In Critical Condition

(Un)Becoming Bodies in Archival Acts of Truth Telling

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ABSTRACT This article engages the archives as a space of multimodal truth telling that challenges the traditional understanding of archives as "authorized evidence." This inquiry, specifically into oral history interviews produced for and within the archives, works to further disrupt the long-standing traditional archival paradigm that advocates for a static and fixed archival record. To recognize an archival record that is neither static nor singular is to recognize how static and singular records have functioned in the archives. Drawing on Michel Foucault's 1983 essays and lectures on *parrhesia* – often translated in English as "free speech" and defined as the process of telling and confronting one's truth – I posit that multiplicities related to subjects and subjectivities offer kaleidoscopic connections between the storyteller and the stories and truths they tell. Through analysis of distinct oral history interviews I conducted for the Arizona Queer Archives and with an emphasis on the narrator, Foucault's *parrhesiastes*, I argue that truth telling emerges through oral history methods that might best support (un)becoming bodies and bodies of knowledge in the archives to trouble the archival record in a generative way.

1 I would like to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers and *Archivaria* editors whose insightful advice helped to clarify and strengthen my argument and theoretical underpinnings as well as my efforts to connect these to shifts in archival practice. Thank you to Adela C. Licona for reading drafts along the way. Thank you, too, to my colleagues who participate in our monthly University of Arizona writing group – Professors Kaitlin M. Murphy, Steph Brown, and Ragini T. Srinivasan. Your support and guidance helped lead me to this finished product.

RÉSUMÉ Cet article pose les archives comme espace de récit de vérité multimodal, remettant en question la conception traditionnelle des archives comme « preuve autorisée ». Cette recherche, particulièrement par des entrevues d'histoire orale effectuées par et dans les archives, vise à ébranler encore davantage le vieux paradigme archivistique traditionnel prônant un document d'archive figé et défini. De reconnaitre un document d'archive qui n'est ni statique ni unique implique également de reconnaitre la façon dont les documents statiques et uniques ont fonctionné dans les archives. Puisant dans les essais et lectures de Michel Foucault de 1983 sur la *parrêsia* – souvent traduite en français comme le « franc-parler » et définie comme étant le processus par lequel on énonce une vérité tout en la confrontant – j'avance que les multiplicités liées aux sujets et aux subjectivités offrent des liens kaléidoscopiques entre le narrateur et l'histoire et les vérités exprimées. Par l'analyse d'entrevues d'histoire orale spécifiques que j'ai menées pour les *Arizona Queer Archives*, et avec un accent mis sur le narrateur, le *parrèsiaste* de Foucault, je soutiens que l'expression de la vérité émerge des méthodes d'histoire orale qui pourraient être les plus à même de porter des corpus en (non)devenir et des corpus de connaissances dans les archives qui ébranlent les archives de façon productive.

The Archives as Bodies of Evidence

> "Parrhesia" means "to tell the truth." But does the parrhesiastes [one who speaks the truth] say what he thinks is true, or does he say what is really true? To my mind, the parrhesiastes says what is true because he knows that it is true; and he knows that it is true because it is really true. The parrhesiastes is not only sincere and says what is his opinion, but his opinion is also the truth. He says what he knows to be true.[2]

> Oral histories, if sensitively used, can provide a window into how individuals understand and interpret their own lives.[3]

I juxtapose Foucault's introduction to *parrhesia* here with Kennedy's poignant comment to demonstrate the urgency of oral history as a method for not only recovering but also reimagining the erased, missing, and normalized histories of those whose stories have been left out of or misrepresented in dominant historical narratives. I begin with a focus on Foucault's explanation of parrhesia to emphasize the understanding of truth as relational and rooted in opinion, which he equates with the truth. In this article, I call for a closer look at the oral history as archival record to explore both what truths are being told within the interview and how oral history, in particular, enables simultaneous multiplicity with regard to these truths through its performative nature. Through simultaneous multiplicity, I draw especially from women-of-colour feminisms to focus on those comingling truths in oral histories that can constitute the archival record as both consistent and contradictory. In practice, this calls for an approach to both description and arrangement that is capacious enough to be able to hold such contradictory records and make them legible and accessible for archival publics. As an instantiation of the performative nature of such records, I focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) archives and the process and production of the oral history interview as an archival record that is multimodal in its function and form. It is multi-

2 Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia*, ed. Joseph Pearson (n.p.: n.p., 1985). The text was compiled from tape-recordings made of six lectures, in English, by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley in the Fall Term of 1983.

3 Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, "Telling Tales: Oral History and the Construction of Pre-Stonewall Lesbian History," *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 71.

modal in its function both as signified memory and as subjective history. It is multimodal in its form both as audio and/or video recording and as transcript and interpretation. This article explicates and attends to multiplicities through the lens of critical archival studies, an emerging area of archival studies research that distinctly engages critical theory[4] to identify, explain, and challenge the power structures that have historically supported unjust and otherwise limiting archival practices and understandings.[5] Here, I work from a definition of *archives* as collections of records – material and immaterial, analog and digital – the institutions that steward them, the places where they are physically located, and the processes that designated them as "archival."[6] I begin my inquiry through traditional archives – those considered bodies of evidence – and explore how such a limiting and delimiting notion is no longer effective or adequate for human bodies and bodies of knowledge that constitute archival records and collections. I use the body as a framework through which to consider the production of the archives since the body is something that we all inhabit and can know quite intimately. However, the body is complex, nuanced, and often disembodied as scholars, thinkers, and doers focus on the contextual and structural formations without looking back at the body itself. There are many links between corporeality and *archivization* – what Eric Ketelaar critiques within Derrida's writing on the archives and considers the creative phase before archival capture and the process of capture or accessioning itself.[7] For the LGBTQI archives, archivization obscures the visceral in ambivalent ways, "yet it is only through the visceral that many acts and desires come into the archive."[8] I am drawn to Ketelaar's notion of *archivalization* as a deeper inquiry into the archivist's embodied (and often unnoticed) processes of thinking about and placing archival value onto certain bodies, bodies of knowledge, and stories before even producing a

4 I explicitly engage critical theories while also applying what feminist scholar Sara Ahmed urgently calls for as a "feminist citational practice" – to expand the theoretical foundation through scholarship of women/women of colour, queers/queers of colour, and Indigenous peoples.

5 Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and T-Kay Sangwand, "Critical Archival Studies: An Introduction," special issue, *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (2017).

6 Michelle Caswell, "'The Archive' is Not An Archives: Acknowledging the Intellectual Contribution of Archival Studies," *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture* 16, no. 1 (2016).

7 Eric Ketelaar, "Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives," *Archival Science* 1, no. 2 (2001): 133.

8 Zeb Tortorici, "Visceral Archives of the Body: Consuming the Dead, Digesting the Divine," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 20, no. 4 (2014): 407.

record, accessioning a record, and making it archival in the archives.[9] I work to recentre the body throughout the processes of producing and building archives to elucidate a deeper understanding of the contextual and relational implications of archives on human bodies and on bodies of knowledge.

In bringing together my disciplinary background, my first-hand experience in oral history production in an LGBTQI archives, and the multimodal forms of the oral history archival record, I offer a perspective that is both about and from the archives. This allows me to elucidate archives and archival bodies – what I consider the multiple histories, stories, and bodies of knowledge that constitute the archives – as sites and practices of (un)becoming. By *(un)becoming*, I mean the dynamic and simultaneous processes of becoming and unbecoming that accompany changes in self-understanding, memory, and subjectivity over time. Through analysis of distinct oral history interviews I conducted for the Arizona Queer Archives and with an emphasis on the narrator, Foucault's parrhesiastes, I argue that truth telling emerges through oral history methods that might best support (un)becoming bodies and bodies of knowledge in the archives to trouble the archival record in a generative way.

Oral History in and for Archives

For decades, there have been recurring debates about oral history as methodology and method and oral histories as records. Archival scholars have questioned the place of oral history in the archives and the place of the oral history as an archival record – and importantly, they have also questioned its subjective nature, which challenges the archivist's presumed neutrality.[10] Through the

9 Ketelaar, "Tacit Narratives," 133.

10 See scholarship on documentation strategies and participatory approaches to archival appraisal and description, which is integral to my inquiry into oral history methods and its function to challenge the archivist's presumed neutrality: Helen Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *American Archivist* 49, no. 2 (1986): 109–24; Terry Cook, "Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 34 (1992): 181–91; Tom Nesmith, "Documenting Appraisal as a Societal-Archival Process: Theory, Practice, and Ethics in the Wake of Helen Willa Samuels," in *Controlling the Past: Documenting Society and Institutions. Essays in Honor of Helen Willa Samuels*, ed. Terry Cook (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011), 31–50; Doris J. Malkmus, "Documentation Strategy: Mastodon or Retro-Success?" *American Archivist* 71, no. 2 (2008): 384–409; Terry Eastwood, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal," in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honor of Hugh A. Taylor*, ed. Barbara Lazenby Craig (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992), 71–89; Kathryn M. Neal, "Cultivating Diversity: The Donor Connection," *Collection Management* 27, no. 2 (2002): 33–42; Michelle Caswell and Samip Mallick, "Collecting the Easily Missed Stories:

postmodern turn in archives over nearly three decades,[11] the archival theories,[12] practices, and classroom pedagogies of both archivists and archival studies scholars have questioned the role of the archives as a neutral third party – especially as this debate has continued to permeate archival thought from within the archival studies discipline and among those disciplines that access and interpret archival records.[13] My inquiry specifically into oral history interviews produced for and within the archives works to further disrupt the long-standing traditional archival paradigm that advocates for a static and fixed archives and archival record. To recognize an archival record that is neither static nor singular is to recognize the way static and singular records have functioned in the archives. An archives built around the notions of neutrality and objectivity functions to support dominant and singular ethnohistorical structures, including those *about* non-dominant peoples.[14] As archival scholars writing through the postmodern

Digital Participatory Microhistory and the South Asian American Digital Archive," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 1 (2014): 78.

11 Since the postmodern turn in archives, archival scholars have questioned the modern notion of a singular and capital T Truth, so that deeper inquiries into multiple voices and truths have further demonstrated the needs for distinct approaches to appraisal and description. For example, see Terry Cook, "Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The Revolution in Information Management and Archives in the Post/custodial and Post/modernist Era," *Archives and Manuscripts* 22, no. 2 (1994); Terry Cook, "Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts," *Archival Science* 1, no. 1 (2001); Terry Cook, "'We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are': Archival Appraisal Past, Present and Future," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32, no. 2 (2011): 173–89; Brien Brothman, "Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice," *Archivaria* 32 (1991); and Verne Harris, "Postmodernism and Archival Appraisal: Seven Theses," in *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007), 101–6.

12 See Terry Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms," *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 95–120; Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1–2 (2002): 1–19; and Brien Brothman, "Perfect Present, Perfect Gift: Finding a Place for Archival Consciousness in Social Theory," *Archival Science* 10, no. 2 (2010).

13 Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, "The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness," *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 4 (1998): 22. For this article, I focus on the archives, archival studies, and the oral history as method and archival record. I acknowledge that there have been many queer studies and humanities scholars who have followed the "archival turn" and written about the "archive" and the "queer archive" as "a space where one collects or cobbles together historical understandings of sexuality and gender through an appraisal of presences and absences." Daniel Marshall, Kevin P. Murphy, and Zeb Tortorici, "Editors' Introduction: Queering Archives: Historical Unravelings," *Radical History Review* 120 (2014): 2. Their work continues to be important in the development and sustaining of LGBTQI and queer archives and for my own ongoing research. See the scholarship of Anjali Arondekar, Ann Cvetkovich, Jasbir Puar, Jack Halberstam, Heather Love, José Esteban Muñoz, and Kate Eichhorn.

14 Jennie Hill, ed., *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet Publishing, 2011). In her chapter, "Strangely Unfamiliar: Ideas of the Archive from Outside the Discipline," Alexandrina Buchanan offers

turn have demonstrated, archives have changed over time to include and support non-dominant voices and histories. In practice, archivists themselves have begun initiating documentation projects and oral history productions to fill gaps with non-dominant community perspectives and to augment traditional collections that present historical knowledge about such communities.[15] As an archivist and oral historian, I focus on the production of oral history to theorize the oral history interview as a multimodal record that is rich with multiple truths and that has the potential to offer fuller and more robust histories from non-dominant communities.

Archivists recognize that documenting a community produces records; community documentation is often accomplished through oral history methods. In the United States, the Society of American Archivists clearly defines and recognizes oral history as a method that "records an individual's personal recollections of the past and historical events."[16] However, the definitions of the record and, importantly, of the oral history as record continue to be debated. One archival approach embraces the record defined as "any type of recorded information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, created, received, or maintained by a person, institution or organization."[17] A second approach does not approve of "memory-based documentation" because "oral history is not a transactional record of evidential value and does not satisfy legal requirements of evidence."[18] Although that debate is beyond the focus of this article, I consider the two distinct approaches integral to understanding the archives both as they *should be* and as they *really are*.[19] This both/and approach impacts how I under-

a thorough tracing of the ways the archive is seen and understood from outside of archival studies to further demonstrate the limiting and delimiting effects of the ideas of neutral and objective archivists. She notes, "traditional archives (the 'organic,' institutional, or bureaucratic archives upheld by Jenkinson as the pinnacle of documentary objectivity) in particular, have been censured for their exclusions, their silencings and their active involvement in oppression" (Ibid., 41).

15 Ana Roeschley and Jeonghyun Kim, "'Something that Feels Like a Community': The Role of Personal Stories in Building Community-Based Participatory Archives," *Archival Science* 19, no. 1 (2019): 49.

16 Society of American Archivists, "Oral History," SAA Glossary, accessed 15 March 2015, https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/o/oral-history.

17 Ellen D. Swain, "Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-First Century," *American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (2003): 147.

18 Swain, "Oral History in the Archives," 147.

19 Berndt Fredriksson, "Postmodernistic Archival Science – Rethinking the Methodology of Science," *Archival Science* 3, no. 2 (2003): 177–97.

stand the archival record that comprises the methodology and method of oral history as well as the narrator's recorded truth telling. This approach also allows the record to be both stable and unstable, consistent and inconsistent, complementary and contradictory. While such a record contributes to the becoming of a particular human body and body of knowledge, it might also (and simultaneously) contribute to the unbecoming of another body and body of knowledge.

In community-based and cultural archives, oral histories have contributed many lived and living histories from non-normative individuals and communities. Leading oral historian Alessandro Portelli acknowledges that oral sources, oral history in particular, are "unstable" and "partial."[20] For those archivists and oral historians working with LGBTQI communities and records, the focus must necessarily turn to the unstable, incomplete, and unfinished qualities of oral sources and their relationships to queer oral history methods and then to how these can be translated into relevant archival processes and practices. Horacio N. Roque Ramírez and Nan Alamilla Boyd suggest that "queer oral histories have an overtly political function and a liberating quality";[21] for this reason, queer oral histories can guide archival thinking toward reimagining new practices and processes through which a new vision (and version) of history and its multiple records might be created. These processes will necessarily attend to the fluidity of archival subjects as dynamic bodies and bodies of knowledge as well as to their alignment with a multiplicity of groupings.[22] For LGBTQI archives, records consisting of oral histories and oral sources have helped to "transform the writing of the history of sexuality and gender" so as to radically shift historically static and therefore limited representations across LGBTQI communities and the bodies that constitute them.[23]

As Kevin Murphy, Jennifer Pierce, and Jason Ruiz point out, Portelli noted that oral history, "as a source was prone to both undervaluing by traditional

20 Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Essays: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 46

21 Horacio N. Roque Ramírez and Nan Alamilla Boyd, "Close Encounters: The Body and Knowledge in Queer Oral History," in *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1.

22 Joel Wurl, "Ethnicity as Provenance: In Search of Values and Principles for Documenting the Immigrant Experience," *Archival Issues* 29, no. 1 (2005): 70; Eric Ketelaar, "Cultivating Archives: Meanings and Identities," *Archival Science* 12, no. 1 (2012): 23.

23 Kevin P. Murphy, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Jason Ruiz, "What Makes Queer Oral History Different," *Oral History Review* 43, no. 1 (2016): 2.

scholars, who too easily trusted the veracity of written sources, and overvaluing by a new generation of social historians eager to capture the voices and experiences of disempowered groups ignored in most written sources."[24] Such a strict separation relies on an either/or paradigm that my argument turns away from. In turning instead toward a both/and approach, I move away from the strict separation in archival discourses between concepts of history, evidence, and memory, which are grounded in the positivist archival science tradition and leave little space for multiple truths. Oral history works as a source of both evidence and interpretation. To understand and validate the narrator's perspectives, one does not take "every recorded declaration as factual truth" but should "commit to listening carefully for what the narrator's recollections reveal about their time and place in history."[25] As Kennedy posits in the statement quoted in the opening of this article, oral history can be the window through which "individuals understand and interpret their own lives." Looking through the glass of a window, we might catch glimpses of our own refracted reflections. In a multiplicity like that afforded by the window metaphor, oral history, then, connects individual perspectives to notions of truth, opinion, judgment, perception, and a certain self-reflexivity – an array of subjective positionings, from that of the interviewer to those of the narrator and those who access the archival record.

Multiplicities: An Archival Intervention

Poststructural and postmodern thought have moved scholars away from an understanding of human subjects as distinctly outlined, unified, and mindful beings and toward an understanding of human subjects as multiply situated.[26] Fredric Jameson has noted that approaching the subject as multiply situated

24 Ibid., 3.

25 Ramírez and Boyd, "Close Encounters," 5.

26 I make the shift to *multiply situated* subjects following Chicana feminists, including Chela Sandoval and Adela C. Licona, to resist the pathologizing implications of a fractured being. I move away from the term *marginalized* because its use automatically positions a subject as inside or outside. *Multiply situated* helps me to understand the different spaces and places where we each may carry varying weights of privilege(s) based on our many identity categories. See Adela C. Licona, *Zines in Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 12; Jamie A. Lee, "Beyond Pillars of Evidence: Exploring the Shaky Grounds of Queer/ed Archives and Their Methodologies," in *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, ed. Anne J. Gilliland, Sue McKemmish, and Andrew J. Lau (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2017), 326.

intervenes in "diachronic sensibilities [and a] sense of history that links a civilization's comprehension of itself to its past and future."[27] An approach that engages the archive with the concept of the multiply situated subject acknowledges the ways in which subjects and their histories can be situated as both dominant and non-dominant, normative and non-normative, proper and improper, legitimate and illegitimate. Similarly, in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Derrida tackles the changing essence of the archive by looking closely at that which constitutes the powerful standard of collecting. He writes that "*Consignation* aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration. In an archive, there should not be any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity or *secret*, which could separate, . . . or partition, in an absolute manner."[28]

My aim is to consider the consequences of Derrida's thinking so as to approach the archives not as a singularly ideal configuration but, rather, as a multiplicity of ideals and sometimes competing configurations.

Ideal Configurations

The oral history as method and methodology insists on multiplicity and the idea of *someness* – a both/and approach rather than an either/or approach – within the archives, its records, and its collections. In interactions with other humans and their contexts, human bodies – those of the interviewer, narrator, archivist, researcher – work to perform legibility and intelligibility while also reading the legibility of other bodies across identity categories. Through oral history production, the processes of the body in simultaneous becoming and unbecoming highlight distributed and relational ways of knowing and being. By highlighting the simultaneity of becoming and unbecoming, I mean to flag the ways in which oral histories can record the becoming, for example, of a male-identified subject who refuses to not also recognize his female-identified self. Such a refusal functions such that a binaristic understanding of the sexed and gendered subject is undone or unbecomes and a fluid understanding of the same subject 'becomes' in its place. Importantly, both understandings exist in one record,

27 Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 16. She references Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capital," *New Left Review* (1984).

28 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3 (emphasis in original).

which is no longer singular nor static. In this example, the archival record is an embodied record that traces the becoming of a male body and the unbecoming of a female body as a process that troubles the notions of the singular and the static and instead produces the record as multiple and ongoing. There are implications, too, for the body of knowledge that is also produced through this unbecoming and becoming body. The archival body that gets produced is one that holds records as bodies of knowledge that are also fluid. By the archival body, I mean the archives and the collections and records they contain, as well as the practices and performances that produce them.[29] By embodied archives, I mean the human body in all of its experiential complexities related to the archival, historical, social, and political forces that have shaped and continue to shape it and its memory-making practices; through the body, I aim to take a closer look into the more nuanced human elements of storytelling as part of the production of the oral history interview. Working with these understandings of the archival body and the embodied archives allows for a recentring of the human, relational, and interactional processes of oral history production in and for the archives and, especially, those in and for LGBTQI archives.

The oral history, then, is comprised of (un)becoming bodies (enfleshed bodies and bodies of knowledge) as these are archived and enter the archives as record. The archives is constituted by (un)becoming bodies and exists, in effect, as the (un)becoming archives; the archives understood thusly is constantly changed by relational and archival human subjects and bodies of knowledge as well as by each newly accessioned collection, each researcher inquiry, each moment of interpretation – with new knowledges being produced and represented in and about the archives itself.[30] Oral history makes the deliberate move away from singular history to the multiple "some," which as Jack Halberstam and Ira Livingston note, is "not an indefinite number awaiting a more accurate measurement, but a rigorous theoretical mandate whose specification, necessary as it is (since 'the multiple *must be made*'), is neither numerable nor, in the common sense, innumerable."[31] The idea of someness opens up new possibilities for multidimen-

29 Jamie A. Lee, "Be/Longing in the Archival Body: Eros and the "Endearing" Value of Material Lives," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2016): 38.

30 See Kimberly Anderson, "The Footprint and the Stepping Foot," *Archival Science* 13, no. 4 (2012); and Brothman, "Perfect Present, Perfect Gift," 142. Both offer arguments to consider temporality and the social configurations of past, present, and future, as well as the role that social and cultural theory plays in archival theory and practice.

31 Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, eds., "Introduction: Posthuman Bodies," in *Posthuman Bodies*

sional stories to be told and recorded. In truth telling, whether through audio or video recordings, the archival body and the embodied archives are simultaneously revealed in the ways that the narrator re-collects and remembers. The narrator, through their own truth telling, performs and re-performs their embodied techniques for legibility for the interviewer, the interview, the camera, the archives, and the visitors to the archives. The formation of the subject as a complex and relational (un)becoming body might be productively framed through "embodiment, sexuality, affectivity, empathy and desire as core qualities" for archival productions and practices.[32] A reframing through multiplicity afforded by oral history methods might challenge the evidentiary qualities ascribed to records as *recordness* because of the (un)becoming body's resistance to fixity over time, when fixity has traditionally supported the archives as static, trustworthy, "authorized" evidence.

Oral History Methods for the Queer/ed Archives

Setting. We sat outside beside the swimming pool, the place that he thought provided the nicest backdrop. He lived and worked at Casa Libre en la Solana, a non-profit creative collective in Tucson, Arizona, that housed writers and visiting scholars for short and extended periods. We chatted while I set up the tripod and video camera. I asked him to run the wireless microphone's cable under his shirt and clip it near the collar in order to capture his voice on this breezy day. I pressed RECORD[33] and continued to get my notebook and list of questions in order. I was concerned about the hot sun, but he insisted that he always sat in the sun and that it would be just fine. The tree near my back threw shadows that created conditions that made the automatic iris on my digital video camera open and close in ways that would become distracting, so we shifted our chairs by inches. I switched the iris to manual and adjusted the luminance so as to capture the best image while the sun was on him. He smiled. He wore hot pink sunglasses and a Western-style, short-sleeved shirt with a hand-stitched floral pattern in purple and pink pastels. He wiped his hands twice on his cut-off

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 9 (emphasis in original).

32 Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 26.

33 I deliberately italicize what was recorded as part of the oral history interview itself, both in the transcript and on digital video. What comes before the italics are my own field notes about the process, technological recording devices, and interview setting, noted to highlight both the moving human and non-human parts of the production.

jeans. His beloved dog, Isabella, stood next to his lawn chair. He scratched her chin and announced, "This is my partner. We've been together 12 years. Yeah, she's good." Then he chuckled and looked at the camera.

> **Interviewer.** *Are you ready?*
> **TC Tolbert.** *I guess.*
> **Interviewer.** *I conducted this trans workshop, and we came up with a list of questions that we all asked each other, and one of them is to introduce yourself and to tell how you self-identify. Everybody identifies differently, and it's important to see how we don't all fit under an umbrella of sorts.*
> **TC Tolbert.** *[He nodded six times and adjusted his sunglasses.] Okay. Um. My name . . . is TC Tolbert and I identify as gender-queer. I identify as queer. And maybe even more . . . than those things, as a poet and a teacher.*[34]

As archivist, filmmaker, and oral historian, I interviewed TC Tolbert on camera in April 2010 with the intent of creating a digital video record to represent a fixed moment of TC's life and what he believed to be the most relevant parts of his lived and living or ongoing history. This oral history interview, this archival record, became one lived history, one story among multiple voices and moments within the Arizona Queer Archives (AQA). However, this one story was not singular, as the narrator – Foucault's parrhesiastes – wanted to contribute a deliberately dynamic record of a subject becoming and unbecoming at once. This particular archival record is his story of being a transgender participant who creatively searched for ways of being included in the archives as a participant whose early materials recorded him as she and whose more contemporary materials recorded him as *gender-queer*. He wanted the evidence of unbecoming female to be present and accessible, and he wanted it to not be complete.

> **TC Tolbert.** *So, in terms of gender-queer identity, for me, that's really about feeling very happy to have been born in the body that I was born in, which is female, and incredibly grateful for my experience as a woman – growing up as a woman, living as a woman. And really feeling like my transition, which has just been taking testosterone, has just allowed me to foreground another*

34 Arizona Queer Archives, Arizona LGBTQ Storytelling Project Collection, TC Tolbert oral history interview (hereafter cited as TC Tolbert oral history interview). Oral history interview conducted by Jamie A. Lee in Tucson, Arizona, on 30 April 2010, www.azqueerarchives.org.

> *part of myself without, hopefully, without erasing what came before. And so, for me, I feel pretty comfortably situated in both genders, even though I know the world sees me as a guy.*[35]

In the excerpts above, I focus on TC's introduction to emphasize the discursive truth telling that occurs within the intimate space of the oral history interview. Focusing on the multiple overlapping identities that TC considers best define him, this archival record is a fixed citational moment in time. In his queer oral history, TC offers – to me and for my video camera – *queer*, *gender-queer*, *poet*, and *teacher* as identity markers that he finds most describe himself. Because TC and I co-created this archival record together, I recognized the trusting and reciprocal relationship that he and I have developed over the years within our shared local LGBTQI communities. He and I share a knowing commitment to a sustained focus on the moving parts of his story, which must be considered when producing what I call the *queer/ed* archives. Acknowledging archival records as dynamic and living oral histories, queer/ed archives can be both legible as professionally managed repositories and also as archives that embody queer politics and practices that are obligated to acknowledging unrestrained and dynamic multiplicities. As founder and director of the AQA, I deploy oral history methods, a queer/ed archival methodology,[36] and reflexive and participatory archival practices to build digital and physical archival collections, in collaboration with local LGBTQI communities, as queer/ed archives. For the archives and archival practice, describing TC's oral history means that the archivist processing the digital video record takes notes while reviewing the interview and transfers their description and keywords into the Omeka digital repository through its Dublin Core metadata structure. Such descriptive practices must include all relevant descriptors and can no longer rely on simple or singular umbrella terms, making each oral history interview distinct in its description. The queer/ed archives, and the practice of queer archiving, demand this descriptive attention and more creative arrangement as set forth from within the intimacy of the oral history interview as a method of multiplicity.

35 Ibid.

36 Jamie A. Lee, "A Queer/ed Archival Methodology: Archival Bodies as Nomadic Subjects," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (2017).

I understand the queer/ed archives to be spaces through which meaning is made to demonstrate the relationships that records and records creators have with one another and with dominant and normativizing historical metanarratives. The archives, as queer/ed, are, importantly, those spaces that are committed to deploying queer theoretically as well as a practice and a politics to work on and within the archives as an act of intervention, an upsetting of the normative archival structures that continue to uphold and reproduce exclusionary dominant power dynamics.[37] I use the forward slash (/) in *queer/ed* to highlight the ease of moving between adjective and verb forms in the present and past tense. *To queer* is the verb, in this case, collapsing the distinct understandings of past, present, and future to intervene in chrononormative markers – what queer studies scholar Elizabeth Freeman defines as the "interlocking temporal schemes necessary for genealogies of descent and for the mundane workings of domestic life" – and to open up multiple ways of being in the world within time.[38] The queer/ed archives is intelligible both as archives *and* as queer. A productive tension exists in this both/and approach that offers archivists and visitors to the archives ways to imagine the possibilities of "queer multimodality as a function of both a recovered and an emerging history"[39] of queer material lives. Through a focus on multiplicities – as in the multiplicities revealed in TC's own sense of being, including being gender-queer and male presenting while embodying a female history within – (un)becoming becomes a mobile and non-fixed state of bodies, bodies of knowledge, and archives.

(Un)Becoming Bodies in the Archives

Through my years developing and producing the AQA, I have been drawn to the many complex and living histories that the archives collects, preserves, and shares. I have questioned the seemingly static role of the archives as situated in the modern (Cartesian) conception of evidence and, through my work using the body as a framework for inquiry into archives and archiving practices, I draw on the records continuum approach to attend to the archives and the ongoing

37 Lee, "Beyond Pillars of Evidence."

38 Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), xxii.

39 Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes, "Queerness, Multimodality, and the Possibilities of Re/Orientation," in *Composing(Media) = Composing(Embodiment): Bodies, Technologies, Writing, the Teaching of Writing*, ed. Kristin L. Arola and Anne Frances Wysocki (Boulder, CO: Utah State University Press, 2012), 189.

processes of becoming (becoming archives and becoming bodies of knowledge) alongside practices of description with ever-expanding layers of contextual metadata that fix and hold records within distinct contexts but do not foreclose multiple representations of human, non-human, and contextual knowledge as valuable truths.[40] From queer and trans perspectives – though certainly not exclusively through a transgender experience – bodies become and unbecome simultaneously. I use the term *(un)become* deliberately to bring attention to that simultaneity. In the sense of Gilles Deleuze and Felíx Guattari, I avoid deploying *becoming* alone, without its silently understood opposite *unbecoming*, because I focus on the explicit work of the undoing that accompanies the doing. I also incorporate parentheses around *(un)* to highlight the momentary capture in time and space – those fixations and markings that are enacted through archival practices of appraisal and description. Such an (un)becoming approach, then, highlights the failure of identities and naming categories to hold and capture non-normative bodies. I am arguing that this is an important intervention into a process and a location that has never been able to account for those whose histories do not fit dominant histories or normative expectations of what it means to have a body – especially those whose histories or bodies are not officially recognized or legible. The shift toward (un)becoming makes the queer/ed archives a site and a practice that refuse to reduce bodies and their histories to singular, static versions of themselves and thereby do not affect the erasure of those records that do not fit the norm. Beyond the enfleshed bodies, a queer/ed archival approach and (un)becoming also make room for (contested) bodies and bodies of knowledge that have been obscured by official historical records.

Archives and bodies as (un)becoming emerge relationally and must be attentive to the coming together, coming apart, and intersecting identities that produce and are produced by multiply situated subjects and subjectivities.[41] As Latinx scholars Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Adela C. Licona argue,

> We may not be the "same" person in different geographical contexts; what an "identity" means may shift from place to place, and the

40 See Terry Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community," 95–120; Sue McKemmish, "Placing Records Continuum Theory and Practice," *Archival Science* 1, no. 4 (2001): 336; and Sue McKemmish, Glenda Acland, Nigel Ward, and Barbara Reed, "Describing Records in Context in the Continuum: The Australian Recordkeeping Metadata Schema," *Archivaria* 48 (Fall 1999): 6.

41 Lee, "Beyond Pillars of Evidence," 340.

> communities that define us are apt to shift over time. What it means, for instance, to be "queer" varies from bar to bedroom to workplace; what it means to be "American" shifts from India to the United States to Mexico; racialized, gendered, and classed identities may shift from ghetto to boardroom to gated community to classroom. Such locational meanings are contingent upon the communities to which we belong. The meanings we assign to any given identity category emerge through the relational practices in which those categories get played out in our daily lives.[42]

It is inside the queer/ed archives, then, that histories of desire, belonging, the erotic, fear, trauma, ambivalence, violence, and lived truths can demonstrate multiple and multimodal truth telling. Such an understanding calls for archival arrangement and description to be relational, cross-referenced, and – like the queer human archival subject – multiply situated.[43] Looking closely at oral history processes and techniques, the multiple truths emerging through first-person accounts reveal the messy seams of past, present, and future bodies juxtaposed with *both* distinct *and* shifting relationships to power and subjectivity formation within archival contexts. In other words, processes of (un)becoming are revealed and, importantly, neither erased nor reduced. At the interstices of un/intelligibility and collapsing temporalities lie the affective potentials of archival productions. The bodies and bodies of knowledge constituted by and constituting an archives affect and are affected by the practices and processes of telling of and recording both remembering and forgetting and, therefore, (un)becoming.

42 Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Adela C. Licona, "Moving Locations: The Politics of Identities in Motion," *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 2 (2005): 12.

43 See Greg Bak, "Continuous Classification: Capturing Dynamic Relationships Among Information Resources," *Archival Science* 12, no. 3 (2012): 287–318. Bak focuses on digital records management to demonstrate the relational classification schemes that might also be effective in working with the multiply situated communities I am focusing on in my research. I am interested in dynamic relationships and representations of non-dominant identities within archival appraisal, arrangement, and description.

Parrhesia: Telling and Confronting One's Truth

Foucault traces the evolution, definition, and practice of parrhesia as it plays out in Greece during the time of Socrates. The practices of parrhesia Foucault is concerned with are the deployment of truth telling in specific types of human relationships and the technique or techné (the technical and practical knowledge of *doing* something)[44] employed to maintain such relationships.[45] I follow Foucault's lead to suggest that the importance of truth telling as connected to parrhesia is related not to whether or not something is true but, rather, to the type of relationship that is established between the speaker and what the speaker says. Looking closely into these types of relationships can, therefore, highlight the "question of the importance of telling the truth, knowing who is able to tell the truth, and knowing why we should tell the truth."[46] Furthermore, the types of relationships that the multiply situated subject as the (un)becoming body encounters are those that topple the perspective of the Socratic-Platonic tradition, which positions parrhesia and rhetoric in strong opposition, as the former produces "natural" dialogue through questions and answers while the latter produces a structured figure through devices and ornamentation.[47] As bodies are (un)becoming bodies, the impossibility of their ever being natural is brought into stark relief.

I draw from Foucault's 1983 essays and lectures, titled "Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia," to look closely at parrhesia – often translated into English as "free speech" and defined as telling and confronting one's truth. One question Foucault poses within his discursive exercise on truth telling asks whether the speaker says "what he thinks is true, or does he say what is really true?"[48] He goes on to claim that the speaker knows what is true

44 Nikki Sullivan, "The Somatechnics of Perception and the Matter of the Non/human: A Critical Response to the New Materialism," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 3 (2012): 302. Sullivan is building on Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982).

45 Foucault, *Discourse and Truth*, 46.

46 Ibid., 75.

47 Ibid., 6

48 Foucault, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Word 'Parrhesia,'" in "Discourse and Truth, Problematization of Parrhesia: Six lectures given by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley, Oct–Nov. 1983," accessed 1 February 2015, https://foucault.info/parrhesia/foucault.DT1.wordParrhesia.en/.

and that even his opinion is also the truth: "he says what he knows to be true."[49] Although focusing on the discursive and verbal activity, Foucault notes that his intention is to deal "with the problem of truth-teller or truth-telling as an activity,"[50] which, for me, makes urgent the need to consider the function of the queer oral history interview beyond the discursive and, as a valid archival record of truth telling, through textual, aural, and visual means, and therefore as evidence of such truths expressed through lived histories, opinions, and experiences. Truth telling in this sense "presupposes that the parrhesiastes is someone who has the moral qualities which are required, first, to know the truth, and secondly, to convey such truth to others."[51] Foucault notes that the "proof" of the sincerity of the speaker is "his courage," especially in the face of some sort of danger inherent in telling the truth.

In Les Krambeal's oral history interview, after 15 minutes of questions and answers about Les's history – growing up in Oregon and moving to Tucson, Arizona, later in life – the interviewer explicitly asked, "And what is your coming out story?" Ryn, the interviewer, was a straight white man whom I was training to conduct oral history interviews. His request for a coming out story illuminates, for me, the prevailing singular narrative that has historically captured LGBTQI histories and that, perhaps, the interviewer was conditioned to look for in the interview. By contrast, in my own practice, I often let LGBTQI narrators lead interviews either toward or away from coming out stories. I recognize the discursive strategies of telling one's lived truths and, importantly, the embodied and affective states of becoming as narrators encounter moments that move them to include or exclude certain stories.[52] Les responded,

> *The coming out story that I tell . . . You have to realize, you know, I'm going to be 60 years old this year. We didn't have Internet and TV shows and stuff that even address the issue of homosexuality. I never even heard of homosexual or gay or anything. I grew up on my grandfather's ranch in*

49 Ibid.

50 Foucault, "Conclusion," in "Discourse & Truth, Problematization of Parrhesia: Six lectures given by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley, Oct–Nov. 1983," accessed 1 February 2015, https://foucault.info/parrhesia/foucault.DT6.conclusion.en/.

51 Foucault, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Word 'Parrhesia.'"

52 Gloria Anzaldúa, "To(o) Queer the Writer: Loca, Escritora y Chicana," in *Living Chicana Theory*, ed. Carla Trujilla (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 1998).

> *southern Oregon. . . . When I was pretty young, I realized that I had a unique attraction to men in Wranglers, but I never really came to realize what that was all about until the one and only time in my life I ever hitchhiked. After college, I was in training in Georgia in Fort Gordon before I went to Vietnam. And the one and only time I hitchhiked, I got picked up and invited for a sexual encounter. It turned out to be a very fabulous experience, and I was so excited. All of these things were rushing through my mind and started making sense.*[53]

The video record displayed Les's body language as he told the story of this hitchhiking experience. A smile played at his lips. His eyes grew excited, as he moved his arms more than he had throughout the earlier part of the recording. Les offers a disclaimer about the time period, during which he did not know of the concept of homosexuality. This unknowing opened up possibilities to understanding himself, perhaps without the perceived stigma of being gay. Telling truths is personal and political, and those truths are also haunted and situated within structures of belonging and longing for connection. Self-identification relies on the narrator's understanding that the destination of their oral history interview is the queer archives, which offers LGBTQI-identified oral history interviewees a home space for their stories; however, storytelling processes highlight for me the nuanced ways that the politics of respectability, along with stereotype (which I elaborate further below), continue to haunt interviewees as they move through affective intensities and relationships to their own stories as they emerge during the interviews.

Oral history narrators I have interviewed have centred the common coming out narrative that has come to more singularly define LGBTQI experiences as an on-camera, at times traumatically revealing and vulnerable positioning; however, upon closer examination, the coming out narrative becomes an affective techné of the storytelling process that seemingly makes the teller legible as an LGBTQI subject. As technés reveal and are revealed within the context of the oral history interview, multiple truths, multiple ways of knowing, and multiple histories emerge as part of the truth telling and of the archival record. The bodies perform and present modes of knowing, and gaps and silences tell parts of their stories

53 Arizona Queer Archives, Arizona LGBTQ Storytelling Project Collection, Les Krambeal oral history interview (hereafter referenced as Les Krambeal oral history interview), Oral history interview conducted by Ryn with Jamie A. Lee in Tucson, Arizona, 10 April 2010, www.azqueerarchives.org.

as well. The archives, then, is not stable, nor can it perform stability when it holds partial and multiple truths. Kevin P. Murphy, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Jason Ruiz argue that the "charged and unpredictable encounter of the oral history interview works to unsettle and destabilize received narratives of social identity, community formation, and historical progress."[54] The oral history interview is then considered both a "story so far"[55] and a partial memory, both of which make it an ideal method for recording multiplicities across communities. The bodies are themselves multiply situated, suggesting a locatedness that is both dominant and non-dominant, normative and non-normative, proper and improper, legitimate and illegitimate.[56] Bodies – archival and enfleshed – are always in processes of becoming and, in their dynamic multiplicities and over time, can destabilize any perceived sense of stability and effectively open unanticipated possibilities.

In destabilization, multiplicity emerges as histories and bodies (un)become over time. The (un)becoming body embodies moments and ephemeral markers of overlap, erasing any possibility for a singular subject. Deleuze and Guattari delineate a principle of multiplicity that suggests that when "multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, 'multiplicity,' . . . it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, nature or spiritual reality, image and world."[57] The process of becoming and unbecoming untethers the subject from more direct placement within a substantive and concrete space and time, identified as "multiplicity." In his oral history interview, TC expresses this embodied multiplicity as experienced in the medicalized processes of his transition:

> *I take testosterone in a cream, and I apply it once a day. When I went to my doctor, I said, "I want to do this really slowly. I am nervous about putting anything in my body." Within three weeks, my period had stopped, my voice was cracking, just like being awkward. Within six months, full-blown acne. I was a teenage boy all of a sudden. (Laughter) . . . I went to my doctor, and she said, "Wow, you're a good example of why there isn't a standard*

54 Murphy, Pierce, and Ruiz, "What Makes Queer Oral History Different," 7.

55 Jamie A. Lee, "Be/longing in the Archival Body: Eros and the 'Endearing' Value of Material Lives," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2016): 41.

56 Licona, *Zines in Third Space*; Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 21, 39.

57 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 8.

> *dose, because each body reacts so differently. Here you're on this almost imperceptible dose and you're transitioning. Your whole body is changing!" I still do the daily cream and, um, I'm only just now after four years getting to the place where I'm thinking maybe I'd feel comfortable doing a shot, just to let that be in my body for 14 days without deciding every day to put on the cream . . . You want to put the cream on a really absorptive area where it's not gonna get washed off, right? So, you could do it on the inside of your wrist or mucous membranes like in your nose, but no one's gonna put cream there (touching wrist) because it's gonna rub off and there (touching nose) because it's in your nose! Um, so the best place – this is hysterical! – is on your inner and outer labia. (Laughter) I know, it's amazing! It's just one of those ironies about the placement and what's happening, you know. All kinds of stuff.*[58]

TC's body cannot be contained by predetermined categories. He performs through his gender-queer body, with *he* and *his* discursively marking the telling and understanding of his stories, while claiming the missing menstrual cycle that belonged to her moments, months, or years ago. TC explicitly embodies the multiplicities and knowledge of his (un)becomings. The application of the testosterone cream moves him more and more into the emerging male body and away from the female body that he had known his entire life; ironically, he notes that the ideal place to rub the cream is on his female genitals. He laughs. He recognizes the non-normative spaces and considers them ironies through which he measures his bodily inventory taking throughout his transitioning, his transgendering, his queering. TC's story and the body he has and is living in reveal an elasticity of embodiment. TC's oral history interview, as an archival record, demonstrates the ongoing archival reflexivity necessary to adequately process the digital video record and archivally describe and interpret the multiple identity markers and self-understanding amid transitioning and transgendering. The record can no longer adhere to an either/or framework with regard to sex and gender. TC is not simply male or female. Rather, following women-of-colour and specifically Chicana feminism, the description and arrangement of TC's record must be undertaken through a both/and framework. TC's identity is fluid and, as such, his archival records must be arranged and described as

58 TC Tolbert oral history interview.

he has lived such an identity, as both female- and male-identified as well as gender-queer. The recording of TC's oral history at this moment has fixed his remembering in a digital video archival record – thus providing a stable representation of his expression of processes and states of multiplicities. Archival description and organization through an approach committed to multiplicities and someness, then, present different ways to think about and organize the body and the corresponding bodies of knowledge. Within multiplicities, disidentification with the normative opens radical possibilities. Butler notes,

> It may be precisely through practices that underscore disidentification with those regulatory norms by which sexual difference is materialized that both feminist and queer politics are mobilized. Such collective disidentification can facilitate a reconceptualization of which bodies matter, and which bodies are yet to emerge as critical matters of concern.[59]

I critically consider TC's oral history interview, as he instantiates this disidentification and his recognition of his queer location as in the midst of overlapping female and male identities. He says that when he came out, he was a very visible dyke and proudly identified as a dyke. However, in his (un)becoming, he recognizes the multiplicities in performing as male and female and in reading and being read as male and female:

> *What I notice now is, um, is really (raises his hands emphatically) it's the way that (pause) as a guy (hands motion toward his chest), there aren't many visual cues. I know that those visual cues for women can be very limiting. Certainly, for anyone, visual cues can be limiting. But they're also a nice handy shortcut when you're in the grocery story (laughs). You know, you get the sort of "dyke nod" (nods and laughs), you know, or whatever that is. So, I don't experience that anymore. It's very rare that I will be walking down the street and I'll see any number of queer folks who will assume that I'm queer. Whereas before, having short hair and that kind of thing, that was an assumption. Again, I can see how that is limiting to a lot of folks and certainly doesn't allow a lot folks in through those visual cues. Femme-identified women*

59 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 4.

> *and masculine men, right? But going from someone who was assumed to be queer right away, to now, not having that assumption is always baffling to me. And I find myself (long pause). Hmmm . . . I was gonna say alone or lonely, in some instances, and I think that's true, but I think that's also a part of the gendered expectations for men in terms of interpersonal connections. And so, it's not that people don't talk to me or (laughs) that I am not talking to people. But the levels of intimacy. . . There are just different expectations for men and women that I knew theoretically as a woman and now I feel experientially as a guy.*[60]

TC's past knowing and bodily being inform his thoughtful characterization of his new experiences as a "guy." He recounts his expressive notions of self as "lonely" and participating in an unfolding interpersonal connective space that is male oriented; such expectations may emerge from his own assumptions about men's interpersonal connections, as opposed to stereotypical assumptions of women as nurturing and centred in interpersonal fluency. Later in his interview, TC mentions that his changing body is now able to perform the pull-up, a comment that highlights a distinct performance that has acquired a sense of normativity, a definitional characteristic of manliness or masculinity. The pull-up becomes a show of strength: it is something that men and some women can do, but here, it unquestioningly denotes manliness. Performance and presentation as reiterated solidify into something legible and recognizable. How can the queer/ed archives capture the body as dynamic multiplicity? TC's 2010 oral history interview recording tells of his transition at that time and reveals and makes legible the many fixed and also still fluid moments of past iterations of TC as he has lived along a sexed and gendered continuum.

Queer oral history necessitates an expansion beyond Foucault's discursive, verbal activity to elucidate the mere bodily presence – through audio/video – of the truth teller, which produces the window metaphor in Kennedy's comment at the opening of this article. In effect, the window offers direct, refracted, and reflected glimpses of self and others through the oral history event. I focus on the production of the oral history and the process of the oral history interview as a pivotal moment that emphasizes a distinct visibility of the narrator – a presence, an outing, and yet a belonging to the archives. Risk taking is always a prescient

60 TC Tolbert oral history interview.

act in LGBTQI archival production, considering the non-normative and multiply situated subjects who come forward to participate in oral history interviews. One might even understand (un)becoming archives as those that are unbecoming – that is, ugly and unseemly – in order to consider the movements of belonging through archival participation, productions, and interpretations. Put simply, the body – and the archival body that collects, organizes, and preserves records produced by and about human experience – is becoming, unbecoming, unstable, and conceivably contradictory; it is ambiguous as well as necessarily dynamic. Working with records that hold the lived histories of non-dominant peoples and communities, archivists are "*creating value*, that is, an order of value, by putting things in their proper place, by making place(s) for them."[61] It is through a sort of tethering archival practice, naming and identifying through practices such as arrangement and description, that the body is made legible or intelligible, accessible, and locatable in time and space. TC's record illuminates how this dynamism is made manifest in both arrangement and description. Multiple and relational descriptions that might mark his living histories over time are what make his processes of (un)becoming accessible for those who connect with the archives and his records. TC is not identified with one or another gender or one or another sex. Rather, through a both/and approach and understanding, TC's record, and TC's life, are released from a restrictive binary to be plotted along a continuum.

Stereotypes and the Politics of Respectability as Strategies that Frame Telling One's Truths

Archives can illuminate the many structures that have held bodies and bodies of knowledge in place. Sara Ahmed suggests that "affect is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects,"[62] and affect might reveal itself, once it is consciously recognized, as foundational to parrhesia though always in relation to contextual structures of being and belonging. Through my hands-on work collecting oral history interviews, I have observed bodies in motion as bodies, bodies of knowledge, identities, and stories

61 Brien Brothman, "Orders of Values: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice," *Archivaria* 32 (1991): 82 (emphasis in original).

62 Sara Ahmed, "Happy Objects," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

all in flux, in ongoing states of becoming and unbecoming. Reflecting on the mobile subject, Braidotti argues,

> These patterns of becoming can be visualized alternatively as sequential modes of affirmative deconstruction of the dominant subject-position (masculine/white/heterosexual/speaking a standard language/property-owning/urbanized), or else, as stepping stones to a complex and open-ended process of de-personalization of the subject.[63]

Bodies move through different stages of becoming, which trace itineraries of erasing and recomposing the former boundaries between self and others. I recognize that stereotype, as a part of the structures that hold bodies in place, plays a key role in the ways humans see and tell about themselves and others. The boundaries between looking out and looking in are fuzzy as stereotype highlights the ambiguous distinction between perception and deception. When we remember, we look backward. In this act of recollecting, the stories and memories we tell are influenced retrospectively by those distinct markers that produce and are produced by stereotype. In TC's interview, he describes his childhood:

> *I grew up in the Pentecostal faith and learned pretty quickly that my . . . (looks at the sky and chuckles loudly) . . . I was very much a tomboy, always getting kicked out of the girls' restrooms and things like that, but . . . I played softball and tended to sort of fall in love, whatever that meant, with my teammates. (Laughter) I very quickly figured out that that wasn't okay. I remember writing my first poem out when I was in sixth grade and I was in love with the third-base woman. I was the shortstop, and it was just perfect!*[64]

The boundaries around normative and non-normative gender roles are clearly delineated when he looks back, and the stereotypes about tomboys and softball become the affective and tethering moments of an (un)becoming body, recognizable and intelligible as "different." Lisa Marie Cacho suggests that stereotype in its "colloquial use often refers to a certain kind of intellectual laziness that

63 Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, 119.

64 TC Tolbert oral history interview.

prefers to interpret situations through ideological shortcuts, rather than searching seriously for what's 'really true.'"[65] Stereotype understood in this way might serve to structure the (un)becoming bodies affectively through belonging and normative moves. With this in mind, the *politics of respectability* – the means of assimilating differences within diverse groups as well as the self-regulating practices undertaken in order to be considered *good* members of a group – work as embodied stereotype. The urgent need to belong moves the narrator during the oral history interview beyond Foucault's parrhesia as truth telling and into a moving web of affective states of becoming, organized by the shortcut Cacho references.

Queer/ed bodies and queer/ed archives, then, might address and complicate the enduring force of such a politics of respectability through practices that open up the potentiality for new narratives and reimagined ways of living, being, and knowing. Non-normative bodies and bodies of knowledge circulate in creases and margins, thus going unnoticed and rendered invisible. Creating reflexive and critical archival practices can work to acknowledge the reimagined stories and spaces that are in the processes of (un)becoming. Therefore, through examining the politics of respectability, one can identify the practices that one uses in order to fulfill desires of belonging to a collective body. The politics of respectability work against – and with, in some ways – bodies and bodies of knowledge through layers of multimodality and (un)becoming.

As an archivist and oral historian, I interrogate the archival body and bodies of knowledge through a conscious recognition of the function of the politics of respectability at play in selective remembering and forgetting. Aspirations to normalcy lead to strategies that regulate stories, bodies, desires, emotions, and the spaces through which meaning is made. One strategy for recognition within normalcy is to be attuned to the complicated ways of being and knowing that can create spaces of access and that can be creative, ambivalent, fearful, hopeful, and even incongruent.[66] Since conducting my first oral history interview for the LGBTQI archives in 2008, I have observed the variety of ways that narrators demonstrate their normalcy. As queer theorist Nikki Sullivan points out – in a passage I find to be indicative of bodies and bodies of knowledge as (un) becoming and generative – LGBTQ historian Martin Meeker claims that the

65 Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 2.

66 Lee, "Beyond Pillars of Evidence."

Mattachine Society adopted "a practice of dissimulation, rather than simply promoting assimilation, donning a 'Janus-faced mask of respectability' which enabled them to 'speak simultaneously to homosexuals and homophobic heterosexuals and to communicate very different ideas to each population, during a time when the latter exerted considerable power over the former.'"[67] Thus, telling lived truths through practices of remembering and forgetting suggests the oral history narrators move through layers of emotional histories related to self-identity, through stereotype and normative markings, in order to make meaningful memories that are relevant to their lives in the present. Considering that memories are important pieces of lived and living histories further challenges parrhesia as "natural" truth telling and highlights, for me, the ways that affect influences narrators in their storytelling and meaning-making practices.

One common theme that has emerged within interviews is that of same-sex marriage. Many narrators mention it in connection with ideas about finally "belonging" and "being accepted," while a few reject marriage altogether. In support of same-sex marriage, Eve Rifkin, in her 30 September 2009 interview, explains that she and her partner

> *have not had a ceremony. We have talked about having a ceremony once we have a child and doing kind of a family ceremony. We're . . . we've both been married. Neither of us are interested necessarily in getting married again, although I think we've changed a little over time. At this point, we're not interested in having a ceremony in the state of Arizona. If we want to get married, then – and we're also not interested in going to a state, getting married, and coming back to Arizona. I think that if we, um, I think that if things don't change in the state of Arizona within the next three to five years, then we probably will leave and move to a place that recognizes same-sex couples as real human beings.*[68]

As becomes apparent in Eve's testimony, she and her partner have been contemplating marriage, but feel thwarted by anti-gay legislation in the state of Arizona. Her last sentence, suggesting being recognized as a "real human

67 Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 25.

68 Arizona Queer Archives, Arizona LGBTQ Storytelling Project Collection, Eve Rifkin oral history interview, Oral history interview conducted by Jamie A. Lee in Tucson, Arizona, 30 September 2009, www.azqueerarchives.org.

being" instantiates, for me, her move through affective states of becoming. Her voice trails off a bit as she emotionally confronts the haunting, dehumanizing strategies that Scott Lauria Morgenson argues have been "terrorizing"[69] LGBTQI bodies since the later 19th century. The haunting here shows traces of the liberal, neoliberal, and rights-based movement that became prevalent in the 1970s and also had roots extending backward into earlier ideas of assimilation and the development of the homophile movement of the 1950s and 1960s with groups such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis.[70] Today, this aspiration for normalized civil rights has become deeply embedded in LGBTQI lives and, furthermore, communities have become inculcated with these desires for acceptance.

In the event of the oral history interview, heteronormativity and homonormativity haunt the exchange through the interviewer's own lived experiences and embodied normativities. In his interview, Les Krambeal states that he and his partner, Gordon, have been together for 20 years: "I mean, how more married can you be? I have straight friends that were not even married half that time."[71] However, throughout his interview, Les mentions another man named Juan, who has been a rock for him through his cancer treatments. At the end of the interview, the interviewer asks, "I'm kind of curious about your relationship: Juan, Gordon, and yourself? How do you negotiate that?"

> **Les Krambeal.** *How do we negotiate what?*
>
> **Ryn (Interviewer).** *Are you all physically and romantically involved with each other?*
>
> **Les Krambeal.** *The three of us? Yes.*
>
> **Ryn.** *That's a very interesting dynamic. I think there's a lot of folks that are interested. How do you negotiate time and jealousy?*
>
> **Les Krambeal.** *Jealousy has never been an issue.*
>
> **Ryn.** *Really? How are you able to overcome that?*

69 Scott Lauria Morgenson, "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities," in "Sexuality, Nationality, Indigeneity," ed. Daniel Heath Justice, Mark Rifkin, and Bethany Schneider, special issue, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1–2 (2010): 105.

70 The Mattachine Society, founded in 1950, was one of the earliest gay rights organizations in the US. The Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), founded in San Francisco in 1955, was the first lesbian rights organization in the US and was conceived as a social alternative to lesbian bars, which were subject to raids and police harassment.

71 Les Krambeal oral history interview.

> **Les Krambeal.** *I don't know that I had to overcome it. I have no doubt in my mind or in my soul that Gordon loves me. I know he does. His actions every day tell me so. Juan has been with us now for four years. And the same would be true for Juan. He's a very kind, gentle, and loving person. He wouldn't do anything to make you jealous. He is as attentive to Gordon as he is to me. Certainly, my attention is to both of them. It's an interesting dynamic because I'm attracted to older men. Gordon has always been attracted to younger men. I sort of feel like I was really lucky to get his attention because I'm only 10 years younger than him. But it works for us and it works very well. If you saw our master bedroom, we have the biggest bed you've ever seen because it's a bed for three. (Chuckles)*[72]

At times, there seems to be a missing public narrative within which to frame how this non-normative relational knowledge is further understood, interpreted, and translated. Les, Gordon, and Juan, and how they together define their relationship, require a space in the archives alongside Eve and her partner, who await legal marriage opportunities to symbolize their belonging. The archival body and bodies of knowledge therein instantiate the multiplicities of lived LGBTQI experiences, desires, and meanings through truth tellings that sometimes rely on stereotypes and the politics of respectability. This example reveals the force and function of the normative in the questions that have so often produced the more stable and singular histories in both traditional and community archives. It is a reminder that archivists, as oral historians, must be attentive to the prescriptive function of the questions they ask and to the need for critical reflection within archivalization processes to ensure that the unconscious social and cultural factors that guide archivists in their archival practices might be examined and disrupted. This is a necessary step to developing a robust archives that makes space for not only multiple identities but also multiple experiences and living histories.[73]

What the archives is and does – both conceptually and as a social and cultural institution – makes memories, histories, and records legible and therefore representational in the larger archival endeavour, whether one gathers together all archives, follows the record through distinct life stages, or acknowledges

72 Ibid.

73 Ketelaar, "Tacit Narratives," 133.

the participants in records creation throughout ongoing and (un)becoming processes. Following Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan, the relationship between the "collective body politic and the individual corporeality"[74] is representational and material. Feminist philosopher Rosalyn Diprose expands on this:

> The regimes of social regulation, which dictate the right way to live, implicitly or explicitly seek to preserve the integrity of every body such that we are compatible with the social body. Not only do these thereby dictate which embodied existences can be transformed by whom and to what end but, as it is here that comparisons are made and values born, not all bodies are counted as socially viable. In short, the privilege of a stable place within that social and political place we call the "common good" is secured at the cost of denigrating and excluding others.[75]

Archives can dictate, through the organization of the greater archival body, the ways that bodies and bodies of knowledge are arranged, described, and made accessible so that some are legible while others continue to be made invisible.[76] The dynamic nature of the archives as the structuring body that holds, organizes, and shares records is concealed, as are the individual embodied practices that the archivists and other archival labourers enact on a regular basis.

74 Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan, "King's Member, Queen's Body: Transsexual Surgery, Self-Demand Amputation and the Somatechnics of Sovereign Power," in *Somatechnics: Queering the Technologisation of Bodies*, ed. Nikki Sullivan and Samantha Murray (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 52.

75 Rosalyn Diprose, *The Bodies of Women: Ethics, Embodiment and Sexual Difference* (London: Routledge, 1994), 131.

76 Lee, "Beyond Pillars of Evidence," and Jeannette A. Bastian, "'Play Mas': Carnival in the Archives and the Archives in Carnival: Records and Community Identity in the US Virgin Islands," *Archival Science* 9, no. 1–2 (2009): 113–25. For archivists to recognize and understand archival records differently in and beyond the walls of the archives is key to reflecting on and recording the ways archives and communities influence one another. Bastian also suggests that archivists themselves have the power to recognize and accept cultural performances as analogous to records within their own working structures without having to invent new techniques or accept new, unfamiliar methods. She suggests that we can do this work in and on familiar terrain: "While the content of carnival cannot be called fixed in the traditional record sense, it could be considered 'fixed' in the conceptual sense . . . But carnival functions both as evidence of cultural production and as a social map" (Ibid., 121).

The Generative Tension within Telling One's Truths

> **Interviewer.** *How did you and Gordon meet?*
> **Les Krambeal.** *Well, we have two stories that we tell. One is that me and Gordon were introduced by a mutual friend. (Laughter) But the mutual friend is the name of the park where we met. He was still married when I met him.*[77]

The queer oral history interviews that I have participated in, recorded, and analyzed support lived truths as both evidence and interpretation. Les's response above instantiates, for me, the power of oral history to ensure that one's multiply situated dimensions can be accessible for archives as well as for current and future research. The two stories that Les references – one proper and one improper – are both true, and he laughs in this truth telling because of the ways the improper truth is normativized and aligns with the politics of respectability. Considering truth as relational and oral history as method and methodology necessitates a shift toward recognizing both multiplicities and the relational and ongoing changes of bodies – those of narrators, interviewers, archivists, and researchers – as well as of bodies of knowledge. The truth telling that occurs in and for oral histories offers insights not only into narrators' stories, but also into their being and knowing in space and time. Body language, setting, technology, and lived experiences tell many distinct truths that may become overlooked if we do not deliberately inquire into the multiplicity that stabilizes the oral history as truth. Herein lies the generative tension that produces possibilities for deeper understanding of multiple historical narratives, especially those from non-dominant communities.

Multiple understandings and interpretations through the oral history archival record offer fuller connections with non-dominant perspectives as valid and valuable histories. TC's oral history interview offers insights that visitors to the archives might never learn if it were not for his distinct tale of the lived experience of being situated in an (un)becoming body – between female and male. His truth telling incorporates a touch of humour that suggests a questioning of his viability as a desirable human and, importantly, as a desirable archival record. He is serious and confronts these truths through pauses, contemplation, and laughter. He shares with me and on camera what seem like secrets

77 Les Krambeal oral history interview.

through delicate moments when he ponders the future while chuckling about the past. As past, present, and future seem to collapse in his truth telling, the lived truths that he tells interweave images and imaginings of TC's body making its way through the stereotypes, notions of belonging, politics of respectability, and those dominant structures that prescribe (not describe) who he is supposed to be. Recognizing that lived truths (unlike parrhesia as a "natural" telling of truths) are produced through affective processes demonstrates how archives are constituted by (un)becoming bodies. Archives, then, can no longer be the space of "authorized evidence" but are instead complex spaces of multiplicity begging for critical and creative inquiries into the webs of arrangements, descriptions, and presentations that hold (un)becoming bodies in place.

BIOGRAPHY Jamie A. Lee is assistant professor in the School of Information at the University of Arizona, where her research and teaching attend to critical archival theory and methodologies, multimodal media-making contexts, storytelling, and bodies. Lee is a faculty fellow of the Agnese Nelms Haury Program in Environment and Social Justice. She directs the Arizona Queer Archives and the Digital Storytelling & Oral History Lab and co-directs the Climate Alliance Mapping Project. She is an award-winning social justice documentary filmmaker, archivist, and scholar committed to decolonizing methodologies and asset-driven approaches to community participatory projects that are produced with communities in ways that will be relevant and beneficial.