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Querying Queer African Archives: Methods and Movements

Thérèse Migraine-George and Ashley Currier

Abstract: Rather than attempting to recover African same-sex practices from the past, we probe the kinds of discursive protocols that can be implemented to uncover queer African archives, defined as methods and movements. In this process, we reconceptualize a transnational queer archive that remains vigilant against dominant taxonomies and actively connected to its political present and future. Because queer African subjects are (dis)located at the junction of multiple sociocultural traditions and geographies, we approach the queer African archive as both an elusive and dynamic site of knowledge production that calls for cross-disciplinary methodologies.

Introduction

The archive as both repository and methodological concept has spawned increasing interdisciplinary exchanges, fueled by the development of digital forms of knowledge production. The "queer archive" has spurred further debates inspired by Michel Foucault's definition of the archive as a "system of discursivity" (1982, 129) and Jacques Derrida's postmodern musings on "archive fever" (1996) as central to the politics of individual and collective memory, desire, and interpretation.[1] In mining various literary, performative, and visual materials and sexual subcultures, Ann Cvetkovich (2003) and Jack Halberstam (2005) in particular have stressed the importance of recovering a queer "archive of feelings" that accounts not only for the past trauma of queer lives but also for the repression, ephemerality, and often spectral traces of queer experiences.

Although some scholars have written on the history and traditions of African same-sex practices, systematic and meticulous archival work on

that topic has remained limited. In his research on male homosexuality in South African compounds and prisons at the turn of the twentieth century, Zackie Achmat, in his genealogical attempt "to recover from the archives a series of local knowledges for queers in contemporary South Africa," paved the way for other scholars to engage in similar research (1993, 108). Marc Epprecht notably has worked on uncovering "a pan-regional, proto-queer identity firmly rooted in history" in southern Africa while acknowledging the many obstacles encountered in the process, from the silence or destruction of historical sources and documents, to the prejudices laced with such accounts (2004, 4). Other historians have tackled the multidimensional complexity of archival work on the African continent, specifically South Africa, using a feminist and social lens that highlights the controversial status of queer African archives (Hamilton et al. 2002; Mangcu 2011).

The study of queer archives in African contexts is further problematized by a number of indigenous and exogenous factors. The archival hubris of the colonial enterprise, intent on superimposing its own "imperial archive" of "knowledge" and "fantasy," has jeopardized access to African records and histories (Richard 1993). The colonial homophobia fostered by British antisodomy laws, for example, contributed to the reinvention of the continent as a hotbed of sexual perversions, which obscured indigenous same-sex practices in different ethnic groups. For Keguro Macharia, the political homophobia deployed by government leaders in countries like Cameroon, Uganda, and Nigeria has prompted activists to engage in queer archival work: "This turn to the archive also subtends sexual minority organising in Africa: against claims that homosexuality is 'un-African,' activists, artists, and intellectuals have attempted to produce archival evidence of same-sex acts in African pasts" (2015, 141). Conversations about the role of archives in gender- and sexual-diversity organizing generate questions about such archives' goals. For instance, Western queer archivization of African lives may be motivated by ethnocentric taxonomies and identity politics, undermining African scholars and activists' own work of restoration (Epprecht 2008). In addition, theories of the queer archive deployed in the U.S. academy have had limited methodological applicability to queer African archives, which require different understandings of temporality and subjectivity and should be approached with a sense of urgency heightened by the "necropolitics" of homophobia enforced by some African leaders (Mbembe 2001, 2003).

Our goal is not to (re)locate same-sex practices or retrieve queer African agency from the past. Rather, we probe the discourses and "best practices" that can be implemented to uncover queer African archives, broadly defined as methods and movements. The ethical protocol guiding archival projects enables wider conceptualization of a transnational queer archive that, rather than dwelling in the porous uncertainty of its past, remains actively connected to both its political present and future. Because queer African subjects are (dis)located at the junction of multiple sociocultural traditions, discourses, and geographies, we approach the queer African archive as a "place in process" that calls for unsettled and unsettling methodologies (Rohy 2010, 358) or, in other terms, as "an evasive and dynamic space animated by the tensions of knowledge production, absence, and presence" (Marshall, Murphy, and Tortorici 2015, 1).

Social Movements Documenting "Queer Africa"

Finding and preserving queerness in the past and present is one way for activists to contest relentless allegations that homosexuality is "un-African." The "homosexuality is un-African" trope can entail disavowing the presence of same-sexualities in African societies or claiming that homosexuality in African societies stems from European colonialism and Western meddling (Msibi 2011). For twenty years, political and religious leaders have claimed that same-sex sexualities were absent from African societies. Promising that queers were unwelcome in his country, in the mid-1990s, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe stated, "Let them be gay in the United States, Europe and elsewhere. . . . They shall be sad people here" (Dunton and Palmberg 1996, 19). In 2015, Gambian President Yahya Jammeh threatened, "If you are a man and want to marry another man in this country and we catch you, no one will ever set eyes on you again, and no white person can do anything about it" (Tharoor 2015). To counter myths that Europeans imported homosexuality into African contexts, activists used research to prove the existence of same-sex sexual practices and same-sex-loving persons in the past and present (Epprecht 2008).

African activists have also conducted their own research to document violations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons' human rights. South Africa has been the site of much research initiated by LGBT activists and scholars (Achmat 1993), in part because the na-

tion-state promotes LGBT rights, unlike in antigay contexts that discourage scholarly research on gender and sexual diversity (Epprecht 2014; Nyanzi 2013). The constitution forbids discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or sexual orientation, and same-sex marriage is legal in South Africa (Judge, Manion, and de Waal 2008). After the end of the South African apartheid regime in 1994, lawmakers convened the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to document human rights abuses perpetrated under apartheid rule (Buur 2001). Alerted to reports of health workers' abuses of lesbians and gay men in the military, South African LGBT activists and scholars conducted interviews with former lesbian and gay soldiers who served with the South African Defence Force (SADF) about their treatment in the military between 1967 and 1991 (Zyl et al. 1999). Motivated by the notion that "reconciliation and healing cannot occur in the absence of knowledge and understanding," researchers uncovered the systematic abuse of lesbian and gay soldiers, some of whom "were subjected to routine humiliation, aversion shock therapy, chemical castration, hormonal and drug treatment and other abuses" (Belkin and Canaday 2010, 4). In addition, an unknown number of lesbian and gay soldiers were forced or coerced into undergoing sex-reassignment surgeries (Swarr 2012). The military intended such surgeries to correct what they perceived as soldiers' sexual anomalies by realigning soldiers' social genders and sexed bodies (Zyl et al. 1999).

Activists also generate and curate movement archives. Founded in the 1990s, the Gay and Lesbian Archives (GALA) of South Africa emerged to redress the "absence" and "biased representation" of LGBT persons (Reid 2002, 200–1) and to "create a safe place in which to deposit a wide range of archival material for posterity so as to ensure that gays and lesbians form part of the historical record" (Manion and Morgan 2006, 30). "As an activist archive," GALA also engaged in public outreach projects with South Africans to "raise awareness" of LGBT concerns (Manion and Morgan 2006, 30). GALA worked with LGBT activists in southern and East African countries as well, not to appropriate African activists' materials for expansionist intentions but to consult on ways to preserve oral testimony and documents in places where gender and sexual diversity is unpopular. For instance, GALA collaborated with the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) in Malawi to produce a collection of LGBT Malawians' first-person narratives (2010). According to Manion and Morgan, "[a]lthough activists saw a role for GALA as a temporary 'safe-keeper' of

records that were at risk of being seized by the state, most activists saw GALA as a repository of last resort—not wanting their communities to lose ownership of or access to the original records" (2006, 34). GALA archivists are sensitive to the political implications of gathering records and materials from LGBT communities and movements throughout Africa (Sizemore-Barber forthcoming).

The fate of some archives depends on the longevity of activist organizations. Archives can disappear when activist organizations founder. Just as GALA served as a safe place for activist organizations in hostile contexts to deposit their records, Behind the Mask was established in 2000 as an online information clearinghouse for LGBT activists on the African continent by Dutch journalist Bart Luirink. Behind the Mask staff described the organization as supplying information for "African gays and lesbians, whatever class or ethnicity, or those supporting the rising GLBT-movement on the African continent. . . . [W]ith the help of the information we provide, western GLBT-movements could provide more support for African brothers and sisters" (Alexander 2002, 229).

Behind the Mask bolstered LGBT organizing throughout Africa because its website shared information about gains and setbacks that activists in different places experienced. Due in part to its location in Johannesburg, South Africa, Behind the Mask dedicated most of its resources to reporting on LGBT issues in the country, although it had a network of correspondents throughout Africa. By 2005, Behind the Mask had "strong contacts" in Namibia, Zambia, Botswana, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. Places in which staff hoped to develop more contacts included Ethiopia, Nigeria, and North Africa (Currier 2012, 200). Stories on Behind the Mask's websites enhanced the public visibility and cultural imaginary of queer Africans. Luisa, a Ugandan lesbian activist and intern at Behind the Mask in 2005, argued that the public visibility of LGBT organizations like Behind the Mask emboldened gender and sexual dissidents. Activist organizations' visibility was

> very important because there are some people out there who think they are alone in this world. People commit suicide. So if we are visible, people get to know, "I'm not alone; I can go somewhere and talk to people who understand me. I can go somewhere and seek help." . . . People would not be forced into marriages. People are stuck in marriages for fifteen years, but they're depressed. . . . But if you come out and see other people you get to love yourself and know, "I'm not doing something

wrong. That's me and I'm not alone. There are other people out there."
(Interview of Luisa [pseud.] by Ashley Currier, February 2, 2006)

Luisa interpreted LGBT organizations as beacons of hope for sexually and
gender-variant Africans. Behind the Mask acted as a movement incubator
that enlarged the "scope of activism" of LGBT movement organizations
across the continent (Dehesa 2010, 184). Due to Behind the Mask's ex-
tensive contacts throughout the continent, Western donors asked staff to
vouch for new activist organizations seeking funding, a request some staff
members found to be ethically questionable (Currier 2012). Despite the
organization's success with obtaining funding for their work, it eventu-
ally dried up. When Behind the Mask shut down, the website—with its
valuable information about organizations in different African countries
and original reporting in English and French—disappeared, disappoint-
ing activists and allies around the world. Although some of Behind the
Mask's activist repository lives on at GALA, now named Gay and Lesbian
Memory in Action, the organization's closure raises questions about the
permanence and disposability of queer African archives.

Theorizing Queer African Archives: Methodological Challenges

Because of their central contribution to LGBT activism on the African
continent, queer African archives deserve theorizing from both local and
transnational perspectives. Western understandings of the queer archive
have limited applicability in African contexts. Temporality has been a key
concept in queer studies and theories of the queer archive (Edenheim
2014). According to Anjali Arondekar, the recent "archival turns" to "geo-
politics in sexual studies . . . still cohere around a temporally ordered se-
duction of access, which stretches from the evidentiary promise of the past
into the narrative possibilities of the future. That is, even though scholars
have foregrounded the analytical limits of the archive, they continue to
privilege the reading practices of recovery over all others" (2005, 12).

Such wishful hermeneutics are compelled by a linear, teleological
model that fails to register the multiple and enmeshed temporal layers
of African cultures. In an attempt to move "beyond the lazy categories of
permanence and change beloved by so many historians," Mbembe's "post-
colony" reflects entangled temporalities in the history of African societies
that, far from being homogeneous, "harbor the possibility of a variety of

trajectories neither convergent nor divergent but interlocked, paradoxical" (2001, 8, 16). Mbembe criticizes the African philosophy that has emerged over the last two centuries for its "historicist" reliance on either "Afro-radicalism"—inspired by a Marxist and nationalist rhetoric that foregrounds concepts of "autonomy, resistance, and emancipation"—or "nativism," which promotes "the idea of a unique African identity founded on membership of the black race." "[N]arratives of loss" govern this "distinctively African philosophy" (2002a, 240–41, 239).

Cultural studies scholars invested in archival research on non-Western terrains have heavily relied on the colonial archive as a principal site of investigation, thereby reinstating the process of recovery as a naturalized consequence of Western imperialism (Arondekar 2005, 2009; Stoler 2009). Scholarly narratives of retrieval, however tentative and cautiously self-reflexive they might be, still view the colonial period as that constitutive moment when the superscript of Western domination projected its anxieties and "epistemic uncertainties" onto colonized bodies (Stoler 2009, 1). Intent on debunking the notion propagated by various African religious and political leaders that homosexuality is "un-African," some scholars in queer African studies have not only highlighted same-sex practices in indigenous African cultures but also demonstrated that colonization was, in fact, largely responsible for exporting a culture of homophobia to the African continent (Murray and Roscoe 1998).

However, these recovery projects do not escape their own "systems" of "enunciability" and "functioning" and, in turn, need to be submitted to archival scrutiny, particularly because "an act of invention or re-invention is always accompanied by an acute sense of the contingency of history" (Eze 2008, 26). In the wake of Foucault and Derrida's poststructuralist archival research, and inspired by a radical suspicion toward historical truth-claims, the archive, notes Arondekar, "has emerged as *the* register of epistemic arrangements, recording in its proliferating avatars the shifting tenor of debates around the production and ethics of knowledge" (2009, 2). However, archival projects that purport to resist authoritative narratives are shaped by specific epistemic and institutional "arrangements" that merit questioning. As Sara Edenheim comments on Cvetkovich's 2003 work, *An Archive of Feelings,* "In relation to the call for a queer archive, it becomes essential to discuss for *whom* we are expected to narrate our feelings and experiences, for *whom* we should make sense of these feelings and experiences, for *whom* the archive of feelings should transfer its content" (Eden-

heim 2014, 45; emphasis in original). Signaled by Cvetkovich's call for the counter-production of an "archive of feelings," the "emotional turn" in the theory of queer archives can also be seen as having limited or even distorting applicability to non-Western cultures. Indeed, the risk lies in "the dialectical drama of intimate tracing and historical unraveling," or in imposing a concept of the queer archive that is intimately shaped by Western, neoliberal notions of subjectivity and that privileges the individual (affective) subject as the main agent and principal beneficiary of the recovery project (Marshall, Murphy, and Tortorici 2015, 2). Alongside Arondekar's archival work on sexuality in colonial India, we argue that similar archival work on same-sex sexuality in Africa "requires a theory of reading that moves away from the notion that discovering an object will somehow lead to a formulation of subjectivity—from the presumption that if one finds a body, one can recover a person" (Arondekar 2005, 21, 26) or, in Gayatri Spivak's terms, from the dangers of metalepsis defined as the "substitution of an effect for a cause" (1996, 211–13) in one's reading of the subaltern as subject rather than as a discursive subject-effect.[2]

The emotional project of subjective recovery is, in many ways, alien to the communal structures of "traditional" African cultures. Same-sex configurations did not necessarily aim at fulfilling individuals' homoerotic desires—although this might also have been the purpose in some circumstances—but had specific social functions as in the case of "female husbands," "male wives," and woman-woman marriages in some Nigerian cultures (Amadiume 1987). In fact, such same-sex configurations were often in place to support the patriarchal and heteronormative organization of traditional African cultures.

Within queer African studies, the danger therefore lies in creating a queer African subject as a mere avatar of a Western queer subject shaped by the identity politics of postindustrial nations, such as the potential "lesbians" joined in woman-woman marriage (Hoad 2007). Although, as Arondekar notes, there has been a productive geopolitical turn in sexuality studies, one should be wary of "the current practice in contemporary sexuality studies of excavating in order to posit a history of presence"—or, in other words, of recovering "the other" for the sake of reuniting (with) the self (2005, 21–22). This process of (self) recovery, well-intentioned as it might seem, is enacted once again in the service of a redemptive Western (queer) agenda that reinscribes its own seamless present/presence. Even claiming that the "real" is deeply buried in the habitus of mundane

or subcultural practices, fleeting feelings, pleasurable or traumatic touch-es—what Cvetkovich calls "the textures of everyday experiences" (2003, 3–4)—invokes the authority of the scholar in determining what the truth of the past might be, whether in the archive or its lingering dust (Steedman 2002). Interestingly, it is as if Foucault's or Derrida's prescriptive reflections on the archive as a discursive form of knowledge/power or as a repetitive desire for origins had led scholars to displace, rather than radically challenge, their own archival search for historical or ontological truth. However, if an "additive model" shapes archival work (Arondekar 2005, 14), then one can argue that this logic of "supplementarity," to use Derrida's term, leads always further away, in its very repetition, from presence. For Derrida (1976), the very (un)truth of history lies in this endless chain of substitutions and signifiers (in writing as "*différance*"), not in any illusory founding origin. As Mbembe also notes, "the postcolony is cha-otically pluralistic; it has nonetheless an internal coherence. It is a specific system of signs, a particular way of fabricating simulacra or re-forming ste-reotypes" (2001, 102).

Scholarly eagerness to eschew repressive historical narratives and to re-trieve the "other" outside of hegemonic nomenclatures risks not only miss-ing both the determining structures and material minutiae of this "other's" historical conditions—what Mbembe terms "the inescapable materiality of the archive" (2002b, 19)—but also depoliticizing the "other" by priv-ileging the empirical positivism of feelings or the "negativity" and "death drive" of queer experience (Edelman 2004). One could argue that pro-moting either feelings or negativity in queer experiences is a privilege of those living in places where state-sanctioned homophobia, violence, and death do not threaten the daily existence of LGBT persons. The risk of dehistoricizing queer experience for the sake of privileging identities is illustrated in particular by Frantz Fanon in his critique of *négritude*, one of the most wide-reaching cultural archival projects—spearheaded by po-litical and intellectual figures such as Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire—in African diasporic cultures. While acknowledging the impor-tance of négritude as a necessary dialectical moment, Fanon views this monumental "nativist" project as ultimately harmful to the progression of African societies and consciousness:

> The colonized intellectual, steeped in Western culture and set on prov-ing the existence of his own culture, never does so in the name of Angola or Dahomey. The culture proclaimed is African culture. . . . The concept

of négritude for example was the affective if not logical antithesis of that insult which the white man had leveled at the rest of humanity. . . . Generally speaking the bards of négritude would contrast old Europe versus young Africa, dull reason versus poetry, and stifling logic versus exuberant Nature; on the one side there stood rigidity, ceremony, protocol, and skepticism, and on the other, naïveté, petulance, freedom, and, indeed, luxuriance. But also irresponsibility. (2004, 150–51)

According to Fanon, the affective thrust of négritude was bound to depoliticize culture and to confine it to an unproductive "refuge of smoldering emotions" (154–55). Examining African same-sex relations and queer agency should remain rooted in their material history and politics because some contemporary African political and religious leaders dehistoricize such relations and agencies by denying their precolonial existence. As Macharia notes:

> Given our present urgencies, in which we produce archives as their inhabitants and (disappearing) objects, the problem of method can seem both irrelevant and indispensable. At once an act of navel-gazing and world-building. After all, why spend time contemplating how one approaches the life one is trying to save? . . . In this urgent moment where a threatened self inhabits an impossible world, surely circumstances demand that one use whatever tools are at hand, deferring the problem of method to a less life-threatening future? (2014)

Macharia expresses disinterest in "the colonial-era archives now brandished with much excitement by those who insist that colonialism brought homophobia, not homosexuality, to Africa" (2016, 186). Instead he focuses on "sites and scenes and objects"—"how wearing trousers was an important moment in Gikuyu colonial modernity when gender and sexuality shifted in radical ways, or how shifting practices of labor and punishment in pre- and postemancipation Jamaica remade notions of gender and sexuality"—that testify to "how different black people across multiple geohistories have co-imagined each other and attempted to create a shareable world" (2016, 186).

Archival work has been connected to concrete forms of practice, action, and intervention in a number of recent projects. As April Sizemore-Barber notes in her analysis of "the everyday practice and outreach" of GALA:

"[b]y embracing action and multiplicity, GALA's work operates in what could be called, following Deleuze and Guattari, a rhizomatic process of becoming-archive" (forthcoming 1, 3).[3] Liesl Theron and Tshepo Ricki Kgositau also document the formation of "a grassroots African trans archive" (2015) by commenting on the 2005 founding of Gender DynamiX, which grew into an organization promoting transgender human rights in Africa.

Literary and visual productions constitute alternate ways of archiving queer experiences. Zanele Muholi's pan-African serial photographs of queer subjects might be seen as a meticulous and political form of archivization, as might the works of artists such as Andrew Esiebo, Kader Attia, or Adejoke Tugbiyele. The "subtleties" of such aesthetic productions dispel the "stereotype of a timelessly heterosexual and homophobic Africa" (Epprecht 2008, 132). Other scholars have been conducting archival work on same-sex sexualities in Africa, plumbing oral testimonies and documents for stories of sexuality told against the epistemic grain of the Western queer archivization of African lives (Ekine and Abbas 2013; Gaudio 2009).

Although various scholars working on queer archives have criticized how dominant historical narratives have hijacked the histories of subaltern groups or minorities, scholars of sexuality from Foucault (1982) to Halperin (2004) have been steeped in rewriting the history of sexual subcultures while interrogating the historical apparatus of knowledge production. The uncertain material and emotional conditions experienced by queer African subjects should be approached from the ever-changing perspective of social movements, antihomophobic mobilization, and instantaneous archives of online networking and activism (Currier 2012). Indeed, it is not just queer African subjects who deserve restoration from historical oblivion or obliteration but also queer African subjects today who require immediate protection from the necropolitics of homophobia that threaten to transform them into the *"living dead"* invoked by Mbembe (2003, 40).[4] Some states have tried to either silence or destroy archives in an attempt to "shut down the past for once and for all," thereby only managing to displace the power of archives. Indeed, "the destroyed archive haunts the state in the form of a spectre" (Mbembe 2002b, 24). It is precisely the painful yet subversive power of such "haunting" that queer African archives, however silenced or displaced they might be, can reveal.

Conclusion: The Queer African Archive as Transnational Chronotope

Losing queer African archives is a real concern to African activists and historians. Behind the Mask's closure serves as a reminder of the impermanence of Internet collections, a transience against which some African LGBT activism militates, as activists agitate for recognition of queer Africans' presence across time. The loss of Behind the Mask's website was a blow to African activists, but its legacy lives on in part at Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action. To ensure that queer African presence is not reduced to sensationalist news stories featuring queer Africans as victims of violence, activists have begun documenting and publishing collections of queer Africans' life histories. In addition to *Queer Malawi*, the Centre for the Development of People recently collaborated with GALA to produce *Proudly Malawian*, a collection of first-person narratives from lesbian and gender-variant Malawians (Xaba and Biruk 2016). These and other collections work to preserve the experiences of ordinary queer Africans from the vagaries of ephemeral Internet repositories.

Rather than being conceived as a form of knowledge to be located and excavated, African same-sex practices and/or queer identities constitute a moving archive intimately connected to the unsettling urgency posed by the politics of homophobia, which, in different African countries, threatens the viability of such practices and identities. The methodological approach to such queer African archives can therefore be described as unfolding in a back-and-forth process, both proleptic and metaleptic, between the past and the present. As "a complex record of queer activity," the archive requires "users, interpreters, and cultural historians to . . . piece together the jigsaw puzzle of queer history in the making" (Cvetkovich 2003, 169–70). Movement, both in the sense of development and activism, also affects the constitution and content of a queer archive: "[for] the archival queer must understand that the archive's promise as an inventional wellspring is inextricably linked to *queer movement*: traversal of time and space, mobilization and circulation of meanings that trouble sexual normalcy and its discriminations. . . . Queer movement must be restless" (Morris 2007, 147–48; emphasis in original).[5] Shifting the focus from the archive as repository to the archive as process elicits a closer scrutiny not only of the institutionalization of knowledge or the politics of archiving but also of the kind of criticism leveled by queer studies scholars against that

very archiving process or agenda. Furthermore, going from "methods" to "movements" in examining queer African archives allows for a more objective acknowledgment of the daily work performed by African activists, for whom remembering the past translates into a daily mobilization against the annihilation of the present and future of queer experiences, relationships, and feelings.

Finally, such stress on movements and processes allows for further reflection on transnational queer archives, or the geopolitics of queer archives, as sites of (dis)located knowledge that mandate both interdisciplinary and cross-cultural methodologies. If Africa functions as both a historical lacuna in Western fantasies of progress and modernity, on the one hand, and as a projection of sexual otherness and perversion pitted against Western heteronormativity and homonationalisms, on the other hand, then queer African practices, identities, and movements cannot be studied separately from such a global "instituting imaginary" (Mbembe 2002b, 19).[6] Following Mbembe's injunction that we need to account for Africa as a manifold spatiotemporal construction, the queer African archive can be seen as a transnational *chronotope*, a site of convergence for both the past and present, the here and there, material presence and subjective representation. The institutional dimension of the archive, its monumental containment, always escapes its place of production. Methodological approaches to queer African archives should be complex, multivalent, and rigorously creative in harnessing ethnographic, sociological, and historical discourses and aesthetic representations. Such methodologies can be seen as exemplary, in their ever-shifting complexity, of the innovative queer methodologies, protocols, and best practices that remain to be invented and implemented across and against disciplinary boundaries.

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Notes

1. For Foucault, the archive is not a "sum" of all texts, documents, or statements attesting to a culture's past or "continuing identity." On the contrary, it is that which defines both the system of "enunciability" and the "mode of occurrence" or system of "functioning" of what Foucault calls "the statement-event" or "statement-thing." In other words, the archive "is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration" (1982, 128–29). Derrida describes the "*mal d'archive*" (translated in English as "archive fever") as follows: "It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. . . . It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement" (1996, 91).
2. This is quoted in Arondekar (2005, 26n53).
3. Sizemore-Barber writes, "When I spoke with John Marnell, GALA's Publications, Communications, and Outreach Officer, during my visit to Johannesburg in June 2015, he explained the relationship between the archive and outreach as a mutually enhancing three-step process: from archiving, to research, to action. For instance, one of GALA's most recent projects, 'Under Pressure,' addressed homophobia in schools. . . . In the past three years, GALA has worked to expand its influence to less-resourced countries in the broader southern African community, where homosexuality is either illegal or heavily discriminated against. This advocacy has taken a variety of forms, including publications, localized work with LGBTI asylum seekers in Johannesburg, and Art for Activism workshops run in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho" (forthcoming, 9–11).
4. For Mbembe, "the notion of biopower is insufficient to account for contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death. Moreover I have put forward the notion of necropolitics and necropower to account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of deathworlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead" (2003, 39–40).
5. As Macharia argues, "As anyone who has assembled or works in an archive knows, archives are as much random ephemera in varying states of use and disuse as they are processes that attempt to organize, to schematize, to impose temporal and other kinds of order" (2014).

6. According to Mbembe, the archive functions as an "instituting imaginary" imbued with material as well as subjective, ritualistic, and political power (2002b, 19).

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