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"A ROOM FOR OUR OWN"

Queer memories and feelings in the archival practices of Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek (Archive and Library of the Queer Movement) in Gothenburg/Sweden

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Abstract

This thesis departs from the case study of the Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek (QRAB) [In English: Archive and Library of the Queer Movement], located in Gothenburg/Sweden, to discuss how queer memories and feelings are embedded in queer archives. It focuses in some of QRAB's practices, such as: the structure and organization of the archive, the membership, the processes of collection and cataloguing of materials, the external activities, and the relationship with the public and other organizations. From the analysis of these practices, the thesis proposes a theoretical discussion about memory, silence and remembrance, inspired by the literature that has been produced in the last two decades about queer archives. The thesis also addresses the issue of archives in a broader perspective, proposing a reflection about the role of memory and memory institutions in society, such as their influence in knowledge production, community-building and activism. The analysis also focuses on how memories, knowledge and narratives about queer people, cultures and movements are produced within queer archives and how different temporalities are intertwined in those places and projects. Besides, it offers an interpretation on how these archival practices express resistance against dominant and normative discourses.

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Introduction

I. The urge to remember

In the last decades the discussions about inequalities, structural violence and human rights have been spread out worldwide and they are getting different nuances according to specific contexts. Marginalized groups – including sexual and gender minorities[1] – fight to make their voices heard and activists stablish agendas for equity, justice and historical reparation. In this process, the past is revisited and discussed in many ways, becoming material for the present struggles and for the possible futures that are at stake. In that sense, it is important to think about the role of memory in the processes of community building and meaning-making, equally in academia, social movements, and other spaces of knowledge production and political debates.

The relationship of a society with its past says a lot about what is intended to be preserved, remembered and reinforced, and what is fated to oblivion (Wernitznig, 2017, p.210, cited in Römkens & Wiersma, 2017, p.9). It is important, in a critical analysis about society and its contradictions, to acknowledge silence and memory as part of power dynamics: as potential instruments of oppression and violence, but also possible elements to create and promote political engagement, dignity, pride, solidarity and empowerment. The construction of communities, identities and collective memories comprises the collection, conservation, diffusion, access and use of records and vestiges from the past: "records become the memory glue that binds people seeking to recall and share similar experiences, and for postcolonial countries, records are a complex and painful mixture of narratives that both deny and offer historical possibilities." (Bastian; Alexander, 2009, p.XXII). The act of preserving the traces of an activity, by a person or a legal entity is what "inaugurates the act of doing history" (Ricœur, 2004, p.168). There is no histories – neither stories – without a mnemonic process of selection and organization. The archive is where this process begins, and this thesis departs from the idea that the archive is something to be problematized.

This thesis aims at assembling and discussing theories and concepts around archives and memory in relation to queer memories and queer archival practices, taking one queer archive as the analytical object. I am interested in exploring the work conducted

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[1] "Sexual and gender minorities" is used here not in the numerical sense, but in the sense of social minorities, i.e. groups that diverge from or subvert cis/heteronormativity.

by a queer archive, trying to understand how the issues of memory-making, community-building and activism are integrated into the practice of archiving.

II. The archive as object, subject and territory of power relations

The ontological complexities of archives and their relationship to memory, history and temporalities are the core of my interest in doing this research. And the more I studied about these themes, the more I understood that the problematizations around archives are as old as the archive in itself.

Since narratives are built upon traces of the past, archives – as well as museums and other institutions that hold, preserve and handle memory – have to be questioned about what they are capable to say about the past, but also about what they *do not* say – and *why*. "[H]istorical narratives are premised on previous understandings, which are themselves premised on the distribution of archival power" (Trouillot, 1995, p.55). Talking about archival choices, processes and gaps also involves a critical interpretation of power relations, societal norms and epistemological regimes.

Beyond the general and ordinary definition of archive as "[a] collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people." (English Oxford Living Dictionary, 2019, online), the archive is, above all, a social agent, animated by tensions of knowledge production, absence and presence. (Marshall, et al, 2015, p.1)

In the last decades the discussions about archives have been enriched since it became a topic of interest in many disciplines (Manoff, 2004, p.9), and their meanings and uses have been analysed from different perspectives. Epistemological debates about production, legitimacy, institutionalization and organization of knowledge are entangled with inquiries about sources, evidences, archiving processes and their criteria. Besides, theoretical questions have been recently raised in terms of the creation, organization, accessibility and interpretation of archives, also new ways of "doing" archives have been developed.

III. Queer practices reinventing the archive

Many queer archives, as well as feminist archives, have been created in the last

decades [2]. Some of them are grassroots collections, housed in people's homes or improvised places, others are conventional archives, connected to formal organisations, such as universities, libraries, museums, regional governments (Kumbier, 2014, p.1). Ann Cvetkovich (In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.219) talks about a "queer archives movement" that is extremely vigorous right now. They are, in general, results of the efforts made by collectives of activists and researchers, making the archive a space of convergence of academic and activist work (Eichhorn, 2013, p.3). In many cases, artists are also involved in the queer archives, working creatively from their existing material, creating new ones or addressing the issues of archive in their works.

These new approaches to archives and their transformative and engaged visions have become a relevant and instigating topic for many disciplines and nurtured my curiosity during the master's programme. Writing this thesis in an interdisciplinary environment encouraged me to choose topics that I am interested in and to approach them from the perspectives of gender and queer studies. Memory and archives have always been important and traditional subjects of study in History, which is my previous area of education[3], but these issues are being increasingly discussed in other fields, enriched by different theories, methods and concepts, also provoking new debates and problematizations. I think this engagement from different viewpoints and contexts is a positive indication of a rich and promising subject, and its levels of importance and complexity show that the discussions around archives, archiving, memory-making and their entanglements are far from an end.

IV. Designing this research

This thesis is an effort to take part in these conversations, from my partial and limited perspective. The discussions about memory and archives from the queer perspective caught my attention throughout the master's programme, and the more archives I found out about during that time, the more I wish I could visit and investigate all of them. However, dealing with the limitations of time and space is also part of the academic work – and a difficult lesson! Considering that it would not be possible to conduct a broad study on the issue of queer archives in a master's thesis, I have decided

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[2] Through online research I found many queer and feminist archives founded in the last 30 years in various countries – however, mostly in Western Europe and North America.

[3] I have a bachelor's degree in History (2013) from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais [In English: Federal University of Minas Gerais] and a specialist's degree in Gender and Education (2015) from the Universidade Federal de Lavras [In English: Federal University of Lavras], both in Brazil.

to frame the research as a case study about one archive: the Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek (QRAB): [In English: Archive and Library of the Queer Movement], located in Gothenburg/Sweden.

My choice of studying archives in a Gender Studies programme is an effort to develop some reflections that I build up during my education and also from my experience working in/with archives. During my bachelor's degree in History, I had de opportunity to conduct extensive archival work for different research projects. Besides, I did internships in public archives both during the bachelors and during the masters in Gendering Practices[4].

I selected this archive as my object of study based on my interest of understanding its specific archival processes and its trajectory since the fairly recent foundation, a little over a year ago. The purposes of QRAB are described in its statute as: "to gather, organize, preserve and make available documentation and information related to the queer movement." (Stadgar för Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, 2019, p.1, translated by me). So, I am interested in *how* QRAB pursues these goals. This thesis is an attempt to understand some of the particular experiences and challenges of creating, organizing and running a queer archive. The possibility of visiting the archive and taking part in some of their activities was an important factor in my decision of limiting QRAB as the object of research. From QRAB's experience and my own perceptions – being there in the role of researcher, but also as someone who is interested and trained in archival work – I developed the analytical frame of this work.

The choice of doing a case study does not represent any intention of making assumptions or generalizing impressions and conclusions about queer archives from QRAB and its experiences. My purpose is, rather, to understand a little about the richness, diversity and creativity of queer archival practices from one recent institution. Alana Kumbier's book *Ephemeral Material* (2014) was influential to me in this point: she works "from the particular – at the level of individuals or relatively small collectives doing archival and cultural work – to suggest what a broader queer archival practice could entail." (p.2). I understand that the queer archives – as well as the queer movement itself – are not homogeneous or uniform. They have plural interests, objectives and perceptions, and might even diverge in some – or many – things, according to different contexts and

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[4] For the mandatory course "Internship in Gendering Practices" (15 ECTS), I went to my home country for an internship at the *Arquivo Público Mineiro* [In English: *Public Archives of Minas Gerais*], in the city of Belo Horizonte.

to the subjectivities, political visions and projects that these archives and movements encompass.

V. Research aims and questions

This research aims at analysing some archival practices of QRAB and queer memories and feelings within these practices. The aim is also to analyse QRAB's practices in the light of theoretical formulations about memory, silence and remembrance, and also to discuss how memories, knowledge and narratives about queer people, cultures and movements are produced within queer archives, and how these practices express resistance against dominant discourses.

Some of the research questions that guide this research are: 1) How does QRAB – and queer archives in general – produce counternarratives and acts of resistance and activism?; 2) How does QRAB engage itself into broader political actions and debates?; 3) How does this archive connect discussions about memory and archival work to the queer struggles?. I am also interested in how issues of temporality appear in its archival processes: 4) From the collection of materials to the political impact, how does QRAB articulate past and future and what impacts does it want to provoke in society?

What I seek in this thesis are not specific and objective answers to these questions; rather, they function as guidelines for the discussions, concepts and theories I approach and articulate in my analysis.

VI. Theoretical/methodological apparatus and ethical considerations

The theoretical framework adopted in this thesis draws mostly upon queer theory, but I also use references from historical, archivistic and philosophical studies that discuss the issues of archives, memory-making and archival practice. My intention is to articulate a broad theoretical foundation to construct an interdisciplinary analysis and contribute to academic conversations. Some important concepts that are articulated in my analysis are *ephemera* (Muñoz, 1996), *archive of feelings* (Cvetkovich, 2003) and *queer archive activism* (Juhasz, 2006). Furthermore, the ideas of *memory* and *history* (Ricœur, 2003), *nostalgia* (Boym, 2001) and *places of memory* (Nora,1989) are also important to my discussions about the QRAB's experience and queer archival practices in general. These concepts and theories are expanded upon in the analytical chapters, where I articulate them to my research material.

My interest in studying QRAB started with an information meeting held in January/2019 by Olov Kriström. He is one of the founders and board members of the archive in the position of archivist, and he told us QRAB's history, goals and projects. After having designed the main interests of this thesis, I got in touch with him and asked about the possibility of conducting interviews, which he fortunately accepted. I also had access to the archive's statute (Stadgar för Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek)[5], and I took part in two membership meetings, where I got to know other members of the archive, and from which I could better understand the routine of the archive and their activities.

Regarding the methods of data collection, the semi-structured interviews were my main choice. Since I am focusing on experiences and practices of QRAB, it seemed to me that interviews would provide me higher possibilities of discussing these themes and addressing my research questions. Through the conversations with Olov I could get to know more in depth the history of the archive and other practical matters, but also learn his own reflections and experiences in regard to archival practices.

Material circumstances and resources have to be considered when doing an academic research. Therefore, this method was also chosen because it seemed to me the most effective and feasible in this case – I had the impression that the interviews would be doable inasmuch as visiting the archive and reaching out the members would not be a difficult task. Apart from the data collected through the interviews, my other sources were the membership meetings that I attended and the information collected on the archive's website and statute.

A positive aspect of working with interviews is their openness in terms of the different ways they can be conducted (Kvale, 1996, pp.84), and their aspect of co-creation between the persons involved (Ibid, p.183). That gave me, on the one hand, a feeling of freedom and excitement to "produce" my own research material, but, on the other hand, the concern about the quality of that material and my responsibilities as its co-author. These reflections led me to think more carefully about my own perceptions, feelings, beliefs and positionalities expressed in the processes of interviewing – from the elaboration of questions until the analysis of the transcribed material – and writing this essay within a certain academic setting.

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[5] The archive's statute is attached in the Appendix section. Regarding the interviews, the first one was held on the 1st of March 2019, and the second meeting took place on the 12th of April 2019. I refer to them in the text as "Interview 1" and "Interview 2". The interviewee agreed on having his name published in this work.

Donna Haraway (1988) states that knowledge production is always situated, contextually located, which means that the researcher is visible – and should be – in their research. That also implies, according to Mia Liinason and Marta Cuesta (2014), the problematization of "the social and emotional dimensions of the research process" (p.23), taking into account the researchers' personal interactions, power relations, the role of emotions, among other aspects. Researchers have to acknowledge the context and the power structures within which they perform their work, and "interviewers and researchers must take responsibility for the influence they exercise over the knowledge and information they produce." (Pieterse; Keller, 2008, pp.234-235, cited in Römkens & Wiersma, 2017, p.13).

The themes addressed in this essay depart both from the data collected and from the literature in which I back up my analysis. I conduct *meaning interpretation* as a method of analysis of the interview material, which is described by Steinar Kvale (1996, p.193) as an expansion of the original text, where the researcher does a deeper and contextualized interpretation of the data. It is a method broadly used in the field of Humanities, where the researcher departs from their perspective on what is being investigated and they interpret the interviews from this perspective. The researcher expands their analysis beyond what is directly said by the interviewee, and include structures and relations of meaning which may not be explicitly mentioned (Kvale, 1996, p.201).

My idea is to establish an analysis of my object of research – QRAB and its archival practices – in a form of "conversation" between the data and the theories. Thus, the text makes this movement of going "back and forth" between literature and data, where I analyse the material using the theoretical sources, but I also establish some theoretical reflections myself. The topics addressed in the thesis are results of my own perceptions of QRAB and queer archives in general, guided by the literature and the sources – the "material" possibilities of the research.

Regarding its structure, the thesis has three chapters: the first one being a literature review on memory, archives and their epistemological complexities; the second and third ones are analytical, focused on the case of QRAB and the themes brought up both by the data collected and by the theoretical readings.

Chapter 1: Desiring, thinking and making archives

I. The past in/of archives

The problematization of archives has a long tradition, and in the last decades the queer and gender studies have brought new elements and concepts to rethink archives and their role as producers of memories and narratives. In the next pages I conduct a literature review of some important texts for the investigation of archives.

Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1996) is an important reference to reflect about the desire for archives and the ways they function in our societies. The text is exhaustively quoted and has nurtured many discussions and arguments when it comes to a critical approach to archives. He deconstructs the traditional notion of archive as a place for safeguard and enlightenment since he approaches it from the double meaning of the term *arkhe* as *commencement* and *commandment* (p.9). According to the author, this name represents both the ontological principle of nature and history – the origin – and the nomological principle, related to the exercise of authority, order and power. The Greek work *arkheîon*, that originates *archive*, refers to a place, a location, namely, the archons' residence. Archons were the magistrates owing power and legitimacy to represent the law and guardians of the official documents. In other words, *arkheîon* refers to "an instance or place of authority" (Solis, 2014, p.378, translated by me).

The archives are created from the notion of dwelling and they can be understood, on the one hand, as depositary of information, where evidences and traces are kept and protected. However, "apart from stocking, the archive gathers and organizes, and in the classic sense this is made in a patriarchal way, *arkhe* as an attitude of command." (Ibid, p.379, translated by me). The archons' tasks function as curatorship and censorship, insofar as they have power to elect the traces of memory that will be kept in the archive. (Azevedo, 2016, p.70). In that sense, the archive cannot be reduced to a mere deposit, to a shapeless and crystalized ensemble that represents direct correspondences with the past. The archive is rather a construction determined by practices that define choices and interpretations, express gaps, limitations and silencing.

Derrida departs from the reading of Freud and from the reflexions on psychoanalysis to understand how the archive is produced and how it acts in our relationship with the past, with memory and with the future. According to Derrida (1996), what leads to our desire and need to create archives are the absence, the oblivion and the

effacement. The archive is always permeated by the loss and destruction; it "will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory." (Derrida, 1996, p14)

There would not be the desire of archive without the imminence of finitude and oblivion. The archive is hypomnesic, that is, it is related to the weakening of the memory thus, its existence is attached to a compulsive repetition, which is, in Freudian terms, indissociable from the death drive. The death drive, in Derrida's words, is the contradiction that threats every archival desire, which he calls *mal d'archive* [archive fever] (1996, p.14); it is what makes the archive work constantly against itself.

> There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression. Above all, and this is the most serious, beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness or finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive. (Ibid, p.19)

The ruling principles of the archive, *mnēmē* or *anamnēsis* (the memory itself) and *hypomnēma* (the act of remembrance) are the counteroffensive to the death drive, the last being "a pulse of aggression and destruction that impels to oblivion, amnesia, annihilation of memory." (Guasch, 2013, p.239, translated by me). The way we elaborate and write history in the present is conditioned to history's own ambivalent movement of remembering and forgetting, to its role as ruler of memory and, at the same time, as field of oblivion (Solis, 2014, p.382).

The archive is, in that perspective, not only "an absolute begin or an inaugurational moment" (Solis, 2014, p.384, translated by me), but a space constructed by inscriptions, effacements and repetitions, that both produces and registers the events (Derrida, 1996, p.17). Through these processes and constructions, the archive gives sense to what has been lived: "what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way. Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives." (Derrida, 1996, p.18).

II. Archives by whom and to whom?

Pierre Nora (1989) also relates the archive to loss and obsession to remember. According to him, the modern perceptions of temporality shifted the way we operate memory: it used to be a lived present experience in pre-modern societies and transformed

afterwards into history, originating what he calls *archive-memory*. The memory becomes misrepresented into history and based upon the archival operation:

> What we call memory is in fact the gigantic and breathtaking storehouse of a material stock of what it would be impossible for us to remember, an unlimited repertoire of what might need to be recalled. Leibnitz's 'paper memory' has become an autonomous institution of museums, libraries, depositories, centers of documentation, and data banks. […] No society has ever produced archives as deliberately as our own, not only by volume, not only by new technical means of reproduction and preservation, but also by its superstitious esteem, by its veneration of the trace. (Nora, 1989, p.13)

In our inabilities to experience the true and genuine memory, we "venerate the trace" through what he calls *lieux de mémoire* [places of memory], whose main *raison d'être* is blocking the process of oblivion through mnemonic operations. The archive is, hence, included in this category, together with museums, sanctuaries, calendars, celebrations, monuments, cemeteries, national symbols, among others – physical places or practices. In his reflections about the essential differences between memory and history, Nora argues that memory is always a phenomenon that takes place in the present and is permeated by affection, while history is an intellectual, analytical and critical process, attached to the past as its representation. "Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things." (Nora, 1989, p.9). In other words, he states that what history does is a continuous – and unsuccessful – attempt to reach memory in its completeness inasmuch as our societies are condemned to forgetfulness.

Therefore, the *lieux de mémoire* are residuals and exist because there is no spontaneous memory in our societies; the process of transplanting memory into history makes the memory inaccessible in its natural form. It becomes, then, necessary to create artifices, constructions and conventions to make the memory (or its false impression) exist: "If we were able to live within memory, we would not have needed to consecrate *lieux de memoire* in its name." (Nora, 1989, p.8). The archive is "[n]o longer living memory's more or less intended remainder, [it] has become the deliberate and calculated secretion of lost memory." (Ibid, p.14)

Lieux de mémoire are places in three senses of the word: material, symbolic and functional (Ibid, pp.18-19). Paul Ricœur (2004), reflecting about Nora's conceptualization, points out that they are inscriptions, external marks, symbolic objects of memory "offered as the basic instruments of historical work." (p.404). Since their fabrication is an intellectual operation that takes place in the present, we can, therefore,

understand it as part of a process of choices and exclusions, and an exercise of power and legitimacy. Why some places become representations of important moments, while others don't have any social meaning is a result of the will to remember (Nora, 1989, p.19), that is, what distinguishes *lieux de mémoire* from other places. These places are, therefore, invented, thought through and intentionally transformed into important symbols to a collectivity. In that sense, they express ideas and choices of certain people and groups in society, to the detriment of others.

Taking into account Nora's definition of the archive as one important *lieux de mémoire* in the contemporary societies, we can, therefore, understand it as a result of choices concerning remembrance and oblivion. The work of producing, selecting and transplanting memories into places and symbols is the basis for accessing the past and constructing narratives and interpretations. The archive, is, therefore, far from being a neutral place: "records, especially as they morph into ones with archival value, serve interesting and complicated roles related to the power of particular groups in any society or culture within that society." (Cox, 2009, p.254).

The archive is a result of social, political and discursive dynamics, of power relations, choices and strategies, rather than an inert repository or an ensemble of documents organized in a neutral way. "Structural biases skew the archival records as well as library collections. Furthermore, each choice to in-or exclude material reflects wider social and historical power dynamics." (Römkens & Wiersma, 2017, p.10). The archive is not just a spatial place, but also a social one (Ricœur, 2004, p.167), and are "organized around unwritten logics of inclusion and exclusion, having power to exalt certain stories, experiences, and events and to bury others." (Kunzel, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.214). The archive articulates past, present and future in dynamic processes of re-reading, organizing, narrating and publicizing material traces and evidences.

Foucault is another important reference when it comes to the nature and the role of archives in society. For him, the archive is a regulative agent, that he defines as the law of what can be said, "the general system of the formation and transformation of statements" (Foucault, 2002, p.146). In that sense, once the archive has the control over the statements, it is what gives it specific meanings and regularity, preventing them from becoming an amorphous or incomprehensible mass of narratives.

Discussing Foucault's theory, Ricœur (2004) defines the archive as the "register of discursive formations" (p.202). As Marlene Manoff (2004) emphasizes (p.18), the conceptualization that Foucault makes of archives are quite abstract, more focused in

what the archives *are not*. He does not understand by archive the physical *locus* of stocking and dwelling of documents, neither the sum of all the texts produced and kept by a determined culture or society. Rather, the archive is the discursive system that defines the enunciative possibilities about the past, that is, the element "establishes a connexion between certain discourses and other certain discourses, excluding all the others." (Simioni, 2016, p.178). In Foucault's words, it is about

> the reason why so many things, said by so many men, for so long, have not emerged in accordance with the same laws of thought, […] but they appeared by virtue of a whole set of relations that are peculiar to the discursive level; […] they are born in accordance with specific regularities; in short, why, if there are things said – and those only – one should seek the immediate reason for them in the things that were said not in them, nor in the men that said them, but in the system of discursivity, in the enunciative possibilities and impossibilities that it lays down. (Foucault, 2002, p.145)

The narratives, in that sense, depart from selective choices and become possible through a discursive system "that will determine the difference between memory and oblivion." (Simioni, 2016, p.175, translated by me). The archive has, therefore, the legitimacy of defining what will be kept, memorized and preserved and what will be eliminated and forgotten. Therefore, it establishes what can or cannot be enunciated.

It is possible to question, from the reflexions of these authors, the way we access the past and how the archive mediates this process. The discursive level, still according to Foucault (2002), is characterized by a set of relations, and the definition of what is held by an archive and what is destined to oblivion or destruction is an outcome of interests and an exercise of power and epistemological legitimacy (pp.145-146).

III. *Archival turn,* archive in plural and new archival practices

The ways the archive is being used and interpreted have shifted a lot throughout time and it has been discussed and appropriated in many ways in different contexts (Manoff, 2004). As Regina Kunzel stated, historians used to be encouraged to think of the archives as the "places where the sources are" (In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.214), an impression that the archive would provide the material and the conditions for the actual intellectual work. In the last decades, new approaches on the issue of archives have been taking place, and it became a subject of interest and study of different disciplines, together with the creation of new formats of archives, including the queer archive.

Some authors speak of an "archival turn" in many disciplines, that has brought

new questions and interventions on archival practices. New formats of archives have been discussed and put into practice, as results of collective efforts of scholars, archivists, librarians, artists and activists, interested in a critical reading of the archive's role in society. These projects have been redefining what is understood as archivist practice and research (Cvetkovich, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.219), and questioning the limits of the archives when it comes to representativeness and heritage of social minorities in spaces of memory and knowledge. As Kate Eichhorn (2013) points out, the "making of archives" is where the knowledge production begins, rather than "a destination for knowledges already produced or a place to recover histories and ideas placed under erasure." (p.3). I address the *archival turn* in this thesis in its relation to feminist and queer knowledge production, to argue for its relevance to understand the queer archives.

The *archival turn*, temporally located by some authors in the 1990s, can be described as a methodological shift from the "archive-as-source" to the "archive-as-subject", according to Ann Laura Stoler (2009, p.44). It is a shift from the traditional approaches to archives, performed in the fields of cultural studies, anthropology, philosophy and history (Marques, 2018, p.473). The *archival turn* is also based in the critique to a positivist idea about the archive as a place for finding the truth about history, i.e., "a treasure trove of 'pure facts'." (De Haan & Mevis, 2008, p.23). This search for the truth – for the one and only history – reflects a Westernized view of textual and official records as the most legitimate and reliable form of evidences, excluding other formats – such as oral records – as relevant historical sources (Cox, 2009, p.254). Other societies and communities had (and have) different ways of collecting and keeping records, that may not be seen as reliable or legitimate within a traditional definition of archives. In many cultures, for instance, oral storytelling has a greater importance and accessibility than written narratives. It is important to acknowledge that the tradition of creating archives, as well as an intellectual production on archival knowledge comes from a European – especially French – tradition embedded in ideals of nation-state, national history, patriotism and patrimonialism. That is, the archive is dated and it origins reflect particular interests and a particular kind of society. Accordingly, it is not a coincidence that the biggest archives in the world – including the queer ones – are situated in Western Europe and North America.

Yet, the fact that an institution was originated in a colonialist and aristocratic context does not mean that it cannot be reappropriated for other purposes. It is the same as thinking, for instance, of universities and how different they are today compared to

their original structure in the Middle Ages. Societies change and so do the institutions. What the *archival turn* proposes is a re-reading of the archive for different purposes in our contemporary societies, much different from the elitist and patriot uses of archives in the West-European aristocratic and colonialist nation-states.

The *archival turn* also brought new questions about the theoretical-methodological positionalities of the archivology as a science, and about the importance of understanding the archive beyond a documental deposit, but as a place of production of memories and discourses. In that sense, these scholars' critiques are focused on how the archives represent actions, choices and silences, taking them as actors in the process of memory-making and knowledge production. What the archives make available is a result of their inner dynamics of silence, oblivion, power relations and their will to make public and possible some narratives in instead of others.

> As a device of power exercise, understanding [the archive] requires a broader attention towards the forms of archiving and the norms that regulate its operations. As an epistemological experiment, it becomes necessary to rethink the materiality and the imaginary of its collections, the criteria of validation of knowledge, the power both over the archives and of the archives. (Marques, 2018, p.473, translated by me)

It is important to emphasize that, even though the idea of "turn" might lead us to think that it has been – or is still being – a process of rupture and rapid transformation, this epistemological reframing does not have a linear history itself. Some queer archives have been created even before the so-called *archival turn*; thus, I understand that these archives should not be taken as consequences of the theoretical turn, but as part of the process of epistemological changes about the archive. Still according to Kunzel, the *archival turn* has intensified crucial questions, such as: the absence and vulnerability of records about queer lives, the possible places – beyond official archives – where it is possible to locate these documentations, and the possibilities of other kinds of archives.

These debates are also related to critiques towards academic standards, disciplines, structure and productivity. Addressing ephemera[6] and its importance in queer scholarship, José Esteban Muñoz (1996) criticizes the institutional boundaries and sanctions that attack works, theories and scholars that refuse to follow specific institutional ideologies. Marlene Manoff (2004) points out the importance of questioning

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[6] *Ephemera* is "the term used by archivists and librarians to describe occasional publications and paper documents, material objects and items that fall into the miscellaneous category when being catalogued." (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.243)

archival techniques and methods of transmission of information and how they set the conditions of what can be investigated and remembered. Inspired by these arguments, in this thesis I am also interested in archives' potential for critical and diverse forms of reading the past and creating narratives – in different formats, whether in academic research or in artistic expressions, for instance.

The intellectual questionings brought by the *archival turn* have been taking place in different and dynamic ways throughout many years, being constantly re-questioned and producing new approaches. The process is not finished, and it does not have a specific milestone; it is, rather, polychromatic and dynamic, as Ann Laura Stoler (2009) points out:

> Among historians, literary critics and anthropologists, archives have been elevated to new analytic status with distinct billing, worthy of scrutiny on their own. One might be tempted to see this as a Derridian effect of the last decade that followed on the publication of *Archive Fever*. **But the archival turn has a wider arc and a longer durée.** *Archive Fever* **compellingly captured that impulse by giving it theoretical stature, but Jacques Derrida's intervention came only after the 'archival turn' was already being made.** […] Archivists have been thinking about the politics and history of archives in ways that increasingly speak to a broader community of scholars. What marks the past decade are the new conversations between archivists and historians about documentary evidence, record-keeping, what features of archival form and content can be retrieved, and how decisions should be made about historical significance and preservation. (pp.44-46, highlighted by me)

Ann Cvetkovich (In: Arondekar, et al, 2015) also mentions that the critiques and efforts to transform archival practices have a broader history and have being going on for a while:

> in addition to the creation of LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer] archives, there are efforts to "queer" the archive, that is, to return to conventional archives from the vantage point of radical and alternative forms of archival practice, research, and exhibition. These are only some of the many good reasons to declare an "archival turn," but I would also suggest that this groundswell of recognition and institution building is the result of work that has been going on for quite some time, and to privilege this moment of visibility can run the risk of erasing a lot of invisible labor behind the scenes. (p.219)

Within this "turn", the archive also becomes, still according to Ann Laura Stoler, a possible site of scrutiny and ethnography: "In treating archival documents not as the historical ballast to ethnography, but as a charged site of it, I see the call for an emergent methodological shift: to move away from treating the archives as an *extractive* exercise to an ethnographic one." (Stoler, 2009, p.47). Speaking specifically about colonial archives, the author shows how this critical reading is being put into practice, for instance, by feminist historians who have discussed the male influence in archival production, in

the writing of history, the exclusion of women from documents and, therefore, from consequent texts. "On colonial terrain the challenges to locate women as subjects continues to critically stretch the scope of the archive in ways that redefine what kinds of reading and writing are historically germane." (Stoler, 2009, p.48)

The archive is seen, within this *turn*, as a much broader and more problematic field, and not the source that we call upon to get to know of confirm the past. "Although the 'archival turn' can be understood as cultural studies' **theoretical reframing** of what historians call the archive, I would emphasize that, through that process, cultural studies has also come to new **archival practices**." (Cvetkovich, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.220, highlighted by me). The formulation of new archival practices, as Ann Cvetkovich affirms in the quoted excerpt, implies in an epistemological reformulation of the archive, a review of the traditional archival practices, that continues expanding and complexifying through the dialogue with queer, feminist, postcolonial, ethnographical and artistic studies. In that sense, the *archival turn* also represents a turn to feminist, queer and cultural studies, and in its core lies a revision about what counts as knowledge and method (Cvetkovich, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.228). It proposes that "we ask how documents come to be archived in the first place, in whose interest they have been preserved, and how the documenting of particular events and processes (and not others) shapes what can be known about the past." (Kunzel, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.230).

In the next chapter will address important concepts, notions and theoretical discussions around queer archives, departing from the archival experiences of the Archive and Library of the Queer Movement (QRAB).

Chapter 2: The queer (in the) archive

I. Why queer archives?

As discussed in the first chapter, the *archival turn* represented an epistemological shift regarding archives and memory, and developed new understandings and possibilities of producing archives. To broaden the definitions of archive also means to deepen the reflections about its potentialities and limitations. In the field of queer studies, the *archival turn* brought an intensification of questions around the vulnerability and constant absence of documentations and records of queer lives. Due to the silence around queer histories, researchers

> cannot simply consult an existing archive, because records about sexuality, sexual lives, and sexual subcultures – written by participants (and not scientists and doctors analysing them, or police surveilling them, or anthropologists studying them) – have been scarce. (Kumbier, 2014, p.14)

In the same line as Kumbier's critique, Sharon Marcus (2005) argues that, while historians of more conventional topics have official archives as potential places for finding their sources, those writing about queer histories in the past and in the present "often need to construct their own archives through oral history, personal testimony, and participant observation." (p.201). Some use auto-archiving as a way to "take history into their own hands" (Marcus, 2005, p.202). The new approaches of archives proposed by queer studies also shed light on other places and practices, beyond the traditional archives, where it would be possible to find queer vestiges and narratives (Kunzel, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.220).

The "queer archives movement" that Cvetkovich (In: Arondekar, et al, 2015) talks about does not intent to simply include queer identities, movements and cultures in the traditional archive; what is at stake in these projects is a redefinition – and subversion – of the forms archives are created, perceived and used.

> The archive can become an extension of neoliberal and homonational strategies when inclusion is about assimilation and equality and not about alternative and absent voices or transformative knowledge. The goal is not just stand-alone buildings and collections but critical engagement with existing practices. […] We want a queer archive […] **not just inclusion but transformation** of what counts as an archive and innovative approaches to an engaged public history that connects the past with the present to create a history of the present. (Cvetkovich, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.222, highlighted by me)

Queer archives are spaces of production of counterdominant narratives (Kumbier,

2009), fostering possible futures whilst remembering the past (Cvetkovich, 2011). One of the endeavours of those archives is to incorporate a plurality of expressions and experiences in their spaces and collections, through a broader range of material and archival practices that are, in some cases, unconventional and radical. What is at issue from a queer archival perspective is also to provoke subversive relations to knowledge, to question the knowledge-production spaces and dynamics, and to create engagement in social issues of present times mediated by dialogue with the past. In that sense, other forms of knowledge are also made possible, in new places (Eichhorn, 2013, p.3) and in new configurations (Stryker, 2010). The product of these ideas is a sensitive, collaborative and non-conventional archive, filled with solidarity, emotions, pride, creativity and engagement. The queer archive encompasses the effort of making resistance through remembrance.

"Lesbian and gay history demands a radical archive of emotion in order to document intimacy, sexuality, love, and activism – all areas of experience that are difficult to chronicle through the materials of a traditional archive." (Cvetkovich, 2002, p.110). Furthermore, queer archives approach sentiments, traumas, loss, and "they assert the role of memory and affect in compensating for institutional neglect." (Ibid, p.110). In that regard, the queer archive engages in filling out gaps of records, memories and histories regarding queer people, movements and cultures.

II. Queer memories, queering practices

The practices of an archive start before the first document is catalogued or the first visitor comes in. It is necessary, as for any organization, that the archive has formal guidelines about the work and processes that take place there, such as: conceptual definitions, establishment of objectives, internal rules, structure of the organization, role and responsibilities of the members, policies regarding access to the documents, and other practical aspects of the activities of the archive. In QRAB's case, all this information is in the statute of the archive, "Stadgar för Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek", approved on the 10th of December 2017 and revised in 23rd of March 2019 (see Appendix).

Insofar as *queer* is an umbrella concept with many possible understandings, it is important that queer archives make clear to the public what is their use and interpretation of the word and how this interpretation is expressed in their archival practices. The first paragraph of QRAB's statute establishes the name and location of the organization; the

second one defines their purpose and how *queer* is understood within their practices:

> The queer movement refers to queer organization, politics, history and resistance to hetero- and cisnormativity. QRAB understands "queer" as a radically inclusive concept, and strives for a diverse and anti-colonial interpretation of "organization", "politics", "history" and "resistance". It follows that QRAB's area of interest does not only include self-identified queer perspectives, but also other body and desire categorizations, such as lesbians, asexual, intersexual, transsexuals, bisexuals, and gay experiences. (Stadgar för Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, 2019, p.1, translated by me)

It is important to mention that many similar archives are also labelled LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQIA, among other terms and abbreviations. However, I adopt the definition *queer archives* in this work since I believe that *queer* is a more inclusive concept when it comes to non-normative expressions and experiences of gender and sexuality, which has been used as an umbrella term in academia, art and activism. Influenced by Alana Kumbier (2014), the concept of queer appears in this thesis not just as an adjective, but also as a verb: "[a]s a verb, it suggests a disruptive, transformational, or oppositional practice designed to challenge normalizing systems and structures." (p.3). In the same line as QRAB's definition, I understand and intend to express queer in this essay as a "radically inclusive" term, also radical in the sense that it wants to question and transform societal norms.

In her discussion about the concept of queer, Alana Kumbier (2014) emphasizes three aspects, namely: oppositional, unruly and coalitional. About the first characteristic, she argues that queer activism and scholarship are oppositional once they "want more than to be considered acceptable or desirable members of the dominant culture." (p.4). They reject and resist the "regimes of the normal" (Michael Warner, cited in Kumbier 2014, pp.4-5). "These regimes of the normal include heterosexual modes of being, life choices, and institutions, as well as cultural imperatives to act and comport oneself in accord with conventional expressions of gender." (Kumbier, 2014, p.5).

About the second characteristic, queer is unruly insofar as it goes against the "univocal whole" whereupon "sexual identity" is supposed to be organized (Kumbier, 2014, p.5). Therefore, it is about the non-conformance to "the regimes of normal"; it happens "when people recognize, cultivate, and celebrate lives that don't 'line up' with social (heterosexual) norms." (Ibid, p.5). In Eve Sedgwick's words, queer refers to:

> the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't* be made) to signify

monolithically. The experimental linguistics, epistemological, representational, political adventures attaching to the very many of us who may at times be moved to describe ourselves as (among many other possibilities) pushy femmes, radical faeries, fantasists, drags, clones, leatherfolk, ladies in tuxedoes, feminist women or feminist men, masturbators, bulldaggers, divas, Snap! queens, butch bottoms, storytellers, transsexuals, aunties, wannabes, lesbian-identified men or lesbians who sleep with men, or… people able to relish, learn from, or identity with such. (Sedgwick, 1994, p.8)

Still according to Sedgwick (1994), queer is a word fraught with personal histories of exclusion, defiance and excitement, which gives it an "experimental force as a speech act." (p.9). Its meaning shifts "because of the violently different connotative evaluations that seem to cluster around the category" (Ibid, p.9) , and this ontological fluidity makes me think of queer more as an act than as an essence. Sharon Marcus (2005) makes an important point that I found relevant and similar to this aspect: according to Marcus, queer "emphasizes affinity and solidarity over identity. […] the adoption of *queer* issued a reminder that complex identifications and differences undermine identity." (p.196). So, queer is not limited to a liberal and individualistic notion of identity, but it brings up political and social aspects of non-heteronormativity.

The third aspect of queer, coalitional, refers to the possibility of engagement with other dimensions of identification that intersect with gender and sexuality, such as race, class, dis/ability, among others; groups that experience themselves "between, outside of, and in tension with a number of normalizing forces, like neoliberal or capitalist socio-economic orders, or oppressive social practices and structures". (Kumbier, 2014, p.7). Amongst marginalized groups, the ability and openness to create alliances is crucial to fight oppression and seek structural changes in society.

As discussed in the first chapter, the tradition of archives is one the groundworks of Western society and history, so, in that sense, the queer archive does not necessarily break with the tradition. However, considering that the queer archive stands "as evidence of queer lives, powers, and possibilities." (Muñoz, 1996, p.6), I see it as one example of what Muñoz calls *queer act*. As any queer act, the queer archive is one element of queer "thinking, scholarship, writing and performance" (Ibid, p.12). Archives are understood here as agents, rather than passive deposits of old materials and memories, and the queer archive not just holds queer memories, but also performs queer acts. Interpreting Muñoz's definition, I see that both queer acts and queer archives "contest and rewrite the protocols of critical writing." (Ibid, p.7).

III. QRAB: a room for their own

The initial impulse to create QRAB came from Olov Kristöm and some of his close activist friends – his previous "queer leftist activism" network – but today the member's profile is quite diverse, since other people have gotten involved during this one year of activities. Today the archive has 126 members, of which 8 are on the board. The membership fee costs 100 SEK – if payed after July 1st, it costs 50 SEK. The reduced price is due to the fact that the membership runs on calendar year, so the idea is that it should be cheaper if one is a member for less than half a year.

The money collected from the membership fees does not raise a big fund for the archive; the low price is, rather, a way of attracting more people and increase QRAB's visibility. I see this factor as an essential for the archive to engage the queer community and become itself a communal space; this is more important to QRAB than grow into a big and exclusive institution. I understand this action as one form of queering archival practices; the simple and cheap mode of becoming part of QRAB is also a way to say that the archive is open for everyone; one does not need to be an expert in archivology (or any related field), or part of a queer activist movement to be able to take part on the decisions and activities of QRAB. It shows the simplicity and openness and how the archive is interested in having a big and heterogeneous membership profile, in instead of a small circle of specialists. I believe that it shows the visionary aspect of QRAB and its coalitional (Kumbier, 2014) potential, because the archive wants people to feel welcome, to bring ideas, to donate their time and energy; the archive wants to speak to the queer community, not to be an isolated and unreachable institution.

The membership fee is defined in the annual meeting, that should take place every year before the 1st of April, according to QRAB's statute. The document also establishes that the board must have at least four persons, who are elected in the annual meeting for the positions of treasurer – responsible for financial matters, including memberships; chairperson (or president) – responsible for internal and external communication; and archivist – in charge of the organization's archives and library; and one substitute.

The policy of QRAB is not to refuse any membership – as long as the person pays the fee and agrees on the archive' statute, they are allowed to become a member. It is also stated in this document that "[a] member who counteracts the purpose of the association may be excluded. Decisions on exclusion are made by the board." (Stadgar för Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, 2019, p.1, translated by me). However, the text does

not make clear what a "counteract" to QRAB's purpose could be. In the condition of member of QRAB, one is allowed to take part on the decisions concerning the archive and its archival practices. QRAB is completely volunteer-run, and the members gather in meetings every other Saturday for about two and a half hours. The meetings do not follow a specific arrangement: Olov told me that some meetings are intended to be focused on sorting out documents that will be posteriorly catalogued, but hey take different formats according to the subjects that have to be discussed.

In the first meeting I attended – on the 6th of April 2019 – six people were present: four members (including two board members – archivist and president) plus me and Laura (another student in the condition of researcher). Olov talked about the trip he had done (together with two other board members) to Bergen, in Norway, where they have visited Skeivt Arkiv, the National Norwegian Archive for Queer History[7]. This trip was also an opportunity for them to gather more material for QRAB through swapping duplicate documents with Skeivt Arkiv. It was the first time they have switched documents with another archive, and they also plan on doing this again in the conference that is going to take place in Berlin in the summer/2019[8]. This method of obtaining more documents enriches the archive's collection not just in numerical terms, but also in diversity – the material they brought from Norway, for instance, were mainly theses and magazines that were published in that country.

It is interesting to see this circulation of documents and the relationships among queer archives in different cities and countries, with the only intention of mutual collaboration and development. The contact with other institutions is important not just for obtaining more material, but also to discuss strategies and challenges of their archival processes and to publicize the archive in different places and raise social interest. Besides that, the contact with other archives and the collaborative efforts stresses the coalitional aspect of community archives and contributes to strengthen the feeling of queer affective community beyond national levels. As mentioned before regarding the membership, the same attitude valuing collaboration and community appears here: QRAB does not aim at being a huge centre of documentation with exclusive material. Collaborating to the growth of other queer archives is more important than holding duplicate documents. One of the richness of queer archives in terms of types and origins of documents is due to the fact that the materials come to the archives in many collaborative ways.

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[7] Skeivt Arkiv's website: https://skeivtarkiv.no/en
[8] "Queering Memory – ALMS Conference Berlin 2019": https://queeralmsberlin2019.de/

The second meeting that I attended was held on the 4th of May 2019 and three members were present – including two board members (archivist and president). In the condition of researcher, there were another three people: me, Laura and Esa – also students in the Gendering Practices Master Program and who are current developing an equality plan for the archive, as part of their education. The meeting was mostly focused on the equality plan; Laura and Esa discussed with the members what they think that should be included in the document, also some technicalities about applying its guidelines into QRAB's practices. But in this meeting we also got to see more material that had been donated to the archive, showed to us by Olov. It was a collection of folders with clippings of texts published on newspapers in Sweden written and donated by one of QRAB's members.

The space of QRAB was envisioned to be a locus of activist articulation and social life, according to Olov. In the statute, the activities of QRAB are defined as it follows:

> QRAB's main activity is to run archives and libraries with a purpose-oriented approach. This activity should be available to activists, academics and the general public. Other activities that can be carried out within the association are, for example, popular education through lectures, study circles or publications. QRAB will work for good relations with the queer movement's actors and relevant archive, museum and library institutions. (Stadgar för Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, 2019, p.1, translated by me)

The initial idea – and still the dream for Olov – was that the archive would supply the need for a physical space where queer people could meet and develop different activities:

> So, one idea of QRAB was also... because in Gothenburg there has been, like, different sources of activist infrastructures, different places, like, culture houses, cafés, that has been gathering, like, physical gathering spots for activism, you can go there and have meetings, you can go there and meet people, but in the last years there hasn't really been one of those places, at least in my circles. So, then I thought it would be nice to have some sort of, like, physical place that wouldn't, like, demand a lot of work, on, like, a bookshop or a café or something. Just, like, a physical space that could be open for people to come to. And then I thought "well, an archive or a library is possibly one of those places", it's, like, a place where people can come and it doesn't, like, take that much effort, so, my idea was sort of to create, apart from the importance of preserving the materials, was also to create this space, like, this... long-term infrastructure for people to come to, and also, like, for my own needs. […] Yeah, and, like that desire, or that drive I've seen... My own, like, plans for the archive, I had this vision of, like, an own space, a place of our own, that we somehow could pay for, but then as always, like, how would we pay for that? (Interview 1)

The space imagined by Olov – as he defines it, "a place of our own", is still not a

reality since the members cannot afford rent and all the maintenance work demanded by an archive. I found this idea of a "place of our own" very sensitive and symbolic, and it reminded me of Virginia Woolf's book *A room for one's own* (1929). In this essay she talks about the importance for women writers to have their own space – literally and figuratively – within a literary tradition and society dominated by the patriarchy. The "place of our own" that Olov envisions and tells me about has a similar function but in a communal level: to strengthen queer ideas, bonds, affects and engagement. It expresses the community aspect of the archive, something that Olov does not want to disappear because of the fact that QRAB is based in a building owned and run by the State:

> speaking of future, I think it's also important to preserve the initial idea of being community-based, so, I don't know if, if we are to continue being, like, in this organization and under these conditions, I think we have to, like, start finding ways to, to keep that connection living, somehow... (Interview 1)

Ann Cvetkovich (2003) explores the affective power of gay and lesbian archives, which produce not just knowledge, but also feelings, at the same time as they are "collected according to sentiment and emotion." (p.269). One of the archives she writes about is the Lesbian Herstory [9] Archives (LHA) [10] in the United States, a big lesbian/feminist archive founded in the 1970s, which has a receptive and sensitive space, organized in a way that lesbians can feel home. Cvetkovich describes it as a "ritual space" and "safe space", conceived less as a research institute and more as a community centre, where lesbians can feel that their histories matter and are worth being preserved. The LHA takes this principle so seriously that it is one of its policies to not refuse any donations of materials that lesbians consider important in her life and in the life of other lesbians (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.243). The format of the archive – located in a house bought thanks to small donations of many lesbians around the country – is inviting and cosy, where lesbians are welcome not just to bring materials and do research, but also to hang out, socialize, have fun and, naturally, volunteer in their activities – since the archive cannot afford a paid staff. In instead of a traditional format of archive with a reading room separated from the storage rooms, in the LHA these physical and symbolic barriers are blurred.

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[9] The noun herstory is a neologism that expresses the idea of histories and narratives produced from the feminist standpoint, putting women as subject and focus of analysis. It is a wordplay with the word history, that has the masculine pronoun his as prefix.

[10] LHA's website: http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/intern.html

> Visitors can browse through the fillings cabinets and shelves at their leisure rather than having to negotiate closed stacks. Organized as a domestic space in which all lesbians will feel welcome to see and touch a lesbian legacy, LHA aims to provide an emotional rather than a narrowly intellectual experience. (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.241)

Image 1: Living room of the Lesbian Herstory Archives

For now, as a first solution, QRAB is located at the building of the Regional State Archives[11], which is a relatively stable and safe condition, since they have a good structure of storage, also an office space. They have a contract supposed to be renewed every year, but Olov does not think it is going to be a problem to get it extended, nor to get more storage space for the collection, that grows bigger continually[12]. They do not pay anything to use the space in the Regional State Archives building, and they are completely free to conduct their work – the official archives has no regulation or control over their activities. However, a negative point about that location is the fact that it is not an inviting place for social activities.

> And so, we started thinking about "well, maybe we could, like, initially start up with having the archive at some other place, without having to pay rent and,

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[11] Located at Arkivgatan 9, Göteborg.

[12] So far QRAB has between fifty and sixty linear meters of documents. The collection has roughly 3500 volumes of books, "and approximately twelve hundred issues of magazines and maybe six linear meters of, like, different archives' stuff.". The response from the activist groups in the city has been very positive, and they usually donate a lot of material to QRAB.

like, manage the house or, manage, like, the space". So, then it ended up that we got the space here and, like, the Regional State Archives isn't, like, an activist space per se, so it turned out a little different than, like, my vision initially. At least now. So, it hasn't been like that hub of, like, activists coming here and meeting […]. (Interview 1)

So, on the one hand, QRAB has a safe and stable material condition, compared to many other queer archives which have constant concerns about maintenance, relying on donations to pay their rent and bills. Nevertheless, being hosted in an official State building – a very formal and strict environment – is a disadvantage for not being an inviting and cosy space for social and political activities, especially if we take into account that queer bodies are constantly under judgements and distrust in institutional spaces[13]. When entering the building at Arkivgatan, one feels this sort of "weight" of formality, institutionalization and strictness. If we compare to the description and pictures of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, for instance, we understand Olov's sentiment of not being completely satisfied with the current situation of QRAB. This is not yet what he pictured as the room for their own, "not just a reading room where you can order stuff and, like, study, but more, like, vibrant living space." (Interview 1), where they could also have the right preservation conditions, with climate-controlled rooms. The money they collect from the membership fees is not enough to buy the equipment they need, such as computer and hard drive – and to start the digitization of documents in the future –, so a lot of their budget depends on funds (Interview 2).

IV. Out of the closet: the queer counterarchive

In this section I am going to discuss the characteristics of queer archives' collections in a general way. In this thesis I do not engage with the collection of QRAB, since I am focusing in the *practices of archiving* rather than the material themselves – this is, apropos, a possibility for future researches to look at the collection more in depth. My aim here is to discuss the general aspects of QRAB's material, how they have been acquired and the specificities of queer archives' collections.

Many queer archives start out from private collections of activists (individuals or groups) and scholars, which is also the case of QRAB. Olov's collection at some point got too big for his home, and that was one of the reasons that led him to come up with the

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[13] I believe this factor might be a discouragement for many people to visit the archive or get involved in it. It could be better analysed in a research tracking the profile of the visitors that look up for the archive, which is not the focus of this thesis.

idea of creating a queer archive. As Ann Cvetkovich (2003) mentions in her analysis of lesbian and gay archives, they are often built on "the donations of private collectors who have saved the ephemeral evidence of gay and lesbian life – both personal and public – because it might otherwise disappear." (p.243). The personal material collected by queer archives – diaries, letters, photographs, etc – assume archival importance because public cultures fail to chronicle queer lives. In addition to accumulating these kinds of material, "gay and lesbian archives are likely to have disproportionately large collections of ephemera because of their concern with sexuality and leisure culture as well as with the legacies of grassroots political activism." (Ibid, p.243)

The collection of QRAB has grown bigger with the (approximately) five hundred volumes they "inherited" from RFSL[14], an organization for LGBTQ rights in Stockholm. Olov told me he heard from a friend that RFSL was giving away their entire collection, since they got a rent increase and were not able to pay for a place big enough to house all the 8-10 thousand volumes they had. Olov got in touch with them and took part of the collection for QRAB, that came without any index or organization. Unfortunately, Cvetkovich's quote in the last paragraph makes sense here, since a big part of what was RFSL's collection got lost:

> I think about five hundred volumes went to other different libraries, and the entire collection was somewhere between eight and ten thousand, so, between seven and nine thousand volumes was sold or donated to, like, second hand bookstores that mainly through stuff away. (Interview 2)

Today QRAB's collection expands through donations of individuals and activist groups. Some archives – such as the LHA – have the policy of not refusing material, but in QRAB they have already said "no" to materials that they did not find relevant for the collection's profile. Through the website they encourage people to donate materials, and there is also the option to leave materials on loan at QRAB. On the website it is mentioned some examples of materials that could be the interesting for QRAB, considering its aims and interests: "[m]aterials that could be of interest are for example protocols, fanzines, photographs, posters, magazines, banners, sheet music, video recordings, paintings, flyers - really **anything that shows how queer struggles have been and are being fought**." (QRAB, 2019, online, highlighted by me). Queer struggles and memories are expressed in a variety of formats and, and QRAB is open to embrace this diversity.

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[14] RFSL's website: https://rfslstockholm.se/

Image 2: Storage room of QRAB

Even though QRAB is open to receive and keep any materials that speaks for the queer struggles, donated by any person or organization, it is important to stress that not all people are able to collect and keep records in a reasonable safe condition. If we think of the Swedish context, for example, not all queers are able to collect materials; what about those in situation of refuge, or those who live in very small places, or those constantly moving out from their homes because of the instable conditions of housing in a city like Gothenburg? When we talk about collecting and preserving objects and memories, we must take into account that, in some cases, the possibility of keeping materials – and, obviously, buying things – and build a collection is a privilege. Thus, we cannot expect that we are going to find – neither in QRAB nor in any other archive – a true representation of society's different groups, classes and struggles. This is something that QRAB is aware of, and from the conversations with Olov it became clear that QRAB does not claim to be representing the queer community in any geographical or identitarian sense. They offer possibilities to tell stories and keep memories alive, and these memories and stories are always going to have gaps. Retaking the discussion of the first chapter, archives always offer a fragmented representation of the past and peoples' lives, due to many circumstances: some of them are deliberated choices, some other are involuntary reflex of society's problems and inequalities.

Image 3: Storage room of QRAB

The content of queer archives are generally unusual if compared to what we find – or expect to find – in traditional archives: intimate objects, personal photographies and films, personal diaries, letters, oral reports, pieces of clothing, sex toys, zines, magazines, pornography, posters, flyers, stickers, pins, venue souvenirs, records of demonstrations and meetings are some of the objects that make part of these collections (Cvetkovich, 2003; Kumbier, 2009).

> The closet and the archive are both queer spaces; they contain, organize, and render (il)legible certain aspects of LGBT life. Inside both the closet and the archive are systems of logical organization and also systems of secret keeping. They both hold things. They both also show things. They spill their secrets forth. Coming out of the closet, that metaphor so central to public disclosure of a previously held secret, locates and constitutes sexual and gender identities not only within the speech act itself, but as Eve Sedgwick reminds us, within a multifaceted web of privileged, circulated knowingness. (Stone & Cantrell, 2015, pp.3-4)

Queer archives hold records from lived experiences, which are "inadequate to the task of documentation" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.9). The criteria of selection, inclusion and safeguard of those records from the past do not necessarily follow the conventional and traditional norms: "[t]heir principles of selection and inclusion are not the same as those of a public research archive that defines value according to historical or research interests." (Ibid, p.243). Rather, a big part of what one finds in queer archives are objects

filled with affective meaning, produced and kept in the private sphere. These private, intimate and ephemeral traces can be very complicated to be catalogued under precise and objective categories, which poses a challenge to queer archives.

According to Cvetkovich (2011, p.32), queer archives are often *archive of feelings* for two reasons: for being motivated from feelings of queer individuals and queer community, and also for aiming at preserving ordinary feelings. Bringing affects and personal memories to the archive and reading and organizing them from an affective standpoint – with nostalgia, fantasy, trauma, hope – is a blend that takes place in queer archives. These places insist that a document can be significant for its affective aspects.

> The archive of feelings is both material and immaterial, at once incorporating objects that might not ordinarily be considered archival, and at the same time, resisting documentation because sex and feelings are too personal or ephemeral to leave records. For this reason and others, the archive of feelings lives not just in museums, libraries, and other institutions but in more personal and intimate spaces, and significantly, also within cultural genres. (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.244)

To deal with evidences of queer lives, it is necessary that archivists, activists and scholars use creative forms of approaching those histories and their traces, which implies in an opening to deal with a miscellany of unusual objects and collections, as well as a critical gaze towards what escapes the archive. "This creativity is often a response to a long history of LGBT life being 'hidden from history', obscured within existing sources, or discarded entirely." (Stone & Cantrell, 2015, p.3).

This critical and creative approach is, in Mél Hogan's words (2007, p.55), an effort to *find the absence*, and demands what Alexandra Juhasz (2006) has called *queer archive activism*. This concept is adopted by Ann Cvetkovich (2011) to explain how the archive acts in society, as an activist agent that acknowledges the silences and absences

> and that uses it to create new kinds of knowledge and new forms of collectivity […]. 'Queer archive activism' insists that the archive serve not just as a repository for safeguarding objects, but also as a resource that 'comes out' into the world to perform public interventions. (Cvetkovich, 2011, p.32)

The *queer archive activism* also implies a critical reading of traditional collections and institutions, looking at the ways they represent – or not – queer lives and cultures, and proposing new archival practices that put these absences into perspective. Still according to Ann Cvetkovich (2011), it is an activist standpoint that also acknowledges the particularities and ephemeral nature of queer lives' evidences, making the archive a space open to these features.

Cvetkovich analyses trauma and emotion as indissociable dimensions in regard to the queer archive, and they help explain the peculiarity of these places, their idiosyncrasies and queerness: "They address particular versions of the determination to 'never forget' that gives archives of traumatic history their urgency." (Cvetkovich, 2002, p.110). The dimension of "never forget" is important here since I consider that queer archives can and should be in line with activist agendas for social change. What is at stake when we talk about *not forgetting* is not just about keeping and safeguarding documents; it is a matter of seeking social justice, visibility and reparation that takes place when memories are visited and instrumentalized to envision a better future.

In this sense, I understand the *queer archive activism* as a methodological archivist approach to the queer evidences that comprise the queer archive. These evidences are ephemeral, or embodied in peculiar collections of objects completely alien to the traditional archive. The *queer counterarchive* (Cvetkovich, 2011) can be understood as the archive that results from the *queer archive activism*. It expresses positions "from within the margins" (Hogan, 2007, p.71) and practices that intent to reconfigure and subvert normative archival practices. Adriana Azevedo (2016, p.71) defines it as "a disruption of the archive":

> It is the archive out of the closet. […] It happens when one takes out the pictures from the trunks kept in attics, basements, in the bottom of closets, under the beds, inside old books. From this rummage, this mess, emerge from the archival depths the queer of the archive – its residuals. The loves, the ways of being together, the ephemeral homes in form of illicit kisses in old pictures in black and white. (Azevedo, 2016, p.71, translated by me)

The *queer counterarchive* seek putting queer people and culture as agents in the archive, not as objects of the traditional archival gaze, and this is what makes possible new forms of political action in society and the construction of narratives by the communities that are present and depicted in the archive. Cvetkovich refers to the Lesbian Herstory Archives again in the article *The queer art of the counterarchive* (2011) to show how its radical and separatist stance insists that only a different kind of archive can accommodate queer culture and preserve the "messiness and outrageousness" of queer histories (p.32).

The efforts of recording, exhibiting, publicizing and preserving these memories are a strategy to confront the violence of marginalization, invisibility, prejudice and silence. The construction of memories by/for the queer community starts from this sensitive contact with past references, which is permeated, many times, by engagement

and creativity. This phenomenon is what Cvetkovich (2002) defines as *queer archival strategy* and Alana Kumbier (2009) as *critical archival practice*. They are projects that reinforce the emotional power of the archives and their potential as sites of production of transformative, critical and engaged knowledge.

In most of the cases these objects come to the archives through donations from "individuals who insisted that their lives and the records they left behind were history even when the rest of the world, including public archives, didn't care or didn't want to know." (Cvetkovich, 2011, p.32). The idea of *queerness* is present, in that sense, both in the form and content of these archives, through "not only new kinds of collections but new forms of exhibition and public display." (Ibid, p.32).

V. Organizing and making accessible

The version of QRAB's catalogue currently available on the website[15] contains approximately 60% of its printed materials – the documents in other formats are not yet catalogued. The main part of this catalogue was made by Olov at the time when the collection that now belongs to the archive was his private one, and this work was conducted throughout many years; apart from this catalogue, they have just some descriptions of the material they got from RFSL's library, which are not systematized. That is, the collection is not yet organized in a homogeneous way. According to Olov, one of the next steps to improve this work is going to be creating a cataloguing group in QRAB, since there are members who have more expertise in this domain and can lead this work and also teach other members.

An important element for the indexation work is a thesaurus, which is a systematization of words, that shows the relationship between different terms, also their related meanings, including synonyms and antonyms. It is distinguished from a dictionary or a glossary because thesaurus "often contains nothing more than headings and their relationships, where dictionaries and glossaries usually contain definitions and annotations on word use."[16]. The plan of QRAB, according to Olov, is to adopt a thesaurus specifically designed with LGBTQ terms, which is the Homosaurus[17], developed by IHLIA[18] (International Gay and Lesbian Information Centre and Archives) in the

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[15] Available at: http://www.qrab.org/index.php?p=subj&lang=en
[16] Definition given by The Society of American Archivists, available at: https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/t/thesaurus
[17] Available at: http://homosaurus.org/
[18] IHLIA's website available at: https://www.ihlia.nl/?lang=en

Netherlands. Other thesaurus in similar formats are available, but the Homosaurus was chosen for being more trans and queer inclusive, being quite recently updated. "So, I think the other thesauruses that I know of are more specifically gay and lesbian, like, niched. So, I thought this would be the most diverse." (Interview 2)
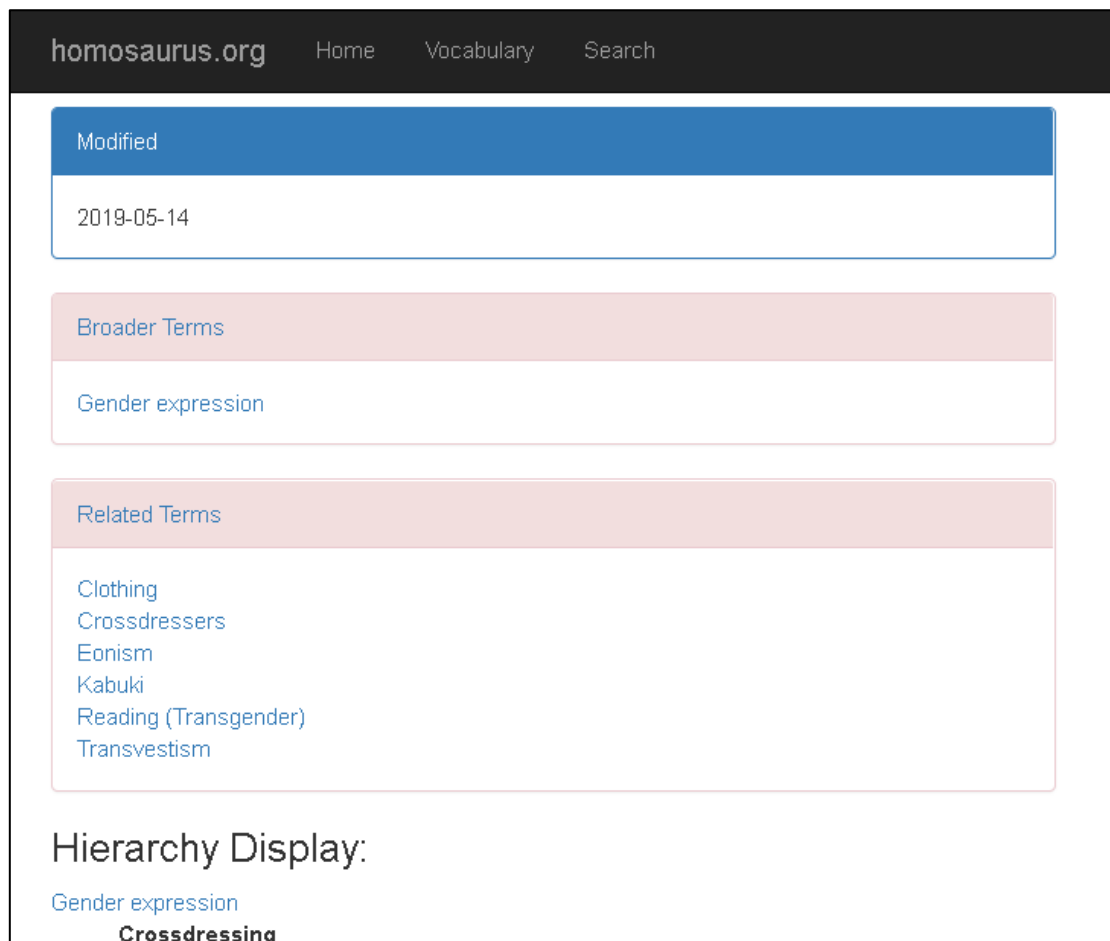
Image 4: Screenshot of Homosaurus page containing the entry "Crossdressing"

As discussed earlier regarding the swapping of material between QRAB and the Norwegian archive, the appropriation of this thesaurus can say a lot about the collaboration between queer archives. In very concrete ways, we see in those cases how the archives work together to face challenges, develop their catalogue, or acquire more material. The way that both archival materials and thesaurus can "travel" says a lot about the sense of community and the possibilities of communal knowledge-production. The use of a thesaurus that is already done, in instead of creating a new one, is one option to simplify the work – especially if we take into account that QRAB only has volunteers and no expressive funds. A project such a thesaurus is very extensive, takes a lot of time and research, which would not be the best solution for QRAB's catalogue at this moment. Thus, the idea of translating a thesaurus already made by one of the biggest centres of

documentation of LGBT memory is clever and convenient, to say the least. Besides, using the same thesaurus as base makes it easier for researchers to match terms and key-words, and this is a tricky endeavour when we are dealing with an instable vocabulary.

Cataloguing is one of the most important activities in an archive, and it is determinant in optimizing the work and making the collection accessible. Traditional archives and public libraries commonly use cataloguing guidelines developed by national regulatory organizations[19]. However, these standardizations have gaps, and the inclusion of "queer keywords" (Kumbier, 2014, p.6) in archives and libraries catalogues and the criteria to use certain terms in instead of others are a complicated matter.

> Contemporary Library of Congress [20] subject headings (used to describe individual books and entire collections of papers in conventional archives) can account for some of these identifications [that queer can refer to], but they can't account for all of them in their particularity, their inventiveness, their impermanence, and their ambiguity. This list of terms reminds us of the ways people live their lives across and outside of categories and classification systems. (Kumbier, 2014, p.6)

The vocabulary around homosexuality and other expressions of non-normative gender and sexuality have instable significances, as Sharon Marcus (2005) argues. The author compares them to the word *woman*, since the last one has existed for many centuries, even though its connotations have changed throughout history. "By contrast, terms for homosexuality rapidly proliferate and disappear, and they often remain confined to codes, slang, and scientific jargon. As a result, gay history confronts different obstacles than women's history does." (Marcus, 2005, p.201)

Accordingly, queer vocabulary, their abundance, complexity and significance in an archive's catalogue are a complicated matter – but that does not mean it is something negative! As Alana Kumbier (2014) says, this is one of the "pleasures that queer communities offer" (p.113). Olov believes that, even though it is challenging and not unproblematic to "approach the past in its own terms", the queer archive should try to carry out this effort, exploring the words and meanings that speak from a certain context in queer history.

The question of handling terminologies and translations raises, in my perception,

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[19] In Sweden, for instance, The National Library is responsible for the national search database (LIBRIS) , which has its specific cataloguing rules. "LIBRIS contains 6,5 million titles from around 300 library units at Swedish university and research libraries, as well as about twenty public libraries." (LIBRIS, 2019, online. Available at: http://librishelp.libris.kb.se/help/content_eng.jsp?open=about)

[20] The Library of the Congress is the main library in the United States and the largest library in the world according to its website. (Library of Congress, 2019, online. Available at: https://catalog.loc.gov/)

the problem of anachronism, which is something important to be discusses in every endeavour to access and understand the past. In our conversation, Olov links the discussion about representation to anachronism to conclude that, if the archive is looking for representation, then it is impossible not to be anachronic:

> if you want to have an archive that is about representation than you have to be, like, than you have to be anachronistic, because then you have to describe the past in terms that makes sense to the present, like, "oh, I want to find information about trans people in the sixteenth century"... than it they have to be catalogued as trans people from the sixteenth century, but if you approach it more, like, it isn't, like, easy, and it's certainly not unproblematic but I think it's worth at least trying **to approach the past on its own terms**, like, using, for instance, if you use subject headings to describe some material, I think it's worthwhile to also use, like, terms from that, like, sapphic, or, uranian, or, like, use the terms from that context, maybe as well as, like, modern day sort of equivalences or misrepresentations of the past, but I think it's important not, like, in, in the translation of the past to the present to, like, forget the past, you have to, like, keep the original language maybe, and that goes as well for, it's not just a temporal issue, it's, like, spatial, from different places using different terms, I think it's important to, to, like, have that window open to "the other" in quotation marks. (Interview 1, highlighted by me)

Even though the work of cataloguing and creating searching databases might seem a strictly technical procedure, a lot of choices are expressed in the ways an archive or library decides to inventorize and classify its material. The organization and description of materials reveal more about the values of the institution than about what is being categorized. Like Alana Kumbier (2014), Sharon Marcus (2005) also talks about the Library of Congress in the United States and problematizes the categorization of books about homosexuality:

> It is not surprising that those who devised the Library of Congress headings in the late nineteenth century defined homosexuality as a sexual deviation to be sandwiched between bestiality and incest, on one side, and prostitution, sadism, fetishism, masturbation, and emasculation, on the other. (Marcus, 2005, p.192)

New cataloguing and archiving methods are being discussed and developed by queer archives and documentation centers – such as QRAB –, in accordance with the particularities of the collection. Olov gives as an example the way the Lesbian Herstory Archives chooses to list names of women in their catalogue:

> For instance, like, names of people, the standard... there's different practices for archives and libraries, I know most about librarian procedures and, like, standard for these name descriptions is, like, last name, comma, given name, which I know, for instance, the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York have a different standard where, because, like, the last name is seen as, like, the patriarchal, if a woman gets married she gets her husband's name, so they have,

like, first name, last name. So, if you search for Emma Goldman it's on E, not
G. (Interview 1)

Developing different cataloguing methods can make a big difference when it comes to express the queerness and non-normativity of the queer archive. In the case of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, described by Olov, the treatment given to the documents expresses a feminist gaze. The cataloguing ideas and processes are important regardless the type of source that is being dealt with: be they more conventional documents – such as books, magazines, formal letters, public registers, etc. – or unusual materials, such as personal ephemera. The most important question is about *how* the documents are being catalogued instead of what kind of documents they are. But the challenge becomes bigger when it comes to unconventional and ephemeral material. It is very unlikely, for instance, that we would find a t-shirt, a demonstration poster or a dildo in a traditional archive! The unexpected objects found in queer archives push the boundaries of the traditional archiving methods, and require systems of information management and accessibility different from the traditional ones.

The normative methods of description and archiving of documents are still restrictive, and, as we see from the example of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, patriarchal. In QRAB's case, one of the strategies they are developing is to ask people who donate material for some background information – a short description and "story" – about that item that is going to become part of the collection.

> our strategy at the moment is to be very open with, like, when people donate stuff to us, we have like a little form they can fill out with a, like, free text description of the items, so they can write, like, a description of what it is, but also, like, give their story of, like, where does this come from, what's its significance for the person donating it. (Interview 1)

This supporting document is useful both for the archiving and cataloguing processes, as well as for visitors, since it works as an additional reference to navigate the collection. Olov told me about a jeans vest they have in QRAB, which is an obscure item in the collection:

> we received a jeans vest, for example, with, like, lots of punk patches on it […] it's like, a jeans vest with punk patches, a little queer punk bands, maybe, but not, like, there's no, like, obvious, like, meaning to it, but with the document of, like, the backstory it's, like, explained somehow. (Interview 1)

The description of this kind of material is important to clarify the origins of the object – especially when its "meaning" is not clearly expressed – and helps the visitor

understand why it says something to the person who owned it, and therefore might say something to other people – especially queer people – looking at it at the archive.

The difficulties of cataloguing queer objects and memories are also due to the fact that standardization necessarily reflects cultural norms and might corroborate to put labels of "normal" or "abnormal" in the archive's documents, which goes in the opposite way of QRAB's goal. Resisting normativity is a common feature of queer archives; but some of them, like QRAB, take this resistance even further, trying to queer even the ways documents are organized and categorized:

Image 5: Jeans vest and other donations received by QRAB

> some of the standard procedures for cataloguing could also be a bit problematic from the queer point of view, so we're trying to, before, like, our goal is to not just "oh, we're following this manual from the, like, National Library or something", but to try and get a structure thought through first before we start cataloguing, like, super properly. (Interview 1)

One challenge for QRAB in the future is going to be developing a strategy to "adapt" the collection into a certain way, so it can be included and searchable through the most important database, but without losing its "queer touch".

> one the ideas we have, which I hope we'll manage to make reality, is to make the catalogue searchable in the National Library catalogue. But if you are going to do that you have to follow some standards, like, they have authority posts

for authors or, so, I think we have to be, **we have to find some sort of way to be both normal and queer**. Like, make extra fields for our own descriptions that doesn't fit in the, like, standard catalogue. So, there'll be lots of work for sure. (Interview 1, highlighted by me)

The challenge of being "both normal and queer" is going to require from QRAB's members a negotiation between traditional archival practices and their queer perceptions and aims. They will have to evaluate what QRAB would probably lose in terms of its queerness in order to adapt to certain rules of cataloguing and making information accessible through national platforms such as the National Library one. As Olov reflects, this is a task that will require a lot of thought and work. If on the one hand it can make the archive much more visible and attractive to researchers and visitors, it could also mean giving up on their flexibility of describing the material in the ways they find the most appropriate from a queer standpoint. From this research I am not able to speak for other queer archives, but it seems to me that this might be a dilemma faced by other organizations as well, where the problem of being visible might also mean having to be normative in a certain way. This impression got even clearer to me when I read the entry "Ephemera", written by Ann Cvetkovich in the book *Lexicon for an affective archive* (2017). In this text, she tells a little bit about her research in the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), whose library now accommodates the *June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives*, that emerged in 1981 and since then belonged to different organizations and grassroot archives run by volunteers. Now they are housed and catalogued by the UCLA's library, which has enough resources to give them stability and broader accessibility. Cvetkovich starts the text with a question similar to what is expressed in Olov's words: "What happens when a grassroots lesbian feminist archive finds its way to the special collections of a major university research library? Does it lose its counterarchival aura, or can it carry its powers of critical intervention into new spaces?" (Cvetkovich, In: Palladini & Pustianaz, 2017, p.181). What would a queer archive lose or gain when incorporated into normative and institutionalized standards? How can they negotiate resistance, activism and impact in society with accessibility and visibility? Do they necessarily lose their queerness if they are not radical in all aspects?

Queer archives are still recent – if we compare to the history of archives in general – so, this is something that I think will still be a matter of discussion in both queer scholarship and also from archivist and technical perspectives. And I do not see this as a problem; in fact, these discussions reach important conceptual, theoretical and political matters and can contribute to the development of queer archives and to archives in a

general epistemological sense. If QRAB is going to become "less queer" if included in the Swedish National Library's catalogue? No matter the decisions that QRAB members are going to take for the future of the archive, I think the question remains important not just for queer archives, but for queer epistemologies in general.

VI. Beyond QRAB's shelves

Olov sees the importance of creating different activities at the archive and with other institutions with the purpose of publicizing the institution and the importance of LGBTQ history, also to generate debates and reflexions in society. So far, they have made two exhibitions using materials of the archive: one in Mölndal Stadsmuseum and another one in one library of the University of Gothenburg. The exhibition in Mölndal Stadsmuseum took place between the 11th and the 26th of August 2018, within the calendar of EuroPride[21]. For that occasion, the archive got funds from the Gothenburg municipality to print folders to be distributed during the event. The other exhibition also

Image 6: QRAB's exhibition at Mölndal Stadsmuseum

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[21] The flyer with information about the exhibition and the other events of EuroPride 2018 in Mölndal is available at:
https://www.molndal.se/download/18.a0c480b1638f40de1e4160/1553599655163/Molndal-programblad-Pride-2018.pdf

occurred in the summer of 2018, in the Gothenburg University Humanities Library[22].

The purposes of the exhibitions are both to publicize the archive and its collection, but also to reach a broader crowd and create awareness and solidarity with LGBTQ struggles. Another strategy that will be applied by QRAB to publicize the archive is to reach out the students of Kvinnofolkhögskolan (women's folk school in Gothenburg). The idea is to let the students know about the archive, and therefore attract more

Image 7: QRAB's exhibition at Gothenburg University Library

visitors, create interest in queer history and show to them the possibilities of QRAB's collection for future researches. The queer archive does not exist to just keep and preserve documentation, but it also takes part in the broader process of knowledge production.

These efforts to reach other spaces, exhibiting materials according to specific themes and reaching out different groups of people is in line with QRAB's purpose of making possible to people to get to know more queer histories and feel inspired by them: "By making these stories available to activist, academics, and the general public we wish to further an understanding of history that can inspire to a continued struggle for everybody's rights and full freedom." (QRAB, 2019, online). The exhibitions in the

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[22] The exhibition had the theme "Stolthet och fördom" [In English: "Pride and Prejudice"]. More information can be found at the university's library website, available at: http://www.ub.gu.se/aktuellt/detaljvy.xml?id=2965

context of the EuroPride, for instance, are very important for joining bigger discussions and other actions to make people aware of queer struggles and their importance. Also, these actions make possible for more people to know the archive and therefore get interested in using the materials for different purposes, or to become members and get involved in QRAB's activities.

Chapter 3: Queer narratives, possibilities and future(s)

I. Queer ephemera, queer acts, queer (counter)narratives

As discussed in the second chapter, the queer archive maps ephemeral objects that express gestures, feelings, private life and sexuality. In this chapter, the aim is to draw some discussions about the reverberations of these archives and their collections to other matters, such as reliability of records, construction of queer narratives from the entanglement of public and private through affection, and creative possibilities of approaching archives and archival materials.

> Central to this queer archival method has been attention to the affective power of archives – that they are collected out of affective need, generate complex affective responses (both positive and negative), and enable affective approaches to history, including the scholarship on queer temporalities so generative of late within queer theory. (Cvetkovich, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.225).

The presence of ephemeral material that express affects is one way of questioning the connotations of "truth" and "evidence" that we usually associate to the archive and destabilising the crystalized ideas about what counts as legitimate historical source. As Ann Cvetkovich affirms (2003, p.268), gay and lesbian archives are usually very special kinds of collection that represent more than the literal value of the objects themselves. Queer archives and their collections challenge traditional definitions around legitimacy and relevance of records.

What is under problematization are the dynamics of knowledge production and legitimacy that determine "how events and things are constructed as potential 'evidence'." (Clarke, et al, 2018, p.12), while others are not validated in the same way. Different kinds of records are then taken in different ways, some being more prestigious or reliable than others. Oral traditional, for instance, is still seen in some contexts as part of "activist practice" instead of proper research material, and do not have the same authority and status as textual sources. (Cox, 2009, p.255)

José Muñoz (2009) links the idea of *evidence* to the concept of *ephemera*, to reflect about the different traces of queer lives and cultures that do not fit the normative discourse of the "fact". He calls *queer evidence*

> an evidence that has been queered in relation to the laws of what counts as proof. Queerness has an especially vexed relationship to evidence. […] Queerness is rarely complemented by evidence, or at least by traditional

understandings of the term. The key to queering evidence, and by that I mean the ways in which we prove queerness and read queerness, is by suturing it to the concept of ephemera. (p.65)

Therefore, the queer evidence escapes the "potential tyranny of the fact" (Muñoz, 2009, p.65) escaping the normative understandings of trace, proof and testimony. Queerness, according to him, is illegible and lost within the heteronormative mapping of space (Ibid, p.72); and by being "lost" he does not mean disappear or hide, but "veer away from heterosexuality's path" (Ibid, p.73).

This means that the queer archive is based on a different understanding of evidences, and problematizes the idea that one goes to the archive to look for confirmation and to write *the* history that relies on veracity and proofs. What is being sought by queer archives is not a complete understanding of the past the way it was, finding truth or the true story about past events. If the queer relationship to traces and evidences are different from the normative ones, so are the narratives produced from them. In Olov's understanding, the queer archives are places that disturb and question the conceptions of a single historical narrative, both for the characteristics of its collection and for the way they envision and entangle memory and knowledge towards actions for changes in society. The queer archive, according to Olov, is the wrong place to go if one is looking for confirmation, proves or validations.

> I don't wanna, like, put value on what is most important, but **it is important for me to view the archive as a place where you can go to, like, disturb narratives about history as well, not just find, like, get affirmation of, like, what you think you already know**... To, like, give a broader... because often times marginal histories, when they are being written, they tend to, like, be quite conformative, because, because it's seen as, like, emancipatory claim, that we have to discover our history to, like, claim our place in society... No! "We have to have a history to, like, have value", and that is, I mean, it's important work, but when that, when that tendency gets mainstreamed and, like, gets the acceptance of, of mainstream society, it feeds into, like, the idea of there being this history, just this one history […]. (Interview 1, highlighted by me)

The queer archive is, rather, a space to find unexpected, unusual, surprising and queer – in its original meaning of *strangeness* – products of people's affections, creativity and engagement. The queer archive does not aim at being neutral or to offer a complete narrative about queer people, movements or culture. Its biases and intentions are proclaimed, and, from Olov's words, it becomes clear that they are seen as positive and strong factors about queer archives and queer narratives.

In that sense, the process of remembering is not permeated by the idea of

verifying, acknowledging or recognizing the past. What is triggered by the queer archive is a disruption – or at least a provocation in this sense – of the idea that minorities need to find their memories and history in order to be recognized, included and have "value" in view of society. In Olov's perspective, the queer archive does not exist to promote affirmation or validation for que queer community, "that sort of, like, idea of the archive, that you go there to find yourself or find something that speaks to you, […] I see it more as, like, you discover something new, you discover something that you didn't expect, something different from what you are used to." (Interview 1)

It is necessary to understand the queer archives as *transformations* of archival practices, and not as *inclusion* of queer thematic within the traditional archive. "The archive can become an extension of neoliberal and homonational strategies when inclusion is about assimilation and equality and not about alternative and absent voices or transformative knowledge." (Cvetkovich, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.222).

The normative conceptions defining the value of a document, or the ideas of belonging or inclusion are not the main preoccupation of QRAB; the queer archive, in Olov's perspective, is not about *inclusion* or *representation*. The movement of mainstream and normative narratives is to try to "add" queer as a theme within an established frame of accessing the past and understanding society. In the same way, some responses to homophobia rely on demands for equal rights, political agendas that "assume a gay citizen whose affective fulfilment resides in assimilation, inclusion, and normalcy." (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.11). Recently we have been seeing more interest in queer culture, LGBT and women's rights (and other questions related to disparities and discrimination) from the media, political parties or popular culture, to name a few. However, this interest does not necessarily mean that these issues are being approached from a non-hegemonic gaze and with a transformative impulse. In the capitalist context we live in, the phenomenon of commodification became a profit-making strategy from the powerful sectors of the society, reducing important and complex social, environmental and political causes to consumer goods. For instance, talking *about* feminism does not mean necessarily talking from a feminist perspective or with feminist interests[23]. In the same

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[23] In this excerption of *In a Queer Time and Place* (2005), Judith/Jack Halberstam makes a similar statement on their analysis of queer subcultures: "On the one hand, the mainstream recognition and acknowledgment of a subculture has the potential to alter the contours of dominant culture […]. But on the other hand, most of the interest directed by mainstream media at subcultures is voyeuristic and predatory. The subculture might appear on television eventually as an illustration of the strange and perverse, or else it will be summarily robbed of its salient features and the subcultural form […]." (Halberstam, 2005, pp.156-157)

line, queer becomes, in some cases, just an addendum or a curious remark within the same traditional structures of mass culture, journalism, university studies, working practices, among other practices.

The queerness as feature of the archive means the opposite: is it not just a superficial "inclusion" of queer within normative practices and normative discourses. It is a tool and expression of its diversity and makes possible the establishment and strengthening of the connections among queer individuals and groups.

From the notion of queer archives as producers of queer narratives, I understand that queer records and memories are instrumentalized to give shape to new perceptions about the past and the present. The commitment of the queer archive is to create other possible ways of visiting and writing queer history. Thus, what is embedded in the queer archival practice and in queer scholarship is a reaction to what is defined as legitimate knowledge and an openness to possibilities of subverting standardized rules and ideologies. This is a matter of acknowledging and questioning power structures in places of knowledge production and intellectual work (archives and museums being some of them), also the academic environment, as Muñoz (1996) analyses:

> With increasing frequency, queer and race scholarship, like feminist inquiry before it, are dismissed as merely passing intellectual fancies, modes of inquiry that are too much in the 'now', lacking historical grounding and conceptual staying power. Because the archives of queerness are makeshift and randomly organized, due to the restraints historically shackled upon minoritarian cultural workers, the right is able to question the evidentiary authority of queer inquiry. All of this amounts to a general critique of queer scholarship's claim to 'rigor'. A question: Who owns rigor? I suggest that rigor is owned, made, and deployed through institutional ideology. (p.7)

Insofar as it brings the possibility of encountering affective and private records, the archive becomes more opened to diversity – of languages, expressions, desires and stories. Creating queer archives – in their diversity of formats – is a means of understanding and hearing voices that have always been excluded from hegemonic narratives. The silences about marginalized groups in the archive and other spaces of knowledge production has to be problematized, and this is also one of the strategies of making a queer reading of the traditional archives:

> Since so much of the archive available to queer historians is authored by people who judge, police, condemn, and punish nonnormative sexuality and gender, the methodology of reading against the grain is perhaps the key methodological strategy of queer history, as it is for other histories of marginalization. (Kunzel, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.214).

If dominant narratives tend to represent privileged groups and normative standards, the queer archive becomes a reaction and claims material and immaterial spaces to produce their own histories and herstories. Since LGBTQ subjects and experiences have always been absent and erased from dominant historical records, "queer studies scholars have sought to create a historical record of their own". (Kumbier, 2014, p.14). But not just researchers are involved in this endeavour: activists and artists also have been creating new archives, working in existing ones, mobilizing reflexions about the archive in their works, and, in this way, redefining what we understand by archival research and practice. (Cvetkovich, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.219). The work or queer archiving is, according to Halberstam (2005), done in part by academics, but cultural producers also play an important role in "constructing queer genealogies and memories." (p.170).

The dynamics proposed by the queer archives seek to incorporate and produce a diversity of expressions, experiences and narratives. In this sense, other forms of knowledge are also made possible. Cvetkovich (In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.225) points out the subjective and affective investments that make possible for the archive to produce alternative activism and scholarship, that are not aimed simply at factual knowledge. Susan Stryker (2010; 2015) reflects about the embodied nature of knowledge and memory, about how experiences are marked in the bodies and how the cultural knowledge is transmitted through corporeal practices. It is a relationship to knowledge that privileges the subjective – affect, desire, positionality – producing what the author calls counterdominant knowledges (Stryker, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.211), and a form of queer archival practice, that fuses together archive, body and knowledge: "[k]nowledge is never purely deal, but rather always material, partial, situated, motivated, invested. The archival imaginary that structures our knowledge and enables our desire is always embodied." (Stryker, 2010, p.105)

This openness to new forms of knowledge also implies in different narratives that are possible to be constructed. The queer archive is not, according to Olov, a place to confirm or tell us what we already know – or think we know – about the queer past. From our conversations, it became clear to me that, for him, the queer archive exists to present to us new objects, new perspectives, new stories, and its queerness lies also on its radical and subversive stance. The projects of recovering queer past do not aim at uncovering the truth or finding empirical evidences and proofs, but they are, first and foremost, about finding the unknown. The notion of seeking the truth, in some cases, has more to do with

reparation, with healing for minorities and marginalized groups and communities, rather than a reconstruction of past events in some verifiable and absolute way. In this process, collective memory challenges the objective notions of the past and history in factual terms (Cox, 2009, p.256). It is about agency to tell their own stories, to review the past in a way that not just involves remembrance, but articulates remembrance into a broader sense of communal project.

Talking about the plans and hopes for the future of QRAB, Olov addressed something very important that I see as the core of the archive: the desire for history:

> But, maybe more realistically, I think I would love to see, like, because I think lot of queer people and, it's not just specifically queer, but people that don't have their history given to them, don't have, like, when they go to school they learn about things that are relevant in their own lives, those people often have, like, feel some sort of **desire for history**, it's my perception, and I hope that this archive could be, like, a resource for those people working through that desire and, like, spreading, spreading their passions and interests. (Interview 1, highlighted by me)

"Desire" is a strong word, a strong feeling, and it has a close relation to archive. As discussed in the first chapter, Derrida's (1996) meditations on the *archive fever* are grounded on desire, which is, in its turn, based on the Freudian death drive. Desire is central in any archival project: desire for history, for truth, desire to be remembered, desire which is also fear of death, of loss, of oblivion, of having no past. The fascinating relationship that we have to remembrance, as individuals and part of a collective, is embedded in an obsessive urge for knowing and appropriating the past, and I believe this happens because we know we will also become past. Writing this thesis was for me a process of reflections about many aspects of life and about how we perceive and experience temporalities. During this time, influenced and guided by my research material and literature, I wondered a lot about what is that that we search in the past. I guess we, humans, are definitely afraid of death, but not necessarily the literal death, but being forgotten. When Olov speaks about the "desire for history", I think of my own feelings when I hear or read a story that speak to me, and in how powerful they can be to my personal life and to other people's lives. There is a connection between past and present, between those who lived many years or centuries ago, and us who are here now. This link to the past can do a lot in the present and for the future. Memory and history can transform our ways of perceiving not just the past, but also situate ourselves in the present. The sense of belonging, of community, is very much based in a common past, in common references and memories.

There is a lot at stake when we tell a story. Memory and history become producers and products of a personal but also collective process of meaning-making, culture and knowledge. In queer archives, the material practices "challenge traditional conceptions of history and understand the quest for history as a psychic need rather than a science" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.268). Desiring and writing history can be a mourning process, but it is also a celebration, which can be an empowering and meaningful tool to create and provoke changes, to create deep experiences of community, belonging, and empathy.

II. Spaces and temporalities

In this section I will draw some reflections on the entanglements of the notion of evidence and queer archival practices in different forms, departing from the idea that "[t]he queer relationships between evidence, imagination, and estrangement are central to any queer archival endeavour." (Marshall, et al, 2015, p.9).

The connections between private and public domains have been addressed by many scholars, activists and artists. Lauren Berlant (1997), for example, explores the relationships between intimacy – particularly sexuality – and the notions of citizenship in the United States. Some works in queer theory argue that affects bridge both private and public realms, such as *An Archive of Feelings* (2003), where Ann Cvetkovich shows how affects, instead of isolation and privacy, can become the basis for creating new and very public cultures.

In the article *Video remains: Nostalgia, Technology, and the Queer Archive Activism* (2006), Alexandra Juhasz explores the power of video as a cathartic toll of expression, healing and empowerment. She explains how she translated nostalgia, mourning and loss into action through videomaking: "[w]hile nostalgia is typically understood as an emotion that is paltry and passive, I propose that when mixed with video, it has the potential to be substantial and productive." (Juhasz, 2006, p.321).

In the same line as the author's statement about video, I think that the queer archive can also be viewed as this *locus* of nostalgia, that can be connected to it in an active way. Having lost her best friend (who died of AIDS), Juhasz wonders if we can learn from the dead and from the past, and in this intimate and beautiful text she explains how she made her mourning into something collective, productive and interactive through the video production. The videomaking is her tool of archiving the private and intimate about her friend, but also an archive that speaks to other peoples' losses and grieves.

According to Cvetkovich (2003), this is the essence of an archive: "[a]t the heart of the archive are practices of mourning, and the successful archive enables the work of mourning." (p.271).

The relationship between archives and future is also addressed in Cvetkovich's (2003) analysis of queer affects, public cultures and documentary. The author argues for the possibilities of documentaries in creating affective archives. Insofar as they can address traumas and other queer feelings, create memory spaces and rituals, they acknowledge "traumatic pasts as a way of constructing new visions for the future." (Ibid, p.14). She also says that the archiving impulse emerges from the encounter of mortality and documentary, not as an attempt to protect from death, but to create practices of mourning (Ibid, p.269). The spectre of death – represented, in many cases, by AIDS – serves as a reminder of public death through the loss of history. In that sense, memory is key not just to acknowledge the past, but also to create a positive and hopeful longings for the future, and I argue that the queer archive can do the same.

Retaking Juhasz's (2006) article, she differentiates nostalgia from melancholia to explain how private feelings and traumas can be melancholic, but they gain a nostalgic potential when shared and communicated on a public level: "[o]ne generation's yearning could fuel another's learning, if we could look back together and foster an escape from melancholia through productive, communal nostalgia." (p.323).

Juhasz is influenced by Svetlana Boym's book called *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001). Boym constructs and extensive reflection about nostalgia, including its collective aspects: "[u]nlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups and nations, between personal and collective memory." (Boym, 2001, p.XVI). Also influenced by Boym's work, Kate Eichhorn (2017) argues that nostalgia is not limited to a reactionary longing for the past; it can be both retrospective, but also prospective.

These authors explore the possibilities of subversion of the original meaning of nostalgia, from its first meaning as the longing for a home that never existed or no longer exists, "a romance with one's own fantasy" (Boym, 2001, p.XIII), a pathetic (and even pathological) sentiment (Juhasz, 2006, p.323) into something public, collective, that speaks to a community. Alexandra Juhasz, in her video project, deepens the melancholic aspect of the footages she made to explore their nostalgic potential:

> Nostalgia enters when I work that frozen material to death: edit it, screen it, make it public. With these sensuous engagements with the material, this practice with tape, I hollow up its melancholic, indexical power […] and sacrifice this to a shared project of nostalgia, where a mournful love for the past initiates a public, hopeful, future-looking project. (Juhasz, 2006, p.324)

This way of handling nostalgia breaks with individual stillness and opens up new possibilities of collective action, since it brings feelings – including the negative ones – from the past to look towards a different (and better) future. So, there is hope in this movement, there are affective connections established between different people and temporalities, through the process of memory and meaning-making, using art as the instrument. In the case of the archives, I see the same potential and possibilities through the collection of artefacts of memories. If artists use different mediums of expression – in Juhasz's case, video has a special capacity – I think that the practices of queer archives can also be a strategy of exploring nostalgia in different ways, transcending remembrance. The act of recalling the past does mean being stuck in that past; we can go beyond and cross temporalities if we make use of the past to a purpose in the present life and future aspirations. In the case of queer archives, I see a very powerful relationship between collection of records and use of these records for the sake of strengthen the community bonds and create awareness about queer struggles and their importance to society as a whole.

Castiglia and Reed (2012) also reference to Juhasz's text to address the creative possibilities of memory narratives centred on loss and nostalgia; they are, according to the authors:

> productive modes of social aspiration both for those who did not live through this loss and for those who did. […] memories must be perceived as windows onto social aspirations, as time warps that bring past and future into a viable present, collective, inventive, and transformative." (Castiglia & Reed, 2012, p.179)

These authors, when addressing loss and nostalgia, speak of "aspiration", "vision", "idealism" and "fantasy", terms that refer to the future, to show that, if loss is rooted in the past, fantasy brings future possibilities. Thus, from transforming loss into invention and creation, what is being done is a lively process of generating vision and potentialities. Memory, in their perspective, is an imaginative idealism, which can be conceived as "a progressive and inventive articulation of yearning rather than as a naïve effort at transparent recuperation" (Castiglia & Reed, 2012, p.177). In other words:

idealism, instead of remaining attached to the past, can be reframed as prospects of the future. I understand queer archives as an idealist project that envisions real interventions in our present context, not just a project of retrieving the past just for the sake of remembering. Queer archival projects – be actual archives like QRAB or artistic creations – aim at using memory, fantasy and idealism into a present political project.

Ann Cvetkovich's (2003) analysis of queer feelings and public cultures has a similar approach to memory and fantasy. According to her, the silences, traumas and gaps in queer histories demand alternative forms of archives; fantasy, then, works as "a way of creating history from absences." (p.271). Analysing cultural genres, such as music and documentary, she demonstrates how creative and multiform the discussions and creations of queer archives can be, and states that the archive has a status of a practice of fantasy made material. (Ibid, p.268)

From this fruitful and sensitive reflections about fantasy, nostalgia and visions of/for the future, I see queer archives, no matter if they are collections of "real" things or purely artistic, invented and fictional, as powerful tools for empowerment of queer individuals and groups. The mechanisms of remembrance can trigger sadness and melancholia, but also hope, pride and resistance in different expressions of creation and vision. A queer archive such as QRAB is not to be reduced to a place to provide access or knowledge about the past; it sure is this place, but it also expands to other temporalities, nurturing imaginative visions of futurities, and of imaginable worlds.

Making memory and creating archives is a political work of the present (Castiglia & Reed, 2012, p.179). The very existence of queer archives says a lot about our present times; as discussed in the first chapter, the archive is always a construction that takes place in the present, aiming at understanding the past. As Zanish-Belcher and Voss states about feminist archives, I believe the same can be said about queer archives:

> Women's archives have a greater meaning than the collections they house. Their very existence confers weight on the value of women's history, increases the demand for sources and offers the important opportunity to promote and enhance the study of women's history. (Zanish-Belcher; Voss, 2013, p.8, cited in Römkens & Wiersma, 2017, p.12

Also addressing the different temporalities that inhabit feminist archives, Kate Eichhorn (2017) argues that they are more focused on the present and future than on the past. Considering that they are sites of activism and cultural production, they are, naturally, oriented towards the future – not just in terms of preservationist efforts – being defined

by present struggles and future desires (Ibid, p.47)

> feminist archives have always had a complex temporality that might be best understood as multidirectional and non-teleological – a temporal orientation that neither accepts the inevitability that memories necessarily fade over time nor assumes that preservationist efforts are necessarily backward rather than forward looking. In feminist archives, the work of history has simply never been a singular and conservative endeavour. (Ibid, pp.48-49)

In this regard, seeing the documents held by archives as *from* and strictly *about* the past is a misconception about the social role of the archives; they do not just keep materials in their shelves, they are also reading, analysing and making statements about the past and the present: "archival material is subject to multiple readings, and the lines between archiving as retrieving and storing material and researching as analysing the content of the material are blurred." (Moore, et al, 2017, p.3, cited in Römkens & Wiersma, 2017, p.13)

As discussed in the first chapter, archives reflect social dynamics and power relations, and they are, therefore, organized according to contemporary concerns, interests, and interpretations. (Breakell, 2008, p.8, cited in Römkens & Wiersma, 2017, p.13). That also means that they express positionalities, choices and interests. Still based on the conception that queer archives are not seeking being representatives of queer people, it is important to mention its non-neutrality and partiality, as well as the gaps and silences[24] that they also have, like any other archive.

> the archive by its very nature is characterized by gaps. Some of these are random – the result of spilt cups of tea, or the need for a scrap of paper for a shopping list. Any archive is a product of the social processes and systems of its time, and reflects the positions and exclusions of different groups and individuals within those systems. (Breakell, 2008, p.5, cited in Römkens & Wiersma, 2017, p.12)

The queer archives express different perspectives about queer movements, resistance and they approach identities and political agenda in different ways. As stated in the introduction of the thesis, my aim is not to create general conclusions based on QRAB's particular experiences, but rather to discuss important topics regarding queer archives, taking as a point of departure the experiences of QRAB.

Since the very LGBTQ movement is diverse and fragmented – with different struggles and agendas in different societies – the queer archive logically incorporates

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[24] For instance, "[t]rans* histories are frequently co-opted, ignored, or misunderstood within queer archives" (Stone & Cantrell, 2015, p.16)

these divergences. Each archive has its own ways of portraying and discussing the past: "[w]hatever the archive contains is already a reconstruction – a recording of history from a particular perspective; it thus cannot provide transparent access to the events themselves." (Manoff, 2004, p.14).

III. Queer archives/archiving in different formats

The queer archive takes documentation about everyday life and insists that everyday life is worthy of preservation. (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.269). Apart from the physical places named as such, there are other takes on the queer archival practices that are not strictly related to the archive as an institutional format: "[d]ocumentary film and video (as well as experiments in other cultural genres) push that enterprise still further, finding an unexpected range of materials that archive emotion and feeling." (Ibid, p.269)

The relationship between art and queer archival endeavour has been addressed by many authors interested in artistic expressions, aesthetics, culture. Various artists use archival material as sources for their works, others invent fictional archives, or use personal and collective memories and popular culture references to address queer affects and struggles, creating conceptual discussions, aesthetical experiments and political statements. These projects show that the archive is never static or stuck in the past, on the contrary: it offers multiple possibilities of readings and creations, eroding "conventional antagonisms between performance and archive, acknowledging that performance remains and recordings disappear, that archives perform and that documents are performative." (Clarke, et al, 2018, p.11). These approaches to archives enhance their creational potential for the future and explore their features from other standpoints – but still entangled with its historiographic meaning. They "focus on the agency and materiality of the archival document, the role such materials play in artistic process, specifically *the making of new works*." (Ibid, p.17). The remains from the past offer infinite possibilities to the present and inspire artists in their quests, expressed in different languages and with different goals. There is no right or wrong way to approach archival material, and this is probably one element that encourages artists to delve into different aspects of the archive materiality and significance.

In our interview, Olov mentioned that most of the people who have reached out QRAB for research were interested in using the materials for creative purposes. It is interesting to see how artists with different backgrounds and styles explore archival

materials and practices, amplifying the range and the possibilities of archival settings, collections and methods. I also see the artistic approaches as acts of rethinking and subverting the status of rigidity, verity and reliability associated to archives. Should we distrust archives? Can we use archives in creative ways? Can we question the status of truth associated with the archive? Do archives also tell lies? Can we see the archive as some kind of home? These are some of the questions and provocations that I have grasped from artistic approaches to the archive as a place, idea and ideal[25]. These "remaking, remixing and review – the repetition and rewriting – of performance exposes and extends the archive's generation of new histories, working over the paradoxes of loss, remainder and recurrence that archival acts precipitate." (Clarke, et al, 2018, p.12)

Many artists dialogue with archives to question their gaps, oppression and silences, but also to invent possibilities of approaching or creating different kinds of archives (Cvetkovich, 2003). At the core of these critiques, there is also a problematization about the ways narratives are biased and determined by interests and power relations, as discussed in the first chapter. From the point of view of these artists, the archive must be asked about the tensions and absences that inhabit its space. That is also a way of reading traditional archive against the grain and directing the gaze towards alternative archival practices, including the queer one(s).

Some authors in queer studies (Taylor, 2003; Cvetkovich, 2003; Muñoz, 2009) have addressed the relationships between performance, queerness and archives. Performance has been one artistic means of storing and transmitting knowledge (Clarke, et al, 2018, p.16), and what connects performance and archives is the possibility for artists to use archives as "*making-place* where the document and its boundaries are sufficiently uncertain as to generate unexpected questions and offer conversations for future practices." (Clarke, et al, 2018, p.22). Both archives and performance have in common the instability, the condition of never being finished, of being opened, vulnerable, and

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[25] I was only able to offer here a superficial panorama about the artistic approaches to the archive, but many authors have already delved into artistic, creative and performative appropriations of the archive in queer, feminist and postcolonial perspectives. It is worth mentioning here a recent book called *Artists in the Archive* (2018), which "focuses on the breadth of ways in which archival remains inform, inflect and influence the production of new works, on how artists are incorporating archival material in their creative processes across a range of performance and visual-arts practices." (Clarke, et al, 2018, p.17). Ann Cvetkovich also mentions many artists who have appropriated her concept of *archive of feelings* in their works: "I have been gratified to see my own concept of "an archive of feelings" gain traction not only among scholars but among artists; Tammy Rae Carland, for example, used it as the name for her exhibition of photographs of objects that had affective meaning for her. Inspired by her work as well as that of artists such as Zoe Leonard, Barbara Hammer, Catherine Lord, Ulrike Müller, Allyson Mitchell, and Alexis Pauline Gumbs (just to name a few) […]." (Cvetkovich, In: Arondekar, et al, 2015, p.225)

therefore full of potentials. "Archival collections consequently order things *towards* a future, are caught in the midst of a process of place-making, of a setting of things in an order: a distribution of points yet to be joined, to be acted out and realized as histories." (Clarke, et al, 2018, pp.13-14).

There are authors who even create false and ironic stories to provoke reflections about the absence of queer history within hegemonic narratives. When I asked Olov about his thoughts on the possibilities of creative approaches to archiving, he told me a fun and interesting story about an artist in Austria, who forged a fake past for the queer community in that country:

> And, I don't know if it's a specific queer tradition or, like, in that archive they had, like, the materials from, a journalist/historian working in Austria, that had, like, wrote many articles in the seventies, sixties and this, about queer history, and made up a lot of stuff. And I think it's super interesting and fun, at least... I guess it could be a problem if you approach it, like, if you approach it like truth, but if you approach it, like, this is something that says something about, about that person, about the time it was written in, like, a lot of his ideas, like, his, I think his main project was to, like, present this glorious Austrian queer history, like, "oh, it was such a fun, they had magazines in the thirties and..." which, I mean, no one else has found those magazines... (Interview 1)

Maybe this artist wanted to mock the official historical narratives, while also making the point for the problematic absence of queer histories in the media and in official records. In any case, the critique is, in my point of view, valid and instigating inasmuch as it expresses a creative and critically engaged way of revisiting the past. Archives can provide the ground for imagination, social criticism and aesthetical experiments.

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, I did not intend to present a complete study about QRAB and its archiving practices. It would also not have been possible to cover such a rich and complex topic in just a few months of research. My aim was to present one possibility of understanding this archive within a broader context and literature about the theme of queer archives.

My positionalities – including my academic background – reflect on the work presented here, and I hope it will be helpful to other researchers who are dealing with similar topics or who are interested in the discussions presented here for any other reason. It is important to acknowledge the possible social impacts of our work; thus, I also hope that this work brings positive contributions to the academic and scientific community, but also to archives and other memory institutions, and to people working and dedicating themselves to queer archives and queer memory.

I have learnt a lot during all this master's programme and through the process of researching and writing that resulted in this thesis. It was an interesting exercise to see myself – in the position of researcher – as a co-creator of the research material, in a related way as archivists and other members are also co-actors of the archival practices. This meta-reflection accompanied me throughout the development of this thesis, making me think about my responsibilities and the implications of the academic work.

Through this research it was possible to understand the aims of QRAB, the organization of the archive, its activities, membership, and relationship with the public and other organizations. It was also possible to learn their project of preserving and publicizing queer memories, and how they are related to their activist standpoint. QRAB's case reinforces the importance of analysing archives within their social and political contexts, because those elements are intertwined and influencing each other. Besides, this thesis brought one possibility to interpret QRAB's processes and practices within a bigger framework about queer archiving, queer memories and counternarratives. It was interesting to choose one case to be analysed in the light of the literature about queer archive and queer theory, but also discussing the issue of archives in a broader perspective.

I think this thesis opens-up possibilities for future investigations and more research queries. During the time I worked on it, other questions came to mind – which I was not able to answer in my text due to time limitations, but also limitations of my own

research focus and aims. Therefore, I believe that other academic works are possible to be produced taking QRAB and its archival practices as the main focus, but analysing them from other perspectives. For instance, it would be interesting to deepen in the particular practices of collection in queer archives, the characteristics of QRAB's collection and the origins of some of the material donated, the histories behind them (using the supporting document with the backstory of the record). Or the relationship between QRAB with other queer archives, their communication and mutual contributions (such as the document swapping, mentioned in chapter 2). Another possibility would be a study focused specifically in the cataloguing process of QRAB and its technicalities – since it is a work in progress, it would be interesting to follow their development. Another rich possibility for future researches would be focused in the materials that QRAB has provided for creative projects. The relationship between archives, performances and other art forms can be more explored in archival, pedagogical and queer studies together with art theory and practice.

Also, it would also be relevant a research focusing on the subjectivities, interests and perceptions of other members of QRAB. In fact, this was an aim that I had for this thesis for a while, and I tried to reach out other members to talk about their experiences in relation to the archive. Together with Laura (the other student in Gendering Practices who is writing the equality plan for QRAB), I came up with an interview guide and we sent out emails to all the members, inviting them to come talk to us about their experiences with the archive. This talk was planned to be held in the meeting room at Arkivgatan, 9 (the same room where the membership meetings take place, to facilitate their coming) on the 29th of April. However, unfortunately no one attended this meeting, which was frustrating, and we would have tried again in another occasion if we had time. I acknowledge that these mishaps are part of any research – especially when we depend on people's availability and interest – and also part of the learning process. For that reason, I decided to include here, in the conclusion, the ideas that I had but that were not put into practice.

My passion and interest for archives lies on the movement between archives and historiography, and I see history as essential for us to situate ourselves within a collectivity. Michel de Certeau (1988) states that what he calls *historiographical operation* goes from the reunion of documents to the writing of the book (p.66). Writing history is a relation between 1) a place, 2) analytical procedures or discipline and 3) the construction of a text (p.57). In this scheme, the archive represents the *place*, the first

stage in the process of producing a historical narrative. I believe that different forms of archives lead to different narratives, and the more queer and diverse those archives are, the more possibilities we have to hear other voices and other histories.

I share with Ann Cvetkovich (2003) the hope that "making the history of the present more strange will produce a new sense of how to approach the history of the past." (p.10). Historiography has been marked by a white, European, heteronormative and cisnormative gaze that establishes itself as bastion of knowledge, while queer are seen as mere objects and topics (sometimes not even that).

> Because queers are made the bearers of affect, whimsy, and desire, allowing heteronormativity (particularly masculinity) to be imagined in terms of reason, objectivity, and factuality, history told from a purported disinterested empirical perspective, even if it takes up queer life as its content, is necessarily told from a unqueer point of view. (Castiglia & Reed, 2012, p.178)

If we want to celebrate diversity and create a different society, we need to queer practices and institutions. Deconstructing our crystalized ways of accessing the past and producing knowledge and memories is just one way of doing that; the more queer they get, the more subversion, transformation and empowerment they can engender.

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Appendix

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Stadgar för
Queerrörelsens
Arkiv och Bibliotek

Antagna vid konstituerande möte 2017-12-10
§ 4 reviderad vid årsmöte 2019-03-23

</div>

§ 1. Namn och säte
Föreningens namn är Queerrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek (förkortat QRAB).
Föreningens säte är i Göteborg.

§ 2. Målsättning
QRAB:s syfte är att samla, ordna, bevara och tillgängliggöra dokumentation och
information knuten till queerrörelsen. Med queerrörelsen avses queer organisering,
politik, historia och motstånd mot hetero- och cisnormativitet. QRAB förstår
"queer" som ett radikalt inkluderande begrepp, och strävar efter en mångfaldig och
antikolonial tolkning av "organisering", "politik", "historia" och "motstånd". Av
detta följer att QRAB:s intresseområde inte bara omfattar självidentifierat queera
perspektiv, utan också andra kropps- och begärskategoriseringar, som t.ex.
lesbiska, asexuella, intersexuella, transsexuella, bisexuella, och homosexuella
erfarenheter.

§ 3. Verksamhet
QRAB:s främsta verksamhet består i att driva arkiv och bibliotek med en med
syftet överensstämmande inriktning. Denna verksamhet bör vara tillgänglig för
aktivister, akademiker och allmänhet. Annan verksamhet som kan bedrivas inom
föreningen är t.ex. folkbildning genom föredrag, studiecirklar eller publikationer.
QRAB ska arbeta för goda relationer till queerrörelsens aktörer och relevanta
arkiv-, musei- och biblioteksinstitutioner.

§ 4. Medlemskap
Alla som ställer sig bakom QRAB:s syfte och betalar medlemsavgift blir
medlemmar. Juridisk person (förening, företag m.m.) kan bli organisationsmedlem.
Varje organisationsmedlem räknas som en medlem i medlemsregister och röstlängd.
I övrigt definierar stadgarna "medlem" även som organisationsmedlem.
Medlemsavgifter bestäms av årsmötet. Medlemskapet gäller för kalenderår. En
medlem som motverkar föreningens syfte kan uteslutas. Beslut om uteslutning
fattas av styrelsen. Medlem aktuell för uteslutningsärende ska skriftligen
underrättas och ges tillfälle att yttra sig innan beslut fattas.

§ 5. Meddelanden

Information till medlemmarna skickas med e-post. Varje medlem ansvarar för att ange en aktuell e-postadress.

§ 6. Årsmöte

QRAB:s högsta beslutande forum är årsmötet. Föreningen samlas årligen till ordinarie årsmöte innan 1 april. Alla föreningens medlemmar har närvarorätt, yttranderätt samt yrkanderätt på årsmötet. Beslut på årsmötet tas med enkel majoritet, om inte annat anges i stadgarna (exempelvis vid stadgeändringar). Vid lika röstetal är mötesordförandens röst utslagsgivande. Röstlängden utgörs av medlemmar registrerade en vecka innan årsmötet.

* Kallelse

Kallelse till ordinarie årsmöte ska utgå till föreningens medlemmar senast fyra veckor innan detta äger rum.

* Ärenden vid ordinarie årsmöte

Vid ordinarie årsmöte ska följande ärenden förekomma:

Formalia

a) Val av mötesordförande, mötessekreterare samt val av protokolljusterare.
b) Fråga om mötets stadgeenliga utlysande och behörighet.
c) Fastställande av föredragningslista och röstlängd.

Granskning av verksamheten

d) Styrelsens berättelse för verksamhet och ekonomisk förvaltning.
e) Revisionsberättelse.
f) Fråga om ansvarsfrihet för styrelsen.
g) Styrelsens rapport om hittillsvarande verksamhet under innevarande år.
h) Kassörens rapport om den aktuella ekonomiska situationen.

Propositioner och motioner

i) Behandling av styrelsens propositioner.
j) Behandling av inkomna motioner.

Verksamhetsplan och budget

k) Fastställande av verksamhetsplan.
l) Fastställande av medlemsavgift.
m) Fastställande av budget för innevarande år.

Val

n) Val av styrelse, minst fyra personer, varav en suppleant. Fördelning av ansvarsroller (ordförande, kassör, arkivarie och eventuellt övriga) görs av årsmötet.

o) Val av revisor att granska den ekonomiska förvaltningen.
p) Val av valberedning, minst en person.

* <u>Motioner</u>
Motioner till årsmöte kan avlämnas av varje medlem. Motioner skall vara styrelsen tillhanda senast två veckor innan årsmöte äger rum. Över inkomna motioner ska styrelsen ha yttrat sig senast en vecka innan ordinarie årsmöte. Frågor som väcks först på årsmöte får ej föranleda annat beslut än hänskjutande till styrelsen.

§ 7. Extra årsmöte
Extra årsmöte sammanträder efter beslut av styrelsen eller när minst en tredjedel av medlemmarna så begär. Extra årsmöte ska hållas inom två månader efter frågan väckts och kan endast fatta beslut i ärende som föranlett det extra årsmötet. Kallelse till extra årsmöte ska skickas till medlemmarna senast fyra veckor före detta. Alla föreningens medlemmar har närvarorätt, yttranderätt samt yrkanderätt på extra årsmöte. Beslut på extra årsmötet tas med enkel majoritet, om inte annat anges i stadgarna (exempelvis vid stadgeändringar). Vid lika röstetal är mötesordförandens röst utslagsgivande. Röstlängden utgörs av medlemmar registrerade en vecka innan extra årsmöte.

§ 8. Firmatecknare
Firmatecknare för QRAB är dess ordförande och kassör i förening. Styrelsen kan inom sig utse enskild firmatecknare för begränsad tid eller särskilda uppdrag.

§ 9. Styrelse
Styrelsen väljs av årsmötet, och ska bestå av minst fyra personer, varav en suppleant. En styrelseledamot väljs som kassör, med ansvar för föreningens kassa och medlemsregister. En styrelseledamot väljs som ordförande, med ansvar för intern och extern kommunikation. En styrelseledamot väljs som arkivarie med ansvar för föreningens arkiv och bibliotek. Väljs fler än tre ordinarie styrelseledamöter kan övriga ledamöter överta vissa ansvar och fler ansvarsområden utses. Utöver dessa roller konstituerar styrelsen sig själv. Styrelsen är beslutsför vid möten som meddelats ledamöterna minst en vecka i förväg och där minst två av ordförande, kassör och arkivarie deltar. Styrelsens beslut fattas med enkel majoritet. Suppleant äger närvarorätt vid styrelsemöten, men ej rösträtt. Vid lika röstetal är arkivariens röst utslagsgivande. Deltar inte arkivarien är ordförandens röst utslagsgivande

§ 10. Verksamhetsår och räkenskapsår
Föreningens verksamhetsår och räkenskapsår är kalenderår.

§ 11. Stadgeändring

För att ändra § 4-10 i dessa stadgar krävs antingen en majoritet av minst 3/4 vid ordinarie årsmöte, eller samstämmiga beslut med minst 2/3 majoritet vid två på varandra följande årsmöten, varav ett ordinarie, mellan vilka minst tre månader har förflutit. För att ändra § 1-3 och § 11-12 krävs samstämmiga beslut med en majoritet av minst 3/4 vid två på varandra följande ordinarie årsmöten.

§ 12. Upplösning

Upplösning av föreningen sker genom samstämmiga beslut med en majoritet av minst 3/4 vid två på varandra följande ordinarie årsmöten. Beslutas om upplösning ska deponerat arkiv- och biblioteksmaterial återlämnas till deponenterna. Övrigt arkiv- och biblioteksmaterial ska erbjudas till relevanta arkiv- och biblioteksinstitutioner. Resterande material och tillgångar fördelas mellan medlemmarna.