are both institutions and historical injustices.

This later point is especially important as it relates to the second issue there is in my view with Guenther's account of institution and social change. The first, as described above, is how it does not attend to the relationship between passivity and institution in understanding social change. In doing so, Guenther positions certain institutions like social movements as being able to supersede in some agential way other institutions like oppressive structures. Such an account of institutions makes it hard to further understand the temporal complexity of how such structures show up within movements for social change. All movement for social change have parts that should not be instituted anymore from practices of exclusion to racism and white supremacy. So how do we put a stop to such structures showing up in our movements?³⁵ We turn to the practices that underlie such structures.

Guenther also makes this move understanding such practices as "operations". She writes:

we focus our attention on the *operations* that keep this death-dealing tradition alive, both the 'operations that are the same as the first workings',

³⁵ See Serano 2013.

such as police violence against Black and Indigenous people and the range of 'other operations' that resume and/or diverge from colonial violence to various degrees (Guenther 2022b, 320).

In this focus on practices, what is missing from Guenther's account is how these practices that keep such structures alive and well are also internally changing. Policing, for example, is a practice with cultural techniques that shift through time. By not tracking such cultural techniques and their shifts and new forms, we miss both how policing for example can and does show up in our movements for social change as well as what we need to struggle against to dismantle such structures of oppression. Such an attention to the shifting of cultural techniques under the umbrella of practices as it relates to specifically structures of injustice speaks in turn to what Alasia Nuti (2019) defines as historical-structural injustice meaning that key to injustices that originated in the past but persist through structural reproduction.

This framework of historical-structural injustice permits on the one hand to pick out the normative importance of certain institution over others in our struggle for justice. As Nuti writes: "the unjust history that should normatively matter in justice-based considerations is present because it has been reproduced over time through different means and it still is so" (Nuti 2019, 4). On the other hand, it permits us to describe the background against which we answer the question of what is to be done in drawing on the practical past. Indeed, for Nuti historical-structural injustice functions as "the background conditions in which individuals and collective agents interact" (Nuti 2019, 28).

In understanding structures of oppression as institutions, the crisis of meaning can be understood in terms of a call for an ethics as rules that give coherence to untimely uses of history focused on the temporal complexity of structures of oppression and the tracking of the practices and cultural techniques at work in their reproduction. In doing this work, in turn, what the historical injustice view requires are methods other than visibility and access in order to read anew the objects and documents of lesbian archives not for their potential but for ways to evaluate their use in the present as well as analyze the ways in which they inform us on the temporal complexity of structures of oppression and their reproduction in the present through different forms.

Scholar and digital humanist Lauren F. Klein, for example, is concerned with the intersections of methods to navigate the limit of sources, here specifically digital methods of visualization, and the ways in which digital archives expend the question of archival silence through the forms that access infrastructures take (interface, metadata, archivist list, etc.). Indeed, for Klein, “the digital humanities in fact presents new processes—critical as well as technical—that allow alternative understandings of the archival record to unfold” (Klein 2013, 672). In this context, digital humanities for Klein does “the work of illuminating the limits of technology, of archives, and of knowledge production generally conceived” (Klein 2013, 672).

What would mobilizing digital humanities methods to visualize but not render visible the lesbian past look like? What could we learn? What could we understand differently? How would we be able to understand anew the importance of these sources and that material? As I conclude this chapter these are the

questions left open by my recharacterization of untimely uses of history as a practice that does temporal work and aims to remobilize practices with an historical injustice view as giving coherence to untimely uses of history. Such a recharacterization has technological, historical, ethical and political implications and opens toward further inquiry into how what is needed is to read anew objects and documents from archives for practices adapted to our present and its ever-changing presence.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The 1996 *The Watermelon Woman* by Cheryl Dunye is a lesbian classic about queer friendships, our relationship to lesbian history, navigating racism and classism in queer communities and a great snapshot of the 1990s lesbian culture in the US. In it, Dunye plays a fictionalized version of herself: a Black lesbian filmmaker who is creating a documentary about Faith Richardson. Faith Richardson or as she is called in one of the film credits “The Watermelon Woman” is for the fictionalized Cheryl an erased queer black women figure of film history that this documentary will help recover.

As Cheryl is navigating life, love and friendship and seeing this documentary taking up more and more of her time but also getting her to meet people in Richardson’s life, we see Cheryl being confronted again and again with the difficulties that characterize the historiographical gesture of creating the representation one needs: lack of time and resources to do the work, and sources that don’t say enough, that have disappeared, that were never saved or that were indexed in ways that organized their invisibility.

However, the movie ends with a twist. As the movie ends, the following quote appears in white text on a black background: “Sometimes you have to create your own history. Watermelon Woman is fiction. -Cheryl Dunye” One way to interpret this quote is that Dunye did not stop at “does not exist” to create the representation needed to attend to stories of erasure of black queer women from history. In doing so, *The Watermelon Woman* becomes through its repeated viewing since 1996 and

its remastering to celebrate its 20th anniversary the embodiment of the motto: create the representation you need. It is at the forefront of creating a new shared heritage or an archive in Sara Ahmed's sense of a willfulness or happiness archive: a set of ideas, thoughts, narratives, images, impressions about what characterizes the historiographical gesture of creating the representation one needs (Ahmed 2010, 15).

Another reading of this cultural text and the practices it orients us towards is possible. The historiographical gesture of creating the representation one needs moves us towards the practice of *creating* representations in ways that attend to struggles over the meaning of the histories they emerge from, archival silences, and planned forgetfulness through a variety of means such as films, documentaries, art pieces, archives, articles, etc. Once we turn our attention to practices and do not take for granted that the only historical gesture at work here is the creation of representations what we find is that there is another practice at work here: the repeated screening and viewing of the movie through the decades.

From the repeated witnessing of the difficulties of creating representation emerges a shared understanding of lesbian history that inspires action taking many forms in the present. On the alternate reading I am proposing here this is possible because an attention to practices, the repeated drawing on cultural texts, archival materials and other documents and sources that relate to lesbian history, and the changes such practices and repeated drawing point to through time open questions beyond the limited agenda of representation towards the question of how we might comport ourselves towards lesbian history and archives with an eye toward

constructing different futures. It is this alternative path of inquiry that has been the starting point of this dissertation project.

In this dissertation, I have shown that to engage with lesbian history in ways that guide and inspire action in the present and towards the future worlds that we deserve requires an attention to the practices (understood as technologies) we find in lesbian archives, histories or what I call “untimely uses of history”. In addition, such engagement requires to evaluate what these practices might do in the present through an understanding of their cultural techniques’ temporality, historicity and the ethico-political questions they raise.

As discussed in chapter 2, untimely uses of history take many forms such as: movies like *The Watermelon Woman*, digital archives (e.g., Lesbian Avengers Documentary Project), a queer dating app like Lex inspired by personal ads written in the woman run erotica magazine *On Our Backs* in the 1980s and 1990s, or Instagram accounts dedicated to lesbian history such as @DressingDykes dedicated to lesbian fashion history. The thread joining all these cultural objects is a specific practice, i.e., ways of doing things with rules that give them coherence, and it is this practice that I am referring to with the concept of untimely uses of history. Cultural techniques in turn fall under the umbrella of a specific practice and it is by tracking how such techniques change through time that we can understand a practice such as untimely uses of history in the present.

In chapter 1, I introduced two questions that animate engagements with lesbian and queer activist archives for action in the present: how is change made

and how do we retrospectively understand our movements successes and failures? (Schulman 2021; Cogswell 2021). A key aspect of remobilization of practices that Chapter 2's development of the technological elements of practices (cultural techniques and operations) highlights is that the form that such practices take and the changes they have taken over time are not only the work of our agential reproductions. At work is also the technological aging and transformation of these practices at different speeds.

Returning to the example of direct action I opened the dissertation with, in describing what an effective and powerful direct action and its message looks like, Schulman writes: "the message must be impossible to avoid. It can be funny, but it has to be attention getting; it needs to be insightful. It has to be visually arresting; it cannot be a cliché" (Schulman 2021, 28). However, such demands of what is funny, insightful, and attention getting have been deeply shaped by social media and such imperatives apply equally to a tweet, a reel, or the opening paragraph of a Substack newsletter. Thus, without tracking how technologically what makes direct action effective has shifted, divorced from, but in conversation with our agential reproductions, remobilizations do not open us towards an horizon of expectation attentive to the limits of what we find in archives and the need to evaluate it for action in the present, but stays focused on the idea that all that is needed is for the right actors to know what practices are available. What my account shows, however, is that in addition what is needed is ways to evaluate such practices technologically, ethically and politically to understand the kind of change such practices can bring about in our contemporary moment.

The dissertation focuses on examples and debates in lesbian history, archives and activism, because it is this history that is portrayed as the most resistant to being possible to find practices to remobilize in our present. Indeed, there is a sense that there are few practices available for remobilization because there is a certain heaviness of drawing from that history understood in terms of a “representational burden” (McKinney and Mitchell 2019, 12) or again as what Mairead Sullivan calls a “lesbian disavowal” or in short, a cruel optimism of how to engage with that history without reproducing racism, transphobia and whiteness.

Put another way however, in my view, the starting point of contemporary inquiry that engage lesbian history, archives and activism is a practice: an apology for finding something useful in lesbian history. I situate then the dissertation’s engagement with lesbian scholarship through this gathering of practices encountered: representation, apology, management of affect. The dissertation proceeds through a series of displacements of lesbian studies canon moves and approaches: from visibility to practices and cultural techniques; from studying the period of the 1970s to the present, I focus on the 1990s and the Lesbian Avengers; from a focus on the disappearance of lesbian markers such as bars, concepts, media to untimely uses of history; from generational differences to the confrontation of ethical outlooks; from affect and attachment to ethics. The dissertation processed through such displacements in order to create a new entry point into lesbian history and activism and what I found (in chapter 3) to be the main characteristics of the practice of untimely uses of history through a temporal approach to cultural

techniques that fall under it: untimely uses of history do temporal work and aim at navigating the limits of sources for action in the present.

While in chapter 4, I take up the problem of how to conceptualize the crisis of meaning generated by scenes of cruel optimism that lesbian history and archive generates, my aim in doing so has been to show that practices in archives are not just pathways of resistance and imagination but also an entry point to doing the work of bringing diverse histories together to think anew the task of finding new combinations and extrapolations to try out in our present moment for better future worlds.

REFERENCES CITED

- Ahmed, Sara. 2010. *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2019. *What's The Use? On The Uses of Use*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1998. *The Human Condition*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Armitage, John. 2006. "From Discourse Networks to Cultural Mathematics: An Interview with Friedrich A. Kittler." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no.7-8: 17-38.
- Behrent, Michael C. 2013. "Foucault and Technology." *History and Technology* 29, no.1: 54-104.
- Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bergen, Jan Peter and Peter-Paul Verbeek. 2021. "To-Do Is To Be: Foucault, Levinas, and Technologically Mediated Subjectivation." *Philosophy of Technology* 34: 325-348.
- Bessette, Jean. 2018. *Retroactivism in the Lesbian Archives: Composing Pasts and Futures*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Bevernage, Berber. 2008. "Time, Presence, and Historical Injustice." *History and Theory* 47: 149-167.
- Bowker, Geoffrey C. 2005. *Memory Practices in Sciences*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press.
- Browne, Victoria. 2014. *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Carr, David. 1986. *Time, Narrative and History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Coeckelberg, Mark. 2019. *Introduction to Philosophy of Technology*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Cogswell, Kelly. 2014. *Eating Fire: My Life as a Lesbian Avenger*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cogswell, Kelly, ed. 2021. *The Lesbian Avenger Handbook: A Handy Guide to Homemade Revolution*. New York: Homocom Corporation.
- Conrad, Ryan and Gary Lee Pelletier. 2022. "Here, Queer, and Paranoid! On Acrid Sociality and Collaborating Otherwise," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 9, no.2: 69-92.
- D'Emilio, John. 1998. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- D'Emilio, John. 2004. *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dorrestijn, Steven. 2012. "Technical Mediation and Subjectivation: Tracing and Extending Foucault's Philosophy of Technology." *Philosophy and Technology* 24: 221-241.
- Ernst, Wolfgang. 2013a. "From Media History to *Zeitkritik*." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 6: 132-146.
- Ernst, Wolfgang. 2013b. *Digital Memory and the Archive*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ferguson, Roderick A. 2019. *One-Dimensional Queer*. Medford, MA: Polity.
- Freeman, Elizabeth. 2010. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1966 (1994). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books Edition.
- Foucault, Michel. 1975 (1995). *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books Edition.
- Foucault, Michel. 1976 (1978). *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1984a (1990). *The History of Sexuality Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*. New York: Vintage Books Edition.

- Foucault, Michel. 1984b (1990). *The History of Sexuality Volume 3: The Care of the Self*. New York: Vintage Books Edition.
- Foucault, Michel. 1984c. "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress." In *The Foucault Reader*, 340-372, edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1994a. "Foucault, Michel, 1926—." In *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, edited by Gary Gutting, 314-319. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1994b. "Self Writing." In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 207-222, edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: New York Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1994c. "Technologies of the Self." In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 223-251, edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: New York Press.
- Geoghegan, Bernard Dionysius. 2013. "After Kittler: On the Cultural Techniques of Recent German Media Theory." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 6: 66-82.
- Gerrie, Jim. 2003. "Was Foucault a Philosopher of Technology?" *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology* 7, no.2: 66-73.
- Giesecking, Jack. 2020. *A Queer New York: Geographies of Lesbians, Dykes, and Queers*. New York: New York University Press.
- Griffin-Gracy, Miss Major. 2016. Interview by Mason Funk. July 27, 2016. Transcript, Outwords Collection, <https://theoutwordsarchive.org/interview/miss-major-griffin-gracy/>.
- Guenther, Lisa. 2021. "Abolish the World as We Know It: Notes for a Praxis of Phenomenology Beyond Critique," *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology*, 5, no.2: 28-44.
- Guenther, Lisa. 2022a. "Six Sense of Critique for Critical Phenomenology," *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology*, 5, no.2: 5-23.
- Guenther, Lisa. 2022b. "Asking Different Questions: A Decolonial Reading of Merleau-Ponty's Institution Course Notes." *Chiasmi International* 24: 311-332.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2007. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

- Hartman, Saidiya. 2008. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe*, 26, vol. 12, no. 2 (June): 1-14.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2021. "Intimate History, Radical Narrative." *Journal of African American History* (Winter 2021): 128-135.
- Hellerma, Juhan. 2020. "Koselleck on Modernity, *Historik*, and Layers of Time." *History and Theory* 59, no.2: 188-209.
- Hemmings, Clare. 2011. *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Ihde, Don. 1990. *Technology and the Life-World: From Garden to Earth*. Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Ihde, Don. 1991. *Instrumental Realism: The Interface Between Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Technology*. Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Jordheim, Helge. 2012. "Against Periodization: Koselleck's Theory of Multiple Temporalities." *History and Theory* 51, May 2012: 151-171.
- Jordheim, Helge. 2014. "Introduction: Multiple Times and the Work of Synchronization." *History and Theory* 53, December 2014: 498-518.
- Jordheim, Helge. 2017. "Synchronizing the World: Synchronism as Historiographical Practice, Then and Now." *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History*. 7, no.1: 59-95.
- Jordheim, Helge and Ytreberg, Espen. 2021. "After Supersynchronisation: How Media Synchronise The Social." *Time & Society* 30, no.3: 402-422.
- Kittler, Friedrich A. 1990. *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Kittler, Friedrich A. 1999. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Kittler, Friedrich A. 2013. "In the Wake of the *Odyssey*," In *The Truth of the Technological World: Essays on the Genealogy of Presence*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Kittler, Friedrich A. 2016. "Unpublished Preface to *Discourse Networks*." *Grey Room* 63, Spring 2016: 90-107.
- Klein, Lauren F. 2013. "The Image of Absence: Archival Silence, Data Visualization, and James Hemings." *American Literature* 85, no. 4 (December): 661-688.
- Koopman, Colin. 2017. "Conceptual Analysis for Genealogical Philosophy: How to Study the History of Practices after Foucault and Wittgenstein." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 55 (September): 103-121.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. 2002. *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. 2004. *Futures and Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. 2018. *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Krämer, Sybille. 2006. "The Cultural Techniques of Time Axis Manipulation: On Friedrich Kittler's Conception of Media." *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, no.7-8: 93-109.
- La Greca, María Inés. 2014. "The Future of Philosophy of History from its Narrativist Past: Figuration, Middle voice Writing and Performativity." *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 8: 196-216.
- Lorde, Audre. 2007. "Poetry Is No Luxury." In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 36-39. Berkeley: Crossing Press.
- Lueck, Bryan. 2019. "Forgiveness as Institution: A Merleau-Pontian Account." *Continental Philosophy Review* 52, no. 2: 225-239.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Freedom Rides," accessed May 15, 2023, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/freedom-rides>.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)," accessed May 15, 2023, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/congress-racial-equality-core>.

- Matthewman, Steve. "Michel Foucault, Technology, and Actor-Network Theory." *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology* 17, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 274-292.
- Mitcham, Carl. 1994. *Thinking Through Technology: The Path Between Engineering and Philosophy*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- McKinney, Cait. 2020. *Information Activism: A Queer History of Lesbian Media Technologies*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- McKinney, Cait and Allyson Mitchell. 2019. "Lesbian Rule: Welcome to the Hell House," In *Inside Killjoy's Kastle: Dykey Ghosts, Feminist Monsters, and Other Lesbian Hauntings*, edited by Allyson Mitchell and Cait McKinney, 3-20.
- McWorther, Ladelle. 2009. *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2010. *Institution and passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-1955)*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Morris, David, and Kym Maclaren. 2015. "Introduction," In *Time, Memory, Institution: Merleau-Ponty's New Ontology of Self*, edited by David Morris and Kym Maclaren, 1-25.
- Murray, Pauli. 1987. *Song in a Weary Throat*. New York and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation.
- Nestle, Joan. 1990. "The Will to Remember: The Lesbian Herstory Archives of New York." *Feminist Review* 34, no.1 (Spring): 86-94.
- Nuti, Alasia. 2019. *Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nguyen, Mimi Thi. 2012. "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 22, no-2-3: 173-196.
- Olsen, Niklas. 2012. *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Powell, Larson. 2012. "Excursions and Recursions: Kittler's Homeric Wake." *Cultural Politics* 8, no. 3: 429-442.

- Rand, Erin J. 2014. *Reclaiming Queer: Activist & Academic Rhetorics of Resistance*. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press.
- Rawls, John. 1955. "Two Concepts of Rules." *The Philosophical Review* 64, no. 1 (January): 3-32.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 2004. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ryan, Hugh. "Hugh Ryan on the Urgency of Prison Abolition," *Lit Hub*, December 5, 2022, <https://lithub.com/hugh-ryan-on-the-urgency-of-prison-abolition/>.
- Samer, Rox. 2022. *Lesbian Potentiality & Feminist Media in the 1970s*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Schwartz, Michelle, and Constance Crompton. 2018. "Remaking History: Lesbian Feminist Historical Methods in the Digital Humanities," In *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and the Digital Humanities*, edited by Elizabeth Losh and Jacqueline Wernimont, 131-156. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Schulman, Sarah. 1994. *My American History: Lesbian and Gay Live During the Reagan/Bush Years*. New York: Routledge.
- Schulman, Sarah. 2021. *Let the Record Show: A Political History of Act Up New York, 1987-1993*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Serano, Julia. 2013. *Excluded: Making Feminism and Queer Movements More Inclusive*. Berkeley: Seal Press.
- Sheffield, Rebecka Taves. 2020. *Documenting Rebellions: A Study of Four Lesbian and Gay Archives in Queer Times*. Sacramento: Litwin Books.
- Siegert, Bernhard. 2015. *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real*. Translated by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Spiegel, Gabrielle M. 2013. "Above, About and Beyond the Writing of History: A Retrospective View of Hayden White's *Metahistory* on the 40th Anniversary of Its Publication." *Rethinking History* 17, no.4: 492-508.
- Smith, Barbara. 2014. "Building Multi-Issue Movements." In *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around: Forty Years of Movement Building with Barbara Smith*,

- edited by Alethia Jones and Virginia Eubanks with Barbara Smith. New York: SUNY Press.
- Sullivan, Mairead. 2022. *Lesbian Death: Desire and Danger Between Feminist and Queer*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tompkins, Kyla Wazana. 2019. "Reflections of a Real-Life Feminist Killjoy: Ball-Busters and the Recurring Trauma of Intergenerational Queer-Feminist Life," In *Inside Killjoy's Kastle: Dykey Ghosts, Feminist Monsters, and Other Lesbian Hauntings*, edited by Allyson Mitchell and Cait McKinney, 143-158.
- Taylor, Nikki M. 2016. *Driven Toward Madness: The Fugitive Slave Margaret Garner and Tragedy on the Ohio*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Terzi, Roberto. 2017. "Institution, Événement et Histoire Chez Merleau-Ponty," *Bulletin d'Analyse Phénoménologique*, XIII, no.3: 1-29.
- Tozzi, Verónica. 2018. "A Pragmatist View on Two Accounts of the Nature of Our 'Connection' with the Past: Hayden White and David Carr Thirty Years Later." *Rethinking History* 22, no.1: 65-85.
- Traub, Valerie. 2016. *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2015. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, 20th anniversary edition*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Vallier, Robert. 2005. "Institution: The Significance of Merleau-Ponty's 1954 Course at the Collège de France." *Chiasmi International* 7: 281-302.
- Verbeek, Peter-Paul. 2011. *Moralizing Technology: Understanding and Designing the Morality of Things*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Vismann, Cornelia. 2008. *Files: Law and Media Technology*. Translated by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young. Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Vismann, Cornelia. 2013. "Cultural Techniques and Sovereignty." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 6: 83-93.
- Wellbery, David E. 1990. Forward to *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* by Friedrich A. Kittler. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Ware, Syrus Marcus. 2017. "All Power to All People? Black LGBTTI2QQ Activism, Remembrance, and Archiving in Toronto," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 2: 170-180.
- White, Hayden. 2014. *The Practical Past*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Williams, Bernard. 1985. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Williams, Bernard. 1995a. "Saint-Just's Illusion," In *Making Sense of Humanity and Other Philosophical Papers 1982-1993*, 135-150.
- Williams, Bernard. 1995b. "Nietzsche's Minimalist Moral Psychology," In *Making Sense of Humanity and Other Philosophical Papers 1982-1993*, 65-76.
- Williams, Bernard. 2002. *Truth and Truthfulness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Winner, Langdon. 1978. *Autonomous Technology: Technics-Out-Of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey. 2015a. "Discourse, Media, Cultural Techniques: The Complexity of Kittler." *German Issue* 130, no.3: 447-465.
- Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey. 2015b "Siren Recursions." In *Kittler Now: Current Perspectives in Kittler Studies*, edited by Stephen Sale and Lura Salisbury, 71-94. Cambridge; Malden: Polity Press.
- Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey. 2011. *Kittler and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey. 2013. "Cultural Techniques: Preliminary Remarks." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 6: 3-19.
- Zammito, John. 2004. "Koselleck's Philosophy of Historical Time(s) and the Practice of History," *History and Theory* 43, February 2004: 124-135.